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A Grounded Theory Study of Overseas Students in an English University

Christine Julie Twigg

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
awarded by the University of Huddersfield.

May 2006

ABSTRACT

The overall objective of the study was to focus on a diverse group of overseas students in an English university and explore their experiences of Britain. Forty two postgraduate students took part in the study and the sample was stratified into world areas which were based on the continents of the world i.e. the Americas, Africa, West Asia, Central Asia and East Asia. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and the grounded theory approach utilised to develop ideas and investigate issues further. This approach was appropriate to the data collection process as it was flexible and allowed the data to grow phase-by-phase.

Data was built up over three sets of interviews and concepts that emerged were categorised and cross referenced with Hofstede's value dimensions. The main questions were based around why overseas students came to England, what was their perception of the culture and how they interacted with other students and the host community whilst they were here. The purpose was to ask questions that did not relate to academic matters but to the student experience as far less was known about this area of research.

Although the results of the study will be useful to anyone who is interested in the lives of overseas students, the conclusions include practical steps which can be used to inform good practice in this area of work. The students reported on the positive and negative aspects of the English study experience and it was clear that there are disadvantages and advantages to studying overseas. However, it was evident that the change in language, attitudes, time environment and relationships were the main factors which affected the quality of student life and that students adapted in different ways. For some it was life changing whereas for others it just made them think differently about certain situations. Nevertheless, the experience allowed many students to learn about and appreciate lifestyles dissimilar to their own thus accruing a greater understanding of different cultures and people.

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I am especially grateful to my husband and mother-in-law for their constant support and patience during my period of part time study. Nevertheless, I am sure they are glad it is all over! They are also the ones who encouraged me to commence the Doctorate, as they have always believed in me.

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ABBREVIATIONS

a.m.	Latin (<i>ante meridiem</i>) before noon
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CVS	Chinese Value Survey
CVCP	Committee for Vice-Chancellors and Principals
e.g.	Latin (<i>exempli gratia</i>) for example
Email	Electronic mail
ECS	Educational Counselling Service
EU	European Union
GP	General Practitioner
GRE test	Graduate Record Examinations test
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
i.e.	Latin (<i>id est</i>) that is
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
M-time	Monochronic time
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MSc	Master of Science
NHS	National Health Service
P-time	Polychronic time
p.m.	Latin (<i>post meridiem</i>) after noon
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
RVS	Rokeach Value Survey
SAD	Seasonal Affective Disorder
SEDA	Staff and Educational Development Association
St	Saint
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UKCOSA	United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs
UoA	Units of Assessment
UMIST	University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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STATEMENT OF ANONYMITY

The British Educational Research Association Code of Ethics (BERA, 2004) states that ‘the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants’ data is considered the norm for the conduct of research’. However, in this instance I decided to retain the name of the participating institution (UMIST) for the following reasons:

- Express permission was given to conduct the study within UMIST.
- All participants were aware that the thesis would reveal the name of the institution, although their personal identity would be hidden.
- As UMIST was such a well known international university it was important for the identity to be revealed to the reader so that it could be used as a ‘point of reference’ for their own purposes.
- The thesis was the basis for a chapter in a book (Cullingford & Gunn, 2005) and therefore interested parties may wish to consult the thesis for further details of the study.

Furthermore, the institution was dissolved on 1 October 2004 and therefore by the time the thesis is in the public domain UMIST will no longer exist.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is a study about several issues relating to the experience of overseas students in Britain. It examines some of the areas in the student life cycle, which commence prior to the arrival in Britain and extend to beyond leaving the institution. The essence of the themes are encapsulated in the aims as outlined below:

- 1 To investigate the main factors which influence overseas students to come to England.
 - To establish why overseas students are interested in applying to England.
 - To establish why overseas students selected UMIST as their final choice for postgraduate study.
- 2 To explore the students' perception of English culture.
 - To discover the effect of prior knowledge and experience on student expectations.
 - To learn about the students perceptions of their new environment.
 - To ascertain the students awareness of social behaviour and traditions.
- 3 To investigate the outcomes of cultural interaction, both between the students themselves, and between the students and the host community.
 - To discover how English language skills affect relationships and the adaptation process.
 - To ascertain the students perception of English people.
 - To gain insight into the dynamics of the friendships and relationships of overseas students.
 - To recognise the impact of cultural differences on the overall student experience.

In 1973 there were approximately 35,000 international students in UK higher education. This was followed by a decline in the early 1980's, possibly due to the introduction of full cost fees which was followed by dramatic growth in the early 1990's. In 1976 the Grubb Institute was commissioned by the Overseas Students Trust to make recommendations about the facilities which overseas students required if they were to make the most effective use of their study period in the UK. The report was based on in-depth discussions with overseas students which allowed them to speak freely about their experience in Britain (Overseas Students Trust, 1978). In 1992 the numbers had risen to 95,000 (McNamara & Harris, 1997).

In 2003, the Higher Education Statistics Agency, reported that there were 184,685 international students in UK universities which the British Council says is worth £1.25 billion in tuition fees with a further £1.86 billion in living expenses (Curtis, 2004). According to Universities UK (2005) the figure rose to 203,000 with international students making up 11% of all the full time higher education students and 32% of full time, postgraduate research students.

During the past decade, the UK's higher education system has changed dramatically and the Government has argued that the work of universities and colleges should become increasingly accountable in terms of self funding and public scrutiny. Therefore, one of the ways in which institutions are aiming to expand their activities and increase income is to develop courses which attract overseas students. There are also non-economic benefits arising from overseas student provision such as the promotion of the English language and culture and fostering understanding between races (McNamara & Harris, 1997). According to a wide-ranging survey, the main reasons why overseas students decide to study in the UK rather than anywhere else are: the English language is spoken; UK qualifications are recognised by home governments and companies; the standard and quality of education in the UK; the international reputation of UK education; and students are already familiar with the English system of education (Allen & Higgins, 1994: p. 22, table 20).

In this study, the required feedback was encouraged from the numerous interviews thus informing and updating the body of knowledge in this area of research. As stated by McNamara and Harris (1997, p. 4) it is the intention that the study 'will help sensitise academic staff and raise awareness to problems encountered by both students and tutors which will aid reflection upon practice and develop proposals for improving practice'.

In June 1999, the Prime Minister Tony Blair launched a campaign at the London School of Economics (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1999) to increase the number of overseas students in the UK. A new target was set to attract 75,000 extra students by 2005. He stated that the institutions, their students and the UK economy will reap considerable rewards. The targets are a significant increase in the UK's share of the fee-paying market from outside the European Union. UK higher education institutions, already second only to US universities, aim to increase their market share, in relation to English-speaking countries, to 25 per cent by 2005 – an extra 50,000 students. Further education colleges are aiming to double the number of international students by 2005 – an extra 25,000 students.

The then Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett (1999) stated that:

This campaign will be good for UK as well as overseas students. UK universities and colleges will develop an even more international outlook. The students will be more employable as a result. They will have greater opportunities to work alongside top students and researchers from overseas. And our universities and colleges will earn improved revenue for expansion.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1999

However, since the initiative was launched in 1999, Universities UK (2005) noted that higher education institutions had already attracted a further 67,825 by 2002/3 and exceeded the goal of 50,000 as in fact, 93,000 arrived. Therefore, on 18 April 2006, the Prime Minister announced ambitious plans to launch a second phase to bring 100,000 extra international students to the UK by 2011 (Smithers & MacLeod, 2006).

The University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) was founded in 1824 as the Manchester Mechanics Institute. In 1905 it was incorporated as the Faculty of Technology in the Victoria University of Manchester. UMIST had a well established reputation for welcoming students from all over the world and had a community of more than 6,500 students and 1,500 members of staff. In 2002, there were over 1,400 international students at UMIST which represented nearly a quarter of the student population. There were students from over 80 countries, but several nations given below were particularly well represented in the overseas student population as follows:

Table 1.1

Nations Well Represented in the Overseas Student Population at UMIST

Brazil	China	Cyprus	Hong Kong	India
Indonesia	Iran	Kenya	Libya	Malaysia
Mexico	Norway	Oman	Pakistan	Singapore
South Korea	Taiwan	Thailand	Turkey	Zambia

UMIST also had a strong reputation for innovation and was the first UK university to offer chemical engineering undergraduate degree programmes and courses in management and marketing. It was also the first UK university to establish an industrial liaison unit in 1986.

Manchester (Williams, 1999; Makepeace, 2000; Law, 2001) lies in the North West of England and is the cultural and business capital of the North. The Greater Manchester conurbation has ten districts and covers an area of 1,200 km². It has a population of over 2.5 million with the city itself having a population of around 430,000. Manchester has three universities (University of Salford, Manchester Metropolitan University and The University

of Manchester) and has a large student population of 57,500 (Manchester City Council, 2006). The University of Manchester is the largest of these universities with over 34,000 students from more than 150 countries.

In addition, Haslam (1999) describes Manchester's transient communities as follows:

Unlike London, which was a thriving metropolis three hundred years ago. Manchester is a hybrid town, born all in a rush one hundred and fifty years ago, when those arriving looking for work in the fast-growing factories, workshops, warehouses and foundries included large numbers of Catholic Irish, as well as Scots, and East European Jews. These migrations have been replicated since, with incomers from the Caribbean in the 1950's and from the Asian sub-continent in the 1970's. Then there are the students, appearing every September, many not staying more than three years, but other others relocating here permanently.

Haslam (1999) p. xi

It has a reputation for being a progressive city with a rich heritage and exciting future. The city has a thriving arts scene with award-winning theatres, museums and galleries and more than 1,000 restaurants offering a wide range of food from many parts of the world. It also has a strong sporting tradition and in 2002, the city hosted the Commonwealth Games; it is also the base for 'Manchester United' which is one of the world's most famous football clubs. Haslam also reflects upon this when he says:

Travel the world and Manchester is known for two things: pop music and football. Mention to a stranger that you're from Manchester and even a half-fan of football will lighten up and drool at the glorious reputation of Manchester United, intoning magic words: Best, Charlton, Cantona.

Haslam (1999) p. xxv

However, it must be noted that since 1999 another 'magic word' has been added – 'Beckham' [David Beckham has now left Manchester United to play for Real Madrid in Spain].

The city welcomes more students each year than any other UK city outside of London. One of the attractions for international students is that both the campus and the city are multicultural and multi-faith with many shops specialising in goods and food from around the world.

The city also has one of the UK's largest international airports and has excellent transport links. From Manchester, it is easy to reach other exciting cities such as Liverpool, Chester

and York or to go walking in the Peak District National Park, the Pennines, Welsh Hills or visit the seaside at Blackpool.

As mentioned in the 'Statement of Anonymity' at the beginning of the thesis, it was important for UMIST's identity to be revealed to the reader as it would allow for comparisons to be made, and to be put into context with other institutions. Therefore, permission was obtained from the Head of the Department of Computation to do this. Also, due to UMIST's historical contribution and prominence on the world stage, it is expected that the study will attract many interested parties. It is anticipated that the findings could be used as a 'point of reference' or guide for institutions wishing to know more about the overseas student experience but who may not have access to the facilities or amenities themselves.

In 2002, there were approximately 230 postgraduate students in the Computation Department of UMIST. Out of these, approximately 135 were from overseas (non-European) and the majority were self-funded. The overseas student fee is more than that of a home student and thus the university benefits greatly from the revenue it receives from this sector. However, the home student fee is less as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) contribute an amount per home (UK/EU) research student in departments rated 4 or above in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2001. The Computation Department was rated 4 in the last exercise and thus was eligible for such funding.

The amount payable per student is banded A, B or C, based on RAE 2001 units of assessment (UoA). According to the banding scheme, departments which submitted to Computer Science UoA, such as the Computation Department, will receive £6,842 per student per year, because Computer Science is in band A. Student numbers are based on the previous year's research activity survey i.e. the number of home research students registered in 2004-5. Therefore, in total for each home postgraduate research student the university receives HEFCE funding of £6,842 per student, plus their fee of £3,085 making £9,927 for 2005/6 academic year. There is no HEFCE funding for overseas students, so the department receives their fee of £10,750.

The cost to overseas students is approximately three times higher than to home students but the amount of money received by the department is nearly equivalent for home and overseas students. It is therefore reasonable to argue that the overseas fee is an accurate reflection of the actual cost of running a programme (on the basis that the home fee and HEFCE grant is intended to cover all the costs for home students). Nevertheless, the overseas income is relied upon and recruitment targets and policies have been established in an attempt to

retain this advantageous position. Also, within the Department, the postgraduate overseas student targets had been increased in order to subsidise the waning undergraduate overseas numbers. An illustration of student numbers, in relation to country of origin is given in Appendices 1-8.

At the time of commencing the study UMIST was an autonomous and independent university which still maintained a close relationship with the Victoria University of Manchester and shared a number of facilities. UMIST had an international reputation for the provision of quality teaching and research in the areas of Engineering, Science and Management. UMIST also had a long history of postgraduate work and was rated the sixth top research university in the UK in the 1996 Research Assessment Exercise. However, towards the end of the study, on 1 October 2004 UMIST and the Victoria University of Manchester were dissolved and the new University of Manchester was created. The prospect of enhancing academic and research excellence was the main incentive for the merger and the new university is set to become a world-class institution with an international reputation by 2015. The creation of the new university included the support of the UK Government, the Regional Development Agency, Manchester City Council and employers' groups. In February 2005, the Times Higher Education Supplement reported that the new University of Manchester was ranked 6th in the UK and 43rd in the world.

I had been employed by UMIST since 1988 as a Postgraduate Course Administrator and had always been situated within the Department of Computation. The position included the administration of ten MSc taught courses and several research programmes from initial enquiry to graduation. However, on 1 October 2004 the Department of Computation became the School of Informatics and my role was changed to that of Postgraduate Research Administrator thus assuming the responsibility for all research student administration within the School.

Although there are obvious advantages for 'insider' research such as guaranteed access to records, buildings, and familiarity with the students and their circumstances, it is very important that strict ethical standards are maintained at all times so that people know what is being undertaken, agree to it and thus 'informed consent' is established. As my duties and the research area were connected, it was envisaged that they would complement each other in that the research will help to provide a better understanding of the overseas student experience. As a result of the increased knowledge, an improved level of service will be available to the students and other members of staff, through my administrative role in the School. It was anticipated that due to the established relationship between many of the

prospective interviewees and myself, the number required would volunteer for interview. Also, many of the interviewees were research students who were willing to help with the research although it was in a different field to their own.

Over the past decade there has been an expansion in the provision of postgraduate programmes in British universities which have attracted many overseas students. Higher education institutions have also become increasingly concerned with the quality of teaching and learning due to the numerous audits and assessments to which they are now subjected. International students represent a substantial amount of the university's income and have been coming to Manchester for so many years that in many countries a significant number of graduates hold senior positions in government, business, industry and academia. These connections and recommendations from alumni help to ensure that students continue to come and the university degree is widely recognised and respected throughout the world.

It is essential therefore that every effort is made to retain this much needed and desirable position. In addition to the internal pressures, the university has many worldwide competitors striving to obtain a share of the lucrative overseas student market. As well as competing with other UK universities, the university is also in competition with European universities who are actively enticing overseas students from the UK. For example, in order to break into the market, Germany had been offering to pay the fees for all overseas students. In exchange the student had to learn German and pay their own living and maintenance costs. This tactic was initially very costly for the German authorities but helped to build a base and once established, attract fee paying students in the future.

The UK is also in competition with other, much larger English speaking nations such as the USA, Canada and Australia which are also strong competitors. In the specific case of Australia, the last decade has seen the number of overseas students studying postgraduate taught programmes rising dramatically. However, the undergraduate and research student numbers have decreased. One reason for international students choosing Australia as a study destination is the pursuit of a quality institution in which to study. In 1998, the top ten source countries were all in Asia, which illustrates the dominance of the Asian region as a source of students in Australia. The top ten countries account for 87% of the international students and were as follows:

Table 1.2 Top Ten Source Countries of Overseas Students in Australia

China	Hong Kong	India	Indonesia	Japan
Malaysia	Singapore	South Korea	Taiwan	Thailand

Nine of the countries are the same as those mentioned as being well represented at UMIST. In addition, Australia also has students coming from the Americas (3%), Europe (4%), Africa (2%) and other (4%). However, it must be noted that a mere change of policy or circumstances in any of these countries could have a significant and detrimental effect on the UK.

The increasing competition was also recognised in the discussion document (Bringing UMIST and the University of Manchester together, April 2002) regarding the merger in which it stated that one cannot rely on overseas students to come to Manchester from traditional sources because:

- National universities are growing rapidly as governments strive to reduce the outflow of currency incurred when students study abroad.
- Institutions in the US, the UK and Australia – the countries which are the current market-leaders for English-medium HE – are increasingly providing programmes for international students either through distance learning or through delivery on campuses set up overseas.
- International competition is growing, with countries such as India, Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa providing English-medium Higher Education.

In the 1950's many overseas students were given scholarships to study in the UK. However, since the 1990's most students have been self-funded and scholarships are scarce. Therefore, higher education has seen a shift in attitude from educational 'aid' to educational 'trade' as universities compete for their share of the overseas student market (Tootell, 1999). Over the past decade the concept of quality in education has developed as universities are continuously assessed and reviewed. This occurrence may be related to the change from aid to trade as the emphasis is now on an export industry and students are referred to as 'clients' or 'customers' in quality manuals and guidelines. The emphasis on quality assurance is not only a trend in the UK but is also a feature of the academic culture in the USA, Australia and New Zealand and a high level of perceived quality in higher education institutions is essential for students seeking a place to study (Tootell, 1999).

'Quality' in itself is an elusive concept and on a personal level usually relates to good characteristics such as honesty and kindness. However, this can be complicated, as individual perceptions are subject to values and judgement unless they are strictly defined. In the business world, quality can be more complicated as it is subject to values, judgements, beliefs and expectations which are difficult to predict. Quality can be seen as an attribute of a product or service which is attractive to potential customers. However, it is very difficult to fulfil the expectations of many people as well as surpassing the efforts of the competition which the customer may also be considering. It means delivering the right product or service, at the right time and place which is fit for the purpose required by the customer. In education the student is the customer and the specified product is their chosen course of study. The student measures the quality of the product by how well it fulfils their educational requirements and the qualification to be awarded. The focus on the customer means that quality is conceptualised in terms of the customer's perceptions and the organisation's objective is to identify the customer requirements so that both the customer's and organisation's needs are met (Hannagan, 1998).

Throughout my career, I have enjoyed learning about the different experiences of all students but noticed that the overseas students require more assistance due to the different cultural and personal circumstances. This predicament is also recognised by many national organisations such as the British Council and United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs, who produce publications to assist overseas students in all aspects of the student process. Also, within the university, the International Office promotes the university and aids students before coming to the university. After arrival, the overseas student advisers and various other societies offer advice and activities for the students. After departure, the Alumni Office attempts to stay in contact with former students when they return home. I admire the courage and determination displayed by many of the students throughout their course of study and often help them with their queries. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties related to being miles away from home in an unfamiliar setting, almost all are successful in achieving their goal.

A small institution that has fewer overseas students may have fewer facilities to support them but due to the smaller numbers, each student will be offered more individual support as the staff:student ratio is greater. However, in a large institution, where there are hundreds of overseas students, needs may not be fully met. Although a range of support services are available, inevitably some students may still feel neglected. A study commissioned by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department in association with Scottish Education and Training in 1998, set out to review institutional support for overseas students in

Scotland and the extent to which tutors and other staff were aware of the issues surrounding overseas students. Whilst outside their remit they did note that some of the student advisers in larger institutions were taking steps towards providing staff development for those colleagues who had to deal with overseas students. Other institutions are also undertaking their own internal evaluations of the levels of satisfaction amongst overseas students, but it is by no means universal. The researchers were shown examples of evaluation questionnaires used in institutions. However, the researchers discovered that responses were not easily obtained; maybe because many of the students were very busy, committed to work or other concerns, or for a whole range of cultural reasons, which is a difficulty institutions have to face. In the School of Informatics, there is no specific support for overseas students and thus help has to be sought from general university facilities. Occasionally, questionnaires are sent to all students. However, the questionnaires are mainly quantitative in design with some students commenting that they wish that they could say more e.g. able to offer more qualitative data. In addition, the questionnaires are mainly concerned with academic issues and do not relate to other aspects of the welfare of the students.

The experience of studying in a foreign country leaves a powerful impression on a person that may last a lifetime. For those who have a negative experience, they may remember the loneliness and rejection of the foreign country. In addition, postgraduates are usually older, sometimes have families with them, and if research students, will work in relative isolation. They may also commence at different times of year and thus miss out on valuable information obtained at organised induction events. The latter is true in the department, where all the undergraduate and MSc students, and most of the research students arrive at the beginning of the academic year. Many introductory events are held on campus to enable the student to settle in and familiarise themselves with university life. However, for the research students that arrive at other times of year, less support is available.

Leaving home and travelling to study in a new country can be a stressful experience. Although it may have been planned for some time, the extent of the change may still be surprising. However, this may vary as some cultures may be more similar than others due to geographic, demographic, historical and political factors. 'Culture shock' (Bochner, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Smith, 1987; Storti, 1990) describes the impact of moving from familiar surroundings to an unfamiliar setting. For overseas students, it will include the shock of a new environment, new acquaintances, new customs and being separated from family, friends, colleagues, and those who can be relied upon for support and guidance. Also, when familiar sights, sounds, smells or tastes are absent they can be yearned for.

Furthermore, the change in climate, food, language, dress, social behaviour and etiquette can all contribute to culture shock.

The process of culture shock is illustrated by a process known as the 'W' curve (Guidance Notes for Students 2004-5, UKCOSA) as shown in Figure 1.1 below. Many people go through different phases of the process of adjustment a number of times, so parts of the curve may be repeated. Significant times such as festivals and family celebrations may cause a student to become unsettled as they think of home and what they may be missing. The process has been broken down into 5 stages:

The 'honeymoon' stage: The student first arrives and the differences may cause excitement, stimulation or curiosity. However, the student is still protected by the recent memories of home.

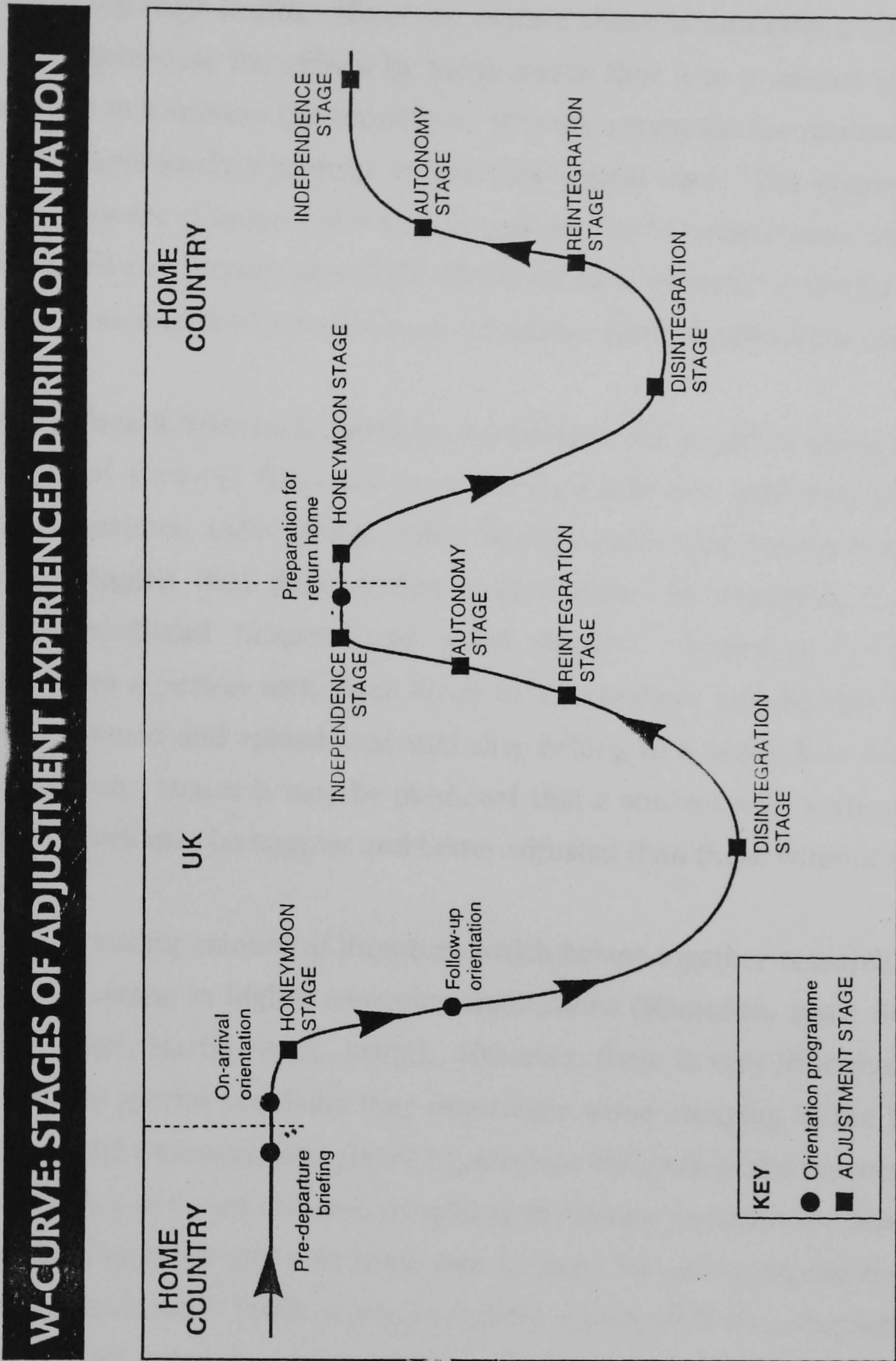
The 'distress' stage: The differences may start to create an impact and the student may feel confused, isolated or inadequate when dealing with the cultural differences. They may also be aware that the familiar support network of family and friends is not available.

The 're-integration' stage: The student may reject the differences and become angry, frustrated or hostile towards the new culture. This is quite normal and allows the student time to appreciate what they value about themselves and their own culture.

The 'autonomy' stage: The differences and similarities are accepted. The student may feel more relaxed, confident and familiar with situations as their experience grows.

The 'independence' stage: The student may feel full of potential and able to trust themselves in all kinds of situations which become enjoyable. The student is now able to make choices according to personal preferences and values.

Figure 1.1 Process of Culture Shock



Adapted from "Orientated for Success", edited by M Barker, Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, 1990.

The stress of culture shock may also manifest itself in physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, lack of concentration, irritability, tearfulness and a general change of emotions. These effects in themselves can increase anxiety, as the student may become concerned about their health. However, culture shock is normally a temporary phase and students can minimise the effects by being aware that it is a normal process and employ practical steps to minimise the transition. It is important for the student to realise it is not because they have made a mistake or that they cannot cope. The experience can make the student more aware of aspects of their own culture due to comparisons with the new culture. The student will also acquire new skills which will be very useful in the future which is one of the benefits of an international education (Guidance Notes for Students 2004-5, UKCOSA).

Research (Derlega & Winstead, 1986) has questioned the extent to which friendships based upon groups of students from the same backgrounds are protected from culture shock (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Smith, 1987; Storti, 1990). The literature on social networks and support suggest that these factors reduce stress by providing the individual with information, emotional, financial and moral support. According to Cobb (1976) social support provides a person with three kinds of information: namely that they are cared for and loved; esteemed and valued; and that they belong to a network of communication and mutual obligation. Hence it may be predicted that a student with a strong and supportive friendship network may be happier and better adjusted than those without such support.

There is an increasing amount of literature which brings together research and expertise on teaching and learning in higher education institutions (Ramsden, 1992; Schwartz & Webb, 1993; Evans, 1998; Hartley et al., 2005). However, there is very little mention of overseas students and the special problems they experience when studying in the UK environment. Despite the crucial economic role played by overseas students in the university system, there is a surprising lack of recent research or writing in relation to their experiences and attitudes or to their learning needs and how these may be met. Nevertheless, the literature that does exist spans approximately thirty years, and offers a believable but simplistic account of the experiences and attitudes of overseas students (McNamara & Harris, 1997).

A central theme is that generalisations should be avoided as overseas students come from many different cultural backgrounds and circumstances within their home countries. Also, the theories of motivation drawn upon for explanatory purposes are largely western Anglo-Saxon concepts and motivation itself encompasses a complex set of individual human behaviours even within a single culture. It is therefore difficult to arrive at a secure understanding of what staff should do in order to motivate their overseas students.

A Code of Practice (CVCP, 1995) recommended that institutions should encourage regular feedback from students on their expectations and experience in order to inform the development of institutional policies. It also states that institutions should be sensitive to the different cultural backgrounds of students, which may affect their requirements for accommodation, personal security, social provision and welfare guidance. It also recommends that institutions should ensure that appropriate training and development opportunities are available for staff working with international students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Globalisation refers to a world in which societies, cultures and economies have in some way, come closer together (Robertson, 1992; Maguire, 1999). According to Giddens (1990, p. 52) the concept can be defined as ‘the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’. For example, someone with a job in England may depend on events in South Korea or Spain as much as on local management or national government decisions. More parts of the world are increasingly drawn into a global system and so are affected by what happens elsewhere (Tomlinson, 1999). The efficiency with which news is communicated affects our sense of space and place so that we are able to keep up to date with world events (Kiely & Marfleet, 1998; Held et al., 1999; Burbules & Torres, 2000). Higher education institutions continue to undergo fundamental change because of the influence of globalisation. Brown & Scase (1994) state that universities will be called upon to educate a new generation of internationally competitive overseas students, to create a climate in which innovation and change can take place, to create links between global and local areas and integrate economic policies with social and cultural initiatives.

In 1985 the Further Education Staff College and The United Kingdom Council for Overseas Students Affairs held a conference which resulted in two reports. The Coombe Lodge Report: Part 1 (Anon, 1985) included a paper on an overseas students’ view of support services. It is based on a taped transcript of an interview with an overseas student and draws attention to some of the needs and expectations of an overseas student and the student’s perception of how far various parts of the institution were able to help and respond to those needs. Another paper discusses the needs and expectations of overseas students and addresses the issues and conclusions reached by working groups during a conference (UKCOSA, 1985). Part 2 (Stone, 1985) comments on a study which suggested that only nine per cent of overseas students in the UK were UK funded leaving 91 per cent receiving funds from

elsewhere. The study aimed to redress the observed decline in Britain's market share of overseas students since the introduction of full cost fees in 1980. It looked at trends of overseas students from various countries and decided to conduct pilot market surveys overseas in order to ascertain the factors which determined whether students came to the UK or not and the information which they had access to. As a body which works largely on invisible exports such as goodwill towards Britain, the study was carried out with some sensitivity to competitor countries.

The Gilligan Report (2000) was commissioned by the British Council to ensure the strategic development of, and to provide an authoritative benchmarking statement on, the marketing of UK education. Due to the strategic importance of international students to the UK as a whole, it provided a critical analysis of the level of professionalism in the marketing of UK education, so that competitiveness could be improved. Therefore, the report did not cover the many positive aspects that occur in various institutions and the British Council but deliberately focused on the weaknesses so that they could be recognised and addressed.

The report was in three parts: Part 1 is the summary of Professor Colin Gilligan's benchmarking report on International Marketing Practice which basically asks all institutions, agencies and authorities with an interest in promoting UK education, to look critically at what they can do to support the professional development of the marketing effort. Part 2 is a framework for the development of a world-class international student recruitment strategy for institutions. Part 3 is the ECS vision and strategy summary which provides a framework through which the British Council and ECS Board will continue to address the need to build a world-class education marketing operation that deals with the weaknesses identified in the Gilligan Report.

Overall, the picture that emerged from this research was of a sector that is of enormous strategic and economic significance to the UK economy. Nevertheless, there is a general lack of co-ordination both within and across institutions and a failure to recognise how markets are changing and are likely to change in future years. It was noted that although Britain's position within the world educational market is strong, competition is becoming far more intensive with customers being more demanding and discriminating with their choice of institution. The report also found that although there are undoubtedly some examples of good practice, they are very much in the minority and are less common than in some of our competitor countries. Therefore, in order to change, higher levels of investment, staff training and a far more strategic approach to market development is required. There needs to be a shift from the product focused ethos to a far stronger customer focused and market

oriented approach. The report aptly stated that 'how we react will determine how successful UK education will be in the international education marketplace in the early part of the 21st century'.

Furnham (1997) tries to understand the learner's perspective and to appreciate study in the host country from the students' point of view. He focuses on important processes associated with being an overseas student. These include culture shock, homesickness, social support and friendship networks, and poor adaptation. Harris (1997) also reviews the evidence of an investigation related to studying abroad from students' perspectives. He illustrates the overseas student experience by locating it within a life cycle model which begins with the period prior to arrival in the host country, moves on to the moment of arrival and stay abroad, and concludes with the return home. He notes that students will have developed expectations prior to arrival and may return home disappointed or inspired depending upon their experience.

Williams (1981) asks 'what has accounted for this surge in international study?' He argues that it is partly due to the development of transport and communications that one is able to apply to an overseas institution and travel abroad to study. He also states that although overseas students in Britain have become a matter of state policy, the individual perspectives should still be given due attention as most are privately funded and supported by their own families.

A decade later than the Coombe Lodge Report, a survey (Centre for Higher Education Studies, 1995) identified three main reasons for a student to undertake postgraduate study. The first may be broadly defined as 'career'. This consists of all statements related to the improvement of job prospects. The second is 'academic' which comprises statements related to the enjoyment of the subject and the desire to contribute to its development. The third is 'personal' which includes statements relating to self-improvement and personal circumstances. The study also obtained information on the students' previous activity before commencing their current study, their employment aspirations and positive and negative features of the postgraduate experience.

Saha (1996) considers the extent to which universities are related to the social and cultural development of a society, and thus to national development and nation building.

One of the best documented research findings is that, compared with those with no higher education, persons who have attended some form of higher education tend to be less traditional, less family-oriented, more secular and

more change-oriented in attitudes, value and behaviour. Although it is debated whether or not attendance in universities 'causes' these modernising effects, or whether a self-selection is the cause, the association is nevertheless clear.

Saha (1996) p. 84

Saha explains that the modernising impact of universities on students may be nothing more than an extension of general education. However, the impact on individual values, attitudes and lifestyle will have an effect on society. The process of modernisation has brought about an individualistic orientation compared to the collectivist orientation commonly found in traditional cultures (Marsella et al. 1979; Kim et al, 1994). The ambition of the individual takes priority over collective ones. Saha also explains that there is considerable empirical evidence to support the idea that higher levels of educational attainment in the less developed countries result in inordinately high levels of educational and occupational aspirations and expectations. Furthermore, Humfrey (1999) describes international education as follows:

International education, in what has been described as its 'classical' form, encompassed the freedom objectively to evaluate ideas from whatever nation or culture they come; the enrichment of case studies by examples drawn from outside the host system; the recognition of qualifications from other education systems; the support for student integration at whatever level of entry their intellect and attainment allows; the sharing of discovery in collaborative research; the willingness to include new perspectives in the curriculum; the enthusiasm for travel to other institutions and the encouragement of that energy and excitement in students and teachers; the willingness to recognise the worth of other institutions. At its highest level, the benefits of such education could be global understanding and harmony – more realistically, they should at least include the facilitation of friendships across international boundaries, more effective development of the global knowledge base and more interesting programmes for students at every level.

Humfrey (1999)

Preface

Humfrey (1999) explains how further education can provide an opportunity for home and overseas students to work together in academic programmes and special skills courses. He believes that international education belongs to those who leave their countries to obtain it and extend their intellectual horizons. The home and overseas students should benefit from the interaction thus promoting international awareness.

2.2 CULTURE

The term 'culture' has a complex and diverse range of meanings. Baldwin et al. (1999) state that due to the breadth of the term, it is essential to begin by trying to define what culture is by referring to one of the founders of cultural studies in Britain, Raymond Williams who categorised it into three aspects 1) the arts and artistic activity which include 'refined' pursuits in which the 'cultured' person engages 2) the learned, primarily symbolic features of a particular way of life and 3) a process of development. With regard to an overseas student in a British university, it could be argued that the individual may have to deal with all three aspects of culture at the same time. In addition, sub-cultures within the university environment may also be encountered.

Barnett (1990) addresses the inner culture of higher education which he argues works on two distinct levels and is an essential ingredient in the development of the system. The first is in relation to the academic community. He asks:

What if anything, is characteristic about the culture of academics? Is there one, in fact, or are there now only the multitude of disciplinary sub-cultures? Can we, at a deeper level perhaps, identify elements of a form of life, with its own values, which is distinctive of the academic community in general?

Barnett (1990) p. 96

However, those questions are separate to those that can be posed on the second level of culture. This is the level of the process of higher education itself which comes close to that of the student experience. The questions to be asked at this analytical level are:

What kind of cultural enlargement, if any, can higher education hope to offer the individual student? Is it a matter of exposing students to some kind of culturally rich material or is it more a matter of a particular educational experience? In other words, is it a matter of content or process?

Barnett (1990) p. 96

Barnett queries that if it is a matter of process, then what are the limitations on the process of learning considered as human transaction, if the sought-for cultural enlargement is to take place? On the other hand, he states that culture as content seems to point to different answers for different kinds of educational programmes. Whilst Barnett distinguishes between the culture of the academic community and the cultural dimension in the student's

educational experience, he believes that there has to be a strong connection between the two. Logically, the character of the life of the academic community affects the quality of the student's experience. Likewise, academic staff will often readily admit that their own continuing development is heavily influenced by their interactions with their students and may refer to them as 'my students' in conversations or publications.

Barnett (1990) describes the culture as:

A shared set of meanings, beliefs, understandings and ideas, in short, a taken-for-granted way of life, in which there is a reasonably clear difference between those on the inside and those on the outside of the community. Part of the sharing, and sense of community, resides in the taken-for-granted aspects of the culture. The unquestioned stock (of dominant ideas, concepts, theories, research practices) bestows personal identity and sustains the community as a community. The recognition takes several forms, including modes of communication. All these features of a culture are apparent in the academic community.

Barnett (1990) p. 97

Furthermore, Barnett discusses the other dimension of culture within higher education namely higher education as a cultural experience for students. He refers back to the 19th century where education evolved through its tutorial system - an educational process in which the student's character was developed and the face-to-face interaction between the student and tutor was crucial. Higher education stood for an overriding and widening development of the mind. Therefore, he claims that higher education was a cultural experience in several senses. This generality of culture is aptly explained as follows:

Having a sense of culture and its related skills are unique human attributes. Culture is fundamentally a group-solving tool for daily coping in a particular environment. It enables people to create a distinctive world around themselves to control their own destinies, and to grow in self-actualisation. Sharing the legacy of diverse cultures advances our social, economic, technological and human development on this planet. Culture can be analysed in a macrocontext, such as in terms of national groups, or in a microsense, such as within a system or organisation.

Harris & Moran (1993) p. 23

Wierzbicka (1991) discusses the need for a universal perspective on meaning, as it is impossible for human beings to study anything from a totally extra-cultural point of view. Humans are inevitably guided by certain principles and certain ideals which are not necessarily shared by the entire human race (Brislin, 1993). However, it is important to determine the specific features of the culture to which one happens to belong, and what can

be, with some justification, regarded as simply human. She points out that to try and explore both the universal and culture-specific aspects of meaning, one should be aware of using concepts provided by their own culture. This does not mean, however, that if one wanted to study cultures other than their own, all they can do is to describe them through the prism of their own culture, and therefore distort it. A point of view which is universal and culture-independent can be found; but one must look for such a point of view not outside all human cultures but within our own culture, or within any other culture that one is intimately familiar with.

Wierzbicka suggests that to achieve this one must learn to separate within a culture its distinctive aspects from its universal aspects and thus 'human nature' must be found within every particular culture. This is necessary not only for the purpose of studying 'human nature' but also for the purpose of studying the particular aspects of any culture that one may be interested in. To study different cultures, a universal perspective and a culture independent analytical framework are needed. Wierzbicka suggests that such a framework can be found in universal human concepts, that is, in concepts which are inherent in any human language.

Cortazzi and Jin (1997), begin with the premise that learning to communicate is important for both staff and students. They develop their theme with reference to academic cultures, cultures of communication, and cultures of learning. They argue that learning across cultures means considering overseas students as conveyors of culture. Hence there are problems associated with expecting overseas students to adapt to British ways. They propose that there is a basic need for all participants in higher education to be aware of the variations in communication and learning which can lead to different understandings.

2.3 SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

In an attempt to understand the meaning of culture, it is important to firstly understand the basics of human behaviour. Roth (1990) states that from babyhood, all humans are both social and individual beings. Initially, this might seem contradictory but she asks how can we be separate from our social world yet be fully integrated into it? How do babies begin to develop a sense of being individuals whilst also learning to fit into the complex social world into which they arrive? This is because the contradiction is not a real one; becoming integrated into the social world and differentiated from it are complementary processes, as the growing child develops sociability and individuality in parallel.

Roth explains that the first of these two complementary processes of social development is usually called *socialisation* (Hofstede, 1984). It includes all the influences that make people accepted members of society and helps to establish and maintain relationships with each other. As such, socialisation is the integrating process which allows the child to become a full member of society (Gottman & Parker, 1986; Brown, R, 1988). There are also many ways in which the growing child is given incentives to conform, from the direct instructions of parents to the more subtle influences of images in the media. The second process of social development is the development of the individual's personal identity, or self. Children need to develop a sense of their own personal characteristics, abilities and attitudes whilst accepting their individuality in relation to the many requirements of the social world, such as those of status, gender and occupation. This process is the differentiating role of social development, whereby individuals distinguish themselves from others and find a personal position within the social network. Both the integrating and differentiating processes in social development are equally essential to an individual's ability to operate successfully in the world, and they are deeply interconnected. People's normal social behaviour can be seen to be guided by the roles they occupy as all humans assume and have imposed on them a number of social roles which constitute expectations for how they should behave in various settings. The participants in any interaction determine what behaviour is appropriate. The people must jointly define their identities to clarify who they are and how they will act towards each other so as to co-ordinate their performance during the interaction. Each role carries with it certain expected rules for behaviour, which are generated by cultural values and beliefs, and which have often emerged because they perform a function in society. Roth asks how do people become aware of these expected rules, absorb cultures and learn to respond to the demands of society. She states that the media and general education have a powerful influence but to a large extent it is through communication and interaction with others, initially parents, that people learn their roles and practise role behaviour. The child gradually becomes an accepted member of a society when he or she understands and uses the rules and roles of that society. These are passed on to the child through interaction with experienced members of society. Nevertheless, it is only possible to create and maintain the structure of a society, and to develop and transmit a culture because humans have such specialised skills in interaction. Humans have unique skills by communicating through spoken and written language and non-verbal systems of symbolic representation which stress the importance of social interaction in human life, and of symbols or meanings which exist between people in their interactions (Roth, 1990).

With regard to overseas students, it must be noted that many will come from countries that have different values, beliefs and social roles than Britain. Also, the student may experience

difficulty and stress in the transition of roles and status which may be different to those at home.

In relation to the human thought process, it is important to understand why students want to study. The earliest interpersonal needs arise in children and are related to attachment which relates to the desire for physical and psychological closeness to another person. Another social motive is the need for affiliation, or interaction with friends or acquaintances. Most people need to be with and communicate with other people (Westen, 1999). Social relationships, particularly with people in whom one can confide, are important for both physical and mental health. Humans are creatures of both biology and culture and belonging to communities channels their innate motivational tendencies so that their expressed motives fit local social and economic conditions (Lloyd, 1972).

Social roles represent a major part of the individual's self image and this becomes increasingly true as people get older. One reason why it is so important to conform to these expectations is that most social roles are interdependent – they do not exist in isolation but constitute social systems. An occupant of a particular role, therefore, has at least one role partner and if society is to function properly each member of the role set must be able to rely on all the others behaving in an appropriate way (Derlega & Winstead, 1986; Fei, 1992). This interdependence is particularly striking in the case of complementary roles e.g. teacher-student where one role cannot really exist in the absence of the other. However, when role expectations are not sufficiently clear to guide the occupant's behaviour and interactions with others, a person feels at a loss to know how to act and might experience 'not knowing what is expected of me' (Westen, 1999).

According to White (1959) the 'master reinforcer' which keeps most people motivated over long periods of time is the need to confirm their sense of personal competence; competence is defined as the capacity to deal effectively with the environment. It is intrinsically rewarding and satisfying to feel like a capable human being, to be able to understand, predict and control the world. Unlike hunger which comes and goes, competence seems to be a continuous, on-going, motive. One cannot satisfy it and then do without it until it next appears because it is not rooted in any specific physiological need and for this reason it is not very helpful to think of the competence drive as a drive which pushes us into seeking its reduction. Competence motives often involve the search for stimulation which can be sought through curiosity and exploration. Therefore, it could be said that the 'competence' motive is an important factor for a student as they are normally stimulated by the curiosity and exploration of seeking new knowledge.

According to Berlyne (1960) exploring the unfamiliar increases arousal. However, if the unfamiliar is too different from what we are used to, arousal will be too high and we may feel anxious and tense. Alternatively, if it is not different enough, arousal is too low and we soon become bored. The optimum level of arousal is partly determined by how relaxed one is feeling initially. When people are relaxed they are more likely to welcome novel and challenging experiences whereas when they are already tense, they prefer to deal with what is already familiar and relatively undemanding. This could explain the problems with 'culture shock' as a student may feel ill at ease in a new environment.

Barker (1997) draws upon empirical evidence in order to review three issues which are central to the learning experiences of overseas students. He first asks why they are studying. He then asks whether there are any significant features of the attitudes, values and motivations which overseas students bring to the classroom, which may cause academic staff to modify their approach to them. Finally, he explores both student and staff expectations and reviews how these may be taken into account. A central theme is that one should avoid generalisations as overseas students come from many different cultural backgrounds and circumstances within their home countries. Also, the theories of motivation used for explanatory purposes are largely Western Anglo-Saxon and motivation itself encompasses a complex set of individual human behaviours even within a single culture. It is therefore difficult to arrive at a secure understanding of what staff should do in order to motivate their overseas students. With relevance to this discussion, a study (Sushila Niles, 1995) was undertaken at an Australian university to compare the patterns of motivation and learning strategies of Australian and Asian students. The results show that there are some similarities and differences between cultures in what motivates students and how they approach learning. However, the most important finding was that the need for 'competition' seemed to be an important dimension of motivation for Australian students, but an equally important factor of Asian students seemed to be 'social approval'.

2.4 MENTAL PROGRAMMING

In an attempt to understand social behaviour it is important to understand the basics of human thinking which affects all human beings of all cultures. Hofstede (1984) argued that people carry 'mental programs' which are developed in early childhood and reinforced through educational establishments. These mental programs contain a component of national culture and are normally expressed through different values. He states that the mental programs can be found at the universal, the collective, and the individual level and

that social systems can only exist because human behaviour is not random, but can be predicted to some extent. He attempts to explain this as follows:

I predict that Mrs X will be in the office at 8.25 a.m. tomorrow; that the taxi driver will take me to the station and not somewhere else if I ask him; that all members of the family will come if I ring the dinner bell. We make such predictions continuously, and the vast majority of them are so banal that they pass completely unnoticed. But for each prediction of behaviour, we try to take both the person and the situation into account. We assume that each person carries a certain amount of mental programming which is stable over time and leads to the same person showing more or less the same behaviour in similar situations. Our prediction may not prove true but the more accurately we know a person's mental programming and the situation, the more sure our prediction will be.

Hofstede (1984) p. 14

Hofstede then comments further on the issue of mental programs and explains that every person's mental programming is partly unique and partly shared with others. He illustrates the three levels of uniqueness as given in Figure 2.1.

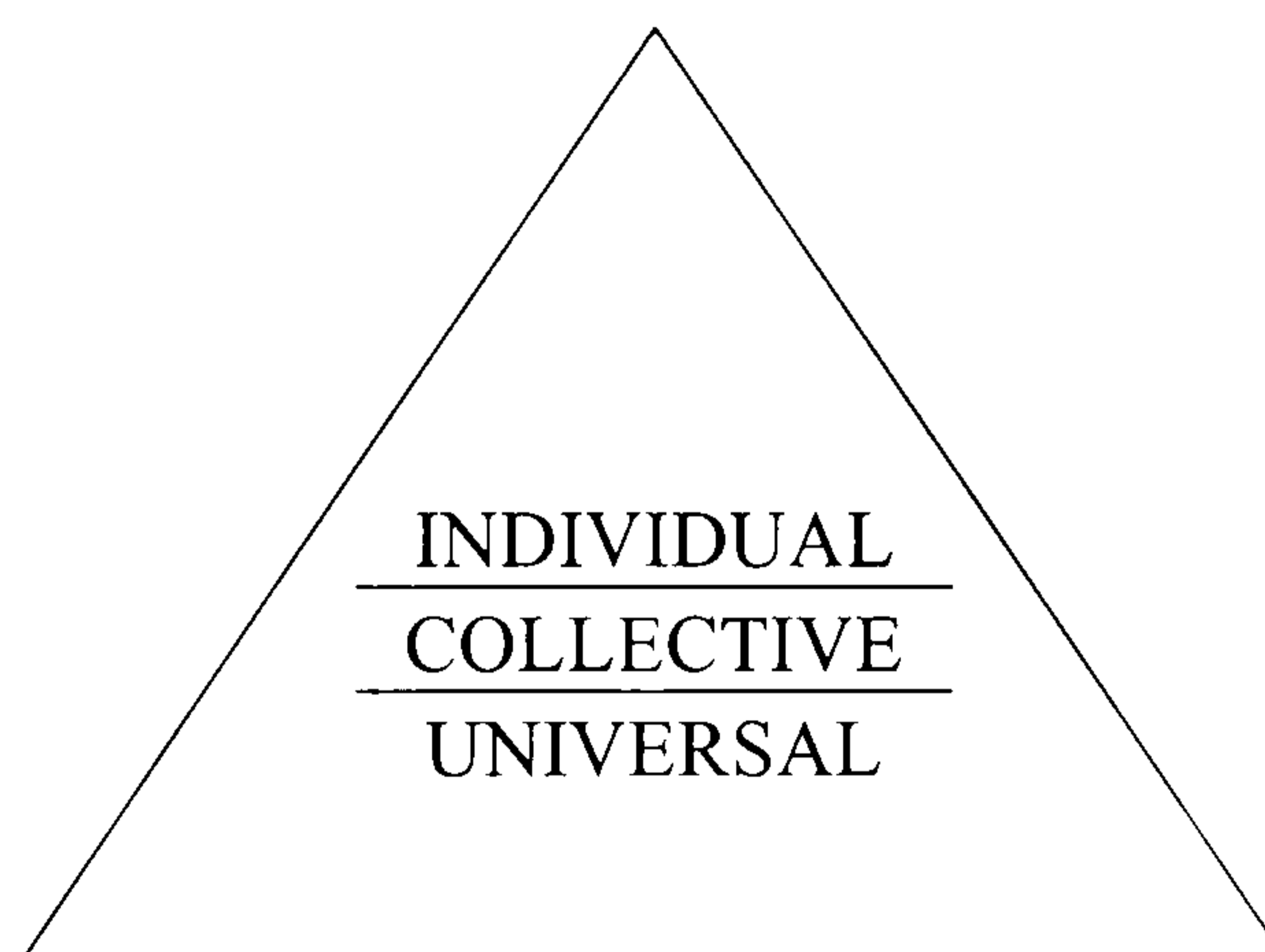


Figure 2.1 Three Levels of Uniqueness in Human Mental Programming

The most basic is the universal level which is shared by almost all mankind. He refers to it as the 'biological operating system' which includes a range of expressive behaviours such as laughing and weeping and associative and aggressive behaviour which are also found in higher animals. The second level is the collective level which is shared with some but not with all other people. He states that it is common to people belonging to a certain group or category, but different among people belonging to other groups or categories. This level includes the language in which people express themselves, the respect people show to others, the physical distance people maintain from others in order to feel comfortable and the way we perceive general human activities.

However, Hofstede explains how the individual level is the truly unique part as no two people are programmed exactly the same even if they are twins who have been raised together. It is the level of individual personality, and it provides for a wide range of alternative behaviours within the same collective culture. He reveals that the borderlines are a matter of debate among anthropologists as it is difficult to draw sharp dividing lines between individual personality and collective culture or to distinguish exceptional individuals from their cultural systems. He believes that mental programs can be inherited or learned after birth (Roth, 1990). The universal level is most likely to be entirely inherited as it is that part of the genetic coding which is common to the entire human species. It is at the collective level that most mental programming is learned, which can be shown by the fact that people share it with people who went through the same learning process but who do not have the same genes. For the top individual level, he argues that at least part of the programming must be inherited but says that this is probably the reason why differences in capabilities and temperament between children of the same parents raised in very similar environments exist.

Hofstede also explored the differences between people of different nations. The data was extracted from survey results of a multinational corporation (IBM) which had subsidiaries in over fifty countries around the world. The survey was conducted in 1968 and 1972 with 116,000 questionnaires being completed. The study identified four main dimensions along which dominant value systems in the 40 countries can be ordered and which affect human thinking, organisations and institutions in predictable ways. The dimensions were revealed by theoretical reasoning and statistical analysis and were labelled Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity. Hofstede described them as follows:

Individualism This dimension reflects the extent to which individuals value self determination as opposed to their behaviour being determined by the collective will of a group or organisation. It describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society. It is reflected in the way people live together e.g. in nuclear family extended families or tribes, and it has all kinds of value implications. In some cultures individualism is seen as a blessing and a source of well being; in others it is seen as alienating. Because they are tied to value systems shared by the majority, issues of collectivism versus individualism (Marsella et al., 1979; Kim et al., 1994) carry strong moral overtones. The central element in our mental programming involved in this case is our self-concept which is different when comparing Western with Chinese thinking. The IBM study has shown that the Chinese-majority countries score considerably lower on individualism than the countries of the Western world.

Power-Distance At the core of the dimension lies the question of involvement in decision making and human inequality. Inside organisations, inequality is inevitable and functional and can be typically seen in the hierarchical boss-subordinate relationship. In low power distance cultures employees seek involvement and have a desire for a participative management style. At the other end of this scale, employees tend to work and behave in a particular way because they accept that they will be directed to do so by the hierarchy of the organisation. The study suggests that the level of power distance at which both tendencies will find their equilibrium is societally determined.

Uncertainty Avoidance Uncertainty about the future is a basic fact of human life with which we try to cope by using technology, law and education. In cultures which have a high uncertainty avoidance, employees will look for clearly defined, formal rules and conventions governing their behaviour. A basic fact of life is that time only goes one way as explained:

We are caught in a present which is just an infinitesimal borderline between past and future. We have to live with a future we “cannot begin” because “it moves away if we try to approach it”; but which “serves as a projection screen for (our present) hopes and fears”.

Luhmann (1976) p. 143

In other words we are living with uncertainty and we are conscious of it; different societies have adapted to uncertainty in different ways. Ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritage of societies and they are transferred and reinforced through basic institutions like the family, the school and the nation. They are reflected in collectively held values of the members of a particular society. Their roots are non-rational, and they may lead to collective behaviour in one society which may seem aberrant and incomprehensible to members from other societies.

Masculinity In highly ‘masculine cultures’ dominant values relate to assertiveness and material acquisition. In highly ‘feminine cultures’ values focus on relationships among people, concern for others and quality of life. The duality of the sexes is a fundamental fact with which different societies cope in different ways. The sex role distribution common in a particular society is transferred by socialisation in families, schools, peer groups and the media. The predominant socialisation pattern is for men to be more assertive and for women to be more nurturing. This can be seen in some organisations where men and women tend to do certain jobs or where the majority of women return to work part time after the birth of a child. The only absolute difference between men and women is that women bear children and men beget them. Nevertheless, different societies show different distributions of power

over the sexes. Hofstede states that the issues of equality or inequality between the sexes is as old as religion, ethics, and philosophy themselves and explains as follows:

Socialisation is the process by which culture patterns are transferred from one generation to the next. As only such a small part of sex role differentiation is biologically determined, the stability of sex role patterns is almost entirely a matter of socialisation. Socialisation means that both men and women learn their place in society and, once they have learned it, the majority of them want it that way.

Hofstede (1984) p. 176

In the IBM study, all the questions had a pre-coded answer which was represented by a score from 1-5. A mean score was ascertained for the answers of an equally matched sample of people from each country or the percentage was computed for people choosing particular answers. Therefore, a table was created which included the mean score or percentages for each question and all countries. Hofstede (1994, p. 25) said that 'If on the other hand, a country scored low on one question from the cluster, it also would most likely score low on the others, or high on questions formulated the other way round'.

For the analysis of the four dimensions, Hofstede used a statistical procedure called *factor analysis* which sorted the survey questions into groups called *factors* or *clusters*. If a country scored high on one of the questions from the cluster, it also could be expected to score high on the others. Alternatively, a low score could be obtained for questions with the opposite meaning. The mean score or percentages appeared to vary together.

The IBM studies used a questionnaire that was composed by a team of Dutch, British, French, Norwegian and American members which caused the researchers to be concerned about the limitation of their instruments. In addition, the questionnaires were not only administered to Western people but also to non-Western respondents who were confronted with Western questions who dutifully answered the questions which caused Hofstede to worry whether the results would express their non-Western values to the full.

However, the results of new value survey studies held in the 1980's illuminated differences between Chinese thinking and Western thinking. In 1982, another cross-cultural values survey was published by a group of academic researchers which was a modified version of the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) based on US society around 1970 (Ng et al., 1982, pp. 196-205). Nevertheless, the IBM and RVS data did not lead to directly comparable results because the data was analysed in different ways. Therefore, Michael Harris Bond, a Canadian from the

Chinese University of Hong Kong decided to re-analyse the data using the same approach and analysis utilised for the IBM data. Four dimensions could be correlated to the four value dimensions of the IBM study but a fifth dimension was found which could not be interpreted (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). To solve the problem Michael Bond had a questionnaire designed by Chinese social scientists with a deliberate non-Western bias which was called the Chinese Value Survey (CVS). He asked them to prepare a questionnaire that included at least 10 basic values for Chinese people. The CVS was administered to 50 male and 50 female students in 23 countries around the world with 20 of the countries being the same as those in the RVS and IBM study. The results were remarkable as the dimensions were significantly correlated with power distance, collectivism, individualism and masculinity despite the completely different questions, populations, time periods and mix of countries.

The analysis of the CVS data which gave answers to the Chinese questions found a dimension unrelated to anything found with the Western questions in the IBM or RVS study which he called 'Confucian dynamism'. He called it Confucian Dynamism referring to the teachings of Confucius who was an intellectual of humble origins in China around 500 B.C. His teachings are lessons in practical ethics without any religious content as Confucianism is based on a set of pragmatic rules for daily life derived from Confucius' perception on the lessons of China's history. The values refer to a long-term versus a short-term orientation in life which is an element that the Western questionnaires did not even consider important. However, as there were values of that dimension that did not relate to Confucianism it was renamed 'Long-term versus short-term orientation' which deals with a society's search for virtue. Hofstede commented that 'besides adding this highly relevant new dimension, Bond's work showed the all-pervading impact of culture: even the minds of the researchers studying it are programmed according to their own particular cultural framework' (Hofstede, 1994, p. 15).

2.5 SOCIAL INTERACTION

Once a student commences academic activity they will most likely interact with people from different cultures as follows:

People affiliate, or seek out and spend time with others, for many reasons. Sometimes they interact to accomplish instrumental goals, such as raising money for charity or meeting over dinner to discuss a business deal. Other interactions can reflect family ties, shared interests, desires for companionship, or sexual interest.

Westen (1999) p. 821

One factor that influences attraction is similarity. People tend to choose causal acquaintances, as well as friends, on the basis of shared attitudes, values, and interests as surrounding one self with likeminded others seems to be rewarding (Tajfel, 1981; Westen, 1999; Sereke, 1987; Vasey, 1987).

Furnham (1997) asks 'to what extent do foreign students' friendship networks buffer them against culture shock?' and 'does the presence of a reasonably large number of students from the same area inoculate against culture shock?' He mentions that the work that has been done on the social support and social networks of foreign students suggests that foreign students with a strong and supportive friendship network may be happier and better adjusted than those without. Information, emotional, monetary and moral support is necessary in reducing stress (Klineberg & Hull, 1979). Furnham also states that although a great deal of work has been done on the friendship networks of students, little has been done on the friendship *preferences*, despite its obvious important application. However, the work of Bochner et al. (1977) is an exception as he provided a functional model for the development of overseas students' friendship patterns as follows:

- **Primary, Monocultural Network** Consists of close friendships with other sojourner compatriots. The main function of the co-national (share same religion/values/language) networks is to provide a setting in which ethnic and cultural values can be rehearsed and expressed.
- **Secondary, Bicultural Network** Consists of bonds between sojourners and significant host national such as academics, advisers and officials. The main function is to facilitate the academic and professional aspirations of the sojourner.
- **Third, Multicultural Network** Consists of friends and acquaintances from mixed cultures. The main function is to provide companionship for recreational, 'non-cultural' and non-task oriented activities.

With regard to the framework, Furnham explains:

Although Bochner did not interpret his findings within a social network framework, others have found that the degree of social interaction between the host national and the sojourner is related to the latter's adjustment.

Furnham (1997) p. 19

Furnham and Alibhai (1985) replicated and extended Bochner's work and found that foreign students showed a stronger preference for co-nationals than host nationals and other nationals despite the fact that Seltiz and Cook (1962) found that sojourners who had at least one close host national friend experienced fewer problems than those with no close host national friends.

They stated that:

Perhaps the difficulty is that some, or many, foreign students do not really 'get to know' the people or the host country. Probably more than superficial contact is needed to change attitudes, and it may be that not all foreign students have the degree of contact with people of the host country to produce attitude change.

Seltiz & Cook (1962) p.17

In addition, they established that there was an association between having one or more close national friends and liking aspects of life in the host country, especially the aspects involving personal social relations.

Surdam & Collins (1984) found that spending leave time with Americans, having adequate knowledge of English, better educated families and religious participation was related to the adaptation process. In a qualitative study Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) found that academic studies, social interaction and language skills were the areas in which students had most difficulties in adjusting. The students had more positive experiences if they could adapt to and enjoy contact with the host community. Also, the academic goals are more achievable if the emotional and social atmosphere is agreeable. For example, in relation to this type of 'customer care' Macrae (1987, p.128) states that 'there are many specific welfare factors which have to be dealt with before serious studies can begin'. These typically include:

- Immigration and visa requirements
- Changes in accommodation and diet
- Understanding care under the National Health Service
- Adjusting to a new environment – campus, city, country and climate.
- Overcoming homesickness and loneliness.
- Settling into a new community.

He continues to say that if these are not addressed they will interfere with the learning process to some extent thus British institutions are adhering to the advice of UKCOSA and are

continuing to develop effective orientation programmes for overseas students. Macrae also explains that:

University departments which accept international students do so on the understanding that what they provide can be assimilated by the students in such a way that they will benefit from the teaching, tuition and research opportunities which are available. If universities are to be effective then the academic welfare of international students must be as much to the fore as their personal welfare.

Macrae (1997, p.128)

Mohamed (1997) also shows that academic and personal welfare are linked when he states that:

The multi-faceted support needs of students indicate that academic difficulties may be intertwined with other problems. Developing a social support system which helps sustain mental health by gratifying basic affiliation needs, maintaining self-identity and enhancing self-esteem, may therefore be a helpful strategy for overseas South-East Asian students (Cohen and Wills 1985; Shumaker and Brownell 1984). Moreover, support may alleviate stressful incidents and increase students' confidence and capacity for personal control.

Mohamed (1997, p.166)

Furthermore, Wisker et al (SEDA) note that:

For international students in particular, different levels of dependency and need are also significant factors. Australian sources (Ballard & Clanchy, 1984) indicate that Asian student and other international students are often dissatisfied with their Australian postgraduate studies because they need better study skills and introduction to culturally inflected learning behaviours in order to benefit more fully.

Wisker et al (SEDA) p.69

Furnham explains that one of the most popular explanations for the different reactions by migrants to a new environment is the neo-Darwinian idea of selective migration. It is an extension of the principle of natural selection, which states that all living organisms that cope best with the demands of the new environment will prevail. Also, the more accurate and comprehensive a sojourner's expectations of the country, culture, university, then the more successful the adaptation will be. Most research has suggested that high expectations that cannot and are not fulfilled are related to poor adjustment and increased mental illness (Vasey, 1987; Bacchus, 1987; Shaw, 2005). However, what is unclear in the literature is what aspects of life in the new country are more important for successful adjustment than others. Humfrey (1999) explains how secure and happy students are more likely to be academically

successful and have good memories of their time overseas. If they are satisfied they will recommend the institution to their families, friends and sponsors and students who integrate well create fewer problems for themselves and the host community. However, integration does not imply separation from compatriots as support can be provided by two or three students from the same country or region being together and sharing common cooking regimes, religion, and facilities.

Cammish (1997) argues that the type of experiences encountered by students when they were learning English in their home countries will affect their linguistic competence. The way they are taught and the methods used will all influence linguistic capability. Similarly Macrae (1997) discusses the induction of overseas students and how higher education institutions may most effectively prepare them for academic life. He identifies issues relating to language needs and emphasises the important point that it is preferable to identify competence in English before students commence their course of study. He also states that tutors need to be especially aware of the challenge presented to students who are learning at an advanced level through the medium of a second language. However, Todd (1997) considers the learning support needs of students from overseas, particularly postgraduates, challenging the view that the core difficulty is language. Although it is an important element, Todd argues that to see it as the root problem rather than as part of a wider issue related to culture and understanding, is a mistake.

2.6 COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

In order to interact with others it is necessary for overseas students to communicate with each other. However, the way in which they interact with each other can be largely influenced by their attitudes, values and beliefs as described by Samovar and Porter (1988):

BELIEFS

Culture plays an important part in belief formation as sources of knowledge and belief depends on our own experiences and cultural backgrounds. Beliefs are at the centre of our actions and thoughts and are our perception of the truth about the world. As belief systems are learned, they are subject to cultural interpretation and diversity. In intercultural communication:

there are no rights or wrong as far as beliefs are concerned. If someone believes that voices in the wind can guide one's behaviour along the proper

path, we cannot throw up our hands and declare the belief wrong (even if we believe it to be wrong); we must be able to recognize and to deal with that belief if we wish to obtain satisfactory and successful communication.

Samovar & Porter (1998, p. 16)

However, this is not always possible as people with similar perceptions are attracted to each other as there is a better understanding and appreciation between those who hold the same hierarchy of beliefs. Nevertheless, the extent to which we believe in an event or object is dependent on our intensity of that belief.

VALUES

Values represent the aspects of life which are important to us and 'one of the most important functions of belief is that it is the basis of our values' (Samovar & Porter, 1998, p. 60). In addition to personal values, cultural values are a set of organised rules which are usually derived from the larger philosophical issues inherent in a culture and specify what kind of behaviour is expected of members of that culture. Samovar and Porter state that 'these values are normative in that they inform a member of a culture what is good and bad, right and wrong, true and false, positive and negative, and so on' (1998, p.16). An understanding of cultural values helps us to appreciate the behaviour of others as well as ourselves.

ATTITUDES

Beliefs and values contribute to the content and development of attitudes. Samovar & Porter state that 'an attitude may be defined formally as a learned tendency to respond in a consistent manner to a given object or orientation. This means that we tend to avoid those things we dislike and to embrace those we like' (1998, p.16). Attitudes are learned within a cultural context as our environment helps to shape and for the way we behave and respond to situations.

In addition, Samovar & Porter (1988) identify variables in the communication process whose values are determined by culture to some extent. Each variable influences our perception which subsequently influences the meaning attributed to behaviour.

The variables are as follows:

1. **Attitudes** Psychological states that cause us to behave in certain ways. Stereotypes are sets of attitudes that attribute certain qualities or characteristics to a person on the basis of the group to which they belong.
2. **Social Organisation** The composition of a society can have an influence on perceptions.
3. **Thought Patterns** The mode of reasoning may differ from culture to culture. What may seem reasonable and logical to one group may be the opposite of another.
4. **Roles** Expectations regarding role behaviour may affect communication as a certain position may command the appropriate behaviour.
5. **Language Skill** Language is important not only for reporting experiences but as a way of defining experiences of the speaker. Interpreters are useful in bridging the cultural gaps of the meaning of the language.
6. **Space** Some cultures treat the areas around them differently. Societies can be referred to as a non-contact or contact society depending on the range of proximity used and at which stage they feel comfortable.
7. **Time Sense** Some cultures see time in lineal-spatial terms where there is a past, present and future whereas others may treat it as a limitless pool in which things happen and then pass. Some may be more time conscious than others which may cause confusion with time related activities and arrangements.

Harris & Moran (1993) stress that communication is central to all organisational and international relations and that it is the most important tool for getting things done. They describe communication as a process of circular interaction which involves a sender, receiver and a message (Marsella et al. 1979). Also, mankind's capacity to communicate ranges from the basic smoke signals and the sound of drums to the intricacies of television and satellites. However, regardless of the communication symbol, a sender and receiver are normally involved. The process is described as follows:

Both sender and receiver occupy a unique field of experience, different for each and every person. Essentially, it is a private world of perception through which all experience is filtered, organised and translated; it is what psychologists call the individual's life space. This consists of the person's psychological environment as it exists for him. Each and every person experiences life in a unique way and psychologically structures his own distinctive perceptual field. Among the factors that comprise one's field of experience are one's family, educational, cultural, religious, and social background. The individual's perceptual field affects the way he receives and dispenses all new information.

Harris & Moran (1993) p. 31

Harris and Moran explain how an individual's self image, needs, values, goals, standards, expectations, cultural norms and perception have an effect on the way input is received and interpreted, in relation to their own perceptual needs. Therefore, two people can derive entirely different meanings from the same message which highlights that communication is a complex process. When the sender is from one cultural group and the receiver is from another, the human interaction is inter-cultural communication (Bennett, 1998). They also explain that a person transmits many kinds of unintended or subconscious behaviour besides verbal and non verbal which includes such aspects as tone of voice, gestures and facial expressions. Some of these 'silent' messages which usually reflect the real content and meaning of messages are referred to as 'body language'. Therefore, it is clear that communication at any level can be complex and the way in which it is communicated can be strongly influenced by cultural conditioning.

Every person is a versatile communicator and language distinguishes human beings from other creatures. Human communication skills include words, gestures, signs, shapes, colours, sounds, smells etc. Every individual communicates a unique perspective of the world and reality and every culture reflects that group of people's view of the world (Harris & Moran, 1993; Peterson & Rhodes, 2003).

2.7 LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF HUMAN INTERACTION

The most common method of communication and interaction between overseas students and their host environment will be through the medium of language.

Language is a tool for communication but crucially it is also a tool of human interaction. By means of language, we express our personality, our thoughts, intentions, desires and feelings; and by means of language we relate to other people.

Wierzbicka (1991) p. 453

Wierzbicka (1991) investigates various kinds of meaning which can be conveyed in language and meanings which involve the interaction between the speaker and the hearer. She explains that there are many different modes of interaction between people and that they depend partly upon what one feels and wants at any particular time. However, they also depend upon who the people are – both as individuals and as members of particular social, cultural and ethnic groups. She gives the following example:

If you and I are Japanese our interaction will be different than it would be if we were both Americans or Russians. And if we were both Americans,

the prevailing modes of our interaction would probably depend on whether we were white or black, Jewish or non-Jewish and so on.

Wierzbicka (1991) p. 2

Wierzbicka argues that all meanings involve interaction between the speaker and hearer regardless of the subject matter, and that we use language as a tool of social interaction. In some cases, culture specific modes of interaction have their own folk names. For example, this is the case with Black English events such as 'rapping'. Similarly, with regard to overseas students from Malaysia and Singapore it could be 'Manglish' or 'Singlish'.

Baldwin et al. (1999) state that as all human societies have language it would be difficult to imagine how a society might exist without it. They say that the minimum condition for human society is ordered and regular relationships between individuals, the recognition of shared meaning and the ability to transmit knowledge and information to each other. However, the use of language is usually the most efficient and effective way of doing so (Lloyd, 1972).

Craig (1993) comments on the expectations of universities that expect the school systems from which their students come to provide not only the essential basic knowledge in the proposed area, but also the linguistic tools needed in order to pursue the specialisation in the native language (Loveday, 1986; Agar, 1994). Craig says that most universities require students to be competent, or near native-speaker level in the language of instruction. This is usually demonstrated by passing an English test above a required minimum score. It is also recognised and accepted that within a single language system, such as English, native speech will vary between the significant extremes of different regional standard variations and in addition there has to be recognition and acceptance of the variation that exists in the growing world population for whom English is a second or third language, rather than a foreign language.

This acceptance of the fact of variable language competence in the university population, even within the requirement for some adequacy in the level of that competence, has its justification in a parallel acceptance of the equal rights of individuals, and the premium that has to be put on the maintenance of cultural, including linguistic, pluralism in most societies and in the world at large. In an increasingly technological world, where the most advanced countries are aiming to have one third of their adult populations with a university education by the year 2000, and where most lesser advanced countries are convinced that their own survival demands that they be not left too far behind in that respect, there has to be an ever accelerating democratisation of university education, not merely for the sake of democracy but for the sake of survival itself in a competitive world.

Craig (1993) p. 2

Craig goes on to say that as a result, there are concerns about the standard of language proficiency as conferred by the school systems that feed the universities and within the university systems themselves. He states that students required to attend English courses in addition to their university programmes will find it hard to find the extra time to improve their English. As experience has shown, they will devise communicative strategies for coping with the language demands of their courses, and those who are most able to in a general and very ill-defined sense, will cope better than those who are less able. He suggests that this is one reason why, within certain limits, those who have high test scores will not necessarily perform better in their academic subjects than those who have a lower score. This was proven in studies such as Canale (1983), Cummins (1983) and Xu (1991). Therefore it could be suggested that language proficiency is not the only or strongest factor related to academic success. However, he goes on to explain that this is not to say that language proficiency is not important in higher education but that proficiency is complex and difficult to assess fully by a structured test as proficiency may be generated by processes inherent in higher education itself and provide a continuation in the development of language proficiency.

Iivonen et al. (1998) also introduce the importance of language and state that:

Although Adler (1997) does not mention language and communication styles as a dimension of cultural difference, it is obvious that they are a major way in which cultures and groups within major cultures vary. Although people may be able to speak the same language they could understand and interpret words differently, because the same words may mean different things to various people.

Iivonen et al. (1998) p. 7

The difference became apparent during the study of a programme in which they learnt that there are differences in spoken and unspoken languages between the Finns and North Carolinians although they were all speaking English. The Finns do not believe in 'small talk' whereas the North Carolinians do. They also found this when asking students to respond to emails on issues irrelevant to the course subject.

2.8 STUDENT EXPERIENCES

An increasing number of international students particularly at postgraduate level, are accompanied by their spouses and families. Humfrey (1999) states that there has been much debate on whether a student performs better if they are alone as they may concentrate exclusively on their academic work, speak English most of the time, and focus on completing the programme and returning home. However, what is certain is that the student whose

family is in the UK, and to whom they return home to every night is handicapped by a family who feel isolated, neglected, inadequate or victimised. It is suggested that on arrival international postgraduates and their families can be linked to local families who are interested in meeting and helping them to integrate (Bacchus, 1987).

Wang (2001) reported on a case study on the cross-cultural learning experiences of two Chinese students in American universities. The students were interviewed regarding their motivations for learning, frustrations and satisfactions, strategies used to cope with language inadequacy, assumptions of the impact of learning on their lives, and awareness of cultural differences in the classroom and daily life. The findings indicated that educators can assist these students by becoming aware of their home culture, different learning styles, frustrations in adjusting to school life and in overcoming culture shock and by helping them adjust to the American educational system and learn about the American culture.

The two interviewees were married to each other and had graduated and held good jobs in China before coming to the US. At the time of the study they had been in the US less than two years and were typical of the Chinese students on the campus. Interviews took place in the students' apartment as well as data being collected by frequent observations of the couple in their daily life for about one month. Wang (2001) stated that his study showed that it is not easy to become a cross-cultural learner and explained as follows:

It requires courage, determination and persistence to succeed in doing so. The process of learning involves many efforts – blood and tears. There are many cultural elements that the learners need to adjust to, get used to, learn or unlearn. But on the whole, it is a very rewarding and great learning experience.

Wang (2001) p. 2

He goes on to say that schools can help students by providing a safe and low-anxiety environment and by providing possible English language classes. Teachers can also help by being friends with them and encouraging other students to be friends with them so they will get to know the US culture better and sooner. However, Wang also suggested that extra time would be needed to get used to the US and understanding from fellow students and teachers would be required if they are to become successful learners.

2.9 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Iivonen et al. (1998) explain how new communication technology such as email and the World Wide Web have made it easier to a certain extent to cross previous boundaries and

communication across time and space. However, it does not necessarily make it easier to collaborate and communicate interculturally as an understanding of cultural differences, shared cultural information and shared meanings is needed for effective communication (Sereke, 1987; Smith, 1987).

The purpose of their article was to discuss how culture and cultural differences can be analysed and understood and how libraries could use this information when acting in a multicultural environment. Therefore, cultural information was exchanged and analysed during a library and information studies course that was taught simultaneously in Oulu, Finland and North Carolina, USA. They referred to Adler (1997) who gave six dimensions that can be used to analyse cultural differences. These include the attention to the understanding of the nature of the people; a person's relationship to the external environment; the person's relationship to other people; the primary mode of the activity; people's orientation to space; and the person's temporal orientation. In addition Iivonen et al. (1998) pay attention to language and communication styles as a dimension of cultural differences. They describe Adler's dimensions as follows:

What is the nature of people?

There are differences in cultures with respect to beliefs about the nature of people, that is, people may be seen as good or evil, or both. Although it is rather usual, at least in Western societies, to see people as a mixture of good and evil, it is also rather usual to fear the unknown. Thus, people may assume foreigners to be evil people. Adler (1967) maintains that Americans traditionally see people as a mixture of good when she explains that:

Some other cultures see people as basically evil – as reflected in the Puritan's orientation – or as basically good – as reflected in utopian societies throughout the ages. Societies that consider people good tend to trust them a great deal, whereas societies that consider people evil tend to suspect or mistrust them.

Adler (1967) p. 19

However, although one can appreciate that Adler is attempting to illustrate the two extremes of this dimension, it is felt that the word 'bad' would be more appropriate than the word 'evil' for the opposite of good, as described by Samovar & Porter (1998, p.16). In addition, the word 'evil' has connotations of 'sin' and 'the Devil' (especially when used in the media) and is therefore inappropriate and most likely offensive if used to describe people's behaviour in the 21st century, which may not have been the case in the 1960's.

What is a person's relationship to the external environment?

There are differences in cultures with respect to people's relationships to the external environment. In some cultures people dominate over their environment. In some cultures people can live in harmony with their environment and do not see any real separation between people and nature. In other cultures people are subjugated by the environment and people accept the inevitable forces of nature. Cultures obviously differ today widely in how they value their technological environment and role of information technology.

What is the person's relationship to other people?

There are differences in cultures with respect to how people see a person's relationship to other people. In some cultures, people are individualists and use personal characteristics and achievements to define themselves and value individual welfare. In other cultures people are group-oriented and define themselves as members of groups, which can be clans or communities. In these cultures people consider common goals and the group's welfare most important.

What is the primary mode of the activity?

There are differences in cultures with respect to the primary mode of activity. Some cultures stress doing, or action, and achieving outcomes. The members of the culture are do-ers, who want to achieve the most in life. The other cultures stress being and suppose that people, events and ideas flow spontaneously. The members of the culture are be-ers, who want to experience life. The do-er is more active, and the be-er is more passive.

How do people see space (e.g. land and property)?

There are differences in cultures with respect to people's ideas of physical space. Various cultures have different opinions whether the space should be seen as public or private.

What is a person's temporal orientation?

There are differences in cultures with respect to a persons' temporal orientation; a culture may be oriented to the past, the present or the future. In past-oriented cultures, the customs and traditions have a strong role as the wisdom of society. Innovations and change are justified according to past experience. Future oriented societies pay less attention to the past

and focus on the future. Innovations and change are justified according to future benefits. They have a very long-term horizon. Present-oriented cultures have a short-term time horizon and they focus on the benefits possible in the near future.

An interesting finding of the project is that there were similarities between the major cultures (Finland and North Carolina) and minor cultures (Sami and Cherokees). In fact there were more similarities between the major cultures or between the minor cultures in the two countries than between the major and minor cultures in one country.

In their study, Iivonen et al. (1998) concluded by reflecting on what they had learned which can be useful for libraries serving multicultural populations. However, as the information is general in nature, it could be used by other disciplines as follows:

- 1) People's behaviour reflects their cultural background. Iivonen et al. suggest that people should be aware about cultural differences and that they try to know their clients' culture in order to establish an analytical framework to understand their behaviour and needs.
- 2) As differences in language and communication may lead to misunderstandings and bad service, they suggest good communication skills can be learned and taught to librarians and other professionals who work in multicultural environments.
- 3) Sharing cultural information interested many students as they wanted to learn about where their classmates were from. Iivonen et al. (1998) suggest that collaboration across cultural boundaries and sharing cultural information should occur together by proactively getting people together and providing information about their cultures.
- 4) New information and communication will bring cultures closer and offer possibilities to overcome cultural boundaries. However, they noted that there are different cultural attitudes towards the use of technology and the ability to use it will vary. Therefore, they will still cater for clients who appreciate books and face-to-face interaction with library professionals.

The issue of cultural diversity does not exclusively relate to universities and international students but all organisations interacting on a global level. Higgs (2002) referred to the need for global organisations to get groups of managers from different nationalities to work together effectively either as enduring management teams or to resource specific projects addressing key business issues. However, he did note that bringing such groups of managers together can be problematic and performance is not always at the level required. In addressing the issues related to developing effective international management teams, he stated that the following areas should be considered:

- Identifying the nature and implications of national cultural differences within the team.
- Establishing a basis for understanding and awareness of cultural differences and how they may be managed.
- Formulating a framework for developing a high performing team which takes account of cultural differences and leverages the diversity present in an international team.

Higgs (2002) sets out to explore each of these areas and proposes an overall framework for building international management teams. In order to do so, he states that it is useful to identify a clear framework for analysing and understanding national cultural differences and refers to those developed by Hofstede and Trompenaars. However, he feels that Hofstede's framework is more helpful when illustrating the major issues and selects Hofstede's basic model which identifies the four key dimensions which impact on cultural differences – Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Masculinity.

Higgs states that the results of Hofstede's research are frequently borne out and reinforced by practical experience of multinationals seeking to implement global human resource policies. He explains that all too often multinationals see cultural diversity as an area of organisational difficulty rather than an opportunity to build competitive advantage. This point was well illustrated in the early 1980's by Laurent and Adler when international executives at a seminar in France were asked to list the advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity in their organisations. 100% were able to identify disadvantages whilst fewer than 30% could identify advantages. Higgs attempted to define the root of the problem as follows:

Understanding the nature and value of cultural diversity is not well embedded within company thinking and practice and has not developed in line with the trend of globalisation.

Higgs (2002) p. 4

Similarly, Hoffa (2002) explains the problems with cultural differences that students living abroad may encounter, as follows:

It is very hard to know what life is really like in a country or region whose culture one has never experienced directly. But it is very easy to have the illusion of knowing what it will be like – from images furnished by popular communications media, from reading, or perhaps having met a few people from 'there', here on home ground. Simply 'knowing about' another culture, however is not the same thing as knowing what it will feel like to

be learning and living there, on its terms. Every culture has distinct characteristics that make it different from every other culture. Some differences are quite evident, even to the unsophisticated (e.g. language, religion, political organisation, etc.). Others can be so subtle that while foreign visitors may be vaguely aware of them, making adjustments is a complex process and one may remain uncomfortable and off balance for quite some time.

Hoffa (2002) p. 1

Hoffa advises prospective students on important issues such as cultural stereotypes, culture shock, fitting in, reverse culture shock, a special note to women, racial and ethnic concerns and being gay, lesbian, or bisexual abroad. In relation to 'culture shock', Hoffa explains how the initial period of excitement wears off; they gradually become aware that their old habits and routine will no longer suffice (Sereke, 1987; Smith, 1987). He attempts to reassure the student that these feelings are a kind of 'psychological disorientation' and that it is part of the necessary discomfort necessary for psychological adjustment to a different environment. Hoffa refers to this situation as an 'occupational hazard through which one has to be willing to go through and learn from in order to enjoy the pleasures and experiences of other countries and cultures in depth'.

Hoffa also mentions that the most important aspects which may be appreciated in any culture are being friendly, courteous and dignified and to remember that one is a guest in someone else's country. He goes on to mention the issues of politeness, humour, speaking the language, physical contact, personal questions, drinking and drunkenness, price bargaining, talking politics and photograph etiquette. In his special note to women he warns that men in some countries may openly demonstrate their appraisal in ways that many US women find offensive but that the indigenous women, who get the same sort of treatment, have been taught how to ignore the attention.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 RATIONALE

As noted by McNamara & Harris (1997), despite the crucial economic role played by overseas students in the university system, there is a surprising lack of recent research in relation to their experiences and attitudes. Nevertheless, the literature that normally exists relates to matters such as teaching and learning and statistical information which is based upon marketing, student retention and achievement exercises.

In the School of Informatics, most information that is collected is related to academic achievement and student's opinions of academic matters. The issues are primarily focused on the larger body of undergraduate students and the taught postgraduate students are asked similar questions. However as the research students do not have a specific course structure and they do not attend lectures, it is very difficult to obtain specific information from them. In addition, the whole student body are rarely asked about their welfare despite its obvious effect on student achievement. Furthermore, overseas students for whom the changes in lifestyle and surroundings may have a greater affect are not specifically dealt with.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the normal method of data collection is through the use of questionnaires which are analysed statistically. Therefore, I decided to use the interviewing method as greater understanding could be gained in the areas under investigation. Also, it may be difficult and time consuming for other members of staff to obtain such information from overseas students; I was in a position where data could be easily obtained which would be of benefit to all concerned.

3.2 SAMPLE

I wished to choose a sample that was representative of overseas postgraduate students in a large university department. Therefore the sample did not focus on any particular group of students from specific countries, age, course, ethnic origin or sex. Nevertheless, due to the large number of students, it would have been easy to focus on a specific group using a focus group methodology. However, I wished to explore the wide range of diverse cultures as this was more representative of many departments in British universities. Furthermore, the analysis would be based on the type of experiences that would occur as a result of overseas students interacting with others within the host environment.

In order to generalise to theory, a representative sample was needed so that the findings from the study would represent the population from which it was selected. Therefore, it was necessary to obtain a subset of students from each area of the world so that it would be a microcosm of the population of overseas students at the university.

I chose to stratify the students into regions which were loosely based on the continents of the world. These were the Americas, Africa, West Asia, Central Asia and East Asia. A total of 42 students took part in the study as shown in Appendix 9. This number was representative of a third of the overseas students in the department in what was the largest intake year to date. It was also necessary for the same percentage of students to be subdivided into the different world areas as shown in Appendix 10.

This approach depended heavily upon the availability of students during the times that the interviews were being undertaken and on them being able to attend at the location. The Postgraduate Office was chosen as the ideal location as the students would feel familiar with it as they frequently visited there. Also, a few students were chosen depending upon their relationship with me. Some were friendlier and more co-operative than others which made the interviewing process more comfortable for those involved. Although some factors were not as important as the world areas, I still ensured that the sample was representative in terms of taught and research students, sex and age as shown in Appendix 11. Due to my biography in relation to the research area it was necessary not to be biased by personal judgement and availability of participants therefore other students were approached whom I had no previous relationship with thus keeping any bias to an absolute minimum. Furthermore, I did not offer an open invitation to all overseas students as the respondents may not have been representative of the student population in question. Therefore it was necessary to select candidates based upon their suitability and availability at the time.

The stratified sample ensured that the resulting sample was distributed in the same way as the population in terms of the stratifying criterion. If merely a random sample of overseas students were taken it would have been likely that the world areas would have been unbalanced and therefore not representative of the diverse cultures in the department. It was feasible to use the world areas as the stratifying criterion as the information on country of origin was readily available and identifiable in the student records.

As no cost was incurred for travelling to the interviews it was not a deciding factor in the size of the sample thus the time needed was the only remaining consideration. The decisions about sample size were also a compromise between time and precision. I had to carefully control the non-response and over-response of the student volunteers from certain regions. It was necessary to turn away some students from some areas as the group would have been too big. Alternatively, I had to actively seek out candidates from areas which were under represented and sometimes persuade the interviewee to take part. Initially, some students were reluctant to participate as they were worried about their English language skills (Kauffmann et al., 1992). Because of this, I decided to give all students a list of the questions beforehand which would be used as a guide for the interview discussion. This method was very successful and put many of the students at ease as they were aware of the topics beforehand thus could prepare themselves better. Although the time taken for each interview was taken into consideration, the time of the academic year had to also be considered. In order to obtain as accurate a response as possible, I required the interviewee to have resided in England for a minimum of six months. Therefore, the interviews had to be held at certain times of the year. As shown in Appendix 10, although I had a target number of students to be interviewed in each period, it was not always possible due to the student response at that time of year. This scenario was particularly evident in Group 2 as it was necessary to interview many students before they returned home at the end of the academic year. Another six months lapsed before the next sample was interviewed to allow the new students to gain experience in their new environment. The interviews were conducted around lunchtime which suited most students. However, due to the diversity of cultures I also had to be aware of the time of the day when interviewing students. For example, Muslims had a longer prayer session on a Friday therefore a later time slot was allocated.

3.3 GENERALISABILITY

Bryman (2001) questions how can one or two cases be representative of all cases? With research based on interviews, rather than participation, he asks whether interviewees can be treated as representative. However, he states that the answer is emphatically 'no' as the

people who are interviewed in qualitative research are not meant to be representative of a population but to generalise to theory rather than statistical criteria; that is decisive in considering the generalisability of the findings of qualitative research. It is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalisation. Therefore, it could be said that the study was based on a particular instance in a Manchester university department in the 2002 academic year and that it is only truly representative and relevant to that time, place and set of interviewees. However, it is possible to generalise as many overseas students study in Britain and have similar characteristics and experiences, thus the examples given can be related to other university departments in Britain as information is not based upon the academic course content but on the student experience itself. It should also be noted that the generalisability is mainly related to the life of students and not of any other people in the general population of England.

Although the study does not contain any quantitative analysis I has given numerical information in Appendices 9 and 11 which may be useful to other researchers who may wish to control for specific variables or statistical data in this area.

3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Bryman (2001) noted that qualitative researchers suggest that techniques used in quantitative research are the only way of establishing validity as they may be inappropriate to qualitative research. Some assumptions are that social science research can only be valid if based on statistical or experimental data and that quantitative data are the only valid or generisable social facts. However, he explains that critics of quantitative research argue that these assumptions have a number of deficiencies (Cicourel, 1964; Denzin, 1970; Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Gubrium, 1988). They note that experiments, statistics and survey data may simply be inappropriate for social science purposes as they exclude the observation of behaviour in daily situations. Therefore, whilst quantification may be useful it can conceal as well as reveal basic social occurrences.

Bryman (2001) notes that reliability and validity are important criteria in establishing and assessing the quality of quantitative research. However, he states that there has been some discussion amongst qualitative researchers regarding their relevance to qualitative research. Bryman defines the two as:

Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. The term is commonly used in relation to the question of whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences are consistent. And validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research.

Bryman, 2001, p.29

Similarly, Rubin & Rubin (1995) state that validity and reliability are most frequently used in quantitative research. If research is valid, it accurately reflects the world being described and if work is reliable, two researchers studying the same project could come up with similar observations. However, they suggest that to apply these indicators to qualitative research distracts more than it clarifies. With regard to the study, if the work was repeated by another researcher it would be possible to come up with similar observations but not exactly the same due to the subjectivity of the interviewees, interviewer and environment used. However, the results and conclusions should accurately reflect the world being described thus lending the study a certain amount of validity.

The methods used by qualitative researchers epitomise the belief that they can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than that which could be obtained through quantitative data. However, it may be difficult to believe what qualitative researchers say regarding the accuracy of their descriptions, as issues relating to social enquiry occasionally have philosophical implications as it is difficult to prove what the truth is as it is supposed to define reality. However, just as everyone's life is different our perception of reality is different therefore any findings could be perceived as true, possibly true or otherwise depending on our own values, experiences and beliefs (Patton, 1987).

Qualitative techniques and field research are identified with the exploration and description of scenarios that relatively little is known about. Qualitative research is associated with long descriptive narratives as opposed to statistical tables. However, the problem arises with the reliability of data when a researcher has to categorise the two events or activities described as follows:

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions.

Hammersley, 1992, p. 67

The issue of consistency particularly arises because the shortage of space means that many qualitative studies provide little more than brief, persuasive, data extracts. However, some

qualitative researchers argue that a concern for reliability of observations arises only within the quantitative research tradition and that as social reality is unstable then it makes no sense to worry about whether the research instruments measure accurately or not. However, if one accepts that there may be some stable factors, it would be useful to record them so that others may replicate the properties.

Ultimately, objectivity should be the common aim of all social science as argued by Hammersley:

The process of enquiry in science is the same whatever method is used, and the retreat into paradigms effectively stultifies debate and hampers progress.

Hammersley, 1992, p. 182

Silverman (1993) concludes by declaring that if criteria for distinguishing qualitative research are to be established, an understanding of similar issues faced by any systematic attempt at description and explanation whether it is qualitative or quantitative will have to be achieved. Nevertheless, Patton (1987) argues that ideally, a researcher should be accepted in the same way as an artist and one should attempt to understand what they are trying to achieve. However, in social research it is only possible to understand the achievement when clarity of an issue is gained and the process is often quite difficult due to the complexity of human behaviour and social dynamics (Hammersley, 1992).

Bryman (2001, p. 269) states that ‘most qualitative researchers when writing about their craft, emphasize a preference for treating theory as something that emerges out of the collection and analysis of data’. Therefore, grounded theory is a frequently used approach for the analysis of qualitative data as it especially stresses the importance of allowing theory to emerge out of the data. In addition, Hammersley (1992) reiterates that some qualitative researchers argue that qualitative data should have an important role in relation to the testing of theories which reflect the growing maturity of the strategy.

3.5 GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

I used the grounded theory approach to build up the data over three sets of interviews. A simplified model of Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) grounded theory includes the following stages for developing analysis of observational data.

- An initial attempt to develop categories which illuminate the data.
- An attempt to ‘saturate’ these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance.
- Developing these categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance outside the setting.

‘Grounded theory’ is a term used by Glaser and Strauss to describe a way of inducing theoretically based generalisation from qualitative data. The grounded theory approach to qualitative data is concerned with the development of theory and the style of analysis is based on the premise that theory at various levels of generality is necessary to gain deeper knowledge of social phenomena. In addition, the theory should be developed through an intimate relationship with the data with the researchers being fully aware of themselves as instruments for developing the theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) firmly believed that social phenomena are truly complex. Therefore the grounded theory methodology emphasises the need to develop many concepts and their linkages in order to capture a great deal of variation which characterise the central phenomena studied during any research project. Part of the capturing is through extensive data collection. However, to make sense of the complex data three points need to be observed as follows:

1. The complex interpretations and data collection are guided by successively evolving interpretations made during the course of the study.
2. A theory must be ‘conceptually dense’ and have many concepts, and many linkages among them.
3. Detailed, intensive, examination of the data is necessary in order to bring out the complexity of what lies in, behind and beyond the data.

The approach to the qualitative analysis is termed grounded theory ‘because of its emphasis on the generation of theory and the data in which the theory is grounded’ Glaser (1978). It is a detailed grounding by systematically and intensively analysing data, often sentence by sentence, or phrase by phrase of the field note, interview or other document; by constant comparison; data are extensively collected and coded, thus producing a well-constructed theory. The focus of the analysis is not merely on the collection or order of the data, but on organising many ideas which have emerged from the analysis of the data.

The initial type of coding is termed 'open coding' and the data will be scrutinised line by line, or word by word in an attempt to produce concepts that fit the data. Subsequently, the concepts and their dimensions will be entirely provisional but will lead to further issues of enquiry. It is important for the researcher not to be too concerned about the true meaning within the initial stages as the aim of the coding is to 'open up' the enquiry so every interpretation is tentative in the first instance. The researcher is required to think in terms of explicit concepts and their relationships which may be difficult due to personal knowledge or experience of the area of study. However, conceptual detachment is necessary for one to develop theoretical understanding and theories about the phenomena being studied (Strauss, 1987).

According to Patton (1987) grounded theory is a qualitative method which is particularly oriented towards exploration, discovery and inductive analysis which attempts to make sense of a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting. He states that 'categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the evaluator comes to understand the existing program patterns' (Patton, 1987, p.15).

In relation to this approach, the study was not guided by hypothesis as in quantitative analysis but by questions, issues and a search for patterns. This classic inductive approach permitted in depth interviewing without being limited to stated, predetermined goals as typified in structured, multiple choice questionnaires or surveys. Another benefit is that:

By way of contrast to logical, deductive theory construction, a grounded theory approach is inductive, pragmatic, and highly concrete. The evaluator's task is to generate program theory from holistic data gathered through naturalistic enquiry for the purpose of helping program staff and decision makers understand how the program functions, why it functions as it does, and the ways in which the impacts/consequences/outcomes of the program flow from program activities.

Patton (1987) p.40

The grounded theory approach allowed me to continually adjust the control of the data collection to ensure the data's relevance to the criteria of the emerging theory. Similarly, the repetitive interviewing process allowed me to clarify what the students were saying and thus increased the validity as 'sociologists generally agree that replications are the best means for validating facts' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 22). Nevertheless, another approach such as surveys would have collected data according to a set plan which would be more likely to force me into irrelevant directions. Furthermore, the grounded theory approach was beneficial as

it does not concentrate on a single phenomenon but allows for a range of variations which are specific to the data collected.

Theoretical sensitivity is a term used in qualitative research which relates to the personal biography and qualities of the researcher which lend an increased awareness to the subtle meaning of the data. Researchers will have different degrees of sensitivity based upon previous knowledge and experience in the area. This sensitivity will typically be found in people who are involved in the research field in some way and it is an attribute which gives insight, meaning, understanding and appropriateness to the data. It is this sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense and well integrated. A researcher that does not have this quality may take longer and be unaware of relationships between the concepts. The increasing sensitivity to concepts, meanings and relationships is developed through interlinking data selection with data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

3.6 RESEARCH METHOD

Various methods such as questionnaires, surveys and focus group interviews were considered for the study. However, it was decided that these would be too limiting as the structured categories would not recognise the complexity of an issue. Therefore, whilst the objective methodologies provide answers to some questions of fact, phenomenological research attempts to answer the questions 'behind' the answer and respond to problems by generating more questions. Nevertheless, the most viable alternative was ethnography which is used by many social anthropologists in the study of culture. It is a form of enquiry that produces descriptions and accounts of certain ways of life. For many ethnographers the main objective is to study individuals in their natural setting to observe the way in which they apply meaning to social situations. The main research instrument is the attempt to understand a particular group of people by using tape recorders, cameras and written records in order to understand the social, cultural and historical setting. A good relationship between the researcher and informant is necessary in order to participate in activities which are of interest to the project. However, the ethnographic approach is changing because the new global cultural economy is being shaped by new technologies, money systems, media images that flow across international borders and subjects now challenge how they are being written about (Denzin, 1997). In addition, ethnographers typically study a small number of cases rather than many small samples thus may not be sound enough for generalisation purposes. Therefore, although it was possible to interview students, in order for ethnography to be utilised in this study, it may have been a lengthy process with little reward due to the following reasons:

- It was not possible to participate in a single activity as the subjects were all research students who work on individual projects.
- It would be difficult to decide how to observe a setting as the students are located in approximately thirty different locations.
- It would be most likely that the mere presence of an observer would cause people to react differently (reactivity) in a situation.
- It may not be possible to gain access from the 'gatekeeper' to various locations in the department.
- Many students are from overseas and speak in a foreign language therefore it would have been very difficult to understand them if they were acting 'normally'.

The interview method is widely used in qualitative research mainly due to its flexibility. Denscombe (1998) explains how interviews may initially seem like just a conversation between two people. However, interviews involve a set of assumptions and understandings about a situation, which are not normally associated with a causal conversation. Also, the research interview is arranged and the conversation is based on the investigation of a set topic. Therefore, the discussion will rarely flow freely as it is monitored and follows a set agenda defined by the researcher. However, in reality interviewing is no easy option as:

It is fraught with hidden dangers and can fail miserably unless there is good planning, proper preparation and a sensitivity to the complex nature during the interview itself.

Denscombe (1998), p.110

According to Patton (1987) there are three basic approaches to collect qualitative data through in-depth, open-ended interviews as follows:

- 1) *The informal conversational interview* is typically used in fieldwork and relies on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction. The interviewee may not even realise that they are being interviewed as no predetermined questions are posed and most of the questions flow from the context under investigation. This approach is useful for interviewers who can stay in a situation for some time to make use of the immediate surroundings to increase the concreteness of the interview questions and responses.
- 2) *The interview guide* provides a framework for collecting the same information from a number of people on the same subjects. The interviewer is free to explore the issues in the schedule which do not have to follow a particular order as it serves as a checklist to ensure

that all the subject areas are covered. Therefore, the interviewer is able to build a conversation within a particular subject area in accordance with the spontaneity of the questions being answered. The interview guide is useful in limited time interviews as it keeps the interaction focused whilst still permitting individual perspectives and experiences to emerge.

- 3) *The standardised open-ended interview* consists of a set of carefully worded questions which are designed to take each respondent through the same sequence with essentially the same questions and words. This approach is used to minimise variations in questions so that the data are systematic and thorough thus reducing the flexibility and spontaneity of respondents. It also makes analysis easier as it is possible to quickly locate each respondent's reply to the same question. Furthermore, it is possible for other evaluators to replicate the study due to the standardised format. Nevertheless, this approach will reduce the extent to which individual differences and circumstances can be investigated.

Patton (1987) states that:

The purpose of qualitative interviewing in evaluation is to understand how people in a program view the program to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences. This is what distinguishes qualitative interviewing from the closed interview, questionnaire, or test typically used in quantitative research. Such closed instruments force respondents to fit their knowledge, experiences and feelings into the evaluator's categories. The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms.

Patton (1987) p. 115

In addition, hierarchical focusing uses a 'top-down' approach to interviewing where topics are raised in order of generality. The initial question is asked at the highest level of generality and then the researcher seeks further elaboration of anything that emerges and notes which aspects of the agenda are covered as the interview proceeds. Aspects that are not mentioned spontaneously by the interviewee are raised utilising the 'top-down' approach from general to specific issues (Tomlinson, 1989).

For the purpose of this particular study, the research field was better served by obtaining material which provided an in depth investigation into the area, drawing on information by fewer informants. When considering which method of data collection to use I realised that interviews would be a justifiable option as it corresponded to the following points as given by Denscombe.

- The research required detailed information from a relatively small number of informants.
- The depth rather than breadth in the material was more suitable to the study as the purpose was to gain insight into a certain situation.
- Much of the data was conceptual as it was based upon emotions, experiences and feelings of the respondent rather than factual matters.
- The use of questionnaires would not have been appropriate as the nature of emotions, experiences and feelings needed to be explored rather than reported in a few words or statistical data.
- It was possible to gain direct access to the prospective interviewees as I worked in the same environment as the interviewees. Permission was easily gained from the Head of Department.
- The interviews were viable in terms of costs and time. The interviews took place in my own office during the lunch time break. Therefore, the interviews did not incur any travelling costs and utilised the minimum time possible for such an endeavour.

As suggested by Patton (1987) a combination of the interview guide and standardised open-ended interview approaches were utilised due to the flexibility to guide the interview in such a way that ideas could be developed and issues probed more intensely when appropriate. Although many of the questions appeared to be 'closed' they were devised in such a way that they could easily be 'opened up' by me if the response required further investigation. The interview schedules (App. 12-14) were used as guide and the interview questions (App. 15-17) were given to the interviewee.

The intention was to ask questions that did not relate to academic matters but to the student experience as far less was known about this area of research. Therefore, the data could be used by many institutions in order to allow a greater understanding of the overseas student experience. All the questions were based on the aims of the study. In the interview, the dialogue related to the main factors which influenced a student to come to the UK and their experience whilst here. Although many of the initial questions were typically marketing and academic orientated, they were followed by others that asked about the English language, motivation for study and perceived possible outcomes. The first section was deliberately simplified and generalised so that the interviewee could relax and familiarise themselves with the interviewing style and environment.

The second group of questions asked about the students' perception of the English culture as I was interested in whether the reality of life in England matched the initial expectations of

the student. Other questions asked how the student felt in their new environment and how it compared to what they were used to. I then went on to investigate the outcomes of cultural interaction, both between the students themselves and the host environment. The questions related to the lifestyle changes needed in order to adapt and how it affected them. They were also asked their opinion of the English people and to comment on the interaction with people they had come into contact with. I concluded by asking if their experience in Manchester had changed them in any way and what they like and disliked about England. The last question was intended to discover any other areas of possible enquiry. It was also meant to be amusing and indicated a welcome end to the interview process.

I consulted my line manager regarding the best time to interview students and matters relating to the questions in the interview schedule. I also asked some postgraduate students for their opinion on the interview questions after which the appropriate amendments were made. The first few interviews were used as trials and the interviewees were informed of such. I used a tape recorder as it would have been very time consuming and distracting if notes were taken. A tape recorder was also appropriate as it was only necessary to capture speech as I did not wish to comment upon non-verbal communication as it would have needed expert knowledge of the multi-cultural arena in order to analyse and the issue of multi-culturalism was a minor element of the investigation. Although a number of interviewees initially expressed their apprehension at being recorded, the feeling usually waned when they were given control of the recorder and became more familiar with the interviewing style. The audio tapes were later transcribed and the transcripts checked by the interviewee if required. The qualitative interviews allowed me to 'peer into' and explore the worlds of the overseas students as follows:

An interview is a window on a time and a social world that is experienced one person at a time, one incident at a time.

Rubin & Rubin (1995) p. 11

I heard about events relating to places thousands of miles away and about cultures very different to that of the English culture. Through what was heard, I was able to learn about a myriad of experiences which gave me a greater understanding of the overseas student experience. Furthermore, because it was not possible to visit all the different geographical areas that were represented, it was a unique opportunity for me to share the benefit of the work with others as follows:

Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. Through qualitative interviews you can understand

experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate. Through what you hear and learn, you can extend your intellectual and emotional reach across time, class, race, sex and geographical divisions.

Rubin & Rubin (1995) p. 1

Qualitative interviewing enabled me to look through the window into other people's worlds and 'open the door' so that others could come in and become more aware of the reality of that world. Rubin & Rubin explain how researchers use the information obtained from qualitative interviews to form explanations and theories that are grounded in the details, evidence and interview transcripts. Such grounded theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) explain what is happening to those involved in a situation. They explain that it is based on exchanges in which interviewees can respond, clarify and explain their views. The results of the interviews may not just be of academic interest but can have many practical implications as it is not just an academic exercise but also a practical tool. It also allows us to share the world of others to find out what is occurring, why people act the way they do and how they understand their worlds and with such knowledge a variety of problems can be solved. As explained by Rubin & Rubin (1995), unlike survey interviews in which those giving information are relatively passive and are not allowed to elaborate, qualitative interviewees can guide the conversation and introduce new topics for discussion as they are treated as partners rather than objects of the research.

In the study (Twigg, 2005), the interview process itself also allowed many students to assess their time in Britain and found it helpful to their own thought process as described by a PhD student from Botswana – 'The interview is good because I hadn't processed it before. Just asking me what I like about Britain is good as I hadn't thought about it'. Therefore, it could be suggested that the interview process and the knowledge gained not only benefits the interviewer and other interested parties, but also the interviewee themselves.

3.7 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The issues that recur in social research with regard to ethical principles are defined by Deiner and Crandall (1978) as:

- Harm to participants
- Lack of informed consent
- Invasion of Privacy
- Deception

These are addressed in relation to the study as follows:

Harm to Participants

Harm can entail a number of facets such as physical harm; harm to participants' development; loss of self-esteem; stress; and 'inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts' (Diener and Crandall, 1978, p. 19).

In the study great care was taken over maintaining the care and confidentiality of individual records. All the written information was only seen by myself and the published records were anonymous so that individuals were not identifiable. It was also necessary not to inform students of other participants although they may have told each other.

Lack of Informed Consent

The principle of informed consent implies that even when people know they are being asked to participate in the research, they should be fully informed about the research process.

In the study, as the interviewees were all voluntary it signified that they were all willing participants. However, despite this, it was still necessary to reiterate the process of the interview and ensure that the student was aware that a tape recorder was being used and to explain how and where the information would be presented. They were also informed of their entitlement to abstain from any questions or to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Invasion of Privacy

This area of ethical concern relates to the degree to which invasions of privacy are allowed. The interview questions were designed in a way that would not delve too much into one's private life. However, as the students were from different cultures the level of privacy and personal freedom to which they were normally accustomed differed. In order to counteract this problem, I gave the interviewee control of the tape recorder and they were also able to pause the recording at will. Some of the students felt more at ease with this method as it gave them a sense of 'ownership' and control of the interview. The participants were also allowed to discuss uncomfortable issues 'off record' and then resume recording when the situation was deemed satisfactory and they knew what to say. Some students stated that they

did not wish to talk about certain situations thus I continued to the next question as their right of privacy was respected.

Deception

As previously explained, the interviewees were informed of all the methods used and how the information would be utilised. Also, to give an accurate account of the interview, I asked the interviewees if they wished to see a copy of the transcript. Some did so and took the opportunity to correct the meaning as English was not their first language and they had said the wrong thing in the interview. The students were also informed of the expected length of the interview which was always adhered to.

Part of the study investigated the outcomes of cultural interaction between the student and the host community. In order to gain insight in to this area it was necessary to ask some questions which could sometimes be quite sensitive in nature. In such cases, I encouraged an honest response by explaining that the objective of the study was to discover and report on the reality of student life even if some aspects were unpleasant. Some questions related to relationship preferences and the students' perceptions of the English culture. Some of the answers were quite revealing and could also be regarded by some as offensive. Therefore, it was my responsibility to analyse and represent the data in a factual and meticulous way without prejudice or bias.

3.8 HOFSTEDE'S MODEL

Geert Hofstede (1984, 2001) produced a wealth of information relating to the five dimensions of culture which is used in many areas of research for both statistical and qualitative purposes. However, Hofstede's work has been criticised as he did not study national culture directly, nor was the data collected with it in mind. As Tayeb (1994) states that 'culture was used as an explanation after the findings revealed interesting patterns'. In other words, 'the study was not planned in advance as an investigation into effects of culture on organisations and their members'. The data used by Hofstede was limited in other ways but despite this it has still been one of the most popular typologies of culture in many different fields (Myers & Tan, 2002). Nevertheless, I wished to utilise some aspects of the model as it will still give a greater understanding of the basics of culture as many factors affect human behaviour - not just culture. In the analysis, I refer to extracts of Hofstede's tables which summarise typical behaviour in relation to certain circumstances where national culture may be evident as shown in Appendix 9.

Geert Hofstede's extensive empirical research from which he created his model for characterising national cultures in five dimensions (originally four) influenced his own son's (Gert Jan) work. Together with his colleague, Paul Pedersen they created ten 'synthetic' cultures so that both extremes of each of the five culture dimensions were covered. Hofstede et al. (2002) believe that people from different countries are more different from one another than people from the same country. 'National culture' is the term they give to distinguish people from different countries and which they describe as follows:

National culture runs deep. It is taught to children from the day they are born. Does it matter whether a child is female or male? What about social class? Do children accompany their mothers all day? Does the family sleep in one room or even in one bed? Do grown-ups teach their children to use different behaviour toward the elderly, the young, men, women? To stand up and fight or to sit down and talk? To speak their mind or to save others' face? To wear skirts, shorts, veils, caps? Are all these things theirs to decide, and if so, from what age?

Hofstede et al. (2002) xviii

However, they also stress that although much of what happens among people from different countries depends on culture, not everything does as every human is unique to some extent and no two people will act exactly the same due to differences in their personal experience and personality (Brislin et al., 1986). Also, people are social beings and behaviour is learned through the groups they associate with (Tajfel, 1981).

In their book, Hofstede & Pedersen (2002) they remind readers that our world is not really a 'global village' and renamed the five dimensions to which they refer as identity (individualism), hierarchy (power distance), gender (masculinity), truth (uncertainty avoidance) and virtue (long versus short-term orientation) as the five basic problems of societies. They state that although most of us interact with people from other countries, cross-cultural misunderstanding is a much-underestimated cause of trouble. They warn that:

If we inhabitants of the globe do not acquire awareness of our mutual differences, knowledge of basic cultural variables, the skills to communicate effectively across boundaries and the will to do so, our world will be worse for it. We need to communicate effectively with people who were raised in ways utterly unlike our own.

Hofstede & Pedersen (2002) xviii

Hofstede & Pedersen also explain that although much of what happens among people from different countries is related to culture, not everything is. As discussed in Chapter 2, Geert Hofstede, refers to the uniqueness of each human being based upon their personal history

and personality. He also comments on how people act differently based upon the socialisation process and how their country of birth is a very important indicator in this process. In the study I wished to discover how much of this process is eradicated or adapted in order to function in a new environment.

The cultural values range from high to low which spans the continuum from one extreme to the other regarding a particular social issue.

Table 3.1 Value Dimensions

DIMENSION	ONE EXTREME	OTHER EXTREME
Identity	Collectivism	Individualism
Hierarchy	Large Power Distance	Small Power Distance
Gender	Femininity	Masculinity
Truth	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance	Weak Uncertainty Avoidance
Virtue	Long-Term Orientation	Short-Term Orientation

Hofstede & Pedersen state that:

Culture only manifests itself through social action that always takes place in a changing context. For instance, political events or technological advances can drastically change the context in which people live. A change in context does not, however, in itself constitute change in culture, though it puts pressure on culture. The effects of culture and context are not easily separable. It is easy to misinterpret a context effect for a culture effect, or vice versa. One can see culture's consequences everywhere or nowhere.

Hofstede & Pedersen (2002), p. 41

The study is also linked with a changing context on two levels. One deals with the change of environment for the students and the other is to do with their academic study. It is often quite confusing to assess whether a student's behaviour is linked to a change in role or change of culture. The study is also concerned with how much a student's behaviour whilst in England is a consequence of the context (circumstances) or their own culture. It also investigates if the change of context leads to a change in culture.

Synthetic cultures embody the five big issues of national cultures which give rise to ten synthetic cultures. They are extreme manifestations of the value orientations at both ends of the dimension and thus are obsessed with one aspect of social life. Therefore in reality the aspects they demonstrate would not be so extreme but tendencies towards the extremities would vary between the two points. The dimensions together with the synthetic cultures are as follows:

- **Identity** (*Indiv* for extreme individualism, *Collec* for extreme collectivism).
- **Hierarchy** (*Hipow* for extremely high power distance, *Lopow* for extremely low power distance).
- **Gender** (*Mascu* for extreme masculinity, *Femi* for extreme femininity).
- **Truth** (*Uncavo* for extremely strong uncertainty avoidance, *Unctol* for extreme uncertainty tolerance).
- **Virtue** (*Lotor* for extreme long-term orientation, *Shotor* for extreme short-term orientation).

Table 3.2 The Five Dimensions of Culture and Ten Synthetic Cultures

DIMENSION	ONE EXTREME	OTHER EXTREME
Identity	Indiv	Collec
Hierarchy	Hipow	Lopow
Gender	Mascu	Femi
Truth	Uncavo	Unctol
Virtue	Lotor	Shotor

Each of the ten profiles consists of the following components:

Core Value

This is a rephrasing of the dimension extremity of this particular synthetic culture. It represents the ‘obsession’ of this culture.

Core Distinction

This represents the most central distinction that members of the synthetic culture make when observing the social world around them.

Seven Key Elements

These are seven golden rules for appropriate behaviour in this culture. They describe aspects of home or working life in relation to communication, social demands, status, roles, rules and relationships.

Words with a Positive Connotation

These are words that members of the synthetic culture like to use and hear. Used in arguments, these words enhance the acceptability of one’s position.

Words with a Negative Connotation

Words that members do not like to use or to hear. People who want to win arguments do not use these words.

At a Glance

These are the 5 cross-cultural communication barriers.

1. Language. In theory there are usually no language barriers among members of each synthetic culture but words may carry different meaning, and the context in which they are used may vary.
2. Non verbal behaviour.
3. Stereotypes imposed by outsiders.
4. How outsiders tend to evaluate this synthetic culture.
5. How the members of this synthetic culture behave under stress.

Gender Roles

Mascu and Femi, are the only ones with obviously different gender roles.

The synthetic cultures approach provides a framework for organising experiences in a complex and dynamic world as they are magnified versions of aspects of our value systems. One example, as given by Hofstede and Pedersen is as follows:

PROFILE: Identity Dimension

Core Value – individual freedom.

Core Distinction – me/others.

Seven Key Elements

1. Honest people speak their mind.
2. Low-context communication is preferred.
3. The task takes precedence over relationships.
4. Laws and rights are the same for all.
5. Trespassing leads to guilt and loss of self respect.
6. Everyone is supposed to have a personal opinion on any topic.

7. The relationship between employer and employee or between parent and child is a contract based on mutual advantage.

Words with a Positive Connotation

Self, friendship, 'do your own thing', contract, litigation, self interest, self respect, self actualising, individual, dignity, I, me, pleasure, adventure, guilt, privacy.

Words with a Negative Connotation

Harmony, face, obligation, sacrifice, family (in a symbolic sense), tradition, decency, honour, duty, loyalty, shame.

Indivs at a Glance

- Language:** Indivs are verbal and self centered, using *I* and *me* a lot.
- Nonverbal:** Indivs make eye contact freely. When in groups, they are likely to stand out visually.
- Stereotypes:** Indivs are defensive and tend to be loners; they run from one appointment to the next.
- Evaluation:** Indivs use other people and measure the importance of others in terms of how useful they are.
- Stress:** Indivs are supposed to continually test their own ability. This can be stressful. They tend to take on stress physically.

Gender Roles

Females might as easily hold power as males, especially in urban and modernised areas. Gender roles are not rigidly defined; each gender takes on the role of the other when necessary to serve her or his self-interests in public and/or private activities.

Role of women: Women are supposed to be adventurous.

Role of men: Men are supposed to be adventurous.

Myers & Tan (2002) refer to Groeschl & Doherty (2000) who point out that with globalisation, individuals today have much more opportunity to live and work within cultures different to their own which can lead them to embrace some of the cultural values and basic assumptions shared by the host culture. However, they also state that the extent to which one embraces the new culture can differ, which is one of the issues raised in the study.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF PHASE 1

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The range of questions for the first group of thirteen students (App. 15-17) was deliberately diverse in order to open up lines of enquiry. In accordance with the grounded theory approach, as discussed in Chapter 3, I initially examined the transcripts to determine categories that were embedded in the resulting data. Due to the diversity of data, the process was quite complex and some of the information transcended numerous categories and issues. However, after much deliberation and deciphering of the data, I established the following categories in which a descriptive account of the areas under investigation is provided.

- Study Incentives
- Country Choice
- University Choice
- The English Language
- Social Conditions and Services
- Attitudes to Work and Time
- Environmental Factors
- Personal Safety
- Perception of People
- Perception of Culture
- Social Interaction and Friendship Networks
- Adapting to a Different Culture

4.2 STUDY INCENTIVES

This category was concerned with the reasons why students chose to do postgraduate study. Were they encouraged by others to continue? Did they have a role model? Were there

certain rewards for obtaining a higher degree? The intention was to discover what motivated the majority of the students to leave behind a land where everything is familiar, to come and live in a foreign country (Barker, 1997; McNamara & Harris, 1997). Such an endeavour takes a lot of effort, commitment and courage the importance of which may be easily overlooked in the current world climate of international travel and globalisation.

As one may expect, there were many different reasons for the students to continue with postgraduate study. Seven of the students believed that their job prospects would improve if they obtained a higher degree and a few others said that they wanted to enhance their self knowledge. Three students from Syria, Libya and Egypt stated that they needed a PhD in order to progress further in their academic careers thus showing that the requirements for academic staff in the corresponding universities were similar. Furthermore, a student from Japan was sent by his company to improve his English skills, as well as his computing skills, as it was an English owned company and he was seen as a future Board Member.

Five students mentioned that they were in receipt of scholarships which gave them the opportunity to study abroad which they could not have otherwise done. However, one student who was supported by her parents felt pressurised to follow them into academia (although she did not want to) as they paid everything for her. Alternatively, three other students who were also encouraged and supported by their families did not feel pressurised in any way.

One of the sponsored students from Mexico said 'I would also like to provide better knowledge and support to my university in the future' which shows that motivating factors (White, 1959; Berlyne, 1960) may be based on an organisational, regional or national as well as personal level.

4.3 COUNTRY CHOICE

This section was concerned with the reasons why the students had applied to England in the first place. Was it recommended to them? Did they know about it beforehand? Did they consider other countries?

As with the study incentives, there were many reasons for choosing England as a place of study. Although England was conveniently situated on the map for some countries, seven of the students also applied to, or considered applying to, America and one Malaysian student had also considered Australia.

Two of the students solely relied on the recommendation of friends and family; sponsored students usually had to adhere to the wishes of their sponsor who may have set up special collaboration schemes with UK universities. A couple of other students chose England due to a specialist area or because better resources were available.

Five of the students commented on the reputation of the UK universities as ‘world-class’ or ‘top-notch’ with some of them also stating that England was considered better than Europe in terms of the educational standard. However, some also chose England instead of Europe as they did not want to learn another language and would be able to improve their English skills as well as experiencing English life. In view of the study, it was interesting to learn that a number of students referred to England as though it was separate from Europe when indeed it is part of it.

Four of the interviewees, commented on the stable economical and political factors in the UK which they found appealing as they may have experienced some obstacles in their own countries. For example:

About 10 years ago no students, due to a political situation, were allowed to study here [England]. So when we were given the opportunity we didn't want to lose it.

PhD, Syria, SY1

At the time the universities in Nigeria were prone to strike action and I kept missing lectures so I decided to come to England and start afresh.

PhD, Nigeria, NG1

For applicants from Malaysia and India, who were used to the English language and the English education system, it was important to continue studying in a similar environment. However, some students motives were more astute in that they only chose England as the programme of study here was shorter i.e. MSc is 12 months instead of 18 months in the US.

4.4 UNIVERSITY CHOICE

This section goes a step further than the country choice as it asks the student why they actually chose the university itself. After having selected a country of study, it is important for a student to be able to go to the university which suits their needs the best. Likewise, as there is a choice of seventy eight universities and a further twelve general higher education colleges in the UK, the university marketing and recruitment staff are interested in attracting

as many potential students as possible. In order to compete with one another, most universities actively promote their institutions and recruit students at events and exhibitions around the world.

It is therefore beneficial to establish why the students chose UMIST when they may have had offers from a number of universities. What made the difference in order for UMIST to secure its share of the lucrative overseas student market? As UMIST was one of the highest ranked universities in the UK, five of the students were aware of the reputation of UMIST before they applied and four students chose UMIST because it was recommended to them by a relative, friend, colleague or UMIST graduate whose decision they trusted. For some, this was the only deciding factor needed to make the final choice. However, reputation and recommendations are not always as important as the subject area or programme on offer which was crucial to four of the interviewees. Another student mentioned that the conditions of the offer were more favourable than other offers thus took the opportunity to study at UMIST. A few of the students used a more interactive method and contacted staff or graduates and found that their advice was very helpful to the decision making process. For example:

I applied to three other universities in England and some were not friendly. I contacted you [interviewer] who was friendly.

MSc, Japan, JP1

I was in contact with a few people at UMIST and a few graduates who gave good feedback, but your advice [interviewer] was the most important as it was the one that really made me think 'I'll go there'. A very good analytical study about where you are going is very handy. It gives you a kind of back door before you enter the system. When you spend so much money in a foreign land you need to know what it is about.

MSc, India, IN1

It seems that despite the Information Technology era, human contact and interaction is still viable and some people rely upon others for help which prospectuses and web pages may not give them. It is therefore important for university staff to remember that first impressions really do count and someone's behaviour or comments may be a deciding factor for an applicant.

However, it was not only the reputation of UMIST that was relevant but also that of the city in which the university resides. For example:

I had an offer from Nottingham University but heard of Manchester as a city so thought it would be more popular and well known.

PhD, Egypt, EG1

Four of the respondents chose UMIST as it was located in a popular and well known city. One student also mentioned that he chose Manchester because the cost of living in London was much higher although he did not choose Warwick because it was in the countryside. He stated that ‘Manchester isn’t too much of a metropolitan city like London and thought I’d be able to concentrate on my study and I was right’.

4.5 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Before commencing study at UMIST all applicants are expected to have obtained a satisfactory English language qualification. As well as the standard requirement, many students may have learnt English for many years in their own country. However, despite this, a significant number of students still had difficulty coping with the native English language when they arrived which can have quite an impact as explained:

The English here is very different in Thailand although English is a core subject in secondary school. My school teacher was an American nun. The first day I arrived here I thought ‘what did they say?’ I couldn’t even understand the Immigration Officer at the airport. I have improved but my weak point is listening. Every foreign student has a different accent.

MSc, Thailand, TH2

I found my listening difficult at first, especially the pronunciation as I am used to American English. It is especially difficult in Northern England. I thought I knew enough English to live and study here but the first days I couldn’t understand anyone and I thought ‘what am I doing here?’ I thought about going back to Mexico as I was frustrated.

PhD, Mexico, MX1

I have learnt English in schools and universities in Syria but it was not good. They were not native speakers or British teachers so had different pronunciation. They just taught the students English with different accents. When I came to the airport I felt as though I was not on planet earth. I was learning English since I was 12 but I could not understand anyone.

PhD, Syria, SY1

The purpose of the questions relating to this topic were to attempt to establish why, despite years of English language tuition, students may still have difficulty when they arrive in

England (Kauffmann et al., 1992). What is actually different between the use of English in their homeland and England? What kind of problems do they have and how do they cope?

The responses were varied possibly due to the personal level of language capability and personal experiences of each student (Wierzbicka, 1991; Craig, 1993; Bennett, 1998). Only three of the thirteen students attended pre-sessional English courses with only one attending an in-sessional course whilst studying. All of them said the courses were useful and helped them to prepare for academic life. Two of them found that the time spent in England before their programme of study also helped them to get used to English life as 'the environment is totally different here and is good motivation for me to learn English and helped me to get used to English life'.

Three of the interviewees had difficulty as they were used to American English because they had been taught by Americans. Furthermore, a student from Libya had not only been taught by fellow Libyans but by teachers from Poland and Pakistan. Only two interviewees (one was from Japan) had teachers from England. The Japanese interviewee stated 'my English teacher was from Leeds and claimed to speak the Queen's English. I can't differentiate between his English and the English here in Manchester' but despite this slight advantage with the local accent he still claimed that he had difficulty with speaking and listening. Quite often, this predicament would present itself soon after arrival causing confusion and disorientation attributed to the 'distress stage' of culture shock as described in the 'W-Curve: stages of adjustment experienced during orientation' as illustrated in Chapter 1. Although the student may be used to speaking English, it may be at a slower speed. Also, they may not normally have to speak constantly as English may not be their first language. They may also be used to English being spoken in the accent of their fellow countrymen which may also have been adapted to their own culture e.g. Singlish (Singaporean-English) and Manglish (Malaysian-English). Not surprisingly then, the majority of interviewees did not find it easy to understand the local Manchester accent as it was different from their usual communication. A few students also mentioned that they could understand the university staff but not the 'slang' spoken by people in the wider community. However, as a couple of students pointed out, understanding was not only related to the standard language but also to the meaning and usage of the language as explained:

There may be a language problem between students and supervisors but it may not be particular to foreigners. I sometimes find it difficult with my supervisor. We have a lot of debates but I don't think it's a language problem, more like an understanding problem.

PhD, Malaysia, MA1

It's not just the language but terminology. In terms of language, I think I can deal with that. It's not just the language but the understanding – some things are new. For example, I cannot tell Shakespeare's English.

MSc, China, CN1

Three students mentioned that they improved their language skills by listening to the television and reading newspapers and a further three respondents commented on how the English language affected their study as they needed extra time to translate the lectures and exam questions. They relied on the lecture notes and one used an electronic dictionary in the class. In addition, one of the students from Syria felt resentful of the effect this had on her studies because although her exam results were good she was used to achieving excellent grades in her own country. She also speaks Arabic at home and at the university so found it hard to understand the native speakers. 'It creates a problem for me discussing the lectures with my Arabic friends and I regret not speaking to native speakers'. This resentment resembled a Mexican student who stated 'I think that one disadvantage of living here with your family is that most of the time we speak Spanish. We should maybe speak more English'. However, his wife and children were learning English but he was amazed that his children picked up the language in just three months. Similarly, a Libyan student who was here with his wife and two daughters commented 'they are settled and my children enjoy English and speak English very well'. This phenomenon could be related to the manner in which a child acquires language which has been debated by linguists and child psychologists for many years. However, the father of the most nativist theories of language acquisition is Noam Avram Chomsky, an American linguist, who brought great attention to the innate capacity of children to learn a language. Chomsky (1965, 1968, 1986) claimed that all children are born with a hard-wired Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in their brains which contains the major principles of language. Therefore, when the young child is exposed to a language, their LAD makes it possible for them to set the parameters and deduce the grammatical principles. Furthermore, his wife, Carol Schatz Chomsky carried out a study in the late 1960's on the acquisition of syntax in children from 5 to 10 years of age. She explained that:

We find that the children do in fact assign an interpretation to the structures that we present to them. They do not, as they see it, fail to understand our sentences. They understand them, but they understand them wrongly. The information thus revealed about discrepancies between child grammar and adult grammar affords considerable insight into the processes of acquisition, and in addition, into the nature of the structures themselves.

Chomsky (1969) p.2

In addition, Chomsky claims that the maturation of language circuits during a child's early years aid the development of language acquisition as the metabolic activity in the brain reaches adult levels by 9-10 months, soon exceeds it, and peaks around the age of four. This growth continues into adolescence until the brain's metabolic rate decreases to adult levels. This change is the possible reason for the decline in the ability to learn language therefore most adults never master a foreign language. However, even if they do, they may find it difficult to overcome the phonology hence the formation of a 'foreign accent'. Furthermore, unlike adults, children are more motivated to communicate and conform and are not set in their ways (Piatelli-Palmarini).

It is evident that language can be a core problem for overseas students studying in England which is influenced by the type of experience they had whilst learning English abroad as expertise varies widely from country to country. In addition to differences in brain function, mature students may have more difficulty as they may be required to have a greater range of vocabulary, including technical terms, abbreviations and acronyms relating to a specialist subject area. Also, an overseas student may have only been taught in English in relation to the values and context of their own culture. Cammish (1997) explains:

their communicative competence in terms of situationally and socially appropriate language, however, may not be adequate for effective interaction with native speakers in a British cultural setting unless the native speakers are aware of and sympathetic to the problem. Moreover, listening and reading skills which may be effective when dealing with 'culture-free' material, can be seriously challenged by the native speaker's casual and unthinking use of allusions and references which are culture-specific.

Cammish (1997) p. 145

Furthermore, due to the religious or cultural reasons for students to live together, it may be difficult for some students to communicate daily with native speakers and thus improvement in speaking skills is slower. Also, as mature overseas students are older people, they tend to be more thoroughly acculturated into their own society and thus will feel less motivated to identify with a new society and language. As a result of English language problems, students may also have difficulty in understanding lectures, asking questions, essay writing, expressing ideas and participating in discussions.

4.6 SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

In response to a number of open ended questions, a range of issues were initially disclosed by the interviewees. The topics related to the functions of English society as perceived by the student. Four of the students commented on the standard of living in England with a number of students from the Far East commenting on how expensive it was compared to their own countries. In addition, a student from Libya stated that ‘the system here, in general, is powerful ... the quality of the service in general, in telecommunications, the post and service in the shops is very good’ thus defining the wide range of functions which are all part of daily life. A Nigerian student also said ‘I like the standard of living, everybody has a good house and you can buy stuff. Food in Nigeria is very, very expensive. If you are hard up you couldn’t have a Snickers bar’. These quotes exemplify aspects of English life that are taken for granted but may be exceptional to a foreigner. For example, it is unusual in the UK for food to be in short supply, shops to be empty or essential services inoperable. Yet in some countries this is the norm and the supply of necessary items and services can be problematic. Good housing in England is also seen as a right and most people do have good housing with homelessness being kept to a minimum. Despite this, some residents in England believe the standard of their house is not good (as it is compared to other UK dwellings), but it may still be much better than a dwelling in another country where just having a place to live may be a struggle or a privilege. It is this difference that is apparent to a person from another country.

It could be said that any visitor to a foreign country may believe misconceptions or half-truths as they may not be aware of the actual facts. For example, a Syrian student said ‘I don’t like seeing homeless people. I have heard that even if they are offered a home, they prefer the streets’. Alternatively, they may appreciate the aspects which may be lacking in their own society as noted by the same student – ‘When we lived in Rusholme there were many Pakistanis and I said ‘this is not England’. I was surprised by this because your society has many religions and can live together and understand each other – it’s really amazing!’ Similarly, a student from India explained his country’s misgivings as follows:

The system of the whole country [England] is quite fool proof and disciplined – everything is in order. A reasonable amount of effort has to be put in to achieve so that is the nice part about it. In India, there are a lot of loopholes in the system e.g. 2 can be 4 and 4 can be 2. Alibis in India are accepted but here you have apologies.

MSc, India, IN1

Six of the students commented on peculiarities they found with public amenities. Some of them were used to 24 hour shopping and eating out. A student from Japan was also bewildered by his experience at British barber's shops as follows:

I hate British barber's shops as they don't cut my hair as I want them to and they don't wash my hair after cutting it. I went to three different barbers and there was no big difference so I bought a barber's kit from Argos and now do it myself!

MSc, Japan, JP1

Similarly, another interviewee described her experience with the British medical system as follows:

I didn't understand the system before I came here like you have to make an appointment with your GP. They sent me to the hospital and it took so long that I recovered by myself although it's still better than Taiwan!

PhD, Taiwan, TW1

Alternatively, another student explained how the British medical system had enhanced the life of his family as follows:

In Mexico it is relatively easy when you go to the Doctor for him to prescribe antibiotics most of the time. In a Pharmacy you don't need a prescription so many people in Mexico prescribe themselves. Here we went to the Medical Centre and most of the time the Doctor told us we don't use antibiotics that much. Now I think it is a good idea. When I went home in December I could have bought some but didn't. When I return to Mexico I will try to have a better lifestyle.

PhD, Mexico, MX1

Furthermore, a Nigerian student commented on the popular public service of television. He said that the quality of TV programs were better in the UK as he was used to watching US channels. Although this medium was also used by some students to improve their English language skills, a Taiwanese student, who was rather shy, used it to learn about the British way of life by watching soap operas. However, the portrayal of British life may be inaccurate as by its very nature, television broadcasting has to be entertaining therefore not necessarily accurately representing daily life. She also commented 'I like documentaries on the TV, especially history of all kinds. Here are more selections as in Taiwan most of the media is from America' showing that Taiwan was also influenced by America.

4.7 ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

An issue that six of the interviewees raised was 'time'. It was brought up in relation to various topics as no questions were directly asked about it in the first instance. In most cases it was used to describe the differences between the English and another culture and how it affected daily life. However, the issues were not just based upon the use of time but attitudes to time and the effect it has on the work force and other activities (Samovar & Porter, 1988; Kern, 1983; Peterson & Rhodes, 2003). For example, a Thai student who had worked in Japan referred to working 'Japanese style' which meant forgetting the time and staying until the job was done. Similarly, a student from Mexico said that before he came to England he knew that British punctuality was a very famous characteristic of the British culture and explained how time differences had affected his daily life. For example, many primary schools in England finish at 3 p.m. whereas in Mexico children start at 7 a.m. and finish at 2 p.m. Therefore, when his family arrived home at 3.30 p.m. they felt as if they did not have enough time for entertainment and playing with the children. Also, the homework is not as intensive, as the children in Mexico do around 3 hours so it is more relaxed for them here. Although he likes the primary school system it will cause problems when he goes back as his children have only ever attended English schools. Some other students mentioned how 'timing' was different for them as follows:

In Egypt, the day is broken into two halves like in some Mediterranean countries. Most people work up to 2-3 p.m. and then they go home for 2 hours and then maybe work until 10 p.m. The day is so different. Most private companies have the weekend on Friday and Sunday. Some have Friday, Saturday and some just have Friday. People are relaxed with regard to time.

PhD, Egypt, EG1

This exemplifies how varied the usage of time can be, not only on a daily basis, but also on a weekly basis. Not surprisingly then, this initial change could cause a student to feel confused and disorientated as though they are in some kind of 'time warp'. Again, these feelings could contribute to culture shock (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Smith, 1987; Storti, 1990) as discussed in Chapter 1.

Another interviewee had noted that although working life is similar (8.30 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.), people in the UK also work shifts. However, he continued to explain how a relaxed attitude to time caused problems in his country as follows:

Everybody is so serious about the work culture which increases productivity. Back home I hate the work culture – people are too relaxed

at work ... In Ghana people are just so casual. Somebody can be at work and then step out and do something else whereas it is not like that here. It is a kind of culture that people have picked up over the years and it is becoming difficult to change.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

He also explained how the British experience had positively affected him and that he would try to take those values back home so that he may influence other people. However, this situation is not so easily solved as it is just not the 'ticking of the clock' that is in question but the thinking behind the culture as explained:

My boss has lived extensively outside of Ghana and his attitude to work is different. You find a difference with those who have only lived in Ghana so there is some cultural conflict. In the foreign banks it is so different because we have to take on their values whereas in the local banks people may be missing in the back office.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

A Libyan student also commented upon similar attitudes in his country - 'where some official work takes half an hour here it may take one hour there. Also the person you want may not be there.' Another dimension of time was introduced by a student from Syria who referred to time in relation to work but also linked it to the respect we have for one another as follows:

I like the respect you give to each other and how you respect the time. You stick to appointments. You also seem to work hard and be satisfied. These concepts aren't the same in my country maybe because the salaries are lower. I still have trouble respecting the time. If someone says 2 p.m., I go at 2.30 p.m. but then sometimes the person has gone!

PhD, Syria, SY1

An Indian student aptly summed up what UK time meant to him when he said 'everything in the UK is time orientated. When I leave I will miss the discipline – everything here has time and technique'. Once again, another facet of time was created as the interviewee perceived it as a technique used in an orderly society.

4.8 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

This section attempts to discover what England actually 'looks' and 'feels' like to an overseas student. Before going somewhere, it is natural to have a picture in your 'mind's eye' of what a place will be like. This 'picture' could be influenced by television, newspapers, radio or word of mouth. However, depending on the accuracy of the information received, any previous

experience of the country and differences in interpretation, the expectations of the student will vary accordingly.

One of the most popular subjects mentioned by six of the students was the weather. Most of them liked the weather here as it was cooler than their own country but some Libyans and Thais felt that the weather was too cold. However, regardless of their preferences, four of the students had to consciously adapt to the change in climate. Some also had difficulty with the short, dark winter days which they may never have experienced before as follows:

Initially it was a culture shock. The first thing that struck me was the weather. I always knew it had four seasons and I arrived in the summer. As time progressed I was really cold and I felt really down and not very productive. I didn't think it would be that bad. I have never experienced dark winter nights.

PhD, Malaysia, MA1

I really like the cold because my country is very hot but I don't like the winter time because it gets very dark, very fast and it is very lonely at that time.

MSc, Thailand, TH1

When I got here I wasn't used to the cold weather. The first two months was terrible and then I started to get used to it. Fortunately through winter we run the same time zones as Greenwich so I often called home. It is only recently when they have moved the clocks forward that I have started to get confused.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

At first it was difficult, especially in winter as the days are shorter. In Mexico it is light until 7 p.m. not 4 p.m. like here. Maybe at the beginning I disliked the weather but it is not a problem nowadays. I try to bring my umbrella with me everyday as you don't know when it is going to rain. If they broadcast that the weather is going to be OK, don't trust it!

PhD, Mexico, MX1

These examples describe not only the physical effect the weather has on overseas students, but also the emotional effect. If a student feels uncomfortable with the environmental conditions, it may affect their mental wellbeing causing them to feel 'really down', 'not very productive', 'very lonely' or 'confused'. However, these feelings seem to be worse in winter when not only is it colder but the daylight hours are shortened and night time is extended. Such feelings may be attributed to a winter depression known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD) which is defined as recurrent major depressive episodes with a seasonal pattern

(Rosenthal, 1993; Terman et al, 1989a). However, it can affect anybody and therefore is just not exclusive to overseas students. According to Avery and Norden (1998), the most common form of SAD to be found in more northern latitude countries is a recurrent autumn-winter depression which is typically associated with increased appetite, weight gain, increased sleep, decreased social activity, decreased energy and decreased mood (Wehr & Rosenthal, 1989).

Bright light therapy is a well-established treatment for SAD due to the capacity of light to restore human health but until recently, 'psychologists and psychiatrists had little reason to be concerned with the physics of light, the principles of radiometry, and the organic chemistry or chromophores' (Lam, 1998, p. 16). However, in 1982 a case study found that a patient who experienced depression during the autumn and winter months seemed to improve as a result of daily treatment with bright light exposure (Kern and Lewy, 1990; Lewy et al., 1982). Since then, the efficacy of bright light therapy for the treatment of SAD has been extensively tested (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Rosenthal et al., 1984) and although much more work needs to be done to determine the use of such light, it is clear that the human biological response to light can be harnessed to improve health and well being. Nevertheless, although light therapy has alleviated the symptoms of SAD in well over 50% of subjects a number of clinical issues regarding light therapy for SAD are the focus of continued research (Lam, 1998).

Alternatively, the prescription of antidepressant medication may be the treatment of choice for this type of seasonal depression which may be taken using similar guidelines for patients with non-seasonal depression. Furthermore, although much is known about the desired efficacy of psychotherapy for depression, little is known about its use for patients with SAD.

Another issue that arose was the landscape and how it looked to the students. A few of the interviewees expected Manchester to have high, modern buildings with one equating it to America by saying 'New York is not Manchester and does not have high buildings or sky scrapers'. Similarly, a student from Nigeria, who had more realistic expectations referred to the US but only for comparative purposes by stating 'England is what I expected. I thought it would be coldish, old buildings – old but graceful and very 'cosy', compared to the States which is very 'wide'. Comparisons were also made with other places, as follows:

The buildings were cross between traditional English and modern buildings. I expected them to be fairly modern because it was Manchester, England – not York. Pictures in the magazines are very deceiving as well.

PhD, Malaysia, MA1

I didn't really like Manchester but when I went to London I thought it was beautiful. I have been to Johannesburg, South America and Santiago but London changed my perception. I don't like the environment. Manchester doesn't look neat – down in Rusholme there is rubbish all over the streets. People told me it is a very neat place but I haven't seen that in Manchester. I have a cousin who lives in Whitefield which is nicer.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

Hastings is just a small town but I think Manchester is better because there are a lot of activities.

MSc, Thailand, TH1

As mentioned in the previous section, comparisons may allow a student to notice differences which they may not have fully appreciated before. This process may help them to acknowledge or understand a situation better as explained:

One thing I like is, compared to my home city of Harbin, the environment is quite good. Harbin has much air pollution but here it is quite clear. In China, everyone touches shoulders in the city centre because there are lots of people. I am not sure if I like it or not. You never get bored, you can watch people! I expect more people to be on the street but here there are no people.

MSc, China, CN1

The university environment was also mentioned by a couple of students. One student from Libya compared UMIST to his own university by saying 'I like the university environment here. I am in the computing department in Libya but there is a shortage of resources there'. Furthermore, a Thai student (who was from Bangkok but had also lived in Tokyo) liked the convenient location of UMIST as she did not need a car to travel around.

4.9 PERSONAL SAFETY

As Manchester is the third largest city in England, it suffers some social problems which could be attributed to city dwelling. As a result of this, the Manchester area has one of the highest crime rates in the country which has a detrimental effect on matters such as house prices and insurance premiums. In recent years, the Greater Manchester Police force has also realised that overseas students have been targeted by criminals and are actively trying to combat this problem. Therefore, I was interested in obtaining student views by directly posing a question relating to safety.

A number of students were informed about the crime rate either before or after they had arrived. For example:

I expected England to be a more dangerous place, in particular, Manchester. Before coming here I was told there was a lot of gun fighting in Manchester and if I went to Manchester I might not be able to go back to Japan!

MSc, Japan, JP1

Despite being given this alarming news, the Japanese student had still decided to come to Manchester although his sponsors insisted that he lived many miles out of the city centre in Cheshire. However, after living here, and not experiencing any crime, he did not think that Manchester was dangerous and regretted not having lived in the city centre which would have been more convenient for him. Nevertheless, it could be argued that his heightened state of awareness could have helped him to avoid suspicious circumstances and prepared him for a state worse than the reality he encountered.

Seven out of the thirteen students knew of someone who had experienced crime which included mugging, robbery, burglary and assault. Understandably, it caused them to feel fearful although they had not been personally involved. In order to cope with such situations, some students said that they had to be more aware and took measures such as not going out at night, avoiding certain areas and not travelling alone. Not surprisingly, six of the students did not feel safe in Manchester although many felt safe on campus. However, whether they felt safe or not, could probably be related to advice they had been given and the level of security they were socially conditioned to before arriving in England. For example:

Before coming to England someone told me that Manchester is one of the most dangerous cities according to crime but I didn't think so because in Mexico there are more problems with crime. I think there are special areas and like during the night so I don't have a problem with safety.

PhD, Mexico, MX1

I don't feel safe in Manchester, especially where I live. I pay more attention when I am outside. I can't relax properly. It wasn't the same in Bangkok because the Police Officers are more helpful and armed. If there is something wrong in areas that are dangerous you will see Police Officers. The Police here did not even come out when my husband's car radio was stolen. They just made a report and they didn't do anything. The children break the post and telephone boxes and after three months it is still the same. In Thailand it is just not like that.

PhD, Thailand, TH2

In Manchester I feel generally safe but we had a few burglaries in the Hall. The Warden invited a Police Officer to talk to us about living in a secure environment. Compared to the cities in South Africa where you could not just walk out from a hotel in the street, the crime rate is quite high.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

I feel safe as I used to live in Lagos which is a big city. I live off campus and everything is fine.

PhD, Nigeria, NG1

The first time I heard about safety in Manchester was from the Customs Officer at the airport. He said 'Oh, Manchester has many problems!' There is no security. The safety is not good here. In Syria a woman can walk around with gold on at 2-3 o'clock in the morning and nobody will bother her. I think it is because everyone knows each other and they do not want to bring shame on their family – even in the cities.

MSc, Syria, SY1

I was warned about the crime rate from a student who had studied in Manchester and to stay away from Moss Side [famous for gun crime]. I felt I had a heightened sense of awareness which I felt I needed coming from a foreign land ... On campus I feel safe and in Chorlton it is quite good. A teenager in Chorlton is better than in Salford where my sister is staying.

MSc, China, CN1

I think Sheffield [where he used to study] is safer than Manchester. I was told before I came that Manchester has a lot of crime.

PhD, Libya, LB1

From the examples, it is evident that there are many factors which contribute to crime and everyone has their own perspective and experience of it. However, the overseas students may have a more difficult time as they have to become 'acclimatised' to the norms of awareness and social conditions in their new environment. For example, it is not unusual in England to be mugged, robbed or burgled in daylight hours therefore students who believe crime only happens at night time are putting themselves at risk during the day. Likewise, although crime is more prevalent in some areas, it can happen almost anywhere depending on circumstantial factors, and not geographical boundaries which a student may not be aware of anyway. Therefore, the students may be given a false sense of security in certain areas and at certain times. In addition to this, students from countries where a large number of Police Officers operate in high crime areas may think that all areas where Police Officers are not patrolling must be safe, which is not always the case. Unfortunately, these

misconceptions, together with other factors, may contribute to the high number of overseas students who are victims of crime, especially within the first few months of arrival in the UK.

4.10 PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

This area arose from numerous open ended questions as I did not specifically ask about the English culture or the English people. However, as the responses are based upon personal impressions and understanding, the replies are quite diverse as everyone has different experiences and expectations. Nevertheless, the views and opinions that are developed will be based on the reality of the overseas students in their everyday lives. Therefore, this information will be used as a point of reference for the customs and lifestyle of the English people which they will convey to others. In view of this, it was important for me to attempt to gain insight into the students' perceptions so that a greater understanding could be gained, and the reality interpreted as accurately as possible.

A subject that four of the students commented on was 'religion' with some noting that England was a mainly secular society. A couple of students compared the differences with their own country with one from Nigeria saying that 'we are more religious back home, fewer atheists – 50% Christians and 50% Muslims who are relatively devout'. Similarly, a student from Syria commented upon the two faiths but explained that 'although here and there, there are Muslims they are different. So are the Christians'. However, a student from Ghana pointed out the perceived insincerity of his own people as 'back home everyone says they are Christian but they don't practice. We have seemingly more Christians than here'. Nevertheless, regardless of the differences, the students were able to continue to practice their religion whilst studying which was beneficial to them.

One student commented on appearance and mistakenly expected all English people to have blonde hair and blue eyes. Alternatively, in addition to images, seven of the students commented on behaviour and noted some personality characteristics of the English people. One student from China referred to the attitudes of old people and said that they used to talk about how things had changed. He was surprised to discover that they liked the past as it was opposite to his people. He explained as follows:

I didn't think people would like the past. For example, old people here say everything has changed. In China everyone likes new things. It's a kind of tradition at Chinese New Year were people send a gift to each other, new things are good – like the Euro. In the past the Chinese suffered a lot so they like new things.

MSc, China, CN1

The remainder believed that the people they had encountered were polite, friendly, helpful, fair and just and one student liked the respect we have for each other. Again, some made comparisons with their own countries as it was their only point of reference. Some examples are as follows:

I like the people here, everybody is friendly, even the cleaners, right up to the Head of Department. Even on the street, when I cross the road at a zebra crossing. In Malaysia, although it is law, it is 'survival of the fittest' but here they stop! People are very fair and just. There is no sense of pretences. You don't get people opening doors for you in Malaysia and people don't ask if you're alright.

PhD, Malaysia, MA1

I have found quite a lot of people to be friendly and helpful especially in the university. I was chatting with a friend who is from Colombia, South America. She said she always prefers to study in the UK and she doesn't like to study in America because she gets all the help she needs here.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

English people are very polite. They say something indirectly. For example, you invite he/she to go somewhere and they say they would like to go but ... In China, they would say 'no!' Some people even don't like you and don't want to go further with you but are still very polite to you. I think it is good that people are polite. You should try to understand each other from different cultures.

MSc, China, CN1

Due to the diverse opinions, a balanced view was given on this issue and therefore the same number of students described the negative aspects of the English people. Firstly, and as before, only one student brought up the issue of respect as follows:

There is no respect for each other. We respect human rights much more than here. Here, on the bus, they may shout and don't care if they are being noisy. Most Asian people are similar in terms of respect, especially in Japan where they have different levels.

PhD, Thailand, TH2

Unfortunately, this particular student did not like many things about England and saw many negative aspects which had changed her attitude. She also said 'the people here don't want you to tell them how to improve anything!' and commented on how it had affected her – 'I didn't have any attitude before I came here but now I do. It has changed me. I should have waited and gone to the USA. I feel very sad that I decided to come here'.

Four of the students thought that the English people were not friendly and some even described them as 'cold'. This caused the students to feel unwelcome or confused as they were not used to that kind of behaviour and initially did not know how to deal with it. Some explanations are as follows:

Initially, coming across the natives was quite difficult. People are not very open here but once you get familiar with the system you become part of it. There is not much warmth towards the foreigners from the natives.

MSc, India, IN1

People are more cold here. The good thing is that I go to a church and have met some English people. I like the atmosphere there and they are more patient.

PhD, Taiwan, TW1

I think Thai people, whenever they see each other; they will smile if they are face to face. In Bangkok, it is a modern city and we have to hurry so we don't smile as much. When I first arrived, I still smiled with the others and my friend kept asking 'why are you smiling at me?'

MSc, Thailand, TH1

Similarly, another student from Thailand commented on the issue of smiling but also related the behaviour to individualism. She stated that 'the people here are more individual, I mean like, no greetings. At first I do not talk to a person in Thailand but you may smile. But here they do nothing – they just look as though you're transparent'. A couple of other students also mentioned how English people liked to be independent and do things on their own as explained:

On the whole, when you interact with people they are not very receiving of foreigners. I think it is something to do with the culture and people value too much of their own independence.

MSc, India, IN1

Here people work as individuals. One person does one job. In Japan we have a lot of team work.

MSc, Japan, JP1

The references to individual personalities could be associated with 'individualism' which is a dimension of culture as described by Gert Hofstede (1984) in Chapter 2. However, this personality trait may be noticed more by the overseas students from 'collective' cultures where the focus of the people is more on the group than on themselves (Marsella et al., 1979; Kim et al., 1994).

4.11 PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

Besides the personalities and behaviour of individual people, seven of the students had noted the behaviour of the society as a whole – the culture. These observations were related to the customs and lifestyle of everyday England from their own perspective. Again, as with the perception of people, both positive and negative aspects were mentioned; some of the positive elements are described as follows:

I like the way the culture behaves – like the pubs. I'm not that kind of girl but I get excited when I see a lot of people in pubs around Manchester. My friends and I went to the pub and then went to sit in other pubs. The pubs in Thailand are different. If I go to the pub in my country someone will say that you are not a good girl. It is a different feeling, maybe it is just my opinion but here you can go to the pub any time you want. We can drink alcohol in my country but my family doesn't like me to drink. I haven't been to any pub in Thailand. It is very different. At first, I didn't join my friends here – I was shocked!

MSc, Thailand, TH1

The regime is more liberated here. You can say anything and in our country we can't. It is difficult for me and will cause problems when I go home.

PhD, Syria, SY1

In Mexico we have a culture that it is not easy to trust in everybody because in the Government, for instance, there is much corruption, so it is not common to practice trust in Mexico. Here, when shopping, if I bought something that is broken it is easy to get your money back but in Mexico it would be very difficult to do so.

PhD, Mexico, MX1

Although, these are mainly good aspects, negative connotations may arise in relation to the student's own culture as what one person regards as positive, another may see as negative, as judgments of any kind are interpreted. In addition to culture, some other influencing factors could be age, sex, ethnic origin, social class, experience etc. Some of the negative aspects are described as follows:

I dislike the way people have a free life and the relationship with parents. Back home we respect authority and here it is so different and people have a free life, like kissing in the streets and on the buses. You don't see those things back home.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

I have noticed that it is common for young people to have enough freedom to live their own life. Maybe they are not living with their families and I have seen some youngsters using drugs, smoking and drinking. In Mexico, maybe parents have more control of children until 18 years old.

PhD, Mexico, MX1

Probably in India we are very social, we have got 'roots' and every day we meet friends. Here, for months you may not meet a friend. Because of the culture and the roots, we are sticking to our parents, not like here.

MSc, India, IN1

Libya is an African developing country; the families are more together in Libya and live quite near to each other, not like here.

PhD, Libya, LB1

It is apparent that although freedom is perceived as good in England, these students were also able to see the disadvantages of too much freedom. They also noted the difference in the marriage and family relationships and believed that their own cultures had stronger connections with their families. Again, these references could be related to the 'individualism' dimension of culture which may be more apparent to overseas students from 'collective' cultures as the focus is on the extended family.

4.12 SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

As relationships are personal in nature, experiences of interaction will vary although some aspects may be similar. Some students may join a society or group of fellow students as they choose to interact with sojourners from their own country. Nevertheless, some of the interviewees explained the advantages and disadvantages of such actions as follows:

There is a Mexican Society at UMIST. After I arrived, I contacted them after 2 months. Nowadays, we have parties and social meetings. There are approximately 40-60 students in Manchester. It is useful for if you need some advice but there are disadvantages. Some people say not to mix too much with your own people and improve your English.

PhD, Mexico, MX1

It is quite difficult to adapt but the good thing is that I have a lot of friends from Thailand here, almost 50 friends because the Thai Society is very big so I do not need to adapt because I have a lot of friends who share the Thai culture with me.

MSc, Thailand, TH1

My friends were very helpful and good and I spent a nice time with them but I spent my time working with them and studying with them. But it would have been better if I would have an English student as a friend ... There is a little community made up of Syrian students. We used to get together but I prefer not to communicate with them all the time.

PhD, Syria, SY1

Although it may be comforting or useful to have co-sojourners as friends, there are also students who seek people with similar values such as fellow worshippers. Such associations may be particularly important to those students who are used to being part of a close family and find that the new group acts as a temporary substitute. For example:

I have made quite a lot of friends at the King's Chapel Church. They worship just like we do back home. A friend introduced me to the priest and I have made friends also at the hall which is quite a small place so it is like a big family.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

After being in England for a while, most students grow in confidence as they begin to get used to their new environment and thus widen their range of experience. This process is described in Chapter 1 as the 'independence stage' – the student may feel full of potential and able to trust themselves in all kinds of situations which become enjoyable. As a result, they may decide to visit new places and mix with a wider range of people as explained:

As a student you gain more confidence and you come across a lot of people, mainly as a student it is an entirely new experience. However, you don't remain as a student as you can just go out in the city at night.

MSc, India, IN1

Unfortunately, for some students it may be difficult to make friends. Although there may be personal contributing factors such as language difficulties or confidence, there may be other obstacles such as cultural differences and situational factors which are not easily dealt with. A couple of students kindly disclosed the distress such situations may cause as follows:

I think that making friends here is quite difficult probably because of my English and they are not so patient although most are fine. I find it hard to make friends, maybe it's because I am a student so they don't want to waste their time as I will be leaving. They talk to you but it doesn't mean you will become very good friends so afterwards you will group with students from your own country and it isn't really good. They are from various backgrounds and there may be gossip or fighting in small groups.

I try to go places by myself but sometimes you just need friends. I get along with people from Greece and Britain. We all use English and are very polite so there are no arguments. However, the downside is that you cannot tell them about everything – just general things, nothing too specific. It depends on different individuals and how they overcome things.

PhD, Taiwan, TW1

In the beginning, the academic system and relationship between supervisor and student were quite different here. This is only my opinion but I have been in many countries before. Like here, the culture and traditions

between Europeans and Asians are quite different. I expected relationships to be more informal. After work, my supervisor in Japan was like a very close friend and the relationship between student and supervisor was good.

PhD, Thailand, TH2

It is evident that the dynamics of friendship and other social interaction can be very complicated due to the many factors involved. During the interviews, it became clear that many students benefited from having friends and interaction with other people (Tajfel, 1981; Sereke' 1987; Westen, 1999). As discussed in Chapter 2, this could be associated with the process of socialisation which includes 'all the influences that make us accepted members of society and help us to establish and maintain relationships with others' (Roth, 1990). However, different societies have different influences which may cause an overseas student to feel confused as their normal social behaviour may not be suitable for the new environment.

4.13 ADAPTING TO A DIFFERENT CULTURE

As discussed in the Chapter 1, the experience of studying in a foreign country can leave a powerful impression on a person that may last a lifetime. Leaving home and travelling to a new country, no matter how well planned, can be quite surprising. As a student adapts to a new environment, new acquaintances and new customs, they may experience some of the factors mentioned in the previous sections which could be attributed to the phenomena of 'culture shock' (Bochner, 1982; Smith, 1987; Storti, 1990). Therefore, I asked a question regarding adaptation in an attempt to understand how students are affected by the transition from one environment to another.

At the time of commencing study, eight out of the thirteen students had never been to England before. For the remainder, it was mostly their second visit. Out of all the interviewees, seven believed that they did not have a problem adapting. However, this may have been because their culture was not that different, they prepared well or they were in contact with friends or relatives. Some of their comments were as follows:

It was my first time in England. It was what I expected as I had been informed by colleagues and friends and found it OK adapting.

PhD, Egypt, EG1

I am here with my wife and two daughters. The first time I was on my own but it is better having my family with me.

PhD, Libya, LB1

I have two cousins in London which really helped me at first. I had quite a lot of contact by telephone and used to see them a lot at first but not as much now. It helps a lot if you have people you know around you. The general perception I get particularly with foreign students is that if they come alone they tend to stay alone. They just think 'I will finish my degree and go back as soon as possible'. But those who have siblings or relatives around tend to do better. The societies are again very much an individual choice, I am in between both. I do enjoy my society but don't go to all the functions as I concentrate on my work.

PhD, Malaysia, MA1

I got quite good at adapting. For example, the queue in the post office was just one queue. In China, it is one window per queue so I thought no one else was waiting!

MSc, China, CN1

I am not having difficulty with the culture, as there is not much difference between Britain and Japan. I am from Tokyo which is quite a modern city. I like Walker's crisps; we have crisps in Japan but not Walker's!

MSc, Japan, JP1

Sadly, some students do not cope as well. This may be because of their personality, language difficulties, cultural differences, unrealistic expectations or for some other reason as outlined in the previous sections. Nevertheless, the effect it can have can be quite distressing for those concerned as explained:

When a new student comes here to study you can see a smile on their face but after a few months they will complain about life, course, assignments etc. I work as a demonstrator and can see that overseas students are having difficulties – I can see it on their faces. People didn't really tell me in Taiwan what it was really like here. I would like people in Taiwan to be more honest about their experience in England.

Here all the lecturers are busy. If I try to talk to them I am somehow quite scared. I don't know why, I think the culture is different. I never call the tutor by their first name like here. Now I am in my second year I know when my supervisor prefers to see me – I learn from experience.

PhD, Taiwan, TW1

The regime is more liberated here. You can say anything and in our country we can't. It is difficult for me and will cause problems when I go home. I sometimes worry and talk to my husband about it. If you say something, you may be dismissed, sent to prison or be a missing person. I will just have to be a good person and don't say anything.

PhD, Syria, SY1

Once again, these examples are exemplified by the 'W-Curve: stages of adjustment experienced during orientation' as illustrated in Chapter 1. The first example is a good account of the 'honeymoon stage - when the student first arrives, the differences may cause excitement, stimulation or curiosity. They are still protected by recent memories of home'. Followed by the 'distress stage - the differences may start to create an impact and the student may feel confused, isolated or inadequate when dealing with the cultural differences'. They may also be aware that the familiar support network of family and friends is not available.

The second example is a good account of reverse culture shock (return to home country) or the 'reintegration stage - the student may reject the differences and become angry, frustrated or hostile towards the new culture' (Storti, 2001). It shows that culture shock can happen on arrival to England, during the stay and upon the return home. However, as observed here, the fear of what may happen when the student goes back may cause premature, undue stress whilst studying here.

In addition, the interviewees who felt as though they had adapted well and had enjoyed their new found independence had benefited from living in a new environment. Again, this could be attributed to the W-Curve, 'independence stage - the student may feel full of potential and able to trust themselves in all kinds of situations which become enjoyable' as previously discussed. Some students explained:

The exposure, the working environment, academic environment and new way of doing things are all helpful. I have learnt a lot and my boss is always interested. I will get a promotion when I get back.

MSc, Ghana, GN1

I didn't find it difficult to adapt and enjoyed it. For me, I have got used to it all and call it my first home now because I have been here for 6 years. I still miss home but would definitely miss this place when I leave.

PhD, Malaysia, MA1

One of the Libyan students mentioned how he found it interesting to change from the position of lecturer to student as it is a change in lifestyle which will further increase his understanding of the student experience and of studying abroad. However, in addition to the operational and psychological changes that may occur, five interviewees referred to the change in physical needs i.e. eating. As well as adapting their diet, the change also affected their mental state as it was intrinsically linked to their previous lifestyle and culture.

Similarly, it could be argued that these types of changes could be experienced by UK undergraduate students who are living away from home for the first time who also have to adapt to change. Some examples of change are given as follows:

I still eat a lot of Thai food but I also now eat pasta. I have good flatmates and most of them are from other countries. There is one English, one Italian and one Chinese girl but here I have to cook on my own and live on my own.

MSc, Thailand, TH1

At home I live with my family and my mother and father cook but here I have to cook for myself. I buy food from China Town but it is expensive.

MSc, China, CN1

Here I need to think about what I have to eat every day and I can't get the things I really want to eat. In Asia you can eat anything at a very reasonable price. Here I have to cook every day. Chinese food is expensive here so I eat a lot of bread. Western food is OK but it is not the same. In Asia, I never thought eating was a problem – shops/restaurants wouldn't cost more than £2.

I think my needs are different here. In Taiwan, I can stay at home alone but don't feel lonely as I have everything I know around me. It's not only related to culture, it is probably student life and the English difficulties.

PhD, Taiwan, TW1

In the last two paragraphs, the Taiwanese interviewee aptly summarised the main areas which an overseas student has to adapt to when studying in Britain i.e. culture, student life and English language. It was also interesting to discover how routine functions such as eating, which are normally not perceived as problematic, can become so when living in new surroundings. However, the extent to which a student is able to cope with the change and adapt to their new way of life will depend on how they cope with the many elements highlighted in this chapter.

4.14 HOFSTEDE'S VALUE DIMENSIONS: Phase 1

With reference to App. 18, references to Hofstede's extreme value dimensions are as follows:

STUDY INCENTIVES

Individualism

- Students cared about own goals and job prospects.

Collectivism

- Students cared about their own country.

Long term orientation

- Students were planning ahead.

Short term orientation

- Students had short term goals such as finding a job and improving English skills.

COUNTRY CHOICE

High Power Distance

- Some students adhered to sponsor's choices.

Individualism

- Students chose country according to perceived personal benefits.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- Country was chosen due to good political situations.

UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Individualism

- Students chose the university for personal reasons.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Long Term Orientation

- Better English skills could improve job prospects.

Collectivism

- Better English skills would benefit other family members.

High Power Distance

- It is difficult to talk to supervisors.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

High Power Distance

- The system is seen as 'powerful' and 'quite fool proof'.
- Drinking alcohol may be discouraged by senior family members.

Collectivism

- Different religions can live together in society.

Uncertainty Tolerance

- It is likely that most people will have a house to live in.

ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

Collectivism, Low Power Distance, Long Term Orientation

- Working Japanese style meant working together for the good of all. However, the worker was expected to work until the job was done.

Short Term Orientation

- Relaxed attitude to time/work can cause problems.

Femininity

- People care about time and respect each other.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Collectivism

- One is used to touching shoulders with everyone on the street; not sure whether the emptiness of the English streets is preferable.

PERSONAL SAFETY

Collectivism

- Safety is linked to the shame crime may bring on one's family; this can be attributed to the shame and loss of face in collective cultures.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- The lack of security causes unease with ambiguous situations and fear of unfamiliar risks.

Uncertainty Tolerance

- Familiarity with ambiguous situations and unfamiliar risks causes no discomfort.

PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

Collectivism

- England was seen as a secular society by those from religious countries.

Short Term Orientation

- Old people in England enjoyed talking about the past which is different to cultures that try to ignore it.

Femininity

- People are polite, friendly, helpful, fair and just. People care and help each other.

Low Power Distance

- People are friendly, from the cleaners up to the Head of Department. There is equality between workers and powerful people may appear less powerful than they are.

Individualism

- People are unfriendly and not open which was attributed to people being individuals and doing things on their own.

PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

Uncertainty Avoidance

- The regime is more liberal in England compared to some countries where what is different may be dangerous and rules are important.

High Power Distance

- In comparison with England, some countries have more respect for authority and more control over children.

Individualism

- Youngsters were perceived to have a 'free life', maybe because they were not living with their families.

Collectivism

- In some countries, families are more together and live nearer to each other unlike England.

SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

Collectivism

- Students mentioned collective groups of co-sojourners or fellow worshippers.
- A more informal student-supervisor relationship was expected as it is regarded as a 'family link' in collectivism.

ADAPTING TO A DIFFERENT CULTURE

Collectivism

- Students benefited through contact with relatives or social groups during the adaptation process.

High Power Distance

- A student was scared to talk to her lecturer or call them by their first name.

Uncertainty Tolerance

- Students who felt they adapted well found new things curious.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- Students who did not adapt so well did not respond well to unfamiliar risks and a new environment.

4.15 SUMMARY

DISCUSSION OF PHASE 1

STUDY INCENTIVES

This category established several reasons why students chose to do postgraduate study. Seven believed that a higher degree would improve their job prospects with a number stating that they needed a PhD in order to progress further in their academic career. In addition, several students were awarded scholarships which gave them the opportunity to study abroad. Alternatively, some students were not as concerned with the pursuit of career progression but wished to enhance their self knowledge. Ultimately, an increased knowledge base would have a wider affect on a local, national or international level irrespective of personal intentions.

COUNTRY CHOICE

After deciding to study, the interviewee usually had to choose which country suited their needs the best. Countries that were considered as a viable option to the UK were America and Australia. For some, the position of the UK on the world map was important due to practical and financial reasons although the reputation of English universities was paramount to others. However, the choice of country was normally limited for funded students as it was influenced by their sponsors. Others believed it would be easier to study in England as they had previous knowledge of the language and education system. In addition, some found the shorter length MSc programmes and the stable economical and political factors in the UK very appealing.

UNIVERSITY CHOICE

After choosing the country, it was important to establish why the students had chosen UMIST instead of other institutions in the UK. As UMIST was amongst the higher ranked

universities the majority of the interviewees had made their decisions based on the reputation or recommendation from a friend, relative, colleague or UMIST graduate. However, these factors were not always as important as the subject area or programme on offer. Furthermore, a few students chose UMIST as the conditions of the offer were favourable or they were impressed by their initial contact with the university staff. In addition, another aspect which was relevant was the city in which the university resides. Four of the respondents chose UMIST as it was located in a popular and well known city and the cost of living was less than London.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

All applicants to UMIST were required to have obtained a satisfactory English language qualification. However, despite this, a significant number of students still had difficulty coping with the English language when they arrived. The responses were varied possibly due to the personal level of language capability and personal experiences of each student. Only a small number of students attended an English course before or during their programme of study, which they found helpful.

Four of the students had difficulty as they were used to American English as they had been taught by American teachers with one student having teachers from Poland and Pakistan. Only two students had been taught by an English person. However, irrespective of the level of the English language, most students had difficulty understanding the spoken language upon arrival in England. The confusion and disorientation attributed to this predicament could be linked to the 'distress stage' of culture shock. Although the student may be used to speaking English, it may be at a slower pace, not spoken constantly or spoken in an accent they can comprehend.

A couple of students also explained that understanding was not only related to the standard language but also the meaning and usage of the language i.e. terminology, humour etc. A few respondents explained how they needed extra time to translate the lectures and exam questions which had a detrimental affect on their study.

In order to cope with the English language difficulties, a number of students relied on lecture notes, electronic dictionaries or discussions with co-sojourners. Some tried to improve their skills by watching the television and reading newspapers. In addition, a couple of students who had brought their families explained that one disadvantage was that they did not speak

English as much as if they were alone. However, one aspect which benefited their families was the ease with which their children had learnt the language.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

A few of the students commented on the standard of living by mentioning such aspects as housing, consumer rights and telecommunications which most British residents take for granted. I also surmised that, as with any visitor to a foreign country, one may believe misconceptions or half-truths as the actual facts may not be known or understood. Again, whilst living in England, students were able to compare standards with their own countries. Typically, they discussed the differences with shopping, dining out, medical services and the media which enabled some to further appreciate the negative or positive aspects of their own society.

ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

An issue that was raised by nearly six of the interviewees was 'time'. It was not just the use of time but the attitudes to time and the effect it had on the work force and other activities. A student from Mexico knew that British punctuality was a very famous characteristic of the British culture and explained how time differences affected the life of his family. Another student, from Egypt, explained how the working day, as well as week, was broken up differently. Similarly, a Ghanaian student noted the differences in working patterns but he believed that people in the UK worked harder than in Africa. Furthermore, he explained how the relaxed attitude to time was a negative part of his culture which his country was trying to address. A Libyan student also mentioned similar problems. However, a Syrian student added another dimension to time as she linked it to the respect we have for one another. In addition, an interviewee from India perceived the usage of time as a technique used in an orderly society.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

This section attempted to discover what England actually 'looks' and 'feels' like to an overseas student. Not surprisingly, one of the most popular subjects mentioned was the weather. Most interviewees liked the weather as it was cooler than their own countries. However, despite their preferences, four of the students had to consciously adapt to the

change in climate. They also described not only the physical effect the weather had on them, but also the emotional effect.

Another issue that arose was the landscape and how it looked to the students. Some compared Manchester with America, New York, York, London and Hastings. Again, these comparisons allowed a student to notice differences about their own culture which they may not have fully appreciated before. A couple of students also mentioned that the university environment and the location of UMIST, which was convenient for travelling around.

PERSONAL SAFETY

As Manchester is the third largest city in England, it suffers some social problems which could be attributed to city dwelling, resulting in one of the highest crime rates in the country. In recent years the Greater Manchester Police force has also realised that students have been targeted by criminals and are actively trying to combat the problem. Therefore, I attempted to discover how the students were affected by the situation.

A number of the interviewees had been informed about crime before they arrived. However, seven of the students knew of someone who had experienced mugging, robbery, burglary or assault. Although they were not personally involved, they naturally felt fearful. This caused them to adjust their behaviour accordingly. I noted that the extent to which they felt safe could probably be related to advice they had received and the level of security they were socially conditioned to before arriving in England.

It was evident that many factors contributed to crime and that everyone has their own perspective and experience of it. However, the overseas students may have a more difficult time as they have to become 'acclimatised' to the norms of awareness and social conditions in a new environment.

PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

These responses were based upon the interviewees' personal impressions and understanding of the English people. However, due to the differing experiences and expectations, the replies were quite diverse. The topic of religion was raised by four of the interviewees as they compared religious practice with their own country with some stating that England was a mainly secular society.

Only one student commented upon appearance of people whereas seven of the respondents mentioned what they believed to be the behaviour and personality characteristics of the English people. Due to the diversity in opinions, a balanced view detailing positive and negative aspects was given. The issues discussed included friendliness, politeness, fairness and respect which some also related to the areas of individualism and personal identity.

PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

Seven of the students interviewed noted the behaviour of the society as a whole – the culture. These observations were related to the customs and lifestyle of everyday England which, once again, gave a balanced view. Some of the issues discussed included pubs and alcohol, freedom of speech, free living, relationships with parents, promiscuity, collectivism and the family unit. Although these topics were wide ranging, it was apparent that students from traditionally ‘collective’ cultures noticed more differences, especially in relation to family dynamics.

SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

Some of the students explained the advantages and disadvantages of interacting with sojourners from their homeland. However, some others found it useful to seek out people with similar values such as fellow worshippers, irrespective of the country of origin. Initially, whichever group they chose, it was clear that such associations were comforting and may have substituted the lack of close relationships which they were accustomed to. However, after some time, most students grew in confidence as they became familiar with their new environment and widened their experience. Although their level of successful interaction may be affected by personal confidence and language skills there may be other obstacles such as cultural differences and situational factors which may be difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, it was apparent that although the dynamics of friendship and other social interaction can be very complicated, many students benefited from having friends and from interacting with others.

ADAPTING TO A DIFFERENT CULTURE

The experience of studying in a foreign land can leave a powerful impression on a person which may last a lifetime. As a student adapts to a new environment they may experience some of the factors attributed to the phenomena of ‘culture shock’.

Eight out of the thirteen interviewees had never been to England before and for the remainder it was mainly their second visit. Despite this, seven believed that they had no problem adapting which may be due to the extent of the cultural difference they encountered, pre-arrival preparation or contact with friends or relatives after arrival. However, some students did not cope as well which caused them personal distress. Although one student from Libya found it interesting to change roles from lecturer to student, five interviewees mentioned the change in physical needs such as eating. However, besides the necessity to adapt their diet, the change in environment also affected their mental state as it was intrinsically linked to their previous lifestyle and culture.

An interviewee from Taiwan aptly summarised the main areas which an overseas student has to adapt to when studying in Britain: culture, student life and English language. However, the extent to which a student is able to cope and adapt to change depends on many contributing factors as highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF PHASE 2

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the larger intake around September, the second set of interviewees, was slightly larger, and consisted of seventeen students. However, after Phase 1, I decided to change some questions on ethical grounds or applicability to the study. For example, questions relating to funding caused some discomfort and were not that necessary to the overall aims. Also, during the initial interviews, I realised that I did not have sufficient knowledge regarding actual academic practices and thus decided not to pursue matters relating to student progress or teaching methods. However, English language ability pertaining to these areas would still be appropriate as the methods used to assist with communication may affect adaptation to a different culture and interaction with others. I also decided to change the emphasis on job prospects as many of the students were unsure about their future intentions at the time of the interview. Therefore, such questions were relocated to the first sections which related to the reasons why overseas students came to England in the first place.

As a result of the Phase 1 responses, two lines of enquiry were opened up. Firstly, I asked how important the English language was in the decision making process as the objective was to establish how many students chose England due to the perceived ease of the use of the language. Secondly, I wished to know how many students were aware of the actual reputation of UMIST before they applied for admission. Further issues are discussed in the respective categories as follows:

- Study Incentives
- Country Choice
- University Choice
- The English Language
- Language and Relationships
- Social Conditions and Services

- Attitudes to Work and Time
- Environmental Factors
- Personal Safety
- Perception of People
- Perception of Culture
- Social Interaction and Friendship Networks
- Adapting to and Learning from a Different Culture

5.2 STUDY INCENTIVES

Many of the incentives mentioned by the second set of interviewees were similar to those in the first group. Eight out of the seventeen students believed that a higher degree would improve their job prospects with five students specifically wanting to study for a research degree. A similar number wanted to increase their knowledge in a particular field and five students said that it would improve their personal development. One student from Singapore just wanted to come for the 'education experience' although he was motivated and persuaded to do a PhD by his work supervisor whom he admired. However, a student from Mongolia had to leave her country as they simply did not have the expertise required in her field of study as follows:

I always had an aching feeling to go to the West to study. They have programmes in Mongolia but because the population is only 2.5 million there aren't always the degrees and fields covered by the universities and specialised professions are always in demand ... At home the IT sector wasn't well developed and I couldn't get into anything in depth.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

As with Phase 1, five students mentioned that they had been awarded scholarships which was their main incentive for applying. But although nine were encouraged and supported by their families some described the turmoil that their decision to study in England caused as follows:

As I am in my 30's the opportunities are very limited but if I get a PhD there are a lot of benefits. It is Asian custom to respect well educated people. Bachelor and Master's degrees are regarded as almost the same but if you get a PhD you can work independently ... I worked in a government research institute and was not allowed to publish my work because I didn't have a PhD.

I started studying very late. I am almost 37 so my family doesn't want me to study anymore. Especially my father who wanted me to get married and have a family but I prepared for the PhD a long time.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

My family supported me but on the other hand they worried about me living in a strange environment that I am not familiar with. Although they worried they were very happy that I had the idea and were very glad and proud of me. They had mixed feelings. In fact, everything is fine now and when relatives, neighbours and close friends talk about me they are very proud of me – I could be the King of my family!

MSc, China, CN2

My mother always wanted me to have a better life and always encouraged me to study, study, study! When I told her I wanted to continue she said 'no problem, we will support you'. But my fiancé didn't like it a bit because he wanted me to stay in China but he knew this degree would give me a better career in China so now he thinks one year is OK.

MSc, China, CN4

Unfortunately, some relationships do not always survive the transition as exemplified by a Mongolian student - 'my family weren't surprised at all and it was my decision but my fiancé did not want me to go and we broke up soon after I arrived here'. Nevertheless, these examples highlight that regardless of a family's support, the pursuance of higher education in a foreign country is not without its complications. However, it seems that many of the interviewees were willing to take the risks as they believed that the benefits far outweighed the costs.

5.3 COUNTRY CHOICE

The interviewees in Phase 2 introduced more reasons for coming to England and a wider choice of countries available to them for postgraduate study. However, the responses also highlight how England is not always the student's ideal choice but that certain circumstances or conditions influenced the availability of the options on offer.

Nine of the interviewees had considered America although seven of them were deterred because of the longer duration of the courses or the requirements of the GRE test. Also, three students considered Australia and two others had considered Canada. A couple of students had applied to the States but did not receive offers. However, another interviewee who had been offered a place had to leave due to visa problems as explained:

I entered America with my British passport but I should have got a student visa instead. I then went to the American Embassy in North Mexico but they wouldn't give me a visa as I think they realised I had an Iranian background. I was born in England and my parents are Iranian. I have dual nationality UK/Iranian. I decided to benefit from my British passport and so I thought that after the USA England was regarded as one of the best education systems.

MSc, Iran, IR1

Furthermore, two students had considered Germany. One was from Mongolia and explained how the government was sponsoring people to go there as well as to England, Hungary, Russia, Japan and the Czech Republic but the competition was intense. Another student, from Singapore, had applied to Ireland and a student from Malaysia returned to England because he had previously studied in Leeds. However, a student from South Korea illustrated how it is not always academic matters which may attract someone to a country. He explained 'I like Britain and wanted to study in the UK. I was fascinated by the British culture and felt that England was better than the USA'. Similarly, another South Korean student said 'I learnt about England from videos. England is quite famous in Korea for the 1970's music scene. Most people have listened to English music – rock 'n' roll and heavy metal'. It seemed that these students had learnt about England from an early age and admired aspects of the culture which they wanted to experience for themselves.

Four of the students were sponsored by organisations that they worked for. Unlike scholarships, the sponsor normally paid all costs incurred for the period of study; they came to England due to existing collaborations or the preferences of their sponsors. However, another three students found the political conditions favourable, as two of the students were from Libya and Pakistan and said that links between their homeland and the US had deteriorated, especially since the events of 11 September 2001. In addition, three students from China, Indonesia and Pakistan had relatives living here which made it easier for them to study in England. A number of the interviewees also believed that it was easier to obtain a visa from Britain than other countries, particularly the USA.

5.4 UNIVERSITY CHOICE

In Phase 2, I changed the interview schedule to specifically ask whether the student was aware of the UMIST reputation before they applied. The main purpose of this question was to establish the significance of the UMIST brand name especially as it would no longer be in use after the new university was formed on 1 October 2004.

The responses were fairly balanced with a majority of ten students stating that they were not aware of the UMIST name before they applied. The interviewees' main sources of data were the internet, prospectuses and league tables. However, it was interesting to discover that those who knew about UMIST were mainly from Far Eastern countries with two stating that a degree from UMIST would improve their job prospects. The popularity of UMIST in this area of the world was described as follows:

When I came for my BEng the reputation of UMIST was very good in Asia because it had a lot of research grants and the teaching is good. You have a lot of experts in this university that would like to teach you how to achieve the same level of expertise as them. That is excellent you know.

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

I also applied to Cambridge, Warwick and Surrey. UMIST is quite famous for management and computing.

MSc, South Korea, SK2

I also applied to Sheffield, Lancaster, Leeds, Cardiff and got an offer from all of them. I selected UMIST because some of my friends study in the UK and told me that UMIST is the best for computation. UMIST is very popular in South East Asia ... UMIST is the best choice.

MSc, China, CN3

Most of the students had numerous offers with seven of the interviewees having received four or more. However, regardless of whether they were previously aware of UMIST or not, in order to make a final decision, nine of them relied on the help and advice of other people. For example:

I wanted to study at a famous and very good university so I asked my cousin to find that out for me. He asked his friends who work in London in the IT field. Basically, they said UMIST was the best option for Computation. I only applied to Manchester University and UMIST as my cousin said I wouldn't have to pay anything if I lived with him.

MSc, Pakistan, PK1

My uncle graduated from UMIST and recommended it so that is why I am here. I got 7-9 offers but my uncle told me UMIST was the best out of them all.

PhD, Singapore, SG1

Similar to Phase 1, once again, these examples demonstrate how influential personal recommendations and word-of-mouth can be. Nevertheless, the success of this particular method was often assisted by other factors such as a high ranking or good quality

assessments which eight students took note of. As before, only one student mentioned that the conditions of the offer were favourable with a further five stating that the subject area was of utmost importance. Three students mentioned that good facilities and the quality of research and teaching were essential to their decision.

Four of the interviewees chose UMIST in preference to other universities because the cost of living in Manchester is cheaper than other cities, especially London. One respondent was also attracted to Manchester's big student community and position 'right in the middle of England'. Furthermore, a student from South Korea stated 'I think at the time I liked Manchester better than the other places because I knew about it before I came'. However, out of the seventeen students interviewed, there was only one student, from Mongolia, who was restricted to UMIST as her government had a contract with UMIST to recruit technology graduates.

5.5 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

In Phase 2, I decided to change some of the questions which were used in Phase 1 for the following reasons:

- The question regarding English being a first or second language was no longer appropriate as it was evident from Phase 1 that students had problems irrespective of whether it was a first or second language.
- It was difficult to establish whether students who attended pre-sessional programmes did any better than those who just arrived early to settle in and become accustomed to new way of life. Also, a student may have been required to attend a pre-sessional English course as a condition of an offer thus their initial skill level may have been lower than the other interviewees.
- It was noted that a number of students felt uneasy with direct questioning regarding English language competence and capability.

I decided to be more tactful and instead asked whether language affected their relationship with others as interaction was a relevant part of the study. This question was also closely linked to one that asked if it was easier to relate to a certain group of people. Therefore, in the analysis of Phase 2, another category entitled 'Language and Relationships' was created to reflect the change.

As in Phase 1, the other aspect of the English language was how it differed from their homeland and how they coped with speaking English in England. Seven of the students explained the problems they faced shortly after arriving in the UK. Some of their comments are as follows:

The English was totally different. I thought my English would be OK because I passed the exam and thought I would be able to converse easily. I got to the student hall and there were about 9 English girls from different parts of England and I couldn't understand a word they were saying! It made me think 'how could I think I can understand or speak English?' The worst thing was when I said something and they couldn't understand my accent.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

When I initially arrived I couldn't understand a word of what they were saying but you have to adapt and learn how to listen. It took a few months to get used to the Manchester accent.

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

At first the Manchester accent was very difficult to understand but after a few months I got used to it.

MSc, China, CN3

I thought I was OK until I found some difficulty with accents. It took a couple of months to get used to it. What I had learned in my country seemed to be wrong. The pronunciation was different, it was interesting.

PhD, Indonesia, ID1

Despite many of the students being proficient in English, it still took quite a few months to become familiar with the language spoken by the local people (Craig, 1993). Therefore, it is evident that regardless of the level of skill it is also the accent which is hard to understand as students may be taught American-English or by someone with a foreign accent. However, a couple of the interviewees also mentioned that although they had teachers from England, they found that the local people spoke faster. Furthermore, four respondents found it 'easier to listen to those who speak slowly and clearly' such as lecturers, university staff and the Prime Minister. A Libyan explained that 'the people on the street speak quickly and maybe do not complete the words'. A couple of students also mentioned that the Scottish accent was very difficult to comprehend. However, it was not always the local accent which was the problem but the use of English in their native country's slang i.e. Manglish or Singlish as discussed in Phase 1. For example:

We speak English with some slang. When I first came here I forgot and people reminded me not to talk like that. I now try to maintain proper English and not to talk like I did before. I remember when I did a

presentation in the States, I was aware that some people wouldn't understand.

MSc, Malaysia, MA4

It was also relevant to note that the students from Malaysia and Singapore, who did not consider English to be an influencing factor when applying, still had some difficulty when they arrived.

In Phase 2, another dimension of the English language was introduced as I wished to discover how important the use of English was in the decision making process. Not surprisingly, four students from countries where English is widely spoken did not consider the language factor when applying. However, the vast majority did take the language into consideration and some explained the perceived benefits as follows:

English was very important and it was one of the main reasons I came. The degree will definitely improve my job prospects.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

English was very important because here everything is in English so studying the relationship with people in the street, in any place, you must use English. In my department we use English only when we have some foreign visitors so it should improve my job prospects.

MSc, Libya, LB2

I wanted to improve my English, as it is better in my country if you are doing business, if you know English. UK is better to learn in because we already know the American accent because it is used in all the countries.

MSc, Pakistan, PK2

English was a very important factor because English is used all over the world. English could be very popular in China soon because we have just joined the WTO. A lot of private schools are being opened just for English because more and more people are learning English because their job demands it.

MSc, China, CN2

Similarly, another student from China echoed these sentiments by stating 'I think English is more important as China has now entered the WTO' which highlights the importance of the English language beyond the fulfilment of higher education.

As with Phase 1, it is apparent that there are many elements of the English language which can cause difficulty. However, it does not only apply to speakers for whom English is their second language. It is quite clear that even those who have spoken English fluently can still

be affected. Some of the interviewees attempted to improve their English language skills by listening to the radio, watching TV, reading lecture notes and by having a part time job. A few students were also pleased that their children had benefited from living here as they acquired very good English language skills. Therefore, in order to maintain competence, they planned to send them for private English lessons when they returned home as it may give them a better chance of entering an English speaking university when they are older.

5.6 LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Five of the students mentioned that their English language capability affected their confidence when speaking in English. Furthermore, the issue can become more complicated as the level of confidence only usually grows when positive interaction has occurred. However, for some students the problem is in having enough confidence just to talk to someone in the first place. Language and relationships can be confusing as it not only depends upon the language capability but personality traits which enable a person to interact successfully in another language (Loveday, 1986; Bennett, 1998). Some of the interviewees explained such situations as follows:

I would choose Chinese to talk to because it is easier because of the language. After that it doesn't really matter. I don't think my speaking is very good so I don't have much confidence. I find it difficult sometimes and worry about it. All my friends come from Asia and I speak to most in Chinese. This year I haven't improved my English and I should have tried to find someone to speak English to. I thought it was quite unusual that there were a lot of Chinese students who stayed together.

MSc, China, CN5

If you don't understand you can ask again but it depends on confidence. When I first started meeting people and sat in a group I didn't understand jokes or slang words which aren't used in Pakistan, but you learn over time. It is all in the process of learning.

MSc, Pakistan, PK1

The first problem in human relationships is attraction. The second is language. The other is patience. Some foreign people say they don't want to listen to me which is stressful but English people are patient.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

These examples illustrate that there are additional obstacles which may complicate communication such as the ability to understand slang, informal expressions or the time needed for someone to patiently listen to what is being said. Interestingly, a couple of the interviewees said that English people were more patient and one Libyan student found it

easier to talk to English people as ‘other nations will just transfer it from English into their own language and after that they answer you. It is easier to talk to an English person because they don’t have to translate it’. Nevertheless, the speed with which it is translated will depend upon the level of proficiency and thus some foreign students may respond as quickly as an English speaker. A research student from South Korea also explained the difficulty with certain words which had a detrimental affect on his relationship with his supervisor as he said that ‘it is difficult to express new ideas immediately as I don’t always know the English words’. Needless to say, this problem could delay the rate of his progress.

Another obstacle which may be present is the availability of English students to talk to as many postgraduates in the department were from overseas. One Chinese student explained such circumstances by saying ‘I must speak and listen more to improve my English but there is no appropriate environment or situation so if I am just here I will not make good progress’. However, it would be possible for him to meet people in the wider university environment and community. Furthermore, three respondents introduced another aspect to this issue by describing why they found it easier to speak to other students irrespective of the language as follows:

In my experience, I think it is easier for me to talk to a group of multinational people rather than British people in the British Community, maybe because we are all in the same situation. The way the mixed group speaks is quite predictable.

PhD, Indonesia, ID1

Asian students have the same plans about the course and talk about the same topic. But the English study here as well as other things so the topic is different. They may talk about the weather or the news. Foreign students just talk about the course. I try to talk to English people because I want to learn about the real English culture, but these days it is easier to read the newspaper!

MSc, South Korea, SK2

Although my English is OK it is easier talking to people from Malaysia as we could chat about the same topic, have the same mission and interests. I may not have the same topic as an English person. You may say ‘Hello, how are you?’ and maybe chat for five minutes but other Asians or Africans have a lot to talk about. We may also travel with other foreign students but the British go back home in the holidays.

MSc, Malaysia, MA4

These examples exemplify that even if an overseas student has the confidence to talk to an English person, after a few minutes the conversation may cease as they may not have any shared interests. This scenario could also be related to the ‘collective’ level of human mental programming (Hofstede, 1984) in Chapter 2. This level is concerned with the need to

affiliate to some human beings but not to others, based upon shared experiences and backgrounds (Bochner et al., 1977; Tajfel, 1981).

One student happily disclosed how the necessity to improve her language skills enhanced one relationship in particular as follows:

I used to bother about my English a lot. The main reason I first went out with my husband was to improve my English. I told him that it was a good opportunity to practice my English and he was really helpful. But the more we talked we started to like each other. He got quite serious after a couple of months but I told him I just wanted to improve my English! Now that we are married he still mocks me and says that my English is still not good enough so I will have to stick around for at least another three years!

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

Fortunately, there are positive aspects to learning English which may change one's life forever.

5.7 SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

In Phase 2, I added some new questions as the aim was to obtain views on the standards of services and living and how they compared with their own countries. A large majority of twelve students believed that the services in England were very good and some from Pakistan, Indonesia and China said that they were better than their homeland. However, although a couple of other students agreed with this, they also saw the negative side of a good service as explained:

In China services are very fast e.g. issuing documents but here they may take 1-2 weeks but nobody pushes them and they never rush. It is a good way and less mistakes will be made.

MSc, China, CN2

The British people don't consider the customer too much. Even though there are long queues and provide a good service they don't hurry up. They are so relaxed. In one respect it is a good habit but not if I have an urgent situation.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

Similarly, although five of the interviewees thought that the banks were very good, one believed that an advanced system is not necessarily better as follows:

The standard of service is good but sometimes it is less efficient. The banks are more advanced than China but sometimes have less action. Maybe the UK banks are more confidential and formal and they give you forms to fill out. In China, if I wanted to open an account I just show my national ID card and they give me a book, a slip, password in just 2-3 minutes.

MSc, China, CN3

However, it is possible that the Chinese system only appears to be faster as his national identity card will provide the Chinese banks with the formal and confidential information which is requested by a UK bank. Therefore, if a foreigner attempts to open a bank account in China, they may face similar problems. A South Korean student also stated that 'English banks are more focussed on the family and own their life but Korean people concentrate on business more'. This statement also implies that the English borrow more money from the banks i.e. loans and mortgages as they do not need to rely on their families when a bank loan will suffice.

Seven of the students liked the shopping here for various reasons. However, it was especially interesting to discover that three Chinese students all preferred the English way of shopping as 'in China you have to argue the price which can be stressful and time consuming'. They also found the atmosphere to be more relaxed and far less pressurised so they actually bought more here. A couple of them also referred to the refund or exchange policies which they related to the element of trust and honesty in our society.

Three interviewees commented on the attributes of people working in the service industries. However, two of them noticed particular values which were lacking in their own societies. The first student explained the different outlook as follows:

In shops, restaurants, wherever you go you don't see grumpy and bad tempered people. Mongolia was a communist country for so long and people were used to making things and business was always centrally related. After the revolution in the 90's, people are still learning how to be pleasant in the service industries. Back home you can be jumped at by anyone who is bad tempered and it can spoil your day.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

The second student attributed the better services to the number of female workers in the UK service industry. He explained his opinion as follows:

The standard of service is better than Pakistan, maybe because more women are in the service industries. It improves the standard. In our

country it is mostly men and they are not that good. The women are more polite and when they work in customer service they understand easier. Men are not that open and just do their job but women are understanding and ask how you are.

MSc, Pakistan, PK2

It is debatable whether men or women are better in customer service. Nevertheless, it is clear that the student's perception is influenced by the core distinction of men and women in his homeland. This distinction could be linked to the masculinity dimension of culture (Hofstede, 1984) where 'men are supposed to be assertive, ambitious, and tough and women should be subservient and tender' (Hofstede, G J et al, 2002, p. 101).

Eight of the students commented on transportation which included buses, trains and taxis. Although one student from Malaysia was satisfied with the services in general, he noted that the cabs were expensive. Alternatively, a Libyan student was very happy with the public transport for the following reasons - 'in my country everybody has a car because the transport is so bad. Also fuel is very, very cheap about one pence per litre!' It seems that feelings were mixed about bus services - 'the buses sometimes take a long time and do not represent the timetable' and 'here I think the buses run more regularly'. However, the differing opinions are probably related to the quality of operations in their particular geographical area as some places are better served by public transport than others. A student from Malaysia found the student discount systems particularly helpful as it was not available at home. Unfortunately, most students did not have anything positive to say about the British rail network. For example, a Malaysian student stated 'The train services in the UK have problems which won't go away by pouring money into it. You need a long term plan of how it can be improved' and an interviewee from Indonesia said 'Knowing that the UK was the founder of train technology it seems that the trains are often late'. Nevertheless, there was one student who was happy with the service as explained:

The whole country has a well developed system e.g. the railway system. In China I heard that there were accidents frequently but I came here and have changed my opinion. The trains are very modern, very nice and convenient. If I travel I usually take the train. I have a student discount card.

MSc, China, CN3

Not surprisingly, many of the respondents mentioned another infamous public service which is frequently in the media – the National Health Service. In keeping with this controversial topic, the interviewees gave a balanced view based upon their own experiences as follows:

Over here the medical service is free but in Malaysia, if you can afford it you can go to a private hospital which doesn't cost too much there. Here you stay with the GP and you have to wait a long time for an appointment. In Malaysia, if you are ill you can go to 24 hour clinics and get treatment.

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

I think medical health is good as it is free, even to the foreign students. It is quite a good system so our country tries to follow the English way. At home we have to pay a bit of money.

MSc, South Korea, SK2

I think the services in the UK are good but I have a friend from France and hear complaints from him. The NHS is good as I can go to the GP and it is free. I am OK but I have heard that some people have to wait in a queue for 3-5 hours. In Iran common people have an insurance from the government which is limited.

MSc, Iran, IR1

The standards of service are better than my country but the medical services are disappointing. I have to make an appointment which takes days to get and then I cannot go straight away, which is not good enough. In Indonesia you just put your name on the list and wait in the queue.

PhD, Indonesia, ID1

I didn't like the GP service. In Malaysia we don't need an appointment. We joke that we will die first before being able to see the GP. We have private and public hospitals where they have a queue but everyone can see the GP. Everyone from Malaysia complains about it because if we get sick we don't know where to turn to.

PhD, Malaysia, MA3

I have a very bad impression about the medical system. I had a very bad cough and made an appointment and had to wait 3 days. When I went to the Doctor's I had to wait for more than an hour because the Doctor was not there. I told him I had a bad cold and high fever and he just started laughing! He told me that in Britain the cough was not a disease anymore. He just told me to go home and drink hot water. I expected to receive some special care, some medicine or something but I just wasted 2 hours of my time. After that I have never gone to the GP.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

Although these responses are self explanatory, it is possible to see that the opinions are quite diverse as expectations are influenced by previous experiences of medical services. However, with regard to this issue, two distinct areas have been discussed. Firstly, it was interesting to discover that the main positive aspects were related to the perception that the medical system was 'free'. This, of course, is misleading and such thinking may be linked to the formation of 'mistruths' as discussed in Chapter 4. In this case, the students may not be aware of the mandatory contributions that employees make to the NHS. Secondly, it was

apparent that there was widespread confusion and dissatisfaction with the 'tiered' system of services which students from abroad may not be used to. Nevertheless, this matter is important as the welfare of all students is paramount. In particular, it was regrettable for me to learn about the South Korean student as his bad experience may have caused him to neglect his health in the future. In addition, it must be noted that this case may have been worsened as the student was from a traditionally hierarchical society (Hofstede, 1984) where Doctors are still very well respected. Therefore, the student may have felt ridiculed to be laughed at by a person whom he held in high esteem thus causing personal embarrassment and undue turmoil.

Some interviewees from Singapore, South Korea, China, Pakistan and Mongolia commented on certain aspects of the standards of living. The student from Singapore said 'it is the same as Singapore except that everything here is approximately 2.5 times more expensive but milk, bread and Clark's shoes are cheaper here'. Similarly, a Chinese student also mentioned food and drink but in relation to hygiene – 'the food from Tesco is very nice and safe to eat and I can drink water directly. I don't need to boil it'. Fortunately, this is a part of British life that many residents do not worry about but which may still be appreciated by foreigners.

Some of the students compared the housing market with their own countries, with only one student from Pakistan saying that the houses are bigger there. However, it is impossible to put this into context as he may reside in a place in England with many small terraced houses as opposed to larger homes in other districts. Also, the size of a house may not be related to the wealth of a country as the land may be relatively cheap to purchase. Some other examples relating to social conditions were as follows:

Most people here live in an independent house but in China we live in blocks of flats. Some people like this type of building because we can communicate very easily and help each other. In England every family has an independent house. When I came here I lived with my cousin's family in a big independent house in a new area. Maybe it is because they have more money and they can support themselves.

In China a big house is expensive and most people live in government houses and the workplace supports the place to live so they have no choice. My cousin has a mortgage which is not normal in China. Only rich people buy houses. I think if they had the choice in China they would live more independently. China has a lot of people and not many places to live so it would be more expensive to live alone.

MSc, China, CN4

The standard of living is higher than China – entertainment, food, environment, communications and transport. It is quite traditional for a couple of generations to live in the same house but life is now changing

because people are more flexible and mobile. After graduating in a city you may decide to live there and have no relatives nearby.

MSc, China, CN2

Korea is a modern society and people living alone has increased and more women are thinking about careers. I don't need a family when I live in Korea but here it would be useful to have a family with me.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

Because we are from a harsh environment we are more closely knit together. Family and friends tend to be really close to each other but sometimes it can be quite tiring because people come in and want to know your business. But in a way it's like a way of survival and a way of living which I missed a lot for the first 2 years because you always have someone to turn to and chat to and share your good or bad moments with.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

It is apparent from these examples that it may not always be a choice but a necessity to live together. People may rely on each other to maintain a standard of living which can be regarded as a way of surviving the rigours of every day life. It was also interesting to learn that the South Korean student felt that having his family with him would help him to cope better. In view of these comments, it could be that some of these scenarios are reminiscent of times in England's history when communities and families were closely knit together in order to survive and employers provided housing. However, since then, the economy has improved and thus many people are self reliant or cared for by the welfare system. Therefore, it is possible that these differences are more noticeable to those students who are still from a traditional collective society where it is still necessary to support each other. Nevertheless, the experience of living in Britain enables them to see another perspective and an alternative way of living.

A few of the interviewees, referred to certain aspects of the system which included some of the elements which have already been discussed. However, they placed individual elements in a wider context and related them to the whole social system. For example:

The political system is fair. England has no exceptions it is always fair. When buying goods it doesn't matter if you are poor or rich and it is easy to get a refund or exchange goods.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

The social system is better here. In Singapore the take home pay is better but you have to care for yourself from cradle to grave. The support from the government is limited.

PhD, Singapore, SG1

A student from Iran did not like the monarchy as he believed that 'the British tax goes in their pocket for nothing'. Alternatively, another student from Pakistan had a good experience with the British tax system. He explained by saying 'When I was working I obviously paid tax. When I finished, I just phoned the Tax Office and sent them a letter. After just one week they sent me a cheque for £120 – I didn't expect that!' Alternatively, a student from Libya expressed how the notion of taxes was alien to him as they did not have to pay any in Libya as the wealth of the economy was sustained by the supply of oil.

5.8 ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

Students from Pakistan, Libya and Indonesia referred to the punctuality in British society. They believed that 'the people here are very disciplined' and 'everything is on time' which was much better than their own countries. In addition, some others commented on attitudes to time which they linked to the workforce. The interviewees thought that our attitude to work was relaxed and that we enjoyed ourselves more as follows:

I am sorry to say, but I think people enjoy life more than working compared to Malaysia. We work more than enjoy life.

PhD, Malaysia, MA3

In Singapore it is a very small country and there are a lot of people there. It is very crowded and the people work hard and long hours. This country is more relaxed. You can see that at the weekend people go outside the city and go to the pubs.

MSc, China, CN5

The amount of work people do here is a lot. In Pakistan people are lazier. In this country people are more aware about what they have to do to reach a certain goal. In Pakistan, once you get in one firm it is the kind of thing where you will do that job for the rest of your life, but in England jobs are contracted so you have to work hard. I think the one thing I like about this culture is that everything is fair here ... if you are willing to work hard you will get the reward.

MSc, Pakistan, PK1

It was possible to surmise that the 'work hard, play hard' ethic was an attractive aspect of the British working culture which another student also wished to learn from as explained:

After coming here I feel that I should spend more time with my family. I have been too busy before and just used to sleep at weekends. Most people are busy in Korea so I didn't know any different. There are now some policies that say 8 hours but Korean people have to work until their manager goes home. The working conditions are much better here. On weekends most families should meet in restaurants and eat together.

MSc, South Korea, SK2

Although it was good for him to learn about different working patterns the desire to change his life for the better may not be so simple as he comes from a traditionally hierarchical culture. Therefore, the cycle of what is expected of him when he returns will be very hard to break as in reality as there will be many factors to contend with.

5.9 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

In Phase 1, many of the responses relating to environmental factors arose as a result of questions relating to student expectations. Therefore, in Phase 2, I specifically asked whether the student liked the buildings and environment in order to obtain their views on such matters.

Once again, the weather was a popular subject and was raised by seven of the interviewees. Also, as before, the affects of the change in climate and dark winter nights were discussed. Some of the comments were as follows:

The weather is worse than I thought. I came in January from Singapore and lived in South China before that. I didn't have any experience of such cold weather. When I went back to China I bought some warm clothing. My friend from North China, where it is colder, advised me what to buy.

MSc, China, CN5

I was more surprised at the weather. I used to live in Moscow where it is colder but they have a proper summer. Manchester is rainy and dull.

MSc, Pakistan, PK2

The first time I came in February and had never been to a country with 4 seasons. When they said 'cold', I never expected it to be so cold. I had only ever been to Singapore outside of Malaysia. When I bought my winter coat in Malaysia I couldn't use it as it was still very cold. It could only be used in spring!

MSc, Malaysia, MA4

It was also evident that the long winter nights especially affected those who arrived in January as opposed to September as they were unable to acclimatise quickly. It was also interesting to discover that the English weather added another dimension to the experience of being cold which some students were not prepared for. Also, the four seasons of the year, which included a disappointing summer, were a surprise to some as further explained by an Indonesian student when he said 'I thought England had four seasons but it doesn't seem to

have a real summer and the weather is unpredictable'. It is this unpredictability which is a factor that many students find hard to cope with as in some countries they have 'rainy seasons' and summer is continuously dry. A Malaysian student also expected more snow as she had seen it on pictures portraying English winter time. Similarly, another Malaysian was very surprised to experience the cluster of earth tremors which occurred in Manchester in October 2002. However, he may not have realised that this was also a new phenomenon to many of the inhabitants of Manchester, which confirmed the unpredictability of environmental conditions both above and below the ground.

In this section, the majority of interviewees responded to a new question relating to buildings. It was interesting to discover that because England is a modern society, many of the interviewees expected to see a high technology landscape similar to that of America, although many actually preferred the old buildings. However, those that were aware of England's long history, were not as surprised as those who were not. Some of their comments were as follows:

I really like the old buildings in the town centre. They are really, really good. New buildings are very good as well. The old buildings are better than expected but new is new and you can see that everywhere. England is like a thousand years old, it is established so you expect old things.

MSc, Pakistan, PK1

You keep the old buildings but in Pakistan they build modern houses and they are all different. Maybe it is because your country has a longer history whereas ours is 50-60 years. In Manchester you don't have any sky scrapers.

MSc, Pakistan, PK2

The buildings and streets gave me a shock because I thought England was a well developed country and the buildings should be higher, beautiful and colourful. At first I had the impression that England was quite boring, red buildings and nothing had changed for 100 years, but on the contrary it is really good. You are living in a cultural life and not just a stone forest.

MSc, China, CN2

In addition to America, comparisons were also made with other countries and cities. However, the most popular was London which fulfilled the expectations of England for some, although not everyone liked it. Some comments were as follows:

I prefer to live in Manchester more than anywhere else in the UK. I have been to London, York, Leeds and places like that. You can say it is a

'medium' lifestyle here, not congested like London, things are really 'wide' here.

MSc, Pakistan, PK1

My friend took me around London and we looked at the famous places like Buckingham Palace and Baker Street. I was surprised by the narrowness of the streets compared to Russia and Mongolia. I thought it would be more modern but was pleasantly surprised. Back home we have old Soviet Union buildings which are similar and quite boring. It was nice to see the old pretty buildings which are all different.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

I expected very high technology, very tall buildings like in America and Malaysia but when I first arrived I didn't see any, only 4 storeys. When I first visited London it was totally different than Manchester but what I expected of England. It was a busy city with lots of people.

MSc, Malaysia, MA4

The buildings are traditional. I like this style. They are not like in Singapore and China which are modern. There are lots of streets with green things. The trees here are very green not like in China. The first time I went to London I thought it was very noisy and dirty. I imagined that London was the best city but I didn't like it.

MSc, China, CN5

A number of students mentioned that Manchester was 'red'. At first I thought that they were referring to Manchester United but was amused to find out that it was the colour of the bricks used in buildings. Some more examples where colours are attributed to places are given:

Manchester was different than London. It was quite 'red'. It's still red – all bricks! Even the old buildings in the city centre are red. In London they are white, grey, quite mixed.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

In Singapore we also preserve old buildings and use them as tourist attractions. But everything looks the same [as England] they even have houses made out of red bricks! I hate London. Singapore is more like London whereas Manchester is not crowded. Sometimes when you are out shopping you realise there is no-one else around you.

PhD, Singapore, SG1

I was quite shocked at the buildings in Manchester but now I am getting quite used to the red brick buildings. The buildings are old and some used to be factories. Whenever I see red brick buildings in Manchester I think of a Pink Floyd album in which they argue about how the Industrial Revolution affected the people. I didn't expect it to be modern but it is still different than the Far East.

MSc, South Korea, SK1

I lived in a red Victorian house. It is 100 years old and strong as well. From the building and garden you can see the life from 100 years before – you don't need to go to a museum. It is really full of culture – it is real life not like modern buildings.

MSc, China, CN2

In addition, a Libyan student explained that 'the buildings are very different than in Libya, especially the roofs ... We don't use bricks but a cement mix' and a South Korean student said that 'The British style of architecture is quite different because most architecture in Korea is made of wood'. Furthermore, a student from Malaysia particularly liked the style of churches which he enjoyed visiting around the country.

The way in which a student perceived the environment was based on their expectations, previous experiences and the extent to which these differed from the reality. For example, for a Chinese student from 'noisy Beijing' Manchester will seem quiet and for students from Malaysia it will be very cold. Similarly, those from crowded cities will think it is empty but for those who are used to vast open spaces it will seem crowded as explained:

In the city it can be quite crowded. I miss not being able to hop on the bus for 10 minutes and then you are in the countryside. Sometimes you want to go somewhere really quiet and not see any fences or cars. I love Wales. It is the closest I can get to Mongolia but there are still paved roads and you have to stick to set routes.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

It was noted that the environment was often experienced through the primary senses of sight, touch and hearing and that an array of words were used to describe what England 'felt' and 'looked' like to an overseas student. However, the most dominant sense was sight as the impressions of England were described in various shapes, sizes and colours. These descriptions could be related to how people communicate with the world. For example, Adler (1997) asks 'How do people see space' as discussed in Chapter 2.

5.10 PERSONAL SAFETY

In Phase 2 I decided to delete the question regarding safety on the campus. The reason for this was that most students did not distinguish the difference between the campus and the city probably because the campus is located in the city centre. A majority of twelve students thought that Manchester was safe. However, most of those believed that this was only the case if certain common sense procedures were practiced. For example:

I would say Manchester is safe if you do not go to those 'black mark' areas. If you don't go there you will prevent it and be OK. Don't do things like walk alone at night which is common sense around the world. Crime has to be put into context.

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

I don't think Manchester is a safe place to live because so many people told me that you cannot walk on the street at midnight and if you live in bad areas your laptop and computer will be stolen. That is why I chose to live in a hall.

MSc, China, CN5

Manchester is safe as long as you take care of yourself. There is not a 100% safe place in the world. There is no point going out very late or going into very dark places.

MSc, China, CN2

I think Manchester is safe but like in any big city, something always happens. Last year there were a few burglaries in my hall. I think it is normal for a big city. We were told to lock the doors here which was different than when I was in Leeds.

MSc, Malaysia, MA4

As discussed in Chapter 4, although it is true that crime is more prevalent given certain conditions, the students who believe that **all** crime only occurs in certain areas and at certain times may put themselves at greater risk. In addition, it is possible to see that some students are more 'acclimatised' to the norms of awareness and social conditions through their previous experiences and be able to cope better than those who have not. For example, people who have lived in places with a high crime rate will not be as surprised as those who have not as explained:

Manchester is a safe place compared to the States. In the middle of the night in San Diego and Los Angeles I could hear gun shots! So here it is good. In the US they have a lot of armed robberies. I have seen with my own eyes the police firing at the crooks whilst chasing them on the street!

PhD, Singapore, SG1

It has been so far, so good for me although people do say Manchester has a high level of crime. I live in a small city in Indonesia and used to live in a crowded area where you had to secure things.

PhD, Indonesia, ID1

I think Manchester is definitely a safe place to live. I have heard it has the highest number of students in Europe so I think that is one of the things that makes it safe because most of the people living here are students and students don't commit crimes. Every city has a bad reputation, especially downtown Los Angeles where I heard some gun shots. I haven't seen any crime here.

MSc, Iran, IR1

The last example is particularly interesting because although the student may have a heightened sense of awareness due to his experience in the US, he may become complacent as his belief about the majority of the Manchester population being students is incorrect. Therefore, unless he finds out the true facts, he may subconsciously put himself at greater risk of crime.

Fortunately, out of the seventeen students interviewed, only one had actually been a victim of crime (burglary) which she attributed to living in a 'horrible' area. In addition, three other students had heard about other people who had been victims of crime which caused them some concern. Similarly, a few more students mentioned that their awareness was increased but not by stories from others, but by the media. They explained:

Even though I heard some bad stories on the news I think it is a safe place. I have lived on campus for 4 years and have had no problems.

PhD, South Korea, SK2

In my opinion Manchester is a safe place to live but I read the newspaper and the statistics say the crime rate is higher than New York! My country is very safe and you can sleep anywhere.

MSc, Libya, LB3

I normally go out during the day and stay at home at night. I haven't seen any criminals but when I listen to the radio and television only then do I start worrying, but overall I think it is OK.

PhD, Malaysia, MA3

I don't think Manchester is safe. Nothing has happened to me but some of my friends have had a lot of problems here. You see the Police a lot here. I worry about my wife and children when I am not home.

MSc, Libya, LB2

It could be argued that some of these students would be less worried if they did not speak to anyone, watch TV or read the newspapers. However, as with many situations, rumours and scaremongering often exaggerate the truth. Also, as many students live in halls and close knit communities it is possible that numerous events may seem to have taken place when in fact only one did. Nevertheless, it is important for the students to be aware of the reality of living in a city so that they can successfully accomplish their goals without unnecessary fear and worry.

5.11 PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

In Phase 2, an extra question regarding the friendliness of English people was introduced as this subject had been raised in Phase 1 and thus I aimed to pursue the matter further. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the group of people to which the interviewees referred to as 'British' or 'English' are those perceived as such due to demographic and individual characteristics. Therefore, it could be suggested that occasionally they may be mistaken as it is not always easy to determine ethnic origin or nationality of a person.

Nine of the students believed that the English people were friendly and only one said that they were unfriendly. The remainder stated that they either did not know enough English people to be able to comment or that it depended on various factors such as age, area and the way in which a person lived. For example:

The levels of friendliness are different. The Scottish people in small towns are more friendly than a big city, and old people are more friendly. I asked directions and they show you and are very helpful but young people just said they 'don't know'.

MSc, China, CN3

Friendliness mainly depends on the area and way of living but mainly the English are friendly and polite, especially the older people.

PhD, Indonesia, ID1

Basically, people here are friendly and you can easily talk to them but it depends where they are living. In big cities you work long hours, get stressed, and the crime rate is probably higher so you don't tend to communicate much. If you say too much you may get robbed. In big cities you protect yourself more but in a village you know each other and may trust each other. You tend to be more open and may share more. The people in Staffordshire where I stayed before were different from those in Manchester.

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

It was evident that these students had observed their surroundings and were aware of certain situations regarding the friendliness of people. However, even though most of the comments were positive, some of the interviewees were a little confused with the way in which the friendly behaviour of English people was demonstrated. For example:

I think English people are friendly but it is very difficult to make friends. Although they are friendly they don't tell you about their personal life even though you may know them a long time. I think it is very similar to

Japanese people who are very polite and kind but do not open their mind to you ... Traditionally, the British are a little bit shy and do not like to talk to strangers.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

English people are friendly but when they finish talking to you, they forget you. When I met my English colleague in another city he was no longer friendly. It made me think that all English people were like that.

I have some English friends who I speak to after lectures. I have been here for 2 years and when I ask people questions they are always friendly.

MSc, Libya, LB3

Friendly behaviour is complex as it is dependent on many aspects including personality and circumstances. However, for some, the confusion with the English behaviour may occur as it is in contrast with what they are used to and they simply do not comprehend it. They may only think that someone is being friendly if that person discloses personal information to them which is not necessarily true in England as one of the students discovered:

It depends on the people and their nationalities but I quite like to talk to European and English people because I like their informal and gentle way. They keep a distance from you but you are together. They will help you if you need their help but they are not trying to get some secret information from you. They respect your private life but offer their hand all the time.

Chinese people talk about every topic. They are curious and want to know everything about the people around them – your salary, your marriage, your bathroom – everything! And you have to say something, true or not. I definitely prefer the English way. Here people care more about their own lives, family members and their dog!

Here people look after other people in a very close way. For example, my friend in London has a relative in China with a very strange disease. My friend told a colleague about this in just a few words. Anyhow, a couple of days later his colleague brought a lot of information about the disease and said his grandmother had suffered from it and been treated in hospital. My friend was amazed that it was not a close colleague but they were still willing to help but didn't want to know their secrets. They offered a warm hand which was very nice. In China it is usually only your friend that will help you and not people in general.

MSc, China, CN2

Although a number of the interviewees were surprised that the English do not freely disclose information about themselves, this student was amazed that despite this reluctance, they were still willing to help others who are not necessarily friends. Alternatively, another Chinese student did not understand this and perceived the English in another way as explained:

English people are always nice on the surface. When they talk their heads are very near but Chinese keep their distance. But if Chinese people are friends they will help each other in every case. But here it is always 'sorry', 'welcome', 'thank you' and in their mind it is 'keep distance'.

MSc, China, CN4

A couple of students were slightly amused that British people treated animals as family members as in their own countries they were left outside the home. Their surprise may also be related to expectations of people from individualistic cultures who they believe are only supposed to care for themselves and disregard those around them. Some differences between Eastern and Western people are aptly explained as follows:

The differences between Eastern and Western cultures are almost opposite. In my country, one of the traditional virtues is that you always stay quiet, modest and polite and avoid saying 'no'. We always say 'yes' because 'no' is a very strong negative meaning. In this country you are able to express your ideas. Sometimes in our customs you think about the 'whole' so sometimes you just hide amongst them. Our culture is based on harmony and relationships are much more than the individual. We always think about everyone.

PhD, South Korea, SK1

Alternatively, although in a collectivist culture it is necessary to think about the 'whole' instead of the individual; it may also be wise to suppress emotions so that colleagues, friends and family may help in times of need as other sources may not be available.

Besides behaviour, some students commented on what they expected people to look and act like. One student commented on physical expressions as follows:

When I arrived it was somehow bizarre. I read a book in Russian called 'The House of Uncle Tom. It was set in England in the 18th century ... In London I was walking along the street and could see all these 'smiley' people, really 'kind' looking, black or white. I thought 'yeah, this is just like in the book'. There was a 'kind' feeling inside. There were old people walking who looked kind and happy looking and didn't care too much about their clothes – really relaxed. They say Mongolians are happy people but it was like a totally different kind of happiness – more relaxed.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

These images may have been particularly significant as the student was from a country where life was hard and the stress may manifest itself on the faces of people. In addition, a student from South Korea thought that the people were very colourful because in his country they mostly have the same hair and eye colour. In addition, a Chinese interviewee expected

everyone to wear suits and listen to classical music. A couple of Libyan students also mentioned their surprise at seeing parts of women's bodies which were normally covered up in their own country.

Being polite, helpful, patient and open minded were other attributes mentioned by nine of the respondents. Some of the students even compared the differences with their own people as follows:

The British people are more open. For example, the British people if in a good mood can dance on the streets to music and nobody will say they are crazy but in China they would take you to hospital!

MSc, China, CN5

The English and Chinese cultures are different in a lot of ways e.g. opening doors. In China nobody holds the door open for the next person. They don't care that other people are behind them. At first I felt very flattered when someone did that for me.

MSc, China, CN2

Before I came we always said Malaysian people are polite but here they are more polite. For example, on the bus when old people come on someone would stand up. In Malaysia you seldom see that. And the men over there are not 'gentlemen'. They wouldn't open the door or help you carry things!

The older generation are very polite but not some of the new generation. People queue for the bus in Malaysia we all rush for a place. Those are the things that I really don't like but when I see people here they are very polite and disciplined in that manner. It makes me admire the people here.

PhD, Malaysia, MA3

In addition, a couple of students were surprised to see English women smoke as this was unusual in their own countries. A Chinese student said that if a lady smokes 'they will think she is a girl in Playboy!' Some Muslim students from Malaysia, Pakistan and Indonesia believed that the English people were not very religious. One of them explained as follows:

Here [in England] people tend to be secular and separate religion and daily life but there the two are connected. Here I think people agree to have a common value based on what they believe to be good and is not necessarily based on religion. But we base our morals on religion. I am a Muslim and being here doesn't change my views but adds to my experience. I can now see that people here have different views but I can still see the problems here e.g. one parent families because religion is not a base.

PhD, Indonesia, ID1

Although this statement is based on individual perceptions, his view could be influenced by his own faith and lack of awareness of English life. It could be argued that one parent families are not necessarily due to the lack of religion but to other issues including the freedom of the individual in society. Being a single parent in Britain is no longer a social taboo as it once was in previous decades. However, in some countries this may still be the case and people may be stigmatised if they do not act in accordance with social norms.

A few students noted that the population of Manchester consisted of mixed races. However, one student from Singapore told of his surprise at seeing Indians, Pakistanis and Chinese as he was told Manchester only had Caucasians and blacks. Initially, it was quite a shock for him until he later learned that 'in the 1960's England imported a lot of people to increase the job market after the war'. Although Singapore is a mix of Chinese, Malaysians, English and Indians he still thought there was more of a mix here.

5.12 PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

In Phase 2 I introduced a question asking how the interviewees learnt about life in England. The aim was to establish which methods were used to gain such knowledge. A variety of sources were used which were similar to those accessed for information about the university. Eight of the interviewees used the internet, TV, newspapers, books and films as a point of reference. A few others visited the library and British Council offices. In addition, six of the respondents had learnt about England whilst at school as it was part of the curriculum. The same number had learnt by listening to stories from people who had been to England.

Similar to Phase 1, the freedom in English society was mentioned by eleven of the seventeen interviewees. This incorporated such issues as lesbian and gay relationships, sex before marriage and independent living. However, it seemed that the Muslims were more affected by the differences as they were not used to such lifestyles as explained:

The culture is very different as I come from a Muslim country. Sorry about that but we cannot have sex before marriage and women in my country have to be covered. If a man wants to get married he can send a woman to see if she has good hair, eyes etc. In their own home, with close relationships, they do not have to be covered.

MSc, Libya, LB3

Iranian culture has the background of the Islamic culture. For example, here it is normal to have a girlfriend or boyfriend but in Iran we don't have that. It is not permitted to have sex before marriage. As a Muslim

we don't have that kind of concept. The tradition is like this. If I see a girl that matches me I will send a female of my family to find out more about the girl and then after we can sit and talk directly together. If we agree to marry we still would not have a courtship – it is taboo.

MSc, Iran, IR1

However, for some, the freedom may not only be related to behaviour and codes of conduct but also the freedom of expression which may be a new concept as there may be 'certain constraints' in some cultures. One of the interviewees explained as follows:

In Malaysia you are not allowed to have a 'punk' hairstyle. I think the society is quite reserved in how you want to do your hairstyle, especially shaving. It is not just about the hairstyle but the image you project. If you have a punk style you are associated with anti-social behaviour so the whole society will make that association. When you live there you have to live with certain constraints or else there will be consequences. The government just say they are not encouraging people to do so. In primary/secondary school they have fixed and very strict rules on dress code and you may be penalised. Outside of school children may dress up but people will think they are weird and something may be written in the newspaper about the anti-social behaviour.

MSc, Malaysia, MA2

Interestingly, this statement may explain a Chinese student's decisions to change his hairstyle whilst studying in England. The reason he gave for cutting his hair was that 'in China I had long hair but short hair is easier to deal with and feels quite free'. Similarly, a student who had worked in Singapore 'felt' differently here although everything was as she expected. She explained that 'I feel more free here. I cannot explain this feeling. It is the first thing that I told my parents. I like this country better than Singapore. If I have a choice I will stay here'. Another Chinese student told of how her own people were led to believe misconceptions of England as the information was strictly controlled by the government. She explains the situation as follows:

*Before the Western culture came into China we seldom heard about lesbians and gays although in China it is normal for young girls to hold hands. Before the 1980's we thought the West was full of very poor people who had no food to eat, no clothes to wear and that there were some very rich men who were very bad and took money from the poor men and that we needed to save you!
After the 1980's we started to hear more from the internet, newspapers and media ... In high school the door opened to the Western world so then we learnt the truth. We were surprised but accepted the truth as we knew we had been oppressed by the government.*

MSc, China, CN4

In view of this example, it is possible that the information being given to people in a country may not be correct due to restrictions in that country. Similarly, when a student comes to study in England they may be surprised not only because they may discover new concepts but that they have been given the wrong information in the first place.

Similar to Phase 1, the subject of alcohol and pubs was raised by nine of the students when referring to the English culture. Although alcohol was also consumed by many of them, they found that the way of drinking was in contrast to what they were used to as explained:

Normally, we don't see drunken people in the road. If Asian people get drunk in a bar they go home afterwards. The English quite enjoy drinking. In Korea, most of the Koreans enjoy drinking for business reasons with colleagues or friends.

MSc, South Korea, SK2

In addition, it was noted that the English drink at anytime (not only weekends) and that young girls also drank. Some of the interviewees did not understand why the English consumed so much alcohol and sometimes to excess. One respondent tried to find a reason for such behaviour as follows:

I know British people like drinking but it made me think why they go out so much here and why in Asia they drink less. At night you don't have anything to do. The restaurants are expensive and the shops are closed. If you want to go out with friends the best place is a pub which is covered and warm. I concluded that the English people like beer because they meet people in pubs and have no other choice. However, I think if you had an alternative you would probably still drink as it has slowly become the culture here. In some sense if you stop drinking you would not be British. When you have a culture it is very hard to change it.

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

Regardless of whether these reasons are correct or not, it seems the extent to which one sees the differences will be related to what they expected and what they are used to. For example, another student was not as surprised because of the following:

In history we learned about England starting with the East India Company so we roughly know about the English culture and also have English pubs – the Singaporeans drink like fish too! Even some of the street names are exactly the same so it is almost the same as England. The Chinese call the Singaporeans 'white bananas - yellow on the outside and white on the inside!'

PhD, Singapore, SG1

As in the previous section on people, some students believed that multiculturalism was a part of the English culture, which the majority of them appreciated. However, one believed that there were too many cultures and also could not understand why immigrants from his own country had created their own culture here. He explained:

Our culture in Pakistan is more advanced than the British Pakistanis. Their parents came in the 1950's so they are implementing the old rules in their houses. Here the Pakistanis are behind whereas I thought they would be more forward than us!

MSc, Pakistan, PK2

Another student from the same country believed that shopping for fun was part of English life. This was in contrast to Pakistan where shopping for clothes is done as a necessity once a season and there is not much choice. He also linked the culture to technology and development as he believed that lots of research in medicine and cancer are carried out in the UK. Furthermore, a Chinese student aptly summed up what culture meant to him. As he was on a computing course, he compared technology with culture and said that 'technology can be out of date a year later but culture is not the same. You cannot learn it if you are not in the environment – it is not in a text book.' His statement emphasises that although students come to England to study a lot more can be learned from experiencing a new way of life.

5.13 SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

In Phase 2, I decided to introduce some new questions regarding friendships. The students were asked where their friends were from and if any of them were English. They were also asked if they found it easier to relate to a certain group of people or not. The aim of the new questions was to attempt to establish if the overseas students were actually socialising with English people and who their friends were.

One of the interviewees aptly described the relationship between culture and social interaction as follows:

When you meet people from a different culture the first thing you do is learn their culture which is obviously different from yours. It is important to have the confidence to talk to people.

MSc, Pakistan, PK1

In view of the study, it was necessary to establish if the overseas students were learning about the culture by interacting with the local people, fellow students or others in the surrounding

environment. It was not acceptable just to assume that it was easy for the students to 'have the confidence to talk to people' as levels of confidence vary from person to person.

Altogether the group of seventeen students had friends from thirty two countries across the world. Five of them said they had no English friends and three said English people were their class or flat mates. However, the majority of nine of the interviewees did have English friends. For example:

I have a friend called Bob who I met at college a year ago. He was quite helpful and helped me move house and gave me a desk for my computer. Last Christmas I asked him to have a meal with my classmates because he lives alone ... My first friends were my Landlord and his family. I go to see them every few months with my girlfriend. They always look after you and know when you have problems. I only lived with them for 2 weeks but in that time they offered a lot of help. We do Chinese meals for them and they are very good friends.

MSc, China, CN2

I have some English friends from the course, from demonstrating and from a part time job, some off the internet by chatting. I have met about 5-6 in Manchester. Generally if you are interested you can exchange photographs and telephone them. It is better than just personally meeting someone as you don't know a lot but the internet allows you to get the information first.

MSc, Pakistan, PK2

As discussed in the English language section, three respondents found it difficult to talk to English people because of language difficulties. However, eight of them found it easier to talk to people from a similar background or circumstances due to the sense of familiarity (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Westen, 1999). Some of the interviewees explained as follows:

I can find many people with a closer culture to mine. Most of my friends are from Pakistan, India or Nigeria. It is important for me to live in a Muslim community. There are many mosques in different places ... I don't have many British friends on the course. I already have things in common with my Muslim friends.

MSc, Iran,

IR1

I have quite a few English friends and some from Oman, Singapore, Thailand and Hong Kong. I think I can talk to anybody but I think I would talk to Asians easier. Not because of the language but the familiarity.

PhD, Malaysia, MA3

I have friends from Spain, Greece, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, India and Hong Kong. It is easier to make friends with people from Asian countries as the background and culture is similar – it is not just the language. In China people come from a different history, cultural background and legal

system. But for western countries they are totally different. My friends from Europe are not very close.

MSc, China, CN3

I have friends from England, Thailand, Belgium, Botswana, Holland and Greece. In my experience, I think it is easier for me to talk to a group of multinational people rather than British people in the British community, maybe because we are all in the same situation. The way the mixed group speaks is quite predictable.

PhD, Indonesia, IN1

Furthermore, a number of students offered their opinions which developed the issue further. A Chinese student found England boring because she was used to playing games and socialising with friends and relatives in a close knit community. However, a Malaysian student had many good friends from both Europe and Asia and did not differentiate between the two. He believed that ‘if people tend to converse with you then that is good but if somebody doesn’t make eye contact, it doesn’t matter where they are from – it isn’t good’. Furthermore, a Chinese interviewee preferred not to have Chinese friends as they ‘may not tell you the truth about money or family or their true feelings. They may imagine that you will do something bad to them as they are away from home and hide things’. She believed that the Chinese suspected each other because they knew each other but they did not have to worry about locals and Europeans because they ‘cannot hurt them’.

I was pleased to learn how living in England had a positive affect on cross cultural interaction (Scollon & Scollon, 1996) which may be forbidden elsewhere as explained:

I have some friends from many countries especially India, China, Greece and Egypt. The situation in India and Pakistan is mainly political. In Pakistan it is more difficult to interact with Indians as we don’t travel that much and because of politics and the military. Our culture and food is the same but we don’t mix much.

MSc, Pakistan, PK2

This example shows how England can act as a ‘neutral ground’ where students from different countries are able to interact regardless of any restrictions which are in place in their own countries. Nevertheless, this is an ideal situation which may be more problematic in reality.

5.14 ADAPTING TO AND LEARNING FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE

In Phase 2, I added a couple of new questions in an attempt to pursue certain issues further. The first question asked if the change of culture and environment had an effect on their

lifestyle or behaviour. The second question asked if they had experienced anything new that had changed their lifestyle or views in any way. The title of this category was also amended to incorporate the new dimension of the study.

It was their first time in England for fourteen of the seventeen students. Two others had studied in England before and another had lived here as a child. The majority of eleven students were living here on their own with the remainder living with, or close to, friends or relatives.

As discussed in the previous sections, the extent to which a person adapts is dependent on many factors such as language, personality and environment. Twelve of those interviewed believed that they did not find it too difficult to adapt. However, their preparation and mental attitude may have helped them to adjust as follows:

Before I came here I prepared myself mentally by finding out about the culture and comparing the differences. Are you able to either totally blend in or don't blend in? Or you just think 'OK, I am here so I will follow the culture here' but you have certain restraints on yourself and what you want to do.

It wasn't that difficult to adapt. The most important thing about a new culture is what you shouldn't do first. You have to observe and see what happens. People here expect you to be polite so when in UK you have to do what the Romans do!

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

I didn't find it difficult to adapt because we know we need to change and always discuss it. We need to understand this culture so it is easy for us to get used to it.

MSc, China, CN4

I just came here and I enjoyed it. I understand culture and I didn't think it was good or bad – it is just a different culture. Because I am living in this country I just accept it. If I am having a bad time other people will not change their culture for me. I must change my culture for others because I live in this country.

MSc, China, CN5

Although it seemed that some preparation aided the transition process, there were five students who did not find it easy to adapt. One student from South Korea was very worried about foreign life as soon as he arrived at the airport. He just wanted to go straight back to the Departures Lounge. However, a Chinese student who initially experienced language difficulties believed that his age had a detrimental effect on his ability to adapt and explained that 'some young people can adapt very fast but some older people, like me, won't accept

another kind of culture'. The ability to adapt in relation to age was also reflected by the interviewees whose children adapted much easier than themselves. Furthermore, two students from Pakistan and Mongolia found the change in daily life hard as they were used to receiving support from their extended families. Initially, these feelings were particularly poignant for the Mongolian student and affected her in ways that she had never imagined as follows:

I did know the feeling of homesickness. It wasn't physical; it was like emotional emptiness in a way. You wanted to say something or share something but it was as if part of your life was taken away. I couldn't say what it was, it wasn't tangible but some part was missing and you couldn't tell what it was and you didn't know how to fill it either. Probably it was the way of life and day to day routine which was totally changed here. It was like that for about a year. I couldn't go with my problems to anybody. You had to make friends but even friends would go away, like students, and there wouldn't be enough time to make good friends.

MPhil, Mongolia. MO1

As in Phase 1, students had to also adapt to physical changes which included eating habits. One student realised how important food was on his first visit to England and made sure that he was more prepared the second time around. He explained:

We also brought a small supply of our own food. Last time I didn't have any food to eat ... I asked my advisor to give me some food so he prepared food for me for almost a week. I ate a lot of sandwiches, mushrooms, fried eggs and sausages. I never ate that kind of food before. In that first week I really experienced the English taste!

MSc, Malaysia, MA4

Eight of the interviewees mentioned that food was an important factor in the transition process although three felt they did not need to change as their spouses cooked for them. It seemed that a wide range of food was available in Manchester thus it was relatively easy for many overseas students to maintain a staple diet. However, a couple of students who initially changed it completely suffered health problems until they reverted back to at least eating their basic food. Nevertheless, the majority of the interviewees chose to combine 'Western' food with what they were accustomed to but cooked in their own style, as follows:

I prefer Chinese food so I cook everyday. I can buy the food in China Town or Tesco's but just cook it in my own style. I now eat bread at breakfast. In China I would have noodles.

MSc, China, CN5

Eating is very different as we have lots of stalls and many dishes every night. I think we have more variety. I now eat bread, noodles, potatoes but I don't like rice and cereal. I eat pasta which is a new food to me. I also eat fruit here because it is easy to eat. I don't need to cook it. I like grapes but they are expensive in Malaysia. I just don't like the types of vegetables. I have adapted but still cook in my own Malaysian style.

PhD, Malaysia, MA3

When I first came to England I thought I would see signs for fish and chips and I knew that because of the US culture that there would be Burger King, McDonald's and KFC. But instead I also found chicken tikka massala and chicken donners which I only learned about here which was a shock. My diet hasn't changed as I like Burger King. At home I eat the same things which are a mix of the English and US culture although my mum would cook Chinese or Malay food for dinner.

PhD, Singapore, SG1

The food is different here. In Malaysia if you don't want to cook you can go out, get some food, come back and go to sleep. Over here the cost is expensive and then you can only have take-aways, kebabs, pizza or Indian/Chinese restaurants and that's it. My friend eats fish and chips everyday but I prefer to cook something nutritious. I cook my own dishes, that is how I survive. I lived in a hall and there were lots of people from different places so I learnt from them. I can now cook curry, macaroni and cheese pie. It would be hard to do in Malaysia because tomato puree, cheese and pasta cost a lot there. If it was cheaper I would cook it but not so frequently.

PhD, Malaysia, MA2

From these examples it is apparent that there are other reasons, besides choice, why people change their dietary habits. For example, some students may not be used to cooking as they may have been catered for at home. Alternatively, they may not be able to find their food or they may simply not find enough time to cook due to study. Others may be used to eating out relatively cheaply or some may dislike the range of fast food available in England. However, some foods are cheaper here than in their own countries which may allow a student to try foods which they normally cannot afford. In addition, a student from Singapore loved to drink fresh cold milk twice a day. He explained that in his home country he could only drink it twice a week as it was almost five times more expensive there due to the lack of cows. Furthermore, a Malaysian student liked to experiment with different tastes as explained:

Normally we eat spaghetti and English food. We only eat Chinese food when we cook together. Actually, we like Western food more – especially steak. We can't get Malaysian food so our diet has changed a lot. We are willing to try new food and went through a stage of trying out new restaurants e.g. Indian. The curry is not hot for us here. We went for an English meal for our first wedding anniversary!

MSc, Malaysia, MA4

Some other changes in lifestyle were also mentioned; three of the interviewees now watch football with one also being interested in cricket. However, some changes may also have a positive effect on health and well being. For example, a Mongolian student was underweight and often suffered from the flu whilst at home but since living in England she is now a normal weight and has only had the flu once in five years. She explained:

I have become more relaxed – not too anxious or stressed about things. Back home, just like everyday problems get on your nerves. You try to struggle and stay afloat – it is an everyday struggle. But here if you are healthy and working ‘afloat’ is to lead a normal life. Just to keep food in the fridge for the next day you have to think really hard and sometimes you have to create ‘magic’. It’s impossible. The employment rate is quite high and the salary is very low but the food was imported so was expensive. Just because of friends and relatives, we somehow got along.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

It is evident that new experiences can be very rewarding and life enhancing. However, I was interested to ascertain whether studying in England had not only changed individuals’ lifestyles or behaviour but also their way of thinking or views. A number of the interviewees explained such effects:

The way of thinking is different. From studying here I think I have learnt a better way of structuring ideas ... We are used to understanding and learning things based on memorising ... That is why some students from Indonesia have difficulty here as we are not used to searching on our own – being creative. It is also the freedom to come up with your own ideas and talk about them. A friend in Indonesia doing research just followed her supervisor; she didn’t even have her own ideas. Since our childhood we were always told to stay quiet, listen to the teacher and if we didn’t we would be punished.

PhD, Indonesia, ID1

When I was living in Iran I was biased towards the government but now I read opposition newspapers and feel that there should be reform. This change has happened because I left Iran and this way of thinking was new to me and it got stronger. Now I read different papers which are published inside and outside Iran. I had some ‘hardliner’ friends but now I am out I have more free time to focus on the other side. I saw the friends when I went back but didn’t express my opinion, if I would I would have been disowned. You can say things privately to your friends but I didn’t want any arguments.

MSc, Iran, IR1

Before I came here I thought the Western people were simpler than the Chinese but better because in China people have two faces so you don’t know if they are cheating you. I think it now depends on the education and situation of the individual.

MSc, China, CN4

I am going to do something I really like when I go back – not a second choice. I have got very good knowledge from here and I will probably set up my own company. Studying is not just about learning knowledge or a new language, it is about new ideas. I will change a bit because before I was exactly like an ordinary Chinese person but now I am going to respect people's privacy but offer help if they need it. I may even open the door for them although they may think I am stupid but I am sure some people would appreciate it as it shows good personality.

MSc, China, CN2

As discussed in Phase 1, a few of the students mentioned the perceived problems they would encounter when they returned home i.e. reverse culture shock or 'reintegration stage'. However, one student from Mongolia added a new dimension to this problem when she described how her culture came to her and her English husband as follows:

Sometimes the culture comes back to me as I get visited from my brother and sister. At first it was quite difficult to accept that they would be staying for over a month. My brother stayed with us for over a year. Like now, I have two nephews coming over the summer on English courses and they just assume they can stay with me. Nevertheless, it would be unthinkable to send them to a bed and breakfast.

At first it was a total shock for my husband but now he has got more used to it. When you live with many people you have to always think of the other people which is restricting. Back home it is like your teenage years are extended.

MPhil, Mongolia, MO1

It could be argued that it is expected that the majority of all students should benefit from the new knowledge and skills attained through academic study. Many of them may also benefit from a change in behaviour as a result of new experiences and responsibilities. However, the overseas students are more likely to have added complications due to the extent of the change needed to relate to a new environment, lifestyle and culture, before the benefits of why they came here can be reaped.

5.15 HOFSTEDE'S VALUE DIMENSIONS: Phase 2

With reference to App. 19, references to Hofstede's extreme value dimensions are as follows:

STUDY INCENTIVES

Individualism

- Students cared about own goals and job prospects.

Collectivism

- A student was expected by his parents to get married and have a family and not to study.

High Power Distance

- A student said that it was Asian custom to respect well educated people.
- In some cultures drinking may only be encouraged for business reasons.

Long Term Orientation

- Students were willing to risk relationships for the sake of long term benefits.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- Families worried about students living in a strange and unfamiliar environment.

COUNTRY CHOICE

Long Term Orientation

- Students had been awarded scholarships in response to long term goals.

Individualism

- Students wanted to experience England for themselves.

Collectivism

- Students came because their relatives were also in England.
- It is normal to drink with colleagues or friends but not alone like in England.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- The political conditions were favourable to some students.

UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Individualism

- Student perceived better job prospects.

Collectivism

- Students may rely on help and advice of friend and family to make a decision.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- Students chose Manchester because they were familiar with it.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Individualism

- Student perceived better job prospects from improved English skills.

Long Term Orientation

- English skills will improve economies by helping with trade and business.

Collectivism

- English skills will improve the prospects of their children.

LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Collectivism

- Students speak to those who they have more in common with i.e. from same background and shared experiences.

Femininity

- English people are patient.

High Power Distance

- Bad communication can affect the relationship with a supervisor.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- Speaking to others in similar circumstances and from a similar background is quite predictable.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

Uncertainty Tolerance

- English workers are quite relaxed and do not rush.

Individualism

- English people rely on banks more than on their families and live in independent houses.

Collectivism

- In some countries people live together to help and communicate more easily.

Low Power Distance

- Consumer rights i.e. refund policies were related to the element of trust and honesty in English society.
- In England, poor and rich people are treated equally in shops.

Femininity

- The better services were attributed to the number of female workers in the UK.
- England's political system is fair.

Masculinity

- Men are not as good in the service industries because they are not that open and just do their job. Women are understanding and ask how you are.

High Power Distance

- A student felt embarrassed when his ailments were not taken seriously by a GP.

Short Term Orientation

- Life is changing in China. People are becoming more flexible and mobile and may choose to live alone.

ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

Uncertainty Tolerance

- People in England enjoy relaxing and being lazy feels good when they are not working.

High Power Distance

- In some countries, although there may be working policies, people work until their manager goes home.

Collectivism

- At weekends most families should meet in restaurants and eat together.

PERSONAL SAFETY

Uncertainty Tolerance

- No place in the world is totally safe. Manchester is like any other big city where 'black mark' areas should be avoided.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- Reports on crime in the media and attacks on other people causes students to be wary of their surroundings.

PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

Femininity

- English people are polite, open and friendly and respect personal privacy.

Individualism

- English people care more about their own lives, family members and pets.

Collectivism

- Some cultures talk about every topic and are curious about every aspect of people around them including their personal details.
- In some cultures, it is normal to think about the 'whole' and for individuals to hide amongst the collective.
- Harmony should always be maintained therefore the use of the word 'no' is to be avoided as it may lead to confrontation.

PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

Individualism

- Freedom in relationships and British society is the norm.
- It is acceptable to drink alone in a bar.

Collectivism

- In some cultures, dressing differently is frowned upon and people normally drink in a group.

Masculinity

- Some students were surprised to see young girls drinking as this activity is frowned upon in their own cultures.

Short Term Orientation

- Shopping in England is a leisure activity and not just a necessity.

SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

Collectivism

- Students found it easier to talk to people from similar backgrounds or circumstances.

ADAPTING TO AND LEARNING FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE

Uncertainty Avoidance

- Some students found it hard to adapt and believed that age had a detrimental affect on the adaptation process.

Uncertainty Tolerance

- Some students enjoyed learning about a new culture.
- Home life can be uncertain as providing food is a daily struggle.

Collectivism

- Family members expect to be accommodated and looked after when visiting England.

5.16 SUMMARY

DISCUSSION OF PHASE 2

STUDY INCENTIVES

Many of the incentives mentioned were similar to those mentioned in Phase 1 and a large number of students believed that a degree would improve job prospects, specialist knowledge and personal development. However, one student from Mongolia had to pursue study overseas as the area of expertise was simply not available in her country. A number of the interviewees had been awarded scholarships which was their main reason for applying for postgraduate study. However, despite the obvious advantages of studying abroad, the turmoil and stress that the decision sometimes caused was also discussed.

COUNTRY CHOICE

The interviewees in Phase 2 introduced more reasons for coming to England and a wider range of countries including Canada, Germany and Ireland as options for postgraduate study. However, a couple of South Korean students specifically came to England as they were attracted to the English culture alone.

Similar to Phase 1, America was a popular choice although some students did not obtain entry or were deterred due to the longer length of programmes. One student from Iran came to England as a second choice as he had to leave the US due to visa problems. This highlighted how England was not always the first choice as certain circumstances may influence the options available.

Four of the students were sponsored and chose England due to existing collaborations. Some other reasons for choosing England were due to relatives residing here, favourable political conditions and the ease of obtaining a visa.

UNIVERSITY CHOICE

In Phase 2, I specifically asked if the student was aware of the UMIST reputation before they applied. The main purpose was to establish the significance of the UMIST brand name especially as it would no longer be in use when the new university was created in October 2004. As in Phase 1, the main sources for finding out about the university were the internet, prospectuses and league tables.

The responses were fairly even with the majority saying that they were not aware of the name before they applied although UMIST was well known in Far Eastern countries. However, regardless of whether they were aware or not, many of the interviewees relied on help and advice from other people in order to make their final choice. Nevertheless, the success of the recommendations was assisted by desirable factors such as high ranking on league tables.

Some additional reasons for choosing UMIST were that the conditions of the offer were favourable, relevance of subject area, good facilities and the quality of teaching and research. Furthermore, some of the interviewees came because of the location of Manchester in the centre of England and because the cost of living was cheaper than other cities - especially London.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

In Phase 2, I decided to change some of the questions regarding the English language. As some of the students had felt uneasy with direct questioning, I was more tactful and instead decided to ask whether language affected their relationships. Therefore, another category was created to deal with these responses as interaction was related to some other questions regarding relationships.

Similar to Phase 1, a number of students experienced difficulty communicating shortly after arriving in the UK. Despite many of the students being proficient in English, it still took quite a few months to become familiar with the language which was spoken faster or in a different accent to what they were used to. Some students mentioned how it was easier to understand people who spoke slowly and clearly such as the university staff or the Prime Minister!

In Phase 2, another dimension to the English language was introduced as I wished to discover how important the use of English was in the decision making process. The vast majority did take it into account as speaking English well was perceived to have numerous benefits. It was also noted that language difficulties did not only particularly affect those students for whom English is a second language but that any student could have problems due to various factors.

LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

A number of students explained how their English language ability affected their confidence when interacting with others. However, they explained how the situation can become more complicated as successful interaction in a foreign language is dependent upon confidence as well as other factors. Further complications which may impair comprehension included the use of slang, informal expressions, patience and speed of speech.

It was also noted that although many postgraduate students in the department were from overseas, the students would still have opportunities to converse with staff and people in the wider university environment and community. In addition, some of the interviewees said that the English language was not necessarily an important factor in relating to others. They explained how it was easier to speak to a person from a similar background, ethnic or religious origin to them or with whom they could relate to in some other way through shared experiences. It could be argued that this scenario could be related to the 'collective' level of human programming (Hofstede, 1984) as discussed in Chapter 2.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

In Phase 2, I added some new questions as the aim was to obtain views on the standards of services and living compared to their own countries. The majority of interviewees believed that the services in England were very good and some from Pakistan, Indonesia and China said that they were better than in their homeland. However, opinions were also given on the negative aspects of a 'good' service.

A number of students enjoyed shopping here as they liked the atmosphere, exchange policies, helpful staff and range of goods available. Transportation was also mentioned which included buses, trains and taxis although cabs and fuel were considered expensive. There were mixed views on bus services as it was probably dependent on the area of

residence. However, the student discount was useful as it was not available in some countries. Unfortunately, only one student had something positive to say about the British rail network.

Many of the respondents commented on the National Health Service and a balanced view was given. It was possible to see that the opinions were quite diverse as student expectations were influenced by their previous experiences of medical services. However, two distinct areas were noted. The first was the perception that the medical services were 'free' and the second was the confusion with the 'tiered' system of services which people from abroad may not be used to. Some students from Singapore, South Korea, China, Pakistan and Mongolia commented on aspects of living such as the cost, hygiene, housing and living together. A couple of them related these topics to the social system as a whole and a few more students mentioned the British tax system.

ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

Students from Pakistan, Libya and Indonesia referred to the punctuality in British society. In addition, some others commented on attitudes to time which they linked to the workforce. The interviewees thought that although British people may work hard our attitude was relaxed and that we enjoyed ourselves more than people in their own countries. It was possible to surmise that the 'work hard/play hard' ethic was an attractive aspect of the British working culture which one student planned to adopt such methods when he returned home.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

In Phase 1, many of the responses relating to environmental factors arose as a result of questions relating to student expectations. Therefore, in Phase 2, I specifically asked about the buildings and environment in order to obtain their views on such matters.

Similar to Phase 1, the weather was a popular subject and the affects of the change in climate and dark winter nights were also discussed. The four seasons of the year, unpredictability of the weather, lack of snow and earth tremors were also mentioned.

It was interesting to discover that because England is a modern society, many of the interviewees expected to see a high technology landscape similar to that of America.

However, those students that were aware of England's long history were not as surprised as those who were not. In addition to America, comparisons were also made with other countries and cities. However, the most popular was London which fulfilled the expectations of England for some of the interviewees although not everyone liked it.

A number of students described Manchester as 'red' due to the colour of the bricks used in buildings. Other materials used and the style of buildings were also discussed. The way in which a student perceived the environment was normally based on their expectations, previous experiences and the extent to which those differed from the reality.

It was noted that the environment was often experienced through the primary senses of sight, touch and hearing and that an array of words were used to describe what England 'felt' or 'looked' like to an overseas student. However, the most dominant sense was sight as the descriptions of England were portrayed in various shapes, sizes and colours.

PERSONAL SAFETY

In Phase 2, I decided to omit the question regarding safety on the campus because most students did not distinguish between the campus and the city probably because the campus was located in the city centre. The majority of the interviewees thought that Manchester was safe. However, most believed that this was only the case if certain common sense procedures were practised. In addition, it was possible to see that some students were more 'acclimatised' to the norms of awareness and social conditions pertaining to Manchester due to previous experiences.

Fortunately, only one student had been a victim of crime and some others had merely heard about people who had been. A number of the interviewees felt that their awareness had been increased by the stories they read in the media.

PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

In Phase 2, an extra question regarding the friendliness of the English people was introduced as this subject had been raised in Phase 1 and I wished to pursue it further. Nine of the students believed that the English people were friendly and only one said that they were unfriendly. The remainder stated that they did not know enough English people to be able to comment or that it depended on various factors such as age, area and the way in which a

person lived. However, even though most of the comments were positive, some of the interviewees were a little confused with the way in which friendly behaviour was demonstrated. This may be because such behaviour is dependent on many aspects including personality and circumstances. In addition, it was noted that confusion may occur as it may be in contrast with what a student is used to and thus they may simply not comprehend it. Being polite, helpful, patient and open minded were some other attributes mentioned by nine of the respondents. In addition to behaviour, some students also described how people looked to them. Some people were described as kind, relaxed and colourful and some were surprised to see people smoking or uncovered. A couple of the interviewees were slightly amused that English people treat animals as members of their families. In addition, some Muslim students believed that the English people were not very religious and others noticed that the population of Manchester consisted of mixed races.

PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

In Phase 2, I introduced a question asking how the interviewees learnt about life in England. A variety of sources were used which were similar to those accessed for information regarding university and country choices. Similar to Phase 1, the freedom in British society was mentioned by a large number of the interviewees. However, for some, the freedom was not only related to behaviour and codes of conduct but also to the freedom of expression which may be suppressed in some cultures. It was also noted that it is possible that information given to people in a country may not be correct due to restrictions in that country. Therefore, a student may be surprised when they arrive as they may have been given misleading information about life in England.

As in Phase 1, alcohol and pubs were discussed by over half the interviewees. However, although alcohol was consumed by many of them, they found the way in which English people drank peculiar. However, the extent to which the differences varied was related to expectations and previous experiences.

As mentioned in the previous section on people, some students believed that multiculturalism was a part of the English culture which the majority appreciated. In addition, another student thought that the English people went shopping for fun and as a leisure activity. A couple of other interviewees related the culture to technology and development with one using it to explain the meaning of culture from his viewpoint.

SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

In Phase 2, I decided to introduce some new questions regarding friendships. The students were asked where their friends were from and if any of them were English. They were also asked if they found it easier to relate to a certain group of people or not. The aim of the new questions was to attempt to establish if the overseas students were actually socialising with English people and who their friends were. Altogether, the group of interviewees had friends from thirty two different countries around the world. Some had no English friends but some others said that English people were only class or flat mates. However, the majority did have English friends.

As discussed in the English language section, some respondents found it difficult to talk to English people because of the language difficulties. However, eight of them found it easier to talk to people from a similar background or circumstances due to the sense of familiarity. Nevertheless, a few students commented on the advantages and disadvantages of certain relationships.

I learned how living in England had a positive effect on cross cultural interaction which may be forbidden in some countries. In such cases, England can act as a 'neutral ground' where students from different countries are able to interact regardless of any restriction which may be in force in their homelands.

ADAPTING TO AND LEARNING FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE

In Phase 2, I added a couple of new questions in an attempt to pursue certain issues. The first question asked if the change of culture had an affect on the student's behaviour. The second question asked if the student had experienced anything new which had changed their lifestyle or views in any way. The title of this category was also amended to reflect the new dimension of the study.

It was the first time in England for the majority of the interviewees. Despite this, twelve of them believed that they did not find it too difficult to adapt. However, this ability may have been assisted by preparation, mental attitude and age although some students still found it difficult to adapt to a change in their daily lives.

As in Phase 1, the students also had to adapt to physical changes which included eating habits. Eight of the interviewees said that food was an important factor in the transition process although some did not change their diet at all. However, the majority ate some types of Western food but cooked it in their own style. In addition, it was noted that people changed their dietary habits as they may not be used to cooking, unable to find their native foods or not have enough time to cook. However, it was apparent that the situation gave some students the opportunity to experiment with different tastes and cuisines which may not be possible at home.

Other changes in lifestyle included watching football and cricket, eating more healthily and suffering less stress. A few students also mentioned how their way of thinking or views had changed as a direct result of living in England. In addition, similar to Phase 1, a few of the interviewees discussed the perceived problems they would encounter when they returned home due to the changes. Furthermore, one respondent described how cultural differences materialised when her family came to visit.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF PHASE 3

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Phase 3 consisted of twelve interviewees thus being the smallest group of the study. As this was the last cohort of interviewees, I intended to clarify matters rather than open up new lines of enquiry. Therefore, some questions were amended so that some issues could be verified or rephrased to improve clarification of meaning; the sections of Chapter 6 are as follows:

- Study Incentives
- Country Choice
- University Choice
- The English Language
- Language and Relationships
- Social Conditions and Services
- Attitudes to Work and Time
- Environmental Factors
- Personal Safety
- Perception of People
- Perception of Culture
- Social Interaction and Friendship Networks
- Adapting to and Learning from a Different Culture

6.2 STUDY INCENTIVES

Many of the incentives mentioned in Phase 3 were similar to the first two Phases. Seven of the interviewees were encouraged or expected to pursue postgraduate study by their families

or friends. However, one student in particular believed that it was necessary to gain a PhD in order to be accepted as a 'normal' member of his family as explained:

Most of my family are academics in universities. My brother, my younger sister, my father in law, my father and my uncle so I found myself alone – not involved. I just want to be in as good a position as they are.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

As before, two students told how their decisions were not always popular with others. For example, a student from Mauritius said that 'my parents were expecting me to do a PhD straight after my BSc, they weren't happy when I went working'. Nevertheless, he enrolled as a PhD student at UMIST although he later reverted back to an MPhil therefore the desire to do a PhD was still not his own. Alternatively, a student from Thailand explained how his parents did not want him to pursue postgraduate study as they wanted him to work in the family business. A further three interviewees were sponsored and the same number believed that a further degree would improve their job prospects. Furthermore, four of the students were more interested in self improvement and broadening their views. For example:

Studying overseas always gives you much better prospects; not only because you can communicate internationally but you have different points of view and perspectives than Taiwan. You can learn something new whilst you are here.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

A good job is a reason but I am more concerned with broadening my views and knowledge and making friends – get out of a small room and get to know the world further.

MSc, China, CN6

With regard to the last example, it was interesting to note that despite the large size of China, the student still referred to his country as a 'small room'. However, it seems that although some foreigners will merely 'peep through the window', the overseas students choose to 'open the door' and walk through to see what is on the other side. Nevertheless, what they find when they get there will vary depending on their expectations, experiences and other influencing factors.

6.3 COUNTRY CHOICE

The respondents in Phase 3 gave similar reasons for choosing England as the other two groups. Four of them preferred the UK as the courses were shorter than those offered in the

US and France. Eight of the interviewees had considered America although three of them could not obtain a place due to certain restrictions i.e. visa, GRE test. However, three of the students did not apply to the US for the following reasons:

Originally I was thinking about going to America but there were a couple of shootings there, on the news, so my parents said that I should go to England instead as they were worried about my security.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

I will tell you the truth although it seems silly. From London to Saudi it takes just 5 hours and I like going home. I go 6-8 times a year for 4-5 days ... First of all with the US, I wouldn't like to be there. It is too far. It takes around 14 hours flying so Britain is closer to home. Also, I didn't feel comfortable when I went to the US. I have been twice. I am the only Saudi who likes the lifestyle in Britain!

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

I heard that the UK was friendly and better than Australia for education and that Muslims may not be welcome in America.

MSc, Indonesia, ID2

In addition, three people had considered Australia and two more believed that the British system was better. Only one student had expressed an interest in mainland Europe. Furthermore, two interviewees from Botswana and Sri Lanka chose England because they were used to the British system in their own countries. However, another student chose England, in preference to the US, due to its 'education industry' as explained:

Britain used to have an education industry about 100 years ago. They made education like an industry. In the last dynasty of China, students were sent abroad to study in Britain, not America, as it was a mess!

MSc, China, CN6

Four of the students were sponsored and therefore their own preferences regarding country choice were restricted. Alternatively, an interviewee from Trinidad and Tobago had applied to Canada but was told that he could only be offered a place if a company sponsored him. In addition, a couple of students had returned to England as they had previously studied here and a further three had come as it had been recommended to them.

6.4 UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Many of the responses regarding university choice were similar to those in the previous Phases. However, some issues were extended a little due to the impact of individuality on the decision making process. Four of the students were aware of the UMIST reputation although the same number came solely due to recommendations. For example:

I was told both UMIST and the University of Manchester were quite good but my mum's friend knew someone who was doing an MSc at UMIST so I believed the 'word of mouth'.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

I only applied to UMIST because a friend of mine who was studying here recommended it. My brother also studied in Manchester many years ago.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

I heard that UMIST was good and my friends told me as it did not say who was the best on the internet.

MSc, Indonesia, ID2

For many of the interviewees, the quality of research, facilities, teaching and the subject area were also important factors although one student was not so impressed. He explained:

Most science studies are not good but here I believed that you provide high standards of new technology and teaching. But when I came I didn't think the UK is up to date as we have much better student facilities but I haven't told my sponsor although nobody has asked me!

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

In addition, a student from Thailand 'wanted to study in a technological university instead of a multi discipline university'. Therefore, it could be argued that the new multi-disciplined University of Manchester will lose such candidates due to the perceived lack of specialism.

Eight of the interviewees held more than one offer with four having received more than three offers for university places. Nevertheless, the university was not the only factor which was taken into account as the city itself was an influential factor. Although six of the interviewees liked the geographical location of the city, a number of students also liked the location of the university as well as other positive aspects as follows:

I wanted a university in the city centre because I don't know how to drive and thought I could be more independent. At home I live in the countryside

but I thought I would have to do shopping and knew I would be able to get food within walking distance in the city centre.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

I went to Colchester University and found it very quiet. Exeter is a small city. It closes at 6 p.m. and you can't do anything after that. I was there for about 2-3 weeks and then 'escaped' to Manchester. I came to Manchester, because, in my opinion, I thought it was the best area to live in the UK. I have been to a few cities and Manchester is the cheapest area ... There is also an international airport nearby and I can go home.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

[It must be noted that 'Colchester University' does not actually exist. Therefore, the respondent is most likely referring to the town of Colchester and the Colchester Institute which runs programmes validated by the University of Exeter]. Similar to the last example, a number of students found that Manchester was cheaper to live in than other places - especially London. Unfortunately, the capital city did not seem to get the balance right as it was either too noisy, too expensive or too busy. For example:

Nottingham didn't have an MSc course and I found out from a lot of people that UMIST is good. I definitely didn't want to go to London as it has a busy life and I didn't want to travel around much!

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

I applied to Imperial, King's, Edinburgh and Cambridge. I got offers from all of them but London would prove to be too expensive although my uncles were down there. I wanted to go to a small town or city and I knew about the reputation of UMIST and the University of Manchester.

PhD, Mauritius, MR1

UMIST has a reputation, people talk about it. UCL also has but I had stayed in London and it was hectic. I thought maybe I should go outside London and have a different experience.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

I wanted to avoid London because it was too noisy. I had been visiting London since I was 7 and knew it would be difficult to study there.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

In addition to these, a student from Taiwan was told that Manchester was the 'city of students' and a Chinese student did not just come 'because David Beckham [footballer] is in Manchester'. However, the mere fact that he knew about the famous sportsman before he came signifies the presence of Manchester on the world stage.

6.5 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A majority of eight students took the English language into consideration when deciding where to study. Some believed that developing their skills would improve their job prospects especially with British owned companies such as BP but a few from Sri Lanka, Botswana and Trinidad and Tobago said English was like their first language. Some others also thought English was a useful language for studying programming, global e-Commerce and another culture. For example:

Actually, I don't think it really mattered if I did a MSc in my country or here because the knowledge would be roughly the same but learning English and getting to know people from other different countries, like the English culture, and especially to get another view about my country, look at it in different ways, is important.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

In addition, a student from Sudan had studied in England since she was seven and another from Mauritius had lived in Australia. A few had attended language schools in England prior to studying, which they found very helpful. However, regardless of ability or fluency, the majority had to adjust to listening to local accents (Craig, 1993). The main reason for this change was that six of the interviewees were used to American-English or English being spoken in another accent as explained:

The English I learnt in Thailand is American-English. You can find it everywhere, even in the newspaper if you read it. I find it difficult to understand the accent here.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

My English teacher was Thai and she taught a mix of British and American English. The accent and pronunciation was incorrect sometimes and I found out when I came here. They [the teachers] hadn't been abroad either.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

Furthermore, it was not just the accent but the clarity of speech and use of words which were quite perplexing. Shortly after arrival, a Sri Lankan student did not understand what it meant when someone asked 'are you alright?' He was quite surprised as he had been brought up in a British system and had no previous problems with comprehension. Some other examples are as follows:

I learnt American-English which was quite different. The phrases used and meanings could be quite different for certain words. The American accent

is quite smooth and soft whereas the English accent is quite sharp. English is easier to pick up as American is not as clear.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

It was difficult to understand people at first because I learnt American-English. American is clearer. I knew English might be different.

MSc, Indonesia, ID2

China has American-English; instead of biscuits they have cookies. There are quite a lot of differences. Personally, I prefer British English. It is interesting to discover the differences and improve my pronunciation and grammar mistakes.

MSc, China, CN6

When I was in Malaysia, the English wasn't that different because it was a UK system but in Taiwan it is more like a US system so the writing and accent were different.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

It was apparent that opinions and preferences differed regarding 'American-English' and 'British-English' as they were probably influenced by various systems. Nevertheless, it was interesting to learn that neither of these was used by the British Council in Indonesia to demonstrate British accents. One student was shown a video of a Scottish person talking and although she could not understand one word of what was being said, she still came.

6.6 LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

In Phase 3, the issues that were raised were an extension of some of those in Phase 2. However, fewer people reported problems with the effect of language on relationships possibly due to a higher level of ability and because five of the interviewees were fluent speakers of English. Nevertheless, four of the overseas students still found it difficult to interact with English people as follows:

I have no English friends. I guess it is because of the language. I have met a lot of people like on the training course. I did my best at first but they don't interact. A long time ago I gave up ... It is not a matter of language but that someone is not involved in the environment 100%.

PhD, Saudi Arabia,

SA1

It is easier to make friends with non-English people because it is difficult to get into a conversation with an English person unless you have impeccable English. I think it depends on the way and occasion but I think it is quite difficult to have a long conversation with an English speaker not just because of the language but because you need to find a common point to talk about whereas if you speak to a non-English speaker or foreigner you

tend to find more stuff to talk about because you're going through the same learning curve as them so you have more in common when talking to each other. But once you have an English friend you can probably have a long conversation because you may have something in common but at the beginning English is a problem.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

Some English people do not talk long if your English is not good but a non-native speaker will spend more time trying to understand what you are trying to say and you will do the same for them.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

Similar to Phase 2, it was apparent that one of the difficulties seemed to be due to the lack of commonality in relation to background and lifestyle. A number of students found that this kind of scenario led to an inability to have 'deep' or long conversations with English people as they could not find anything meaningful to talk about. It was also interesting to note that it was easier for the interviewees to speak to a 'non-English speaker' [albeit in English] as the other person would also be inclined to make mistakes so the pressure was less. Therefore, it could be argued that it is not only the spoken language which is a barrier to successful interaction but other factors such as confidence, patience and body language which are key players in any human interaction. Some of the interviewees explained as follows:

My English is not fluent but I can understand a lot. I am nervous when people are unfriendly and impatient but it is the same in Taiwan [where she worked]. I have good friends who listen to me.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

I sometimes speak with local people in the halls and so many times I have to ask them to repeat what they said slowly for me and then I understand. I try to get used to it but most of the time I prefer to read rather than speak so that is a problem for me ... I speak to everyone but it is more convenient to make friends with oriental people. English people do not like people who speak slowly. Sometimes you can't think about the right words at the times you want to say it and they have to wait for you to recall the words you want which can be a problem.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

Alternatively, a few students found the English people to be patient and a couple more enjoyed the challenge of learning a new language. It seemed that they benefited from interaction with native speakers, irrespective of their origin. They explained:

I had some good friends who taught me English who would correct me. Some were English and one Nigerian. The security guard at the hall also taught me. Anytime I went out and saw a strange situation that I didn't

understand or certain words, I would ask them what it is about. Even now if we have any problems one of the students goes and asks his housemate who is English.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

There is only one thing I would like English people to do. I would like them to correct my mistakes because if I keep doing mistakes it doesn't make sense. I would thank them if they are willing to help. Also, I am here to improve myself and language is part of these things. People who help do not offend me.

MSc, China, CN6

Needless to say, the effect language has on any relationship depends on numerous other factors such as personality and situation. However, it seems that those who have the confidence to tackle obstacles are able to use their personal skills to overcome their English language problems. They probably also realise that the ability to communicate successfully with the local people is the quickest way to finding out about the culture which can also be used as a common topic of conversation. Nevertheless, friendships are not just based upon commonality and long conversations but on the necessity to please and care for one another. It is part of the human psyche to obtain a sense of satisfaction from helping others. Therefore, it was interesting for me to see that some students used their 'perceived' inability to cope as a starting point for friendships which could then be based upon the caring factor and not just the language. After all, one has to put small words together in order to construct a long sentence.

6.7 SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

In Phase 3, many of the issues mentioned were similar to those raised previously as the same subjects were discussed. However, I decided to split the question regarding standards of service and living into two so that the issues would be treated separately. I also decided to specifically ask about the General Practitioner service although five of the students were unable to comment as they had not used the services. Nevertheless, the majority of seven gave an opinion albeit a negative one. For example:

It is difficult to get treatment from the GP or in an emergency. I went with my friends at night and we had to wait 3 hours. In the end we gave up and went back home. My friend wanted advice about her contact lens but when we left, the receptionist asked why we had come here if it was not serious! If you are not very well it is difficult to find someone to consult and decide whether it is a critical problem or not because you don't know.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

The GP service is terrible. When I went to make an appointment they didn't allow me to see the doctor. I had to see a nurse. I asked her what happened because I had kind of allergic spots all over my face and she just told me to go home and come back in a few days. It was kind of horrible because if you have symptoms you wonder what is going to happen to you but they said they didn't know what's going on either so you might as well go home! Luckily it went away but I would have liked to know what it was. The system here seems to be better when in reality it is not.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

Similar to many patients in Britain, it seemed that the interviewees were unhappy about the waiting times and inaccessibility to appropriate care. However, there may be added confusion for overseas students as the health service may differ from what they are used to in their own country. Some comparisons were made as follows:

The only thing with the GP here is that it can be very difficult to get an appointment whereas in Sri Lanka you just have to pay and get in on the same day.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

The GP and hospital service is different. In Taiwan and Malaysia you can select which hospital you go to so you have more choice. Here, for everything you have to go to the GP.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

In Thailand there are public hospitals which you normally go to during the day and for emergencies at night. In private hospitals you can go anytime you want and they provide a doctor. There are a lot of private hospitals. They don't cost much more than a public one. You can find a doctor at any hospital and also at clinics.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

In Thailand you can see a doctor but you may have to queue for a day but they will treat you and give you some medicine which I think is better in terms of psychology - that they are trying to analyse your symptoms.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

It must be noted that, in some overseas countries people have to pay directly for medical services, even if it is a small fee, but in doing so a proportion of the population would be denied such treatment. However, in Britain everyone is entitled to medical care whether they can afford to contribute payments to the National Health Service or not. Therefore, it may be suggested that, what the students may have witnessed were the disadvantages of a perceived 'free' medical system as it sometimes cannot deal with the 'supply and demand' of the people it is expected to serve.

The legal system in England was also raised by a couple of the interviewees. The first was from Thailand and said that 'the law is stronger and better than Thailand as the Government cannot control pistol carriers although they have laws'. The second interviewee was from Sri Lanka and said 'here if you get caught speeding you get fined but I am sorry to say this, in my country you could bribe them and get away with it. It is quite strict here'. It is unfortunate that in countries where there is a greater division between rich and poor, it is often the poorer people who are most likely to be criminalised as a result of corruption due to an inability to pay penalties.

Another popular topic for discussion was public transport. Fortunately, unlike the GP service, nine of the interviewees commented on mainly positive aspects of the transport system as follows:

I like the services. The transport is clean and reliable and you know you can get somewhere.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

The bus services are good. Sometimes the ideas are quite good, like bus lanes, but it might be difficult to implement it and can cause more congestion.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

Transport services are quite good here. The bus times are on the stops which is good but they come within 5 minutes anyway.

MSc, Trinidad & Tobago, TT1

Similarly, two students from Indonesia and Sudan thought that the buses were 'clean', 'modern' and 'reliable'. However, the Sudanese interviewee also brought up another aspect when she said that 'you know that you can get somewhere'. Fortunately, this is not a concept that has to be considered often in England. It seemed that some of the students really appreciated the services here as they were quite reliable and simply available. Some explained problems in their own countries as follows:

In Thailand we use public transport a lot and sometimes we can't get the support from the Government. There are a lot of people and a lot of pollution. There aren't enough buses and trains for the amount of people who want to use it so they have to buy cars.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

There are very few people who use buses. For example, I have never been on a bus in Saudi and I don't know anyone who has and I have never seen a bus! Everyone has to have a car. There are no trains except for cargo,

goats and things like that. I have a car here but I could do everything on the bus; I just have one for convenience.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

In addition, a Sri Lankan student said that ‘the buses are expensive and some people cannot afford them. They are packed and there is no limit as to how many can get on’. Furthermore, a student from China found the way bus fares were calculated to be peculiar as ‘the bus charges you for the distance [here] but in Shanghai everyone pays the same’. He also commented on the high cost of accommodation and high taxes. Nevertheless, he was not alone as four of the interviewees mentioned the high taxes, council tax and tax on bank accounts. However, a number of the students were happy with the bank services and one from Thailand said that ‘banks are very good as they helped when I had some problems but it is very difficult to open an account. In Thailand you can open as many as you want’. This scenario was also mentioned in Phase 2, as well as people not understanding why shops are closed when people finish work.

An interviewee from the Middle East aptly described how he perceived the successful operation of the whole system as follows:

The services are the one thing I like in Britain. I always say to my friends ‘the circle is complete’ in Britain. The buses can help people to get to their jobs early, the GP’s do their job perfectly, post office delivers the mail, the system helps everyone. In Saudi there is no system.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

It could be argued that in England the ‘circle’ is complete most of the time therefore the general public are fortunate enough to take it for granted. However, when it is disrupted, for example when a postal strike occurs, it is easy to see how the cycle can be broken. Unfortunately, for some of the overseas students they may never have experienced the cycle in motion.

The attitudes of the employees in the service industry were also mentioned and comparisons were made with other countries as follows:

The services are much, much better than France, America and lots of different countries I’ve been to. The services here, the way people give you attention, the way they interact with me for a minute is very good.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

Everything is better here than in Sri Lanka as it is a poor country. The rich are very rich and the poor are very poor... The higher classes in Sri Lanka get better service in shops but everyone here is treated the same.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

In addition, an interviewee from Taiwan referred to the 'shopping culture' in the UK but also took the opportunity to discuss his own people's attitudes towards the service industry. He explained:

The way of living life is better here and I think it is part of the culture – the way you have been brought up here. In a way, people in Taiwan will go for a bargain but here you also look at how you will use something and you worry about the quality as well as the price but in Taiwan, we will just buy something because it is cheap.

Now people are changing and will spend more money to buy a better service. The way I was brought up is that you shouldn't really spend money on extravagant things but now people don't worry about the cost anymore. They worry about what it looks like and their tastes. My grandmother used to say 'you don't need to spend money unnecessarily' but now if I fancy something new I just buy it'.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

The above example exemplifies how people's spending habits can reflect the wealth of a nation and in turn, its culture. It also shows how a culture can change between generations depending on the economics and situation of a country. However, the accumulation of wealth and material goods is not necessary for all societies to function successfully as explained:

I think life is very expensive here but back home you can survive on nothing because of the community structure and the fact that we don't put too much emphasis on material things. If I don't have a TV or fridge life goes on but here it is almost like a must. It is part of the society that every household has these things. If you don't have it someone might ask you why you don't have it.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

Nevertheless, it could be possible that the community structure could change as seen in Taiwan. The people may be influenced by outside ideals which happens in numerous areas around the world. I was also pleased to see that as a result of dividing a question, the issue of living standards was discussed at length by seven of the students. It was also interesting to discover that many of them related the difference between England and their own country through the extended and nucleus family systems. For example:

People live with extended families in Sudan; you tend to live alone here. It is strange that after 18 you move out. Living in a family you are never lonely which I think that everybody is here. When living independently you have to do everything for yourself. Back home I don't have to do anything. I don't have to go to the market but everybody has to do something.

PhD, Sudan. SD1

I don't know much about how British people live but it is probably different because in Thailand we have very big families and normally stay together, maybe the grandparents and children in the same house. But if you go to a big city you can find lots of nucleus families.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

When you get married you prefer to stay apart and have your new family than stay together but in Thailand you stay as a big family. If you separate your family from your parents; if one of your parents dies you probably get together again. Then the mother/father will probably care for the grandchildren while their own children go to work. I think you separate families in general here. Especially if you don't get married they prefer to buy a house, stay alone, but we prefer to stay together. I prefer to stay together because when you come home your parents are waiting and it is a kind of mental security.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

Most families live with their parents until they get married, not like here, 18 years old and then moving out. It depends on whether people have enough room or if they have other choices. We don't usually live with aunties and uncles but we have bigger families than nucleus families.

MSc, China, CN6

Although many of the students seemed to be in favour of living in an extended family, it may not be purely out of choice. It may be more economically viable to live together, and sometimes work together, with each person assuming a role in the household or community. Some of the interviewees explained:

In the countryside people live together because it is cheaper but in the cities, because house prices are so high, it is difficult to buy a big house to fit everybody in. Personally, I prefer to stay on my own because I can have more freedom. You can do things in your own way; decorate your house in your own tastes. I will probably live nearby my parents when I go home. We have a tradition to look after our parents but here you send your parents to an old people's home but these things would never happen in Taiwan. You would never just send them away.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

Similarly, another student spoke about the importance of living together but in a community structure as follows:

A community is like people helping each other. You can actually rely on people. That is different than here. The population is 1.5 million but it is a big country with lots of animals ... In villages they live in huge compounds where everyone is related and it has a name. The people are poorer and stick to traditions more.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

Despite the strong group cohesion of people, the student further explained that ‘the country people live together in big families but in towns it is like the western culture – people move out’. This is most probably because the people in the towns are wealthier and are able to be more independent and that property for a large family in the towns is too expensive.

It is evident that a certain amount of prosperity allows one to be more independent. However, it is not necessarily the accumulation of capital which allows one to be independent but also the availability of financial assistance. For example, bank loans and mortgages enable flexibility, choice and independence in financial matters. Some interviewees explained how their countries were changing as follows:

Taiwan has a Chinese culture. Here when you are 18 you can go to university but your parents don't need to support you because you can get a loan. Normally, I think most children in Taiwan stay with their parents until they find a job but if it is in a different location they may rent. Nowadays, more and more of the children are living separately from their parent when they get married.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

We used to live in extended families until about the late 1970's and now people are in more nucleus families which is the way it has been moving more recently. People also borrow money for 20-25 years which used to be unheard of. A seven year mortgage used to be a big thing. It is going to be a big problem so I don't know if people will go back to living together again.

PhD, Mauritius, MR1

It seems that although many of the students were in favour of the extended family system, it was probably because they were receiving all the benefits because they were still young e.g. funding through university. However, as they get older they may have to assume the responsibilities necessary to maintain such support systems. For example:

When I was a kid I learned to be independent. When I get older I will have to look after my parents but I will never have to pay the bills – men do that and women do housework as it is the traditional way. Women can work but you don't have to spend your money; that's the guy's job. Men are under pressure to care for the family. What you had before in England is what we still have.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

People must live together before they get married. They don't live alone before that. We are not allowed to move out. If some family is very big they may live in a big house. We prefer to live near our parents. There is no system for when they get old so we have to be near them; sometimes British people don't understand that ... In my country, children and old people are totally dependent. One of the most interesting things here is that the old people are independent and they have their own wheelchair and can go shopping or do whatever they want.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

In Phase 3, I received a wide range of views relating to the way in which people lived and the reasons for doing so. It was also interesting to note some of the 'misconceptions' of some of the interviewees about the British living habits i.e. children leave home at 18 and that we send our parents away when they get old. These statements may imply that English people are uncaring and do not like responsibility for children or the elderly. However, it is most likely that children do not *automatically* leave home at 18 and that most old people are well cared by a relative, friend or the welfare state. The students did not seem to realise that these situations may also occur because they are most probably an effect of the culture of freedom and independence and thus the ability to choose various options are available. Therefore, some older people may express their free will by choosing to live independently of their children in their old age. Nevertheless, all systems incur disadvantages and advantages and the opinions will vary depending on the students own experience, culture and ethics.

6.8 ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

In Phase 3, only three of the interviewees made some kind of reference to time or work. A student from Saudi Arabia explained how the schooling system was different as children go to school from 6 a.m. in his country; the other two students were from Africa. The first was from Sudan and described how people did not plan ahead much and were not very organised. She said 'it is more relaxed there and people take a long time to do things. If you have an appointment you turn up within an hour'. She also mentioned that the times for eating were different. Similarly, the other student from Botswana referred to her own country as a 'spoilt nation'. She explained how the attitude to work was causing a dilemma in her own country as follows:

Their attitude to work is so laid back; they do not see it as their responsibility. I say that all the time as, as a nation we have agreed to improve in that respect. We have never really had political struggles that you see elsewhere. People have not had to learn to survive, protect, the kind of things that give you motivation to do things. It is a Third World country but it is a stable, upcoming country. I work in a multicultural

academic environment and I see the attitudes other people bring to work and listen to the stories they tell. They talk about what they had to do to get their degree and how hard they had to work. But for us it is like free education from when you are 6 so you are never really going to know how hard it is for them. People also have jobs for life in my country.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

Although Botswana is a stable country, it was interesting to learn that this was one of the countries with a very traditional community structure. Therefore it may be possible to surmise that the people do not feel motivated to work hard as their jobs are for life and the cost of living is probably quite low as they do not require many material possessions. It could also be possible that they may be employed by a member of their family and that may also be the reason why their jobs are so secure. However, as seen in England in past decades, such situations may change due to outside influences, national conflicts or a change in environmental or social conditions.

6.9 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Many of the issues mentioned in Phase 3 were similar to those in the previous Phases. However, a few more aspects were discussed therefore expanding the category further. Once again, the weather was a very popular subject. However, this time, opinions were more negative as eight of the interviewees did not like the weather with one complaining that the bad weather was not shown in the university prospectus. Some of the interviewees also commented on how the weather was 'depressing', 'gloomy' and that it makes them feel 'lonely' especially during the winter time which could be attributed to seasonal affective disorder (SAD) as discussed in Chapter 4. Furthermore, some of the students described how the weather changed their daily habits. For example:

Here you walk more. In Sudan you can't because it is too hot. We get in cars or buses. You can get too sweaty if you walk ... I am not used to the rain. It is nice when it is sunny. We just have a rainy season and then the rest of the year it is dry; here it is windy. We can wear flared skirts at home but I can't wear it here but I do wear trousers here whereas at home I never wear trousers; they are warmer here.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

The weather is very different. It is very windy here and it makes you feel very chilly and I get cold and I don't like it. It also rains a lot, nearly every day. It is very hard to work and get out if you have some appointment you find it difficult to do it because of the weather conditions. I never thought that England had that much rain. I never had to think about the weather before ... In Thailand I just wear a T-shirt, pair of jeans and pair of sandals

- that's it. But here a big coat, big sweater and you can't wear sandals as you get wet feet!

PhD, Thailand, TH3

However, a student from Saudi Arabia explained how he had resorted to extreme measures as 'winter here is too cold and windy' for his young son so he did not take him to school for a week because he kept crying every time he went outside.

Many of the interviewees commented on various aspects of the buildings. As before, a few students expected England to be similar to the US and to London. They also described the landscape in terms of shapes, sizes and colours with Manchester still being referred to as 'red'. Some of the comments were as follows:

I expected to see high, tall buildings but what I saw were red brick houses which are different to me. In Taiwan we paint over the bricks so to see the bare red brick was interesting in a way. I was told by my housemate that it was traditional. I expected to see the tall buildings like in London or America.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

I expected to see taller and bigger buildings because England is one of the G7 countries but then I guess it is more European. The roads were OK but not like I was expecting. I thought they would be wider but then again, most people's perception of England is London. I am not being rude but the only thing that came out of Manchester is Manchester United so people don't actually know the city itself. Another thing that surprised me is that I saw a lot of unused buildings and old factories.

PhD, Mauritius, MR1

I was always thinking 'First World, Fast World' but when I got here I was surprised to see it was just the same pace as us. To be honest I think I was exposed to American TV and I was expecting America, that kind of life. I thought it would look like America but the I saw these normal buildings, even older buildings than where I come from ... My perception of the First World were the little things you see in the media.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

It was very different from my expectations. I thought England should be high in technology and buildings. My perception is that England should be similar to the US because I have seen so many pictures of the US and mostly New York and I surmised that England should be similar but when I came it was different.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

As in the previous Phases, London seemed to fulfil the expectations of what many expected London or England to look like. However, the perceptions varied due to previous knowledge,

experiences of British life and geographical location. Some of the interviewees also compared English cities with their own country. For example:

The architecture is really nice here. It is more old in London but Manchester is more industrial in style like Manchester Museum is like a factory. The buildings are quite nice but they seem squashed. In Trinidad there is more room. In the country it is like back home but we have bigger houses; everyone has gardens and patios. There is not much colour here; not much variety. The buildings are red but there are no flowers.

MSc, Trinidad & Tobago, TT1

London is the same as I expected as I thought it should be quite old and the architecture should be like the pictures in the travel books and TV programmes of Tower Bridge. I thought 'yes, this is London'. Manchester was different as I thought the buildings are quite new and modern architecture compared to London. There are not as many old buildings as London. It looked like modern stuff but in an old colour - dark and grey.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

I thought it would be very historical, not very modern, not high technology so I think it is more or less what I thought. I came from Malaysia but I did my undergraduate degree in Taiwan so there is a lot of relation to the USA through the media. But in Malaysia, it is more connected to England because it was governed by the UK a long time ago and the system is a UK system but Taiwan is a US system. I know the history of England and America.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

In addition, a Taiwanese student explained that Taiwan was a small island with a high population, high pollution and no big houses. According to her, Manchester had more space and 'is not as crowded, especially when you go hiking in the country'. She also liked how people planted beautiful flowers in their gardens as they only put them in pots in Taiwan; she also thought it was much greener here.

6.10 PERSONAL SAFETY

Many of the responses in Phase 3 were similar to those given in the previous Phases. However, similar to Phase 2 a slight majority of seven of the interviewees believed that Manchester was safe especially if common sense measures were taken. They believed the area in which they resided was an important factor and that crime should be expected in every big city. Some of their comments were as follows:

It is a safe place just as long as you take precautions like in any other city. Probably here all the students are grouped in one sector of the city so a lot of people know that there will be a lot of money around. I think it is generally a safe city. Just use your common sense.

PhD, Mauritius, MR1

I think it depends which area of Manchester you live in as some are more dangerous. Some of my friends, and friends of friends, got robbed but if you stay in a posh area it should be OK.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

I have heard stories about what has happened in some areas but personally I think the safety is OK. Back home I live in a city but we don't have guns and knives like here. It is shocking how people kidnap kids.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

In addition, a student from Thailand believed that London was safer than Manchester because when she arrived someone told her that Manchester was the most dangerous city but after a few weeks she believed that if she kept herself safe then she would be alright. Similarly, a student from Sri Lanka also had a bad experience the day after he arrived in Manchester. He saw a man 'bleeding to death' outside his apartment and had to call an ambulance. Despite this not being a good experience, he thought Manchester was still a safe place to be as long as you do not go to the wrong place at the wrong times. Fortunately, none of the interviewees had been victims of crime. Nevertheless, irrespective of their opinions, most had heard of someone who had been a victim and were also affected by the media. A couple of the students explained:

Personally, I think Manchester is a safe place but having said that I didn't realise that a Taiwanese student was stabbed to death 2 years ago. Since then I realised that it could happen to me so it makes you feel nervous. I don't go out at night much.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

I am not quite sure about the safety because I have seen so much on the news. It has also happened to my friends as well. At midnight, 3 robbers broke the door and 2 of my friends were sitting in the living room but managed to escape. The police took 30 minutes to see what had happened! Before that many people told me Manchester wasn't safe but now I believe it.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

It was apparent that the responses were quite diverse due to the personal experiences of the students and the extent to which they were affected by influential factors such as the media.

However, for some, England seemed more dangerous in comparison to their own countries. For example:

Surely Manchester is not safe; compared to Shanghai it is a total mess. Even at 2.00 a.m. you can walk in Shanghai and you don't have to worry about anything. The security is very high priority as it has a lot of investment. I heard that two of my friends had a laptop stolen and break-ins. Another few were pushed to the ground and their bags stolen. One of the cases happened during the day in Piccadilly Gardens and nobody helped; in Shanghai, there are cops around.

MSc, China, CN6

Manchester is not as safe as back home. I live in the capital and there are some streets that are bad there. I know people get mugged here and they target foreign students. It is hard to compare as back home everyone is Caribbean and there are not many foreign students but here it is worse in terms of crime but I still go to Tesco at 3 a.m.!

MSc, Trinidad & Tobago, TT1

It is clear that the issue of crime is quite complex due to the diversity of the individual, circumstances and types of crime committed. Although these issues are constantly dealt with by the Police Force, it could be argued that they cannot be everywhere at the same time. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the individual to take 'common sense' measures in an attempt to avoid the possibility of crime. However, for overseas students, this may be more difficult as it may take more time for them to 'acclimatise' to their new surroundings. It is also an unfortunate fact that the majority of students will not be able to afford to live in the 'posh' areas which may experience less crime, therefore putting themselves more at risk.

6.11 PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

In Phase 2, issues relating to the patience of the English people were raised by some of the interviewees therefore an extra question was introduced in Phase 3, in an attempt to pursue the matter further. The issue was an extension of the question related to the friendliness of English people and although seven of the interviewees thought that the British people were friendly, the remainder had mixed views. A student from Indonesia believed that since living here her opinion of the western people had changed for the better. She said 'they say English are cold but I don't think everyone is cold'. Another student from Sudan was also unsure as she 'supposed' that English people were friendly if you got to know them. She said that 'if you are just passing somebody on the street then they are not friendly. Back home we nod at each other. You hear people saying that British are unfriendly'. However, similar to the previous Phases, a number of students believed that friendly behaviour was dependent on various factors such as area, age and education. Some explained as follows:

Generally, people are friendly but city people and country people are different. The people in the country are friendlier which is the same as Thailand.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

I think most of the young people are friendly; I don't know many older people. I met a couple of very old people but I think they stick a bit too much importance to the past and after a while it bores you.

PhD, Mauritius, MR1

I think the first impression is that the elderly persons are friendlier than the younger generation but I didn't know that it is more difficult to talk to a young person. An older person is easier to talk to; they have more time to help you whereas a young person may be impatient or they would not spend as long as an older person would. But the more friends you make, there is no real difference, as you can get nasty old people as well as young people. I think people are friendly in general but it depends on age.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

It is apparent that the views were quite wide ranging on this matter which was aptly explained by a Malaysian student when he said 'everywhere you have friendly and unfriendly people so you cannot classify a group as it depends on other things'. In addition, a couple of students mentioned the issue of English people being 'reserved' or independent which they explained as follows:

The English are more independent than friendly ... Educated people are more reserved than those who live in the working class. I can feel from their eyes, their actions, talking motions ... The working class are easier to get in closer, to communicate, to talk to. Middle class who have a proper job and work 9-5, a stable income, savings, houses, cars and they do not need anything else which means they do not have a desire to communicate with others. They don't want others to bother or disturb their own life.

MSc, China, CN6

'Quite reserved' - those are the words said all the time about English people. They would much rather do their own things. It is not the same as independence. When I came I didn't like it. In other cultures, when people are into your life you won't really apply your whole self because you always depend on someone contributing to it which can limit your capabilities. Also, the nosey kind of life where everyone knows each and everything you do is negative whereas in the reserved culture, you know people are private in general.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

It was interesting for me to note that both these examples were given by people from traditionally 'collective' cultures. However, the student from Botswana, who had been here a

number of years, seemed to understand the behaviour more, which the Chinese student did not. He may have assumed that English people were unfriendly as they keep their personal lives private, which may have resembled the behaviour of wealthy people in his own society. Needless to say, these examples are by no means conclusive but further exemplify the complexity of human interaction. However, a reason for the 'reserved' behaviour may be a result of the 'politeness' of the English people as a different approach is adopted when interacting with other people. Some students explained:

The English are friendly but their approach is different to that in Sri Lanka ... I started a part time job at Barclaycard and there were about 20 English people and some Indians and Pakistanis. I got in the lift with some English people and they didn't say anything so I introduced myself. They were looking at me in a weird way but now we get along quite well. I wanted to learn about people's different cultures and experiences. Anyone who is willing to accept my friendship is OK.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

The only thing I thought was good when I first came was 'these people are very polite' and I gave them that. But when they were reserved I thought at least they were polite ... I thought the English were impolite until they spoke. Now I realise that I have to introduce myself first and after some time I may have a friend ... Polite is good but it has its disadvantages because sometimes you never get anywhere fast. These days I am a 'go-getter' and meet people and talk to them first. I have learnt that rather than wait for them. I think English people are friendly once you understand them!

PhD, Botswana, BW1

Furthermore, a student from Mauritius took the good behaviour of the English people for granted until he lived in France. He said 'they didn't say 'thank you' to the bus driver but would throw bricks at the bus drivers!' He explained how the bus drivers got verbally or physically attacked as a result of the strikes or incidents which happened on a regular basis.

The subject of patience of the English people received a mixed view as their was a balanced response because six of the interviewees believed that patience depended on such factors as circumstances and personal attributes and thus was not culturally determined. However, it was interesting to note that a few students related queuing and good driving as a display of patient behaviour in the English people as it may not be a part of their own culture. For example:

English are very patient - you tolerate things more. You don't hear the cars beeping at each other on the street. In some countries they make lots of noise. I think the British are good drivers.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

Everyone gets in the queue systematically. Some of my friends came to do English language for one month. They spent one week here then escaped because they didn't want to be in a queue. If you force them to be in any queue they will leave the country!

We don't have queues in Saudi; we haven't been educated to stand in a queue and respect other people. For example, if someone is driving and they want to turn left, there is no doubt that they will just turn left without thinking about others; there are millions of accidents! The driving here is 100% better because everyone knows how to think about other people, when to go, stop and move. I have never seen an accident here because everyone expects other people to follow the system e.g. stop at red lights.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

Similarly, a Mauritian student said 'English people are patient because nobody else would queue up for that long!' Needless to say, despite these opinions, road traffic accidents do occur.

The issue of gender difference was raised by two students (Hofstede, 1984). The first was from Saudi Arabia and he said there was a 'huge' difference between men and women and that after graduating, his wife could not get a job for nine years. However, despite the equality in the UK, his wife did not like it here and wanted to go back to see her family. The second person was from Taiwan and said that 'they will generally be treated equally but in some cases men will have more advantages as men are seen to be able to handle more pressure and do more things'. He believed that it was not just the culture but the way they live and have been taught. Nevertheless, he did say it is now beginning to change as people are being influenced by America and Germany and becoming more open minded. In addition, two Muslim students from Indonesia and Sudan believed that the British people were not as religious as 'back home' although the Sudanese student said that 'Sudan is not as strict as some other countries'.

Further comments regarding Britain were made by some individual students. One interviewee from Botswana liked the British 'subtle sense of humour' which was the 'top thing' for her. She said 'even when they want to present themselves or campaigning, they have the funniest ideas e.g. Red Nose Day and I wonder where did they get it from?!' A Mauritian student thought that the English dressed casually and that some of them grumbled a lot about taxes. Similarly, a Thai student said 'sometimes English people think they are very good and over confident - they think they are the best'. However, one may argue that this may be due to the American influence on the traditionally 'reserved' British people. Furthermore, an interviewee from Taiwan did not expect to go into Asian areas and see all

Asian shops. He 'expected to see fair people sitting by the side of the road drinking coffee'. Initially, he was quite shocked as they do not have many foreigners in Taiwan but he got used to it. Furthermore, a Thai student could tell the difference between the American and British people by watching the 'Weakest Link' by 'the way they act, they way they respond, is totally different.'

In Phase 3, this section incorporated additional aspects related to English people which are diverse and complex as they are connected not only to individual but also political, cultural and religious issues. This exemplifies that no matter how 'individual' a person may feel, they usually conform to some element of society even though they may not be aware of it.

6.12 PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

Similar to Phase 2, the most common methods for finding out about life in England were through the British Council, books, newspapers, movies and television. Although these sources were accessed by seven of the interviewees, some of these may have been quite misleading. For example, an interviewee from Trinidad and Tobago used 'Enid Blyton' books as a point of reference and a student from Thailand used the film 'Notting Hill' which he admitted was 'not quite right!' However, he also stressed that there were not many English films available as they were mainly American in his country.

A student from Sri Lanka had learnt from prospectuses and UK graduates who came to their schools to tell them about their experiences abroad. He said 'since we were small they used to feed us ideas about the English environment'. Despite this amount of information he found that it was a totally different experience when he came himself. The reasons for this difference could be due to a number of reasons as explained by a couple of the interviewees:

Some people who had studied in England and my cousin told me about their experiences. Nobody knew that much about Manchester it was mostly about London ... A lot of things they said were useless as I found out. When I came to this country, nobody gave me the practical facts like what times the shops are open; I just got perceptions of culture. I would say that I was not similar to the people who told me, like I go out but they don't go out. I had to come here to learn for myself.

PhD, Mauritius, MR1

I learnt about England in books, media and asked some friends who had studied in Australia and Britain. if there was anything I needed to bring with me. I didn't expect anything but asking them was like 5 blind people touching an elephant. They all give you a part of the elephant but they can't give you the whole picture of the elephant! I tried to collect as much as

I could but I understood that it wouldn't give me everything. It was just for reference although they all tell you the truth.

MSc, China, CN6

From the examples, it is possible to establish the influencing factors which affect the difference in experiences. First of all, the place and location i.e. London and Manchester can be quite dissimilar as explained in the 'Environmental Factors' section. Similarly, the personalities of the informant and enquirer may also vary therefore the choices made and advice given may be incompatible or inappropriate e.g. a person who does not drink alcohol would not be interested in the best local pubs. Alternatively, the enquirer may request the wrong type of information from the person who has been to England and may not ask 'open ended' questions. Furthermore, the person who has been to England may not have adapted very well but may be ashamed to say. It is also possible that they may have misconceived certain events or situations therefore pass on inaccurate information. Needless to say, it is best if you 'feel it for yourself and put your feet on the land' as suggested by the Chinese student. Nevertheless, whichever it may be, it is clear that five different people will experience England in five different ways hence the 5 blind men touching the elephant. However, it is important to ensure that at least the elephant has four legs instead of three as a certain amount of accuracy needs to be maintained.

In Phase 3, I decided to introduce two new questions as a result of the issues raised in the previous Phases by many of the respondents. These questions related specifically to alcohol and freedom within the English culture. However, it must be noted that the responses are closely related to the section on perception of people as individual behaviour by many people constitutes the normal cultural behaviour of that society. Seven students commented on the issue of the freedom of British people which some closely related to the aspect of 'open mindedness'. Due to the freedom of speech and human rights in British society, these elements were also discussed in relation to individualism (Kim et al., 1994) and independence as raised in the Social Conditions section. For example:

In my culture we have seniority, you have to respect older people - sometimes too much as you cannot give your opinion at all which is not a good thing. So the best place is in the middle of both countries.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

Teenagers have too many freedoms. You have to respect your parents even when you are older. If you don't agree with them you discuss it and try to get an uncle or someone else to convince them. Sometimes it is a compromise.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

I think people here are more open minded and have a lot of freedom. At home what another person does is other people's concern. People are afraid what other people say. Some parents are very strict. There again, there are many different cultures. Most Muslims dress differently and do cover up. Their sense of understanding is different. I am Muslim.

Here open minded people really listen to what you have to say and see it from different angles - what is right and wrong; maybe mostly with the educated people as they will understand more. People have their own things to do and move on.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

English people are allowed to express themselves. People are not shocked by someone trying to be an individual. In my culture, Jesus Christ, there are rules and regulations and if I wanted to express myself I would be limited by the people. That is what I admire about this society - people are allowed to be individuals, express themselves and do whatever they want to do without anyone thinking it's not right.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

People here are more open minded. I am also open minded but in some circumstances it still surprises me e.g. in relationships they are more easy going, not like the Chinese culture. When you see people here they hug but with Chinese people we don't touch each other. But I get used to this culture and like hugging and being happy together. In China, you don't even hug your family. You don't even kiss your parents, brother or sister only your partner. When I see Westerners I think it is very natural.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

In addition, a Chinese student believed that an unelected government was better than a democracy (as long as there was a 'proper' leader) because 'if people were given too much freedom, they would have more choices and therefore take more time to make decisions'. Similarly, a Mauritian student thought that too much freedom can be a bad thing especially in the press as 'they can say what they want - too much really'. However, he still thought it was better than many countries where people may be put in jail or lose their jobs. He explained that 'you don't have to say anything particularly bad, just a criticism or anything and you would probably find yourself in the bad books'. Alternatively, a Thai student liked the media and talk shows as they gave people 'a lot of freedom to discuss things'. She also found some of the topics interesting and further comments on other aspects of the media were as follows:

It is mostly what I expected but I didn't expect people to be so liberal, not really free but like cursing [swearing] in public as in Trinidad it is illegal. Some people over here are terrible with it. The media over here shows things that are obscene, the newspapers as well. We don't get anything like that on normal TV - maybe on cable. We are considered as North Americans along with Mexico. America is quite conservative and is not as

bad as here. I thought they would be worse than England but cursing is censored there. I expected it to be like America but not worse!

MSc, Trinidad & Tobago, TT1

One thing really shocked me - when I saw pornographic magazines. When I landed at Heathrow and my feet were on British land for the first time I just saw so many magazines on the top shelf so that children could not get them ... but kids were running nearby. I just thought 'why is this country going this way?' This kind of stuff is illegal in China; cops can arrest people for this kind of behaviour.

Nothing frightened me except for the night life! I went home late and people seem a little bit mad. Young men and women keep using swear words as an adjective and adverb and I don't know how young girls can have so little clothes on in such cold weather!

MSc, China, CN6

For the first time, the interviewees unanimously agreed on one issue - that alcohol was a part of the English culture although a couple of students said it was the same as their culture. For example, a student from Trinidad and Tobago said 'it is also part of our social culture. For everything people open a bottle. Alcohol is cheap and rum is made in Trinidad'. Similarly, a student from Botswana said 'it is about the same as home but they do it more openly here'. Similar to Phase 2, although alcohol is consumed in most countries, they had a different attitude towards beer as follows:

Alcohol is very much a part of British culture, especially beer. They like it and love it. I never used to drink but I do sometimes when I get together with my friends. Sri Lankans drink a lot of spirits whereas in England they drink beer.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

People in Thailand don't drink beer but whisky. If you want to drink beer you can go to a pub where a girl will sit with you - it is not very nice.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

If you are talking about alcohol, I am not sure but beer is certainly part of Manchester life. More people have pubs as part of their life.

MSc, China, CN6

Four of the interviewees were surprised at the amount of alcohol that was consumed and the different times of the day were also mentioned. However, a couple of the interviewees who came to England for their undergraduate study explained how they were introduced to the advantages and disadvantages of drinking at an early stage as follows:

I was an occasional drinker when I came but in order to get into the spirit you need to buy a round when you go to the pub and if you don't do that then it would be rather difficult for you to fit in. The more you go out, the more things you learn. I don't go out as much as I used to as an undergraduate but you can just look at soaps like Coronation Street and Eastenders where they spend the majority of the time in the pubs and most of the scenes are shot in a pub.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

I lived in a public school hall when I first came and the rugby lads used to get completely 'smashed' every two nights. I expected alcohol to be part of the culture but I didn't think there would be so much binge drinking, not too much itself, just too much at once. They drink it too quickly, especially the undergraduates.

PhD, Mauritius, MR1

It could be argued that a group of young men anywhere in the world may do anything to excess, whether it be drinking or playing table tennis. However, what is clear is that although drinking in England is a socially acceptable activity (which is also reflected in the media and is a very profitable industry due to the payment of taxes) it is also a pastime which can be done alone or with a group which is a little different to some countries. Some comments about the English drinking habits were as follows:

Drinking is a part of life in England. You might want to go somewhere and might stop for a beer first and then continue going. In Thailand, when friends drink beer they have to come together and drink together and it takes time but here in thirty minutes you are finished. Normally people drink with a group because they can chat and have fun.

I like the beer as it makes people come and speak together. When you go to a pub you can talk to people you don't know - it's a social connection. It's special - it's part of the culture. In Thailand you can't use beer as a social connection with other people because they bring their own friends. But here you can go alone and talk to other people - it is good but when they get drunk it is not that good!

PhD, Thailand, TH3

I think alcohol is part of the American and European people. The habits of drinking alcohol here is different to my country. When you drink alcohol in my country they will drink until they get drunk and can't walk but here it is like a social party. Most people here drink but in my country they don't. But if they do, then they drink too much - over the limit; the poorer people usually drink more.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

It could be argued that, people all over the world, irrespective of age and class may drink excessively at some time in their lives due to a variety of reasons. However, a couple of students commented upon the difference in attitudes to drinking and the problems it causes in their own countries. They explained:

Back home you have to pretend sometimes depending on where you are. But here you are very free and you can just go for a pint and it's OK. You can even do it with your lecturer. At home you can't do that. It is tradition - the culture. There are protocols that have to be observed when you go into certain areas or when talking to certain people e.g. if there is someone older than me there are certain things I can and cannot say. I can't invite them for a pint but they could me - it works downwards. Here and there, there are limitations because of the culture.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

When I didn't drink the English people really respected that. They were proud of me and said it was very good. Sometimes they even admitted that they were drunkards! But after about a year I started drinking with my Sri Lankan friends. The English people were more accepting but with the Sri Lankans I had to drink to be part of the group.

In Sri Lanka, if they see me drink they would kill me. If my community saw me they would be shocked because they think I am perfect but I am not. At home I am a bit quiet because I don't go out that much. I mainly go out at night to do things as I have to hide away from people. If I go somewhere people see me and pressure my dad and tell him what I am doing. If they see me smoking or drinking they tell him.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

It was interesting to learn how drinking was also linked to other realms of socialisation such as freedom, open mindedness, seniority and community behaviour as discussed in previous sections. Once again, this displays how complex human behaviour can be and how it varies in certain environments. Due to this complexity, a couple of students attempted to understand the underlying reasons for the English drinking habits. The first interviewee was from Malaysia and thought that alcohol was 'inseparable' from the English culture. He said that 'here they don't have entertainment in their spare time so they go to the pub'. He believed that each culture has different types of entertainment e.g. Taiwanese go bowling or to karaoke, Malaysians like eating and shopping until late. Similarly, a Chinese student said that his people 'would go to a tea house, coffee bar or entertainment place instead of a pub'. Alternatively, a student from Sudan explained how she is not allowed to drink at home as she is Muslim so 'it is very different here. It is excessive drinking and a lot of the drinking is social'. Similarly, another Muslim student from Indonesia could not comprehend the idea of social drinking in Britain she said 'I don't like it; I don't know why. We are not allowed to drink so it seems completely different to me'. Once again, this exemplifies how alcohol, quite literally, is not everyone's 'cup of tea'.

Some other aspects relating to culture were also raised. A student from Trinidad and Tobago noticed how events such as Chinese New Year, St Patrick's Day and Eid were separate. He said that 'they are all an 'everybody' thing at home. For Eid we would go to a Muslim's house

and you do not need to be invited. Everyone knows everyone, or of them'. However, he did explain that this was probably easier to do as the cultures were more integrated as the population was only 1 million. Alternatively, he noted that an advantage of the larger population and country size of England, was that there were more activities - 'there is a lot more to do here because I like going to plays and musicals. England has tons'. Similarly, a student from Mauritius, explained that his island was about the size of London. He said 'people at home live a simpler life. They don't go out as much as they do here. We used to have a 'rent-a-video' culture whereas here they go to the cinema. In England you have the opportunity to practice sports whereas at home people spend a lot of time in front of the telly'. Nevertheless, it should be noted that although numerous activities and leisure facilities are available, the student may not be aware that the majority of the population still prefer watching sports on television rather than participating in them.

Similar to the previous Phases, the issues of living together before marriage and the difference in family relationships and multiculturalism were mentioned by a few students. Furthermore, one of the Thai interviewees said 'I think there is an international culture not just in the university but everywhere - especially in London. They come from everywhere but it is not like that in Bangkok. Manchester is a city of universities so there are students everywhere'. In addition, a Taiwanese student believed that football was part of the culture and said that 'football is a good conversation point as many English people ask you which team you support'. Furthermore, a Thai student believed that the culture of the people can be learned through looking at the landscape. He noticed that 'England has so many treasures like castles and I would like to experience these things because if you study the history of people you can understand them better than studying in the university'. This statement propounds the connection between the environment and culture, as the environment often reflects the history of the land and underlying reasons for the customs which affect the current culture.

6.13 SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

In Phase 3, I decided to amend one of the questions so that the meaning was clearer. Instead of asking the students if they found it easier to relate to a certain group of people, it was changed to ask whether they found it easier to make friends with people from a certain nationality, country or group. As in Phase 2, they were still required to explain the reasons for their choices.

In this Phase, the interviewees had friends from a range of seventeen different countries. Although this number was lower than the last Phase, it reflected the smaller number of interviewees that took part. Nine of the students had English friends although the remainder had no English friends at all. However, this was not always out of choice but was sometimes due to the lack of British people on the postgraduate programmes as explained:

I have no English friends here. Actually there are not many people doing research and there are none in my office. Also, on the MSc course the majority were from overseas; people don't believe it back home.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

A few of the interviewees that had English friends enjoyed maintaining the friendships they had. Some students also mentioned the benefits of such relationships and how more can be learned about the culture through its people. For example:

My best friend is British so I think compared with other people I am quite lucky ... It is great to get to know the British culture through my British friend as I spend Christmas and New Year at her house. I can go to see an orchestra or on a country walk with her family. There are not many British students doing Master's so there isn't much chance to learn about the UK - it is very restricted. My friends from Taiwan don't have any contact with the locals and they stay in a group so when they go back they don't know about the different culture, things and way of living.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

I think when you have a lot of English friends you can learn a lot in a group. When I came I didn't know any other Taiwanese students. I think it is difficult to break into a group at the beginning but if you go out with a group of English people it is better.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

Despite the obvious benefits of having English friends, three of the students thought that familiarity was important. A Thai student explained:

As time goes on you find it easier to go for someone who has quite a similar culture to your own country because the Europeans and Asians are totally different in some aspects. Asian people think about some things too much and the European people don't think about it at all e.g. Asian people think about others around them but the Europeans won't. I think it is good to be both because some times the Asian people think too much about this and it can be a bad thing as you cannot be happy about it.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

Similarly, a Chinese student confirmed that he did not have any preferences but 'surely I would say 'hi' to a Chinese person first because it is polite but later it just depends on which person you would like to talk to, not on where they are from'. A student from Mauritius echoed these sentiments although he did not automatically like his own people. He explained 'it doesn't matter to me where people are from it just depends on if we get on or not. A lot of people from my country, I don't like them - even the ones in Manchester'. In addition, a couple of students noted that the Greeks 'stick together' and that 'you get a 'closed' feeling if you tried to approach them'. However, I was surprised to learn that seven of those asked, regardless of origin, felt some kind of affinity with the Chinese people. For example:

I find it easier to talk to people from China; maybe we are from similar cultures and from somewhere far away ... It is not that difficult to make friends with them.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

I have made friends with Arabic and Chinese. Most Chinese are friendly and there are many at UMIST. The Chinese are interested in having a relationship with me but the British aren't ... In my opinion, Chinese are really friendly people. You can just smile and say 'hello' and then go to dinner with them and make a relationship with them.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

The Chinese are very nice; they are friendlier than the Europeans. I prefer Arabs first and then Chinese. My Chinese friend introduced me to her friends and they all talked to me - they wanted me to be part of their group.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

In the class there were Chinese people and it was easy to immediately relate to them ... The Chinese invited me for dinner and we ate together. I thought they maybe come from an environment with a community structure. The Chinese are also kind of humble - they are not assertive. I feel I can dominate them and that I can be their leader! I can decide where we are going and you can take advantage of that weakness! Even if they don't want to do it, they will just follow.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

From these examples, it is clear to see that the connection may be due to a similarity in cultures, parts of the world or language. However, it also seems that the Chinese people are appealing as they willingly welcome people into their group which those from 'community' cultures can also identify with. This may be due to the collective element of their culture as people are encouraged to live together in harmony. However, one of the Chinese students explained the disadvantages of such communal behaviour as follows:

If you are in a group, suppose you have to go somewhere, you think about the other people going but if 3 or 4 people don't go then you can't go at all. Sometimes, even if the minority don't want to go then the majority don't go either! Nobody can decide as in general nobody is taught to be a leader. I think if you allow the people to decide then they may take too long or nothing happens - I don't like it.

MSc, China, CN6

A similar 'anti-democratic' view was given by another Chinese student in the 'Perception of Culture' section. It was also noted that Chinese people seemed to attract people into their group by inviting them to dinner thus supporting the old adage 'those who eat together, stay together'.

Unfortunately, not everything is ideal as some people do not have good relationships with each other due to various reasons. For example:

I have a problem with Indians, Muslims and all that. The culture is personally a problem as I cannot relate to them as they are too religious. I am a Christian and when they say things, I don't agree with them fundamentally and I feel like I might offend them so I try to keep away and I can't express myself. Although I am friends with them, I can't be best friends. I like to be open with my friends. I feel like our friendship could be at stake ... Religion is very sensitive, especially with Muslims. Their culture in general is different. I work with people from India and Pakistan back home and we feel as though they isolate themselves. You work with them but after work that's it. You can't have a relationship with them but with anyone else you can. They don't interact with the main society.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

One of the Pakistani guys thought I was from India and used to give me the 'cold shoulder' but when he found out I wasn't he was friendlier but I thought I won't talk to someone who feels like that. Another Pakistani guy had no problem with me at all.

MSc, Trinidad & Tobago, TT1

As mentioned in Phase 2, England can be a 'neutral ground' where students from different countries are able to interact regardless of any restrictions which are in force in their own countries. Nevertheless, as stated before, the ideal situation is far more problematic as it involves many factors which go beyond the individual and their culture which are frequently reported in national and international news bulletins. One student from Mauritius gave a very simplistic view of such problems when he said 'interactions also depend on experience not just culture. It depends on how you are raised and how to interact'. However, as highlighted in this section, the gap between these elements can sometimes seem like an abyss.

6.14 ADAPTING TO AND LEARNING FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE

It was the first time in England for six of the interviewees. Four had been here twice before and a further two had visited numerous times. Out of those, nine were living on their own and the remainder resided with relatives or friends. Nevertheless, I was, once again, pleased to learn that the majority of eight students did not find it difficult to adapt. This may be due to the numerous factors previously mentioned such as language ability, personality, minimal cultural differences or companionship. Some of the students explained as follows:

Maybe I am a bit strange! I wanted to know more about differences. Why and how? Maybe others take months to adapt if they stay with their own people but to me, I like being alone ... Everything is exciting. Many things are similar - match boxes all around. I felt a bit lonely in the first 3 months as I missed my parents a little but it didn't affect my life.

MSc, China, CN6

It was not difficult to adapt because with the cricket team I had been to India, Pakistan and England. I have also been around Europe, Middle East, Egypt and Asia with my parents. Since I was 6 we travelled once a year with my family to about 5-6 countries; it has helped me to get used to different cultures.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

I don't think it was difficult to adapt; it was quite easy for me. My personality and way of living helped. I have been independent in Taiwan and when I was in Malaysia I was working in different places since I was very young. I am not shy. It took me about one year to get used to my surroundings. I have been here three years now.

MPhil, Malaysia,

MA4

It wasn't really difficult to adapt because I knew that England was a mixed culture because so many countries have moved to England for a long time, for example, Bangladesh, so I think people here accept foreigners. The way people behave here is not offensive to foreigners. When we talk to people they try to talk to you even when they can't understand at all.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

Since being in England, a Taiwanese student had changed his lifestyle and now liked to go to the pub and watch football every day. Although it is not popular in Taiwan (basketball and baseball are preferred) he believes that it will be difficult to get rid of the habit when he goes back. Alternatively, the students who felt that they did not adapt very well had a diverse

range of reasons for doing so. For example, a student from Thailand was apprehensive as soon as she arrived. She said 'it was very scary the first day; I thought 'can I go back now please?' I felt a bit lonely and wondered what I was going to experience in the next year'. Luckily, she was met at the airport by her friend who helped her settle in for the first few days. However, it took her a couple of months until she felt 'comfortable' here. The interviewee believed that 'it depends on how often you go out with British people or your friends. The thing I had to adapt to was not really a British but a kind of international culture'. She also described the difficulty with having to speak English all the time instead of just three hours per week. Once again, this reiterates the importance of many of the topics discussed in the previous sections i.e. Language and Relationships etc. Similarly, a Taiwanese student took about three months to learn about practical things such as bus systems and shopping. He believed that the adaptation process would have been aided if he had spent more time learning about 'living styles and habits of people in this society' before he arrived. In addition, a student from Botswana believed that the need to understand the culture of the people was a significant element in the adaptation process as follows:

It was not so much the environment but the people were hard to adapt to. It affects you. It took me a couple of months to get to know my way around but about 2 years to get used to the culture of the people and to understand them. Students who are here for one year may go back with the wrong ideas because they haven't had time to adapt.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

Although it is evident that time and familiarity are significant factors in the adaptation process they are by no means a guarantee of success due to the complexity of human nature, lifestyles and living habits. For example, a student who had visited London many times before came across a phenomenon in Manchester that she simply could not comprehend as it was unheard of in her own culture. Therefore she did not know how to react. She explained as follows:

It wasn't difficult to adapt but my first time in Manchester, the Gay Festival was on and it was very strange for me. You had a festival and a village. I was living close by so I decided that for 2-3 days I wouldn't go out. I wanted to avoid the whole thing as I just couldn't understand it but afterwards I got used to it. In my country they don't have it. I was surprised they have a gay group in the university.

PhD, Sudan, SD1

This example also exemplifies how the adaptation process can become more complicated as it is constantly influenced by change. Therefore, what 'rules' apply one day may change on another. It also shows how there can be regional cultural differences both at home and

abroad. Needless to say, a student from Thailand (famous for glamorous 'Lady Boy' transvestites) may not have been as bothered by such an experience.

Similar to the previous Phases, four of the students in Phase 3 mentioned food as an integral part of the adaptation process although a student from Trinidad and Tobago liked the food but found it 'quite bland' due to the lack of spices. In addition, a Chinese student disliked the Chinese noodles here 'because they are not Chinese noodles!' However, he did like cooking and experimenting with different recipes. He also enjoyed cooking for friends and in return a Spanish friend taught him how to bake cakes and bread. A couple more interviewees commented on their experience with food as follows:

I like the different types of food you can get here e.g. Indian but I don't like the expense. I also eat kebabs and Indian food. I used to love fish and chips when I was in Sri Lanka but now I don't eat it too much; the fish was fresh there. I can only eat halal meat so I am restricted.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

The food is very different. The staple in Thailand is rice and there is much more variety and you can get very cheap food. That is the main reason it is better - only the food. Normally I cook my own food from Tesco's but I have to go to China Town to get other food. In Thailand if you want to get fresh fish you can find them swimming in the tank.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

It is possible to surmise that food differs according to the country it is served in so this may be another reason for change. For example, English people eat what they believe are Chinese noodles and likewise Sri Lankans eat what they believe are English style fish and chips. The well known *Coca Cola* company are aware of these preferences as they adapt the taste of coke according to the market they serve i.e. in China ginseng is added. Once again, this exemplifies how culture even has an effect on people's taste buds as foods are adapted to the people according to the environment in which they are served.

For some of the younger students, the greatest physical change was to cook, wash their clothes and look after their rooms which made them appreciate their parents more. For example:

I have learned to be responsible for myself because at home everything is done for you. Food is there when you get home, clothes are washed, the room is clean so you have nothing to do. I was able to judge people better because I was away from home and had to listen to people; I opened up a bit more.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

I felt as though I was out of the cage, out of the room - if you open a window you get fresh air but everything has its price. You have to do many more things but you begin to understand a bit more about life and how hard it has been for your parents to keep the family together; I have become more mature here.

MSc, China, CN6

Similarly, a student from Sudan now changed light bulbs in the house whereas before she would not. A student from Saudi Arabia also explained that he no longer leaves the lights on as electricity is not cheap here and that he also has to protect his car more due to the higher crime rate. Nevertheless, it is clear that the experiences of 'escaping' from parents or saving electricity are more positive than negative and the outcome often gives the individual a greater sense of responsibility, appreciation or confidence. This greater understanding was explained as follows:

You change in some ways because you see more stuff - different things. I haven't been back since '95 but I have a different perspective of how people do things. I also know about different cultures so I am more open minded ... It has been a good life experience. I think I became more used to learning new things. It gave me more courage and made me more adventurous as I didn't worry about making mistakes.

MPhil, Taiwan, TW2

I am quite sure that the experience here will change my life. The things I have experienced, the books I have read here and the knowledge and views I have learned have changed me. The friends, the exchange of views and the way they look at the world and their lifestyle will change me.

MSc, China, CN6

I wanted to come here to experience another culture, another perspective, not just to study. When I came here it made me realise that the political parties are the same here and it was not because my country was Third World. I realised that it wasn't just a fault with my country and that they have problems everywhere.

MSc, Trinidad & Tobago, TT1

When I first came I was not open to other people. I have now met so many different people and cultures that I am comfortable everywhere. I was only open to my own culture ... I have learned more outside the university than in it. I ask questions, have debates and watch TV. I quite like the way you can give your opinion and contribute to a TV show without being stigmatised.

PhD, Botswana, BW1

When you live in your own country you see the system and figure out how to solve it. But when you come here you see the system here and compare it. You can see where problems are and maybe change it. You may not be

able to change everything but we can try to do our best. We could tell people about it and discuss it and it might be a starting point; I do this with my Thai friends.

PhD, Thailand, TH4

My attitude has changed. When you are inside the circle you don't see the circle but when you go abroad you can see it very well. I have seen some disadvantages and advantages about my own country but if it is not necessary, I don't want to say. I have a wider perspective and feel that my personality has changed by living abroad.

PhD, Saudi Arabia, SA1

It is clear that the overseas experience may change people in ways that they had never imagined possible. However, a student from Malaysia aptly addressed the perplexity of this issue by saying 'I think people change sometimes but you don't know if it's the culture or your personality changing. Your behaviour may change but it may be because you are learning, getting more knowledge and experience'. In reality, it is probably a bit of both as a change in culture affects one's personality which subsequently affects one's behaviour.

It was also interesting to hear the interviewees referring to their own country in terms of 'the system, room or circle' as it almost implied a sense of captivity from which they were now free. However, I was pleased to learn that a number of interviewees may try to use their experience, not only to change their own lives, but that of others for the better. Some students may have the ability to make this a reality as they may be appointed to prominent positions where the instigation of change may be possible.

Nevertheless, one negative aspect of the British study experience is that the change in behaviour or personality may make it difficult to re-adapt upon their return home (reverse culture shock). Four of the students explained such concerns as follows:

I have been growing up here and adapting to this environment. My thinking has changed so when I go back home I may ask why things are different. Sometimes you don't notice you are changing because you just deal with things.

MPhil, Malaysia, MA4

I am going to take back all the things I like and throw away the things I don't like. I hope my son does the same. He is completely different. He behaves well because he has been educated here ... but it is hard in a different environment.

PhD, Saudi Arabia SA1

I like expressing my opinion and will try to take it back home with me but I will need to adapt it because some people over there can't accept it. People who have been in their country their whole lives and are about 50 - you

will not be able to change them. We have to think about it and mix what we got from abroad and what we have from here and adjust it because we have to stay there longer ... I feel more independent which is quite a problem when I go back. I used to do things straight away but now I don't and my parents get annoyed. Most people have a problem when they go back.

PhD, Thailand, TH3

When I go back home, I have already learned to respect people's privacy and let them do their own thing. When my community are judging someone I will get them to see the other side of the story. I learnt that here I am not as quick to judge now. I have also learned that the bottom line is that 'it's none of your business!'

PhD, Botswana, BW1

In addition, a couple of the interviewees wanted different cultures to learn from each other so that a greater understanding could be achieved. They explained as follows:

Some people do not know China. In their view Hong Kong, Taiwan and China are not all separate countries but they are China. I know it is for historical reasons but I don't like people thinking this way and really feel sorry that people do not know much about China. They keep their stereotype all the time. Those programmes on TV are not China and I can't imagine what people have in their minds after watching them. Some people may still see me as a foreigner but to me people are people. We are from different cultures but we are more or less the same.

MSc, China, CN6

Sometimes people generalise people from other countries but they shouldn't do that. They need to get a feel for themselves but there again all countries are a bit similar to another. They are all interlinked. There are things that are similar but in the first instance you won't notice it but after some time you realise that they are on a different path.

MSc, Sri Lanka, SL1

These examples could be associated to the levels of mental programming (Hofstede, 1984) as discussed in Chapter 2. For example, all people are 'more or less the same' could be related to the universal level and 'all countries are a bit similar to another. They are all interlinked' could be related to the collective level. However, as discussed throughout the study, the difficulty mainly arises due to the individual level of mental programming which is the most complicated due to personal experiences and differences in personality.

One of the purposes of this study was to investigate the many issues relating to the student experience so that a greater understanding may be achieved. Therefore, I was pleased when a student from Botswana revealed that 'the interview had been good because I hadn't

processed the information before. Just asking me what I like about Britain is good as I hadn't thought about it before!

6.15 HOFSTEDE'S VALUE DIMENSIONS: Phase 3

In relation to App. 20, references to Hofstede's extreme value dimensions are as follows:

STUDY INCENTIVES

Individualism

- Perceived improved job prospects. Experience would broaden personal views.

Collectivism

- It was necessary for a student to gain a PhD in order to be accepted as a normal member of his family.

COUNTRY CHOICE

Uncertainty avoidance

- England may be safer than other countries.
- Students are not welcome in other countries and a visa may be difficult to obtain.

UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Individualism

- Students chose university depending on personal preference.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Individualism

- English skills would improve job prospects.

Uncertainty tolerance

- It is interesting to discover the different accents, improve pronunciation and grammar.

LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Uncertainty avoidance and collectivism

- It is easier for students to talk to non-English people because they do not expect impeccable English and are like to have something in common with them.

Uncertainty tolerance

- Some students enjoyed the challenge of learning a new language.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

Femininity

- Everyone is cared for under the NHS; everyone is treated the same in shops.
- The social system is designed to work for everyone.

Long term orientation

- In some countries, people may buy something just because it is cheap as it is good to be thrifty and save money.

Short term orientation

- People are changing their shopping habits and will spend more money to buy a better service. They now worry about their personal tastes.

Uncertainty avoidance and collectivism

- It is possible to survive on nothing because of a community structure and lack of emphasis on material goods.
- People may live together because it is cheaper.

Individualism

- People tend to live alone in England and stay apart from their families when they marry.
- Old people are independent and can do whatever they want.

Uncertainty avoidance

- People may borrow money for 20-25 years which used to be unheard of; 7 years used to be a big thing.

Masculinity

- Men pay the bills and women do the housework; men are under pressure to care for the family.

ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

Collectivism

- People may not feel motivated to work hard as their jobs are for life and the cost of living is low.

PERSONAL SAFETY

Uncertainty tolerance

- Many believed that Manchester was safe especially if common sense measures were taken.

Uncertainty avoidance

- Some students found England more dangerous than their own countries and avoided going out at night.

PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

Short term orientation

- Old people in England enjoy talking about the past.

Individualism

- English people are independent.

Collectivism

- In some cultures, people may not reach their capabilities as they are dependent on someone contributing to their lives.

PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

Individualism

- English people have personal freedom to do what they want.
- Alcohol is drunk more openly than in other countries.

Collectivism

- Personal freedom is limited and what one person does is another person's concern. Rules and regulations need to be adhered to.
- It is necessary to drink alcohol to be part of a group.

High power distance

- Parents have to be respected even when one is older.

SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

Collectivism

- Some students stay in groups and do not learn anything about the English culture.

ADAPTING TO AND LEARNING FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE

Uncertainty tolerance

- New and different things are exciting.

Uncertainty avoidance

- Some found change frightening.
- Some students may suffer reverse culture shock when they return to their old country which may not be so accepting of new ideas.

Individualism

- Being independent helps one to adapt and grow as a person and acquire new skills.

6.16 SUMMARY

DISCUSSION OF PHASE 3

STUDY INCENTIVES

Many of the incentives mentioned in Phase 3 were similar to the first two Phases. Seven of the interviewees were encouraged or expected to pursue postgraduate study by their families or friends and a few explained the impact that their decision had had on their families. A further three interviewees were sponsored and the same number believed that a further degree would improve their job prospects. Four of the students were more interested in self improvement and broadening their views rather than the programme of study itself.

COUNTRY CHOICE

The respondents in Phase 3 gave similar reasons for choosing England as the other two groups and four of them preferred the UK as the courses were shorter than those offered in the US and France. Eight of the interviewees had considered America although three of them could not obtain a place due to certain restrictions. In addition, three people had considered Australia and two more believed that the British system was better but only one student had expressed an interest in mainland Europe. Furthermore, two interviewees from Botswana and Sri Lanka chose England because they were used to the British system in their own countries. In addition, four of the students were sponsored and therefore their own preferences regarding country choice were restricted. Alternatively, an interviewee from Trinidad and Tobago had applied to Canada but was told that he could only be offered a place if a company sponsored him. Furthermore, a couple of students had returned to England as they had previously studied here and a further three came as a result of personal recommendations.

UNIVERSITY CHOICE

Many of the responses regarding university choice were similar to those in the previous Phases. However, some issues were extended a little due to the impact of individuality on the decision making process. It was noted that four of the students were aware of the UMIST reputation with the same number coming due to recommendations alone. For many of the interviewees, the quality of research, facilities, teaching and the subject area were also important factors. However, eight of the interviewees held more than one offer with four having received more than three offers for university places. Nevertheless, the university was not the only factor which was taken into account as the city itself was an influential factor. Although six of the interviewees liked the geographical location of the city, a number of students also liked the location of the university as well as other positive aspects such as the cost of living.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A majority of eight students took the English language into consideration when deciding where to study. Some believed that developing their skills would improve their job prospects especially with British owned companies such as BP but a few from Sri Lanka, Botswana and Trinidad and Tobago said English was like their first language. However, some others also thought English was a useful language for studying programming, global e-Commerce and another culture. In addition, a student from Sudan had studied in England since she was seven, and another from Mauritius had lived in Australia with a few others having attended language schools in England prior to studying here. However, regardless of ability or fluency, the majority had to adjust to listening to local accents although it was not just the accent but the clarity of speech and use of words which were quite perplexing. Furthermore, the opinions and preferences also differed between the interviewees regarding 'American-English' and 'British English' as they were probably influenced by various systems.

LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

In Phase 3, the issues that were raised were an extension of some of those in Phase 2. However, fewer people reported problems with the effect of language on relationships possibly due to a higher level of ability because five of the interviewees were fluent English speakers. Nevertheless, four of the overseas students still found it difficult to interact with English people. Similar to Phase 2, the lack of commonality in relation to background and

lifestyle led to an inability for some students to have 'deep' or long conversations with English people as they could not find anything in common to talk about. It was also interesting to note that it was easier for the interviewees to speak to a 'non-English speaker' (albeit in English) as the other person would also be inclined to make mistakes so the pressure was less. Alternatively, a few students found the English people to be patient and some more enjoyed the challenge of learning a new language. Needless to say, the effect language has on any relationship depends on numerous other factors such as personality and situation. However, it seems that those who have the confidence to tackle obstacles are able to use their personal skills to overcome their English language problems when forming relationships.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SERVICES

In Phase 3, many of the issues mentioned were similar to those raised previously as the same subjects were discussed. However, I decided to split the question regarding standards of service and living into two so that the issues would be treated separately. I also decided to specifically ask about the General Practitioner service although five of the students were unable to comment as they had not used the services. Nevertheless, the majority of seven gave an opinion albeit a negative one, as it seemed that the interviewees were unhappy about the waiting times and inaccessibility to appropriate care which is a common grievance of the British public.

The legal system and public transport in England were also mentioned. Fortunately, unlike the GP service, nine of the interviewees commented on mainly positive aspects of the transport system. In addition, four of the interviewees mentioned the high taxes, council tax, tax on bank accounts and a couple more mentioned the shopping culture. The attitudes of the employees in the service industry were also discussed and comparisons were made with some other countries.

Although many of the students seemed to be in favour of extended families it was clear that it may not be purely out of choice as it may be more economically viable to live or work together, with each person assuming a role in the household or community. It was also noted that although a certain amount of prosperity allows one to be more independent, it is not necessarily the accumulation of capital which allows one such freedom, but the availability of financial assistance. For example, bank loans and mortgages enable flexibility, choice and independence in financial matters.

In Phase 3, I received a wide range of views relating to the way in which people lived and the reasons for doing so. Nevertheless, it was noted that all systems incur disadvantages and advantages thus the opinions varied depending on the students own experience, culture and ethics.

ATTITUDES TO WORK AND TIME

In Phase 3, only three of the interviewees made some kind of reference to time or work. The first was from Saudi Arabia and explained how the schooling system was different for his children and the second, from Sudan, described how people did not plan ahead much and were not very organised. The third student, from Botswana explained how the attitude to work was causing a dilemma in her own country. However, as seen in England in past decades, such situations may change due to outside influences, national conflicts or a change in environmental or social conditions.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Many of the issues mentioned in Phase 3 were similar to those in the previous Phases. However, a few more aspects were discussed therefore expanding the category further. Once again, the weather was a very popular subject although this time opinions were more negative as eight of the interviewees did not like the weather, with one complaining that the bad weather was not shown in the prospectus. Some of the interviewees also commented on how the weather made that them feel depressed (especially during the winter time) and how it affected their daily habits.

Many of the interviewees commented on various aspects of the buildings. As before, a few students expected England to be similar to the US and to London and they also described the landscape in terms of shapes, sizes and colours with Manchester still being referred to as 'red'. As in the previous Phases, London still seemed to fulfil the expectations of what many expected London or England to look like. However, the perceptions varied due to previous knowledge, experiences of English life and geographical location. Some of the interviewees also compared English cities with their own country.

PERSONAL SAFETY

Many of the responses in Phase 3 were similar to those given in the previous Phases. However, similar to Phase 2 a slight majority of seven of the interviewees believed that Manchester was safe especially if common sense measures were taken. They believed the area in which they resided was an important factor and that crime should be expected in every big city. However, for overseas students, this may be more difficult as it may take more time for them to 'acclimatise' to their new surroundings. It is also an unfortunate fact that the majority of students will not be able to afford to live in the 'posh' areas which may experience less crime, therefore putting themselves more at risk. Despite this, it was fortunate that none of the interviewees had been victims of crime. Nevertheless, irrespective of their opinions, most had heard of someone who had been a victim and were also affected by the media. It was apparent that the responses were quite diverse due to the personal experiences of the students and the extent to which they were influenced by other factors. However, for some, England still seemed more dangerous in comparison to their own countries.

PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE

In Phase 2, issues relating to the patience of the English people were raised by some of the interviewees therefore an extra question was introduced in Phase 3, to incorporate the change. The topic received a mixed view as the balance was equal. This was because six of the interviewees believed that patience depended on such factors as circumstances and personal attributes. However, it was interesting to note that a few students related queuing and good driving as a display of patient behaviour in the English people as it may not be a part of their own culture. Similarly, seven of the interviewees thought that the English people were friendly although the remainder had mixed views. However, similar to the previous Phases, a number of students believed that friendly behaviour was dependent on various factors such as area, age and education. It was apparent that the views were quite wide ranging on this matter and a couple of students mentioned the issue of English people being 'reserved' or independent.

The issue of gender difference was raised by two students from Saudi Arabia and Taiwan. In addition, two Muslim students from Indonesia and Sudan believed that the English people were not as religious as their own countries.

In Phase 3, this section incorporated additional aspects related to English people which are diverse and complex as they are connected not only to individual but also political, cultural and religious issues. This exemplified that no matter how 'individual' a person may feel they usually conform to some element of society although they may not even be aware of it.

PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

Similar to Phase 2, the most common methods for finding out about life in England were through the British Council, books, newspapers, movies and television. Although these sources were accessed by seven of the interviewees, some of these may have been quite misleading as the information did not reflect what the students experienced when they arrived here.

In Phase 3, I decided to introduce two new questions as a result of the issues raised in the previous Phases by many of the respondents. The questions related specifically to alcohol and freedom within the English culture. However, it was noted that the responses were closely related to the section on the perception of people as individual behaviour by many people is usually regarded as the normal cultural behaviour of a society. In addition, seven students commented on the issue of the freedom of English people which some closely related to the aspect of 'open mindedness'. Due to the freedom of speech and human rights in British society, these elements were also discussed in relation to individualism and independence as raised in the Social Conditions section.

For the first time, the interviewees unanimously agreed on one issue - that alcohol was a part of the English culture. However, four of the interviewees were surprised at the amount of alcohol that was consumed and the different times of the day were also mentioned. It was clear that although drinking in England is a socially acceptable activity. It is also a pastime which can be done alone or with a group which is a little different than some countries. It was also interesting to learn how drinking was linked to other realms of socialisation such as freedom, open mindedness, seniority and community behaviour as discussed in previous sections. Once again, this displays how complex human behaviour can be and how it varies in certain environments.

In addition, a student from Trinidad and Tobago noticed how events such as Chinese New Year, St Patrick's Day and Eid were separate. However, he did explain that this was probably easier to do as the cultures were more integrated due to the smaller population of 1

million. He also said there were a lot more activities available in England which was echoed by a Mauritian student.

Similar to the previous Phases, the issues of living together before marriage and the difference in family relationships and multiculturalism were mentioned by a few students. In addition, a Taiwanese student believed that football was part of the culture and a Thai student believed that the culture of the people can be learned through looking at the landscape which propounds the connection between the environment and culture in relation to a country's history, as this often reflects the underlying reasons for the customs affecting the current culture.

SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

In Phase 3, I decided to amend one of the questions so that the meaning was clearer. Instead of asking the students if they found it easier to relate to a certain group of people, it was changed to ask whether they found it easier to make friends with people from a certain nationality, country or group. As in Phase 2, they were still required to explain the reasons for their choices.

In this Phase, the interviewees had friends from a range of seventeen different countries. Although this number was lower than the Phase 2, it reflected the smaller number of interviewees that took part. Nevertheless, nine of the students had English friends although the remainder had no English friends. This was not always out of choice but was sometimes due to the lack of English people on the postgraduate courses. However, those who had English friends enjoyed maintaining the friendships they had. Some students also mentioned the benefits of such relationships and how more can be learned about the culture through its people. However, despite the obvious benefits of having English friends, three of the students thought that familiarity was still important. Therefore, I was surprised to learn that nearly seven of those asked, regardless of origin, felt some kind of affinity with the Chinese people. The connection may have been due to a similarity in culture, part of the world or language. However, it also seems that the Chinese were appealing as they welcomed people into their group which those from 'community' cultures could also identify with. However, one of the Chinese students explained the disadvantages of such communal behaviour. Nevertheless, as mentioned in Phase 2, England can be a 'neutral ground' where students from different countries are able to interact regardless of any restrictions which are in force in their own countries.

ADAPTING TO AND LEARNING FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE

It was the first time in England for six of the twelve interviewees. Four had been here twice before and a further two had visited numerous times. Out of those, nine were living on their own and the remainder resided with relatives or friends.

Once again, I was pleased to learn that the majority, eight students, did not find it difficult to adapt. Alternatively, the students who felt that they did not adapt very well had a diverse range of reasons for doing so which reflected the importance of many of the topics in the previous sections.

Although it was evident that time and familiarity were significant factors in the adaptation process they were by no means a guarantee of success due to the complexity of human nature, lifestyles and living habits. Furthermore, it was noted that the adaptation process can become more complicated as it is constantly influenced by change as well as regional cultural differences both at home and abroad.

Similar to the previous Phrases, four of the students in Phase 3 mentioned food as an integral part of the adaptation process. It was also possible to surmise that food differs according to the country it is served in so this may be another reason for change. For some of the younger students, the greatest physical change was to cook, wash their clothes and look after their rooms which made them appreciate their parents more. In addition, a number of the interviewees explained how the experience gave them a greater sense of responsibility, confidence or appreciation.

It was clear that the overseas experience may change people in ways that they had never imagined possible. In addition, I was pleased to learn that a number of interviewees may try to use their experience, not only to change their own lives, but that of others for the better. Nevertheless, the negative aspect of the British study experience is that the change in behaviour or personality may make it difficult to re-adapt once they return home and four of the students voiced such concerns. In addition, a couple of the interviewees wanted different cultures to learn from each other so that a greater understanding could be achieved.

One of the purposes of the study was to investigate the many issues relating to the student experience and culture so that a greater understanding may be achieved. Therefore, I was

pleased when a student from Botswana told her how it helped her to understand her own experience better as she had never analysed it before.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of the study was to focus on a diverse group of overseas students in an English university to explore their experiences of Britain. Although, it would have been possible to study fewer, larger groups of students from single countries a wide range of students were selected so that the sample represented a range of people who could be in a university department on a daily basis. In addition, due to the different cultural groups (i.e. Chinese-Malays, Muslim-Malays) within the countries themselves, greater knowledge of cultural ethnicity and diversity would have been required in order to analyse and maintain the validity of the data. Furthermore, although numerous variables such as age and gender are relevant to some issues, the intention was not to conduct a traditional comparative study as follows:

In comparative studies of more than 2 groups, the sociologist usually tries to compare as many as he can of the groups for which he can obtain data. The resulting set of groups is then justified by citing common factors and relevant differences, stating that this constitutes all the available data anyhow. Further comparisons are left to future researchers.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) p. 47

The intention was to adopt the grounded theory approach to illuminate conceptual ideas that arose from the data as explained:

In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. The evidence may not necessarily be accurate beyond a doubt (nor is it even in studies concerned only with accuracy), but the concept is undoubtedly a relevant theoretical abstraction about what is going on in the area studied. Furthermore, the concept itself will not change, while even the most accurate facts change.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) p. 21

Therefore, given the limitations and time constraints of the study, I decided that the conceptual data arising from what the students wanted to divulge was more relevant than the analysis of variables which could be the focus of another study.

The questions were deliberately diverse and covered a wide range of issues in the areas of admission, cultural perceptions and social interaction and the main aims were as follows:

- To investigate the main factors which influence overseas students to come to England.
- To explore the students' perception of the English culture.
- To investigate the outcomes of cultural interaction both between the students themselves and the host community.

The detailed results of the interviews were discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 therefore, it is only the main findings in relation to the aims which are emphasised in Chapter 7.

7.2 AIM 1

To investigate the main factors which influence overseas students to come to England.

First of all, it must be noted that the majority of the questions were deliberately simple in order to allow the students to familiarise themselves with the interview process and use of recording equipment. The questions were based around incentives for postgraduate study and the reasons for choosing England and thereafter, UMIST, as a place of study. I was aware that the first aim could be regarded as a typical 'marketing exercise' although the emphasis differed in that the questions were not demographically biased but predominantly explorative.

It was established that many of the incentives were linked to job prospects, improvement in self knowledge and language skills which could be compared with students from anywhere in the world who make the decision to study abroad. However, I was surprised at the turmoil such decisions caused to personal relationships and families as a consequence of achieving 'the dream'. Furthermore, it did not seem to matter if the students were supported or not as it was the process of change itself that caused the distress. Despite this, it was clear that the majority of students were prepared to make such 'sacrifices' in the hope of a better future for themselves and their families. It could be argued that these situations could be compared

with any UK student who is living away from home for the first time and has to leave behind all that is familiar to them. However, it is likely that the stress is far greater for overseas students due to the extent and nature of the change in their new environment.

Many of the reasons for coming to England and choosing UMIST were based on the reputation of the UK education system and university ranking. Although it was evident that the main competitor to the UK overseas student market is still the United States, in some cases, students had not gained entry to the US due to high entry requirements and visa restrictions. This was possibly due to the events in the US on 11 September 2001 which made some nationalities feel unwelcome there. It was also interesting to learn that one advantage that the UK still seemed to have was the shorter length of Master's and research degree programmes being offered as the duration is longer in the US. Therefore, one must be aware that the UK market may be threatened if the US decides to offer shorter postgraduate programmes. It was also apparent that UMIST and the British university system had a very good reputation, especially in the Far East and that some people still found personal contact with university staff to be influential in the decision making process. Therefore, these observations should not be ignored as the majority of students declared that they had three or more offers from UK universities alone thus they could be quite selective with the final choice of institution. In addition, the location of Manchester, the convenience of the city's facilities and the reputation as a 'city of students' with a low cost of living (especially compared to London) were influencing factors which could be utilised for the benefit of recruitment and marketing purposes.

7.3 AIM 2

To explore the students' perception of the English culture.

The questions relating to Aim 2 covered a wide range of issues including the student's perception of the English culture, safety, the environment, social conditions and attitudes to work and time. These categories evolved throughout the study with some gathering more momentum and interest than others. However, all of the issues were valid in their own right as they symbolised the peculiarities of the English way of life and how it differed to the customs and cultures of the students' homelands.

In particular, I noted that although some students mentioned that punctuality was a famous trait of the English culture, they also apparently perceived it as a sign of a 'disciplined' and 'orderly' society which their own may be lacking. For example, a number of African students

commented on the relaxed attitude to work in their homeland which was causing problems and was a cause of national debate. Alternatively, some students from the Indian sub-continent and the Far East stated that the English worked fewer hours than themselves and had a more relaxed attitude to work and life. However, rather than regard the British as 'lazy' they preferred the English working life and hoped to adopt the same attitudes whilst still being able to earn enough money. Nevertheless, although intentions may be good, it was noted that in reality such actions are not always possible due to certain cultural and economic factors. For example, the disparity in relation to attitudes to work and time may be explained by Edward Hall (1989) who split time into two particular types – monochronic time (M-time) and polychronic time (P-time). M-time emphasises schedules, segmentation, and promptness and P-time systems are characterised by several things happening at once. Hall explained as follows:

For M-time people reared in the northern European tradition, time is linear and segmented like a road or a ribbon extending forward into the future and backward to the past. It is also tangible; they speak of it as being saved, spent, wasted, lost, made up, accelerated, slowed down, crawling and running out ... Monochronic time is arbitrary and imposed; that is learned. Because it is so thoroughly learned and so thoroughly integrated into our culture, it is treated as though it were the only natural and 'logical' way of organising life. Yet it is not inherent in man's own rhythms and creative drives, nor is it existential in nature.

Americans overseas are psychologically stressed in many ways when confronted by P-time systems such as those in Latin America and the Middle East. In the markets and stores of Mediterranean countries, one is surrounded by other customers vying for the attention of the clerk. There is no order as to who is served next, and to the northern European or American, confusion and clamor abound ... Particularly distressing to Americans is the way in which appointments are handled by polychronic people. Appointments just don't seem to carry the same weight as they do in the United States.

Hall, 1989, pp. 19-20

It was possible to surmise that some of the overseas students had difficulty with the use of, and attitudes to time and that the above quotes partly explain why the issue of time arose in the first place. However, these problems are more complex than I initially thought as it could be argued that some students were polychronic people who were trying to adapt to a monochronic timeframe. Hall (1989) typified how the two systems once clashed when Eskimos who were working for a fish cannery in Alaska thought that factory whistles were ridiculous. He stated that 'the idea that men would work or not work because of a whistle seemed to them sheer lunacy'. This was because in Eskimo society the tides determined the activities of the working day as opposed to the ticking of a clock. Similarly, some of the

overseas students may find adjusting to a nine-to-five schedule as ridiculous as the factory whistles were to the Eskimos (Kern, 1983; Jones, 1987).

The study also illustrated how each element of the social structure in England was integral to the entire social system in order to make the 'circle complete'. The results emphasised the way in which English people take many aspects of the system for granted as they expect to have good amenities. For example, if a bus arrives on time every day, an English person does not usually delight in such a fact and congratulate the bus driver for being punctual. Nevertheless, if the bus happened to arrive late, it is far more likely that people would be inclined to inform the bus driver of their disappointment with the service as receiving a poor service is a distressing part of modern life in Britain. However, the study makes one realise that at least such facilities exist, as some countries are not fortunate enough to have such amenities and even if they do, they may not operate well or be available to everyone.

It was clear that the US media and film making industry had a great influence on many countries, which many of the students assumed the UK would resemble. Popular perceptions of England were for it to be like the US with modern, high rise buildings and for Manchester to be like London. Nevertheless, it was surprising to learn that Manchester was described as 'red' due to the colour of the brick buildings and as 'horizontal' due to the low level buildings and lack of sky scrapers. This also illustrated how one communicates with the world through mediums other than language i.e. shapes, colour. However, these perceptions seemed to vary depending on the accuracy of their awareness of the English environment before they arrived. For example, those with knowledge of the industrial revolution were fascinated by the old factories but those who were not aware of English history were more surprised. However, the most prominent issue that arose in relation to the English culture was that of freedom. Many of the overseas students attributed the amount of freedom to the lifestyle of the English people which was sometimes in contrast with their own country. For example, the English are free to dress and cut their hair according to their own tastes or fashion. However, some of the interviewees were surprised by such liberal dress codes especially those of 'barely dressed' young women. This was especially mentioned by the Muslim interviewees who were not used to seeing certain parts of the body on display in public. Nevertheless, many of them understood that the difference in dress codes were a part of the English culture although they did not like it. Such scenarios were discussed by a number of young Muslims at a forum held by 'The Guardian' newspaper. One young woman said 'you might not want to see people in miniskirts, but that's the right of the country we live in, and the law which we have to yield to. It's not up to us to come in and tell them how to live' (The Guardian, 30 Nov 2004). They also explained the dilemma caused by the widely held misconceptions of the Hijab by saying

that 'everyone seems to think that the Hijab is a symbol of oppression. It is our right. We've chosen it. Get over it!' Furthermore, it could be argued that it is the right of every young woman in Britain to wear a miniskirt and show parts of their body in public as it is part of the culture to allow people freedom of expression. Similarly, the freedom of the media, couples living together outside marriage and gay relationships were all aspects of the British culture which accentuate freedom in British society. Nevertheless, such concepts were difficult for some to grasp - especially for those from strict religious backgrounds.

In addition, the effects of freedom were evident in the way English people behaved in public - especially in relation to the consumption of alcohol. Although alcohol is consumed in many countries, the excessive amount of alcohol leading to 'binge drinking' was the main concern. This phenomena has already been acknowledged by the British government who claim that such alcohol abuse is costing the country £20 billion pounds a year (BBC News, Sept 2003). Not surprisingly, the police have often found themselves overrun on weekend nights trying to cope with what Steve Green, the Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire police and the chief member on licensing for the Association of Chief Police Officers, called the 'drink-punch-smash-vomit culture' (The Telegraph, Nov 2004). Needless to say, this is a part of the culture that many English people would prefer to ignore. Nevertheless, it was evident that an oppressive society is not desirable but neither is a society that has too many freedoms (which some interviewees thought of the UK). Therefore, it could be argued that the optimum amount of freedom can be found half way between the two systems where a reasonable balance may be achieved.

7.4 AIM 3

To investigate the outcomes of cultural interaction both between the students themselves and the host community.

The issues raised in Aim 3 generated the most interest from the interviewees. A plethora of information was collected in relation to the overseas students' perception of the English people, social interaction and friendship networks, the effect of English language on relationships and the process of adapting to and learning from a different culture.

The English people were generally regarded as friendly, fair, polite and open minded by many of the overseas students and it is possible that fairness and open mindedness could be a result of the freedom in British society as discussed in Aim 2. Similarly, a study of personality traits at the US National Institute of Ageing assessed 4,000 people from 49

countries and concluded that Britons are some of the most extroverted, open and liberal people in the world. However, despite these positive perceptions it was not very easy for students to interact and make friends with English people in the university and local community. Although there was some difficulty with language skills it was not the English speaking ability that was the main problem as many of the students did not mind conversing in English with co-sojourners. Some students found it frustrating to converse with a native speaker because they feared that they may not understand the different accents or that the person may be intolerant of their inferior language skills. In addition, they found that other than polite greetings and shared university experiences, the topic of conversation was limited with the local people. Therefore, the possibility of having meaningful dialogue was far more likely with a fellow international student due to the fact that they were both away from home in a foreign land thus sharing similar experiences which they could discuss. Nevertheless, there were other criteria for companionship from which the students derived a sense of familiarity. It seemed that many students sought out friendships with people who shared the same religion, values, interests or cultural background regardless of the country of origin thus some interviewees did not interact well with local people as they did not want to move out of their 'comfort zones'. Nevertheless, the study showed that those who were willing to do so benefited greatly as they were able to experience and understand the culture far better through the daily lives of their English friends. However, it also illustrated that the same problems in relation to social interaction and language skills were still in existence (as reported by Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Jones, 1987 and Bacchus, 1987) so nothing had really improved in nearly twenty years.

It was evident that the students varied greatly in their ability to adapt to their new environment. Some experienced culture shock as soon as they arrived whereas some never experienced it at all. Some felt alienated in their new environment whereas some positively flourished in it. It seemed that the wide range of diversity of previous experiences and expectations was a possible factor in the adaptation process. It was also evident that the difference in the ability to change was dependent on factors such as personal confidence, language skills, cultural differences and situational factors. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the problem for overseas students is that they have to re-learn another culture different to the one they already know. For example:

Culture is not something that we simply absorb – it is learned. In anthropology this process is referred to as acculturation or enculturation. In psychology it is described as conditioning. Sociologists have tended to use the term 'socialisation' to describe the process by which we become social and cultural beings.

Baldwin et al, 1999, p. 7

In the study it seemed that the people who were more willing to 'condition' themselves to their new surroundings were more successful which resembles the neo-Darwinian theory as discussed in Chapter 2. The most obvious factor in the adaptation process was the change in diet although it could be argued that the extent to which this happened could depend on the availability of food and not always on choice. However, it was clear that some of the interviewees were merely not willing to sample Western food thus varied their diet very little whereas others enjoyed experimenting with the different tastes and ways of cooking. In addition to the change in diet, some students learned to socialise in their new environment by replicating the activities of the indigenous people by going to the pub, watching football, cricket or changing their dress or hairstyle. These changes would also help them to 'walk through the door' of the new culture as it could lead to shared experiences with the locals thus also increasing the likelihood for an exchange of meaningful communication. A change in identity may also make it easier for English people to relate to foreigners due to a sense of familiarity and compatible identity (Jones, 1987). In time, such changes allowed students to assimilate and integrate into their new environment which is a key step in the adaptation process.

As discussed in Chapter 2, it is possible to surmise that many of these changes and experiences are due to the affects of globalisation (Kiely & Marfleet, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999; Burbules & Torres, 2000) on the overseas student population. Due to the increase in worldwide trade, it is far easier for students to travel abroad, communicate with their homeland and still eat their local food than ever before. Although globalisation is not a key focus of this study, it is apparent that the opportunity for individuals to live and work with cultures different to their own has a significant impact on higher education today. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are disadvantages and advantages to any experience thus throughout the study, the positive and negative aspects of the British study experience were frequently mentioned. However, it was evident that for some the experience was life changing whereas for others it just made them think differently about certain situations. Nevertheless, for many of the interviewees it allowed them to talk to people they normally could not or would not meet and experience lifestyles dissimilar to their own. More importantly, they were able to learn from each other thus accruing a greater understanding of different cultures. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, the students may face problems when they return home as their new ways of thinking, living or dressing may not be appreciated by the society they once left behind. Therefore, it is necessary for the students to be aware of such problems and have a strategy for re-adapting whilst retaining the positive aspects of the British study experience.

7.5 HOFSTEDE'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Due to the popularity of Gert Hofstede and Geert Jan Hofstede's work in the field of cultural studies, I decided to refer to the theoretical frameworks to assist with the explanation of cultural matters. Therefore, the frameworks were mainly used as a guide for the issues under investigation and not as the sole focus of the study. However, at various stages in the interview process, the dimensions of culture were mentioned by a number of individual students although a greater number referred to the dimension of individualism. Therefore, it was clear that this dimension was a significant aspect of English society which was sometimes in contrast with the students' homeland. Similarly, as a result of the studies discussed in chapter 2, it was interesting to discover that the comparison of the results of the IBM and RVS versus the CVS studies also showed that 'three dimensions dealing with basic human relationships seem to be so universal that they somehow show up in whatever multicountry value study we do. These are the equivalents of the power distance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity dimensions in the IBM study' (Hofstede, 1994, p. 120) which are also illustrated in App. 18-20.

However, I found that Hofstede's mental programming theory was more relevant to the study as it was fundamental to many of the issues under investigation. Gert Hofstede believed that people carry mental programs with them therefore human behaviour is not random, but can be predicted to some extent because of the universal, collective and individual aspects of the human personality. The study revealed that the 'collective' program was a very prominent part of the overseas students' psyche which may be an obstacle in the adaptation process. This may also partly explain that despite the numerous studies into the benefits of friendships with host nationals (Selltitz & Cook, 1962; Surdam & Collins, 1984; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986) many overseas students still prefer to make friends with co-sojourners as the innate sense of familiarity must be overwhelming. Even if they are able to successfully move into the 'multicultural friendship network' as described by Bochner (1977) it is still beneficial to have some friends who fulfil their 'collective culture' requirements. These needs have already been recognised by many universities who have permitted and supported the establishment of cultural societies in order to aid such relationships. However, the study revealed that such organisations are not always helpful as some students are totally reliant on them to fulfil all their needs which ultimately do not help them to adapt to the host community. Alternatively, those who use the societies as an initial supportive mechanism and thereafter, a link to their home culture, fair far better than those who are totally reliant on them.

7.6 RESEARCH PROCESS

I was satisfied with the overall outcome of the study which depended on the integrity of students, interview results and research methodology. However, with hindsight, I would have omitted many of the questions relating to Aim 1 as the data was not conceptually dense enough to produce new ideas or lines of enquiry. Therefore, it could be argued that despite the greater amount of time taken, the results were probably not that dissimilar to those produced if traditional survey techniques had been utilised. In addition, some difficulties were also encountered during the process which may have been avoided with better planning and preparation.

In the first instance, the process of arranging interviews was far more time consuming and complex than imagined. Initially, I decided to contact more students than required as I was aware that a number of students would not be willing or able to attend the interviews. Therefore, the responses had to be carefully monitored as the number of interviewees had to accurately reflect the world areas in each Phase of the interview process. However, in time, I became more skilled at both contacting and selecting students. For example, when possible, it was preferable to select students on a personal basis when meeting them in the office or on campus. This approach also encouraged a more 'personal touch' to the process and allowed me to explain the interview proceedings and answer any reservations the students may have. This was sometimes difficult as some students would ask why they had not been asked when their friend had been. In such cases it was necessary to explain the methods used for selection and inform the student that they may be selected in the next round of interviews. Their contact details were noted and used for such an eventuality. Secondly, I learnt some very valuable lessons during the first few trial interviews as I had planned to use one side of a 90 minutes tape to record the interview. However, difficulty soon arose when some students decided to talk for longer than 45 minutes thus the tape had to be turned over which resulted me recording over the previous interview before transcribing it. Therefore the dialogue had to immediately be reproduced from memory before it was forgotten. Needless to say, after that incident, I purchased more tapes and used one 90 minutes tape per interviewee to avoid such mishaps. Furthermore, whilst transcribing the initial conversations, I noticed that I sometimes interrupted the student and even suggested to them what I wanted them to hear. I also found myself explaining or defending the English culture which was neither necessary nor appropriate to the interview process. It was obvious that such interference would have a detrimental effect on the accuracy of the data therefore I allowed students more time to respond and refrained from responding to remarks even if they were deemed offensive or inaccurate.

The grounded theory approach was very appropriate to the data collection process as it was flexible and allowed the data to grow Phase-by-Phase. However, as a result of the flexibility it was more complex to monitor due to the continued changes as explained at the beginning of each of the Discussion Chapters. In addition, the analysis of the data was quite complicated due to the coding system which was utilised. For example, I initially intended to code the data in relation to Hofstede's dimensions of culture. However, I soon realised that such an approach was impossible as no direct questions had been asked on the subject although a proportion of the responses happened to relate to the dimensions. Therefore, it was necessary to code the information based upon the data that resulted from the conversations and create categories accordingly. Furthermore, due to the interpretative approach, some of the information was difficult to code as the same data could be used in more than one category depending on the context in which it was perceived. Such problems were particularly prevalent in the categories relating to language and relationships, English people and culture as the issues were closely interlinked.

With respect to the validity of the data, I was satisfied that the data was representative of the reality and day to day lives of the overseas students considering an interpretative approach was utilised. This reasoning was due to the existing relationship of mutual trust between the student and interviewer together with the amount of theoretical sensitivity as discussed in Chapter 3. My previous knowledge and experience in the area permitted an increased awareness of concepts, meanings and relationships which was paramount to the study. Nevertheless, due to the multicultural aspect of the study it was evident that some of the students felt obliged to attend the interview and were reluctant to disclose certain information. Fortunately, such predicaments were in the minority although it is clear that they were an inevitable constraint of the study. Other limitations were related to the amount of time allowed for the collection, the influence of available students on the sample configuration and the lack of literature available in the area which hampered the analytical processes. Nevertheless, if more time was allowed, the research on the perception of culture, friendship networks and the adaptation process could be continued. The research could focus purely on the extent of previous experience and cultural backgrounds in those areas and other factors such as age and attitude to change could also be included. The reliability of the data could also be increased by interviewing more students from the same countries in order to clarify matters relating to cultural familiarity and identity. However, as seen in this study, although people may be from the same country, individuals are not nations due to the differences in their personal experiences and other factors. Therefore, such a study may prove fruitless or compound the existing theory further. On a wider scale, further research could be conducted within the university setting by asking British students and members of

staff about their experiences with overseas students. Such research would also enable this particular study to be put into context as a triangulated view could be ascertained. Furthermore, studies could be undertaken in relation to British students studying abroad and the outcome of their experiences.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although I acknowledge that institutions are continuously improving facilities and information for international students, it is anticipated that the following key points, resulting from this study, will be helpful in informing good practice in this area:

1. Universities should always ensure that they are marketing their institution in the best possible way by continuously receiving feedback from students on the reasons why they came to their university. For example, besides reputation and programmes available, there may be other features such as a local airport and low cost of living which may be attractive to potential applicants which the institution is not initially aware of.
2. Institutions should remember that despite the information technology era, human contact and interaction are still viable in the marketing process. Therefore, it is important for university staff to remember that first impressions really do count and someone's behaviour or comments may be a deciding factor for an applicant who may hold numerous offers from competing universities.
3. Initially, it is important for many students to eat a staple diet consisting of the food they are used to. However, they should also be encouraged to eat the local food as it will allow them to adapt easier and give them an opportunity to gain insight into the culture by dining with local people.
4. Staff and students should be made aware of the different stages and effects of culture shock and that practical steps such as keeping in regular contact with home and joining a similar social group may help to combat some of the symptoms. The university could also ensure that students know how to enrol on pre-sessional English courses, make cheap international telephone calls, access email services and where to buy their local food.
5. In relation to culture shock, staff and students should be aware that there may be some aspects of the English culture which students simply do not know how to deal with as they have not experienced them before. For instance, as well as physical

aspects such as a change in building design or food, it may also be social aspects such as gay relationships, drinking alcohol or singing in the streets.

6. Staff must be mindful of the importance of integrating students so that they will be part of social networks which can help them to adapt to their environment and gain a realistic view of the English culture and people. Staff should not assume that it is easy for all international students to interact with local people. Therefore, institutions should encourage students to interact more with English students by mixing students more in group projects, physically locating them near each other or organising events so that the opportunity for shared experiences is increased. In addition, home students should also be encouraged to mix with overseas students in order to enrich their own experience by developing a true sense of global communication and friendship. However, it must be noted that some international students will find the consumption of alcohol a barrier to integration therefore non-alcoholic social activities are recommended.
7. With reference to Selltiz and Cook (1962) students who have made at least one close host national friend are more likely to have much stronger feelings and beliefs about the host country. They will gain a greater understanding of the people and culture through their friends which may result in a more favourable view and evaluation of their stay in the host country.
8. The students should be informed of the different levels of the National Health Service so that they will not waste unnecessary time or endanger themselves by using the service inappropriately. The university should inform them of which services are appropriate for the treatment required and give examples where possible.
9. As perceptions of different situations vary, students should be given precise details so that they may be able to decide for themselves how best to use certain information. For example, rather than using general terms such as 'warm' for describing the weather, the exact temperature should be indicated. Similarly, besides measurements, this advice could apply to any information where precise details could clarify certain statements i.e. weekend (it is different in some countries).
10. Culture is not absorbed, it is learned therefore institutions should have some responsibility for teaching new students about aspects of the English culture and how they are expected to behave as this will help them to adapt easier. For example, they are expected to be polite, wait in queues and be punctual. Similarly, they should expect other people to stop for them at zebra crossings and expect people to act as individuals due to the amount of freedom in an individualistic society.
11. In order for certain mistruths to be dispelled, wherever possible, students should be given the facts relating to certain aspects of the culture or their environment which

they may be concerned or confused about. This could be achieved by students being encouraged to have an open mind and question what is going on around them. However, it must be noted that some students will not be used to acting in this way so it may be more difficult for them to do so.

12. Before leaving, students should be prepared for the kind of problems that may arise when they return home as their views, attitudes and feelings may have changed as a result of their sojourn. Students may have favoured many aspects of the host country and therefore may be critical or even hostile towards their home country and culture when they return. In addition, they may find that their new skills and knowledge may not be appreciated and their career may not benefit as quickly as they had expected, despite the effort it took to attain it. Adler (1997) refers to this phenomenon as:

Cross-cultural re-entry which involves readjusting to the home country work and non-work environments as well as to interacting again with home country nationals. It involves facing previously familiar surroundings after living and working abroad for a significant period of time.

Adler, 1997, pp. 242-243

Furthermore, international students may be surprised upon re-entry because they do not expect anything unfamiliar when they return home as they did when they first went abroad. However, it is most likely that when they were away, not only have they changed, but their country and social networks may also have changed. In addition, family and friends may not be able to comprehend life in another country so stories of the student experience cannot be shared. Nevertheless, students should be reassured that these feelings are part of the process of re-adjusting, and that it usually lessens within time, similar to what it did in the UK. Shames (1997, p.114) says '*too many homecomers confuse readjustment with regression*' and that the real challenge is adding another perspective to their lives by broadening acquaintances and activities to incorporate what they have learnt during their sojourn. Certain groups such as Alumni Associations and those promoting contact with fellow sojourners should help during the transition period.

13. According to MIND (www.mind.org.uk) the mental health charity, Seasonal Affective Disorder may affect as many as a third of the general population to some degree. However, as overseas students may not have time to acclimatise, they may be more affected than others. Nevertheless, in addition to light therapy and drug treatment as discussed in Chapter 4, there are other practical ways which staff may inform the students about as follows:

- Daylight triggers the hypothalamus gland in the brain to produce serotonin which is a 'feel good chemical'. Similarly, darkness leads to a drop in the production of melatonin, (the hormone that promotes sleepiness) which is why it is difficult to get up once the clocks go back. Therefore, it is important to get as much daylight as possible, even if it is just a brief walk at lunch time. Ideally, students should book a holiday to a sunnier climate.
- Although light therapy is helpful, it is not available on the NHS. Nevertheless, students should be informed that there are a lot of products on the market such as light therapy alarm clocks that create a false dawn, light boxes that can be put on a desk and visors that shine light into the eyes. However, light therapy should not be left until symptoms are severe as beginning it early could prevent the onset of winter depression. Ideally, it should be done in the mornings.
- Patrick Holford, Clinical Director of the Brain Bio Centre, advises eating a healthy diet rich in the amino acid tryptophan as it helps make serotonin and can be found in fish, turkey, oats, chicken, beans, cheese and eggs (www.mentalhealthproject.com). Omega 3 fatty acids found in oily fish and seeds also make serotonin. Patrick Holford also advises that 'all the B vitamins are vital for good mental health so eat plenty of brown rice, green vegetables and wholegrains to get the benefits'.
- Herbs such as St John's Wort and Valerian Root can also help with mild to moderate depression. However, students must check with their doctor before taking them as they may interfere with other medication.
- Dr John Eagles, Consultant Psychiatrist at Royal Cornhill Hospital in Aberdeen says that 'exercise can make a significant difference to mood so it's advisable to persevere with it as far as you can during winter and as much of that as possible should be outdoors during daylight'. Aerobic exercise is especially good as it triggers the release of the feel good chemicals called endorphins which can improve mood as much as antidepressants (Daily Mirror, 11 Oct 2005). Nevertheless, staff should be aware that if feelings of depression and anxiety are serious or persistent, students should be advised to visit their GP as medical treatment may be needed.

Through this study, it is possible to surmise that the overseas student population comprises of a large number of individuals who differ in many ways even before they arrive in England. Similarly, the experiences they have after their arrival may vary widely due to the impressions gained of the new culture and environment as they are related to their own background, preconceptions and expectations. However, despite these differences, there are some issues which affect international students in similar ways which have been highlighted in this study.

GLOSSARY

Bicultural Network	Consists of bonds between sojourners and significant host nationals such as academics, advisers and officials. The main function is to facilitate the academic and professional aspirations of the sojourner.
Chromophore	Cell structures which absorb and react to photons of particular wavelengths or “colors”. Once absorbed this energy is either re-emitted for example as fluorescence, or discharged in some other defined form, for example as an electron, occasionally both.
Collectivism	The opposite of individualism. Together they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. Collectivism represents a society in which people from birth are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which will protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.
Culture	The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.
Culture shock	A state of distress following the transfer of a person to an unfamiliar cultural environment which may be accompanied by physical symptoms.
Dimension	An aspect of a phenomenon that can be measured.
Extended family	A family group including relatives in the second and third degree such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.
Femininity	The opposite of masculinity. Together, they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. Femininity represents a society in which social gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.
Friendship networks	A system of interconnecting people through the friends that they have.
Globalisation	Globalisation refers to a world in which societies, cultures and economies have in some way, come closer together.
GRE® Test	The Graduate Records Examinations test measures critical thinking, analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and

quantitative reasoning skills that have been acquired over a long period of time and that are not related to any specific field of study.

Grounded theory

Methods used to induce theoretically based generalisation from qualitative data.

Hierarchy

Refers to a system of grades of status usually constituting a line of command and a formal upward-downward communication channel.

Human interaction

The transmission of many kinds of conscious and subconscious behaviour between people.

Individualism

The opposite of collectivism. Together they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. Individualism represents a society in which the ties between individuals are loose and everyone is expected to look after themselves or their immediate family only.

Intercultural communication A process of human interaction where the sender is from one cultural group and the receiver is from another.

Long-term orientation

The opposite of short-term orientation. Together they form a dimension of national cultures originally labelled 'Confucian dynamism'. Long-term orientation represents the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards.

Manglish

A dialect of the English language spoken in Malaysia.

Masculinity

The opposite of femininity. Together they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. Masculinity represents a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct; men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

Mental programming

Gert Hofstede argued that people carry 'mental programs' which are developed in early childhood and reinforced through educational establishments. These mental programs contain a component of national culture and are normally expressed through different values.

Monocultural Network

Consists of close friendships with other sojourner compatriots. The main function of the co-national (share same religion/values/language) networks is to provide a

setting in which ethnic and cultural values can be rehearsed and expressed.

Multicultural Network

Consists of friends and acquaintances from mixed cultures. The main function is to provide companionship for recreational, 'non-cultural' and non-task oriented activities.

Motivation

An assumed force operating inside an individual which stimulates the person to take the necessary action to accomplish a desired goal.

National culture

The collective programming of the mind acquired by growing up in a particular country.

Nuclear family

A family group including only relatives in the first degree such as parents and children.

Monochronic time

M-time emphasises schedules, segmentation, and promptness.

Muslim

A person who believes in the religious faith relating to the revelation of Allah in the holy Quran.

Open coding

A system whereby data is scrutinised line by line, or word by word in an attempt to produce concepts that fit the data.

Polychronic time

P-time systems are characterised by several things happening at once.

Power distance

One of the dimensions of national cultures which represents the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

Short-term orientation

The opposite of long-term orientation. Together they form a dimension of national cultures originally labelled 'Confucian dynamism'. Short-term orientation represents the fostering of virtues related to the past and present especially a respect for tradition and the need to fulfil social obligations.

Singlish

A dialect of the English language spoken in Singapore.

Socialisation

The integrating process which allows a child to become a full member of society. It includes all the influences that make people accepted members of society and helps to establish and maintain relationships with each other.

Sojourner

Person who is on a temporary stay in a foreign country.

Synthetic cultures

They are extreme manifestations of the value orientations at both ends of the dimension and thus are obsessed with one

aspect of social life. Therefore in reality the aspects they demonstrate would not be so extreme but tendencies towards the extremities would vary between the two points.

Temporal orientation

There are differences in cultures with respect to a persons' temporal orientation; a culture may be oriented to the past, the present or the future.

Theoretical sensitivity

Personal qualities of the researcher and their awareness of the subtle meaning of the data.

Third world

A group of the less developed countries of the world can be identified as tending to share certain characteristics. These include little modern industry or support services and low output per person.

Uncertainty avoidance

It is one of the dimensions of national culture which represents the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.

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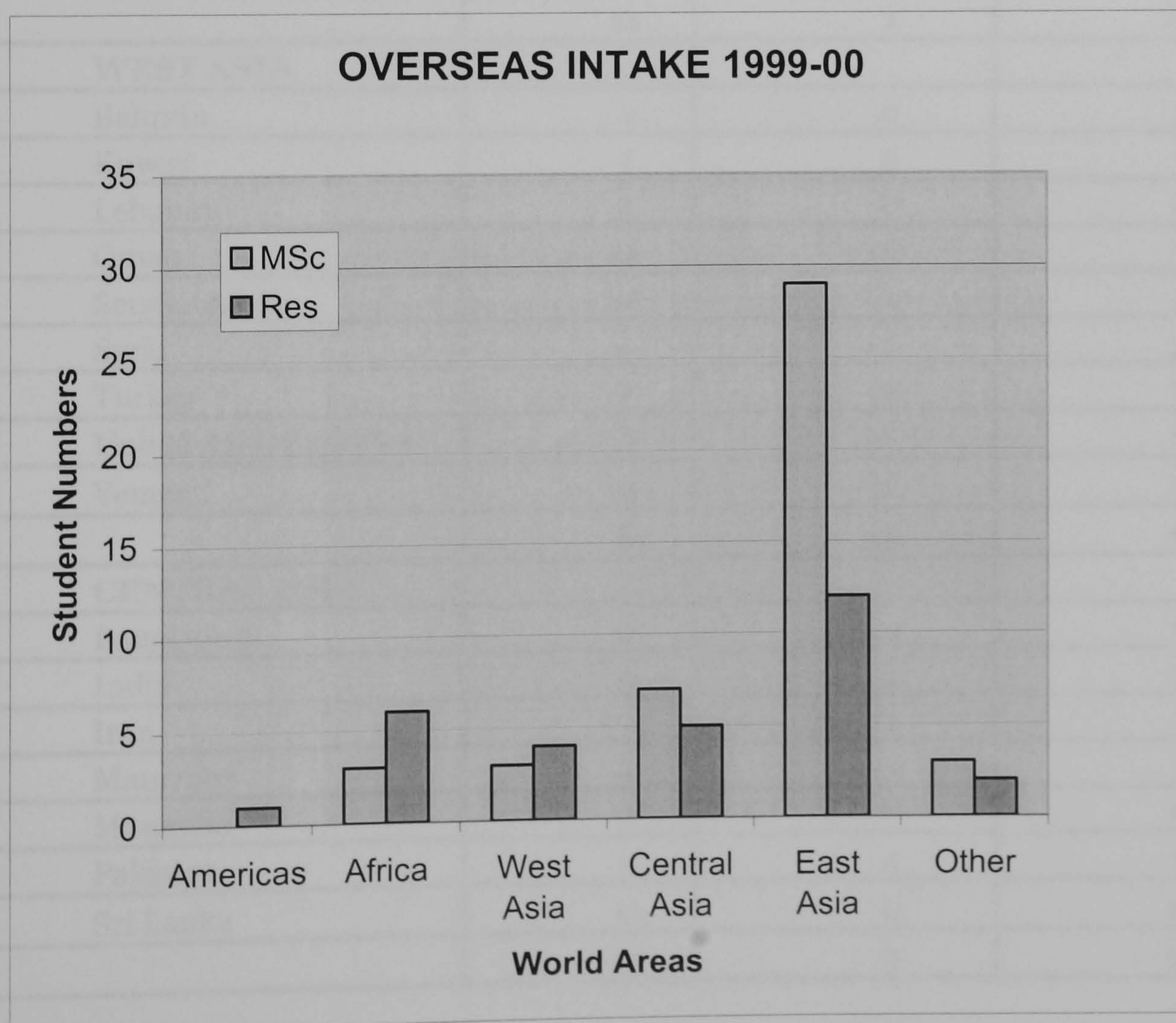
App.1**Overall Student Intake for 1999-2000 Academic Year**

	MSc	Research	Total
AMERICAS			
USA	0	1	1
Mexico	0	0	0
Trinidad & Tobago	0	0	0
	0	1	1
AFRICA			
Algeria	0	1	1
Botswana	0	1	1
Egypt	0	1	1
Eritrea	0	0	0
Ghana	0	0	0
Kenya	1	0	1
Libya	0	2	2
Uganda	0	0	0
Nigeria	2	0	2
Sudan	0	1	1
Zambia	0	0	0
Zimbabwe	0	0	0
	3	6	9
WEST ASIA			
Bahrain	0	0	0
Kuwait	0	0	0
Lebanon	0	0	0
Oman	1	0	1
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1
Syria	1	2	3
Turkey	0	2	2
United Arab Emirates	0	0	0
Yemen	0	0	0
	3	4	7
CENTRAL ASIA			
Bangladesh	0	1	1
India	2	3	5
Iran	0	0	0
Mauritius	0	0	0
Mongolia	0	0	0
Pakistan	5	0	5
Sri Lanka	0	1	1
	7	5	12

EAST ASIA			
China	11	4	15
Hong Kong	0	0	0
Indonesia	1	1	2
Japan	1	0	1
Malaysia	4	4	8
Singapore	2	0	2
South Korea	0	1	1
Taiwan	8	2	10
Thailand	2	0	2
	29	12	41
OTHER			
Bulgaria	0	0	0
Cyprus	1	2	3
Norway	2	0	2
	3	2	5
STUDENT TOTAL	45	30	75

App. 2

Overseas Student Intake for 1999-2000 Academic Year



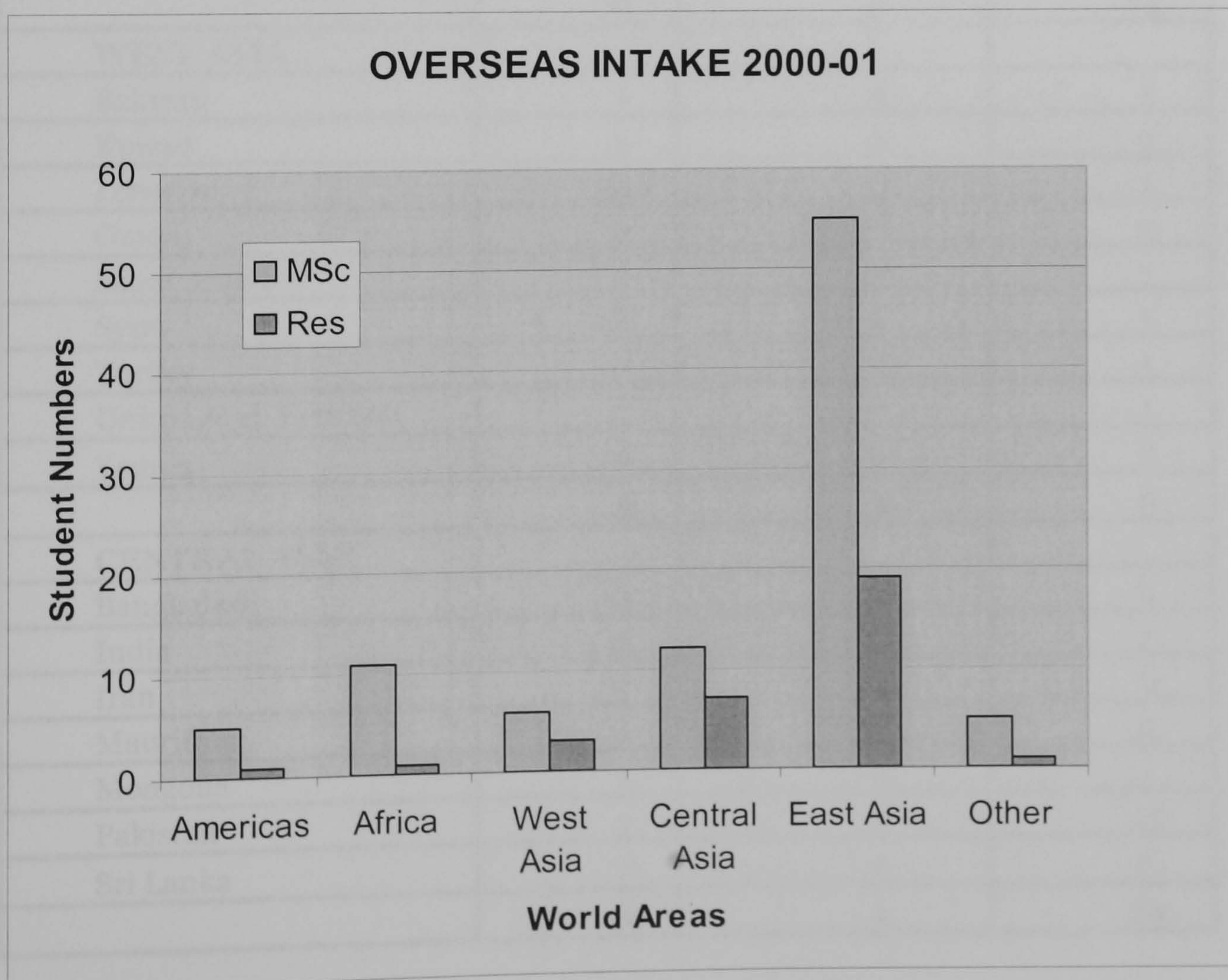
App. 3**Overall Student Intake for 2000-2001 Academic Year**

	MSc	Research	Total
AMERICAS			
USA	0	0	0
Mexico	5	1	6
Trinidad & Tobago	0	0	0
	5	1	6
AFRICA			
Algeria	0	0	0
Botswana	2	0	2
Egypt	0	0	0
Eritrea	1	0	1
Ghana	1	0	1
Kenya	1	0	1
Libya	0	0	0
Uganda	1	0	1
Nigeria	3	1	4
Sudan	1	0	1
Zambia	0	0	0
Zimbabwe	1	0	1
	11	1	12
WEST ASIA			
Bahrain	1	0	1
Kuwait	1	0	1
Lebanon	0	0	0
Oman	0	1	1
Saudi Arabia	0	1	1
Syria	2	1	3
Turkey	2	0	2
United Arab Emirates	0	0	0
Yemen	0	0	0
	6	3	9
CENTRAL ASIA			
Bangladesh	0	0	0
India	5	1	6
Iran	0	1	1
Mauritius	2	1	3
Mongolia	0	0	0
Pakistan	5	4	9
Sri Lanka	0	0	0
	12	7	19

EAST ASIA			
China	16	3	19
Hong Kong	7	0	7
Indonesia	3	0	3
Japan	0	0	0
Malaysia	6	5	11
Singapore	3	1	4
South Korea	1	1	2
Taiwan	17	6	23
Thailand	2	3	5
	55	19	74
OTHER			
Bulgaria	0	1	1
Cyprus	3	0	3
Norway	2	0	2
	5	1	6
STUDENT TOTAL	94	32	126

App. 4

Overseas Student Intake for 2000-2001 Academic Year



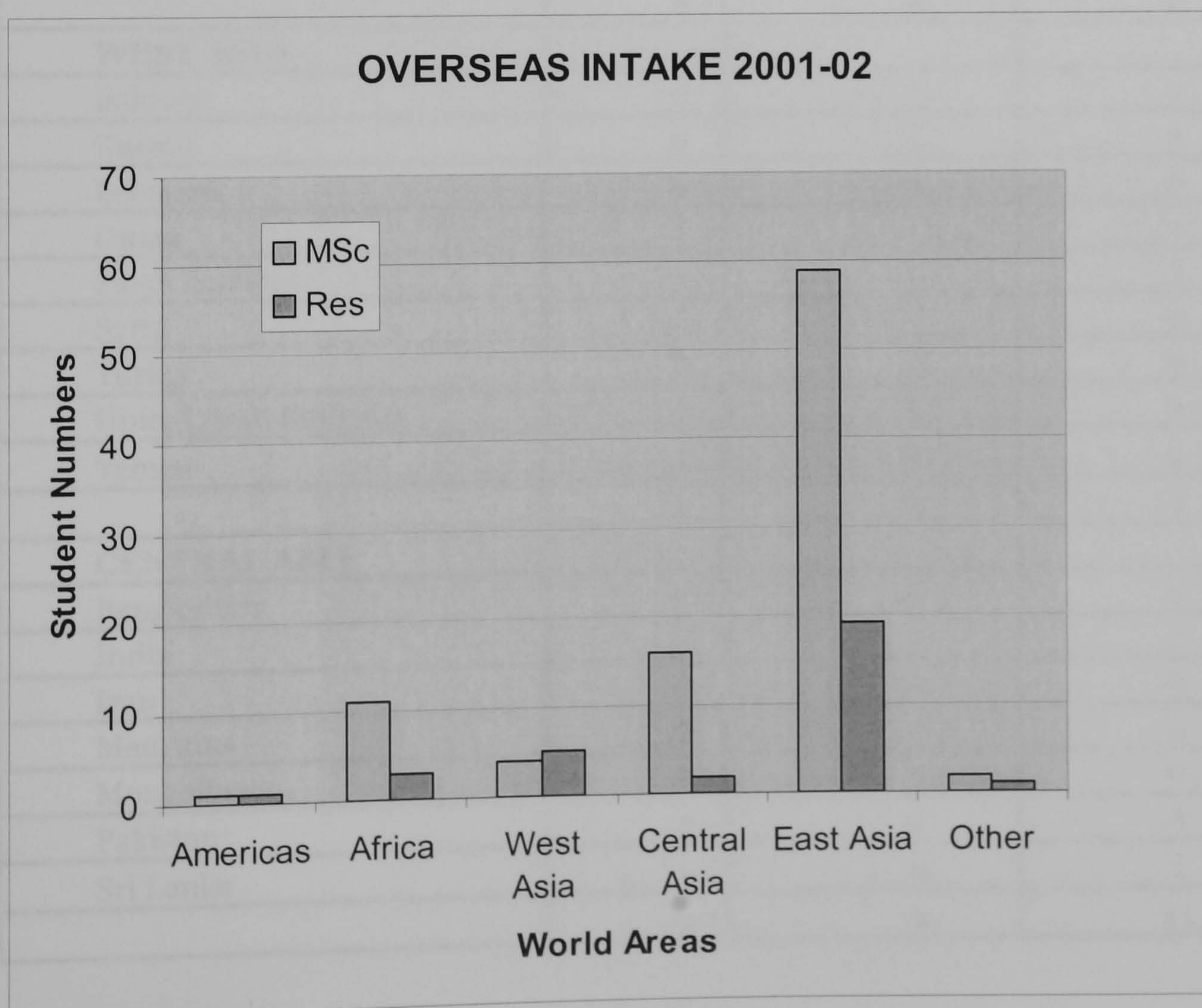
App. 5**Overall Student Intake 2001-2002 Academic Year**

	MSc	Research	Total
AMERICAS			
USA	0	1	1
Mexico	1	0	1
Trinidad & Tobago	0	0	0
	1	1	2
AFRICA			
Algeria	0	0	0
Botswana	0	0	0
Egypt	2	0	2
Eritrea	0	0	0
Ghana	2	0	2
Kenya	1	0	1
Libya	4	0	4
Uganda	0	0	0
Nigeria	1	2	3
Sudan	0	1	1
Zambia	1	0	1
Zimbabwe	0	0	0
	11	3	14
WEST ASIA			
Bahrain	1	0	1
Kuwait	0	0	0
Lebanon	0	1	1
Oman	0	0	0
Saudi Arabia	0	3	3
Syria	0	1	1
Turkey	1	0	1
United Arab Emirates	1	0	1
Yemen	1	0	1
	4	5	9
CENTRAL ASIA			
Bangladesh	0	0	0
India	3	0	3
Iran	0	0	0
Mauritius	3	1	4
Mongolia	1	0	1
Pakistan	9	1	10
Sri Lanka	0	0	0
	16	2	18

EAST ASIA			
China	37	11	48
Hong Kong	1	0	1
Indonesia	2	1	3
Japan	1	0	1
Malaysia	8	3	11
Singapore	1	2	3
South Korea	1	0	1
Taiwan	5	2	7
Thailand	3	0	3
	59	19	78
OTHER			
Bulgaria	0	0	0
Cyprus	1	1	2
Norway	1	0	1
	2	1	3
TOTAL	93	31	124

App. 6

Overseas Student Intake for 2001-2002 Academic Year



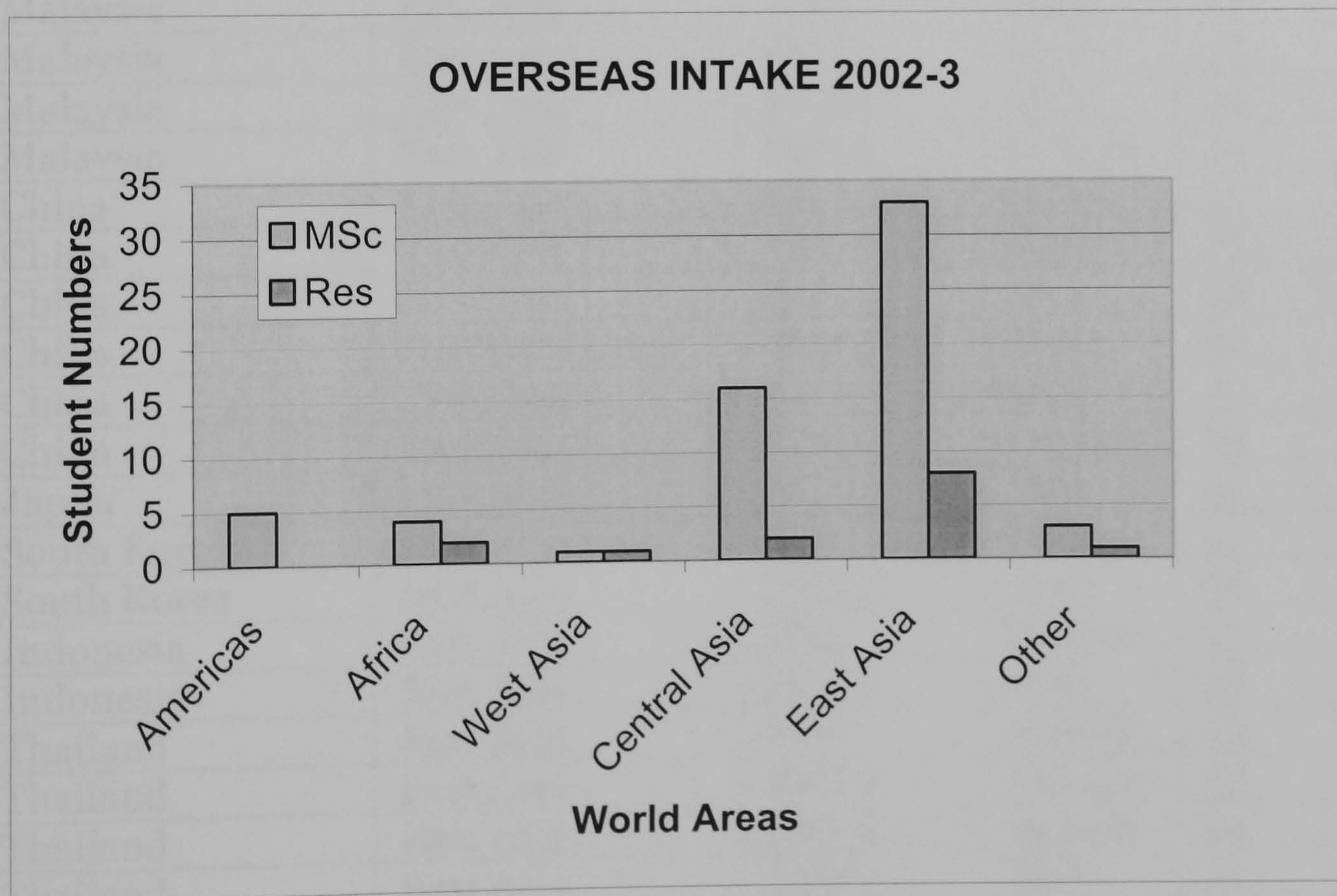
App. 7**Overall Student Intake for 2002-2003 Academic Year**

	MSc	Research	Total
AMERICAS			
USA	0	0	0
Mexico	4	0	4
Trinidad & Tobago	1	0	1
	5	0	5
AFRICA			
Algeria	0	1	1
Botswana	0	0	0
Egypt	0	0	0
Eritrea	0	0	0
Ghana	0	0	0
Kenya	0	0	0
Libya	2	1	3
Uganda	1	0	1
Nigeria	1	0	1
Sudan	0	0	0
Zambia	0	0	0
Zimbabwe	0	0	0
	4	2	6
WEST ASIA			
Bahrain	0	0	0
Kuwait	0	0	0
Lebanon	0	0	0
Oman	0	1	1
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1
Syria	0	0	0
Turkey	0	0	0
United Arab Emirates	0	0	0
Yemen	0	0	0
	1	1	2
CENTRAL ASIA			
Bangladesh	0	0	0
India	3	1	4
Iran	0	0	0
Mauritius	0	0	0
Mongolia	0	0	0
Pakistan	5	1	6
Sri Lanka	1	0	1
	9	2	11

EAST ASIA			
China	21	5	26
Hong Kong	0	0	0
Indonesia	3	0	3
Japan	0	0	0
Malaysia	5	2	7
Singapore	1	0	1
South Korea	2	1	3
Taiwan	1	0	1
Thailand	0	0	0
	33	8	41
OTHER			
Bulgaria	0	0	0
Cyprus	1	0	1
Norway	2	1	3
	3	1	4
TOTAL	55	14	69

App. 8

Overseas Student Intake for 2002-2003 Academic Year



App. 9

Student Details

COUNTRY	WORLD AREA	COURSE	SEX	AGE	CODE
Ghana	Africa	MSc	Male	34	GN1
Libya	Africa	MSc	Male	36	LB1
Libya	Africa	MSc	Male	37	LB2
Libya	Africa	PhD 3	Male	39	LB3
Nigeria	Africa	PhD 1	Male	25	NG1
Sudan	Africa	PhD 2	Female	31	SD1
Egypt	Africa	PhD 3	Male	33	EG1
Botswana	Africa	PhD 3	Female	32	BW1
Trinidad & Tobago	Americas	MSc	Male	23	TT1
Mexico	Americas	PhD 2	Male	41	MX1
Mongolia	Central Asia	MPhil	Female	32	MO1
Sri Lanka	Central Asia	MSc	Male	21	SL1
Pakistan	Central Asia	MSc	Male	26	PK1
Pakistan	Central Asia	MSc	Male	28	PK2
India	Central Asia	MSc	Male	31	IN1
Mauritius	Central Asia	PhD 2	Male	26	MR1
Taiwan	East Asia	MPhil	Male	25	TW1
Taiwan	East Asia	PhD 2	Female	26	TW2
Malaysia	East Asia	MPhil	Female	31	MA1
Malaysia	East Asia	MSc	Male	27	MA2
Malaysia	East Asia	PhD 2	Male	28	MA3
Malaysia	East Asia	PhD 2	Male	24	MA4
Malaysia	East Asia	PhD 3	Female	46	MA5
China	East Asia	MSc	Male	31	CN1
China	East Asia	MSc	Male	25	CN2
China	East Asia	MSc	Male	28	CN3
China	East Asia	MSc	Male	32	CN4
China	East Asia	MSc	Male	30	CN5
China	East Asia	MSc	Female	33	CN6
Japan	East Asia	MSc	Male	30	JP1
South Korea	East Asia	MSc	Male	31	SK1
South Korea	East Asia	PhD 3	Male	36	SK2
Indonesia	East Asia	MSc	Female	27	ID1
Indonesia	East Asia	PhD 2	Male	28	ID2
Thailand	East Asia	MSc	Female	22	TH1
Thailand	East Asia	PhD 2	Female	38	TH2
Thailand	East Asia	PhD 3	Female	25	TH3
Thailand	East Asia	PhD 3	Male	31	TH4
Singapore	East Asia	PhD 2	Male	33	SG1
Syria	West Asia	MSc	Female	28	SY1
Iran	West Asia	MSc	Male	26	IR1
Saudi Arabia	West Asia	PhD 2	Male	32	SA1

App. 10

Required Interview Groups per World Area

<u>OVERALL REQUIRED = 42</u>					
<u>REQUIRED PER GROUP/PER SESSION</u>					
AMERICAS	AFRICA	WEST ASIA	CENTRAL ASIA	EAST ASIA	TOTAL
0-1	1-2	0-1	1-2	7-8	9-14
<u>GROUP 1</u> <i>Mar-Apr 2002</i>					
AMERICAS	AFRICA	WEST ASIA	CENTRAL ASIA	EAST ASIA	TOTAL
1	4	1	1	6	13
<u>GROUP 2</u> <i>Aug-Sept 2002</i>					
AMERICAS	AFRICA	WEST ASIA	CENTRAL ASIA	EAST ASIA	TOTAL
0	2	1	3	11	17
<u>GROUP 3</u> <i>Feb-Mar 2003</i>					
AMERICAS	AFRICA	WEST ASIA	CENTRAL ASIA	EAST ASIA	TOTAL
1	2	1	2	6	12
<u>TOTAL</u>					
AMERICAS	AFRICA	WEST ASIA	CENTRAL ASIA	EAST ASIA	TOTAL
2	8	3	6	23	42

App. 11

Summary of Student Details

SEX	AMOUNT
Males	30
Females	12
Total	42
MSc	21
MPhil	3
PhD	18
Total	42
Americas	2
Africa	8
West Asia	3
Central Asia	6
East Asia	23
Total	42
Age Range	21-46
Average Age	30.2

App. 12

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: Group 1

March-April 2002

Introduction

- Welcome respondent.
- Introduce self and own position as researcher.
- Explain purpose of interview.
- Explain how data will be used and guarantee anonymity.
- Explain the estimated length, recording procedures and that questions may be asked throughout.
- Clarify that the respondent finds the format acceptable.
- State that they are not obliged to answer all the questions and that they may withdraw from the interview at any time.

To explore the selection and admission process for overseas students applying to a British university.

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Why did you apply to a British university?2. Did you apply to another British university?3. Did you apply to another country?4. Why did you select UMIST?5. What is your main motivation for postgraduate study?6. Did you have any difficulty coming to England?	<p>Try to establish the main selection criteria.</p> <p>Did the respondent have numerous offers from other universities?</p> <p>What helped them to make their final decision? Is motivation related to self improvement, culture, family expectations or employment?</p> <p>Were there any specific problems which the university may not be aware of?</p>
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To explore the complexities of academic work conducted in a second language i.e. English.

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Is English your first/second language?	<p>This question will not be appropriate to all respondents as some overseas students have English as their first language.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. What English qualification do you have? Did you attend an English preparatory course before starting your study?	<p>The level of English needs to be confirmed in order to accurately interpret the response to the following questions.</p>

3. Have you attended any ELTC courses at UMIST – were they useful?	The student may have studied directly prior to the course/currently studying which may have enhanced their skills.
4. Is the English language that is spoken here different than the English you learnt in your home country? Do you have any difficulty understanding the English language? 5. If so, is it in a particular area(s) i.e. listening, speaking, reading or writing. 6. Do you feel that your progress may be affected? 7. Do you have any particular techniques to help you cope with academic study in English?	<p>The respondent may need clarification e.g. dialects, Queen’s English or their own variation of English i.e. Manglish (Malaysia)</p> <p>The respondent may be reluctant to answer.</p> <p>They may feel that their ability is being questioned or not willing to admit that they are experiencing problems.</p> <p>It is important to explore the issue in a sensitive manner.</p> <p>The respondent may be reliant on dictionaries, notes or friends when dealing with coursework. This could lead to problems in exams, presentations etc.</p>

To attempt to establish if the students’ preconceptions of student life in Britain are accurate.

1. Is this your first time in England?	The responses to the following questions will be affected by the respondent’s experience.
2. Is it what you expected? 3. How is it different to your expectations?	Try to establish if and why it is different to their own country and what formed their own reality e.g. relatives, friends, media.
4. Are the teaching methods similar to what you are used to?	Is there a link between the familiarity of teaching methods, ease of adaptation and progression?
5. Are you finding it difficult to adapt to a different culture?	Has the respondent settled in yet? This will vary depending on time here. Do some cultures find it harder than others?
6. Name the ONE thing that you like/dislike the most about England?	The respondent should be encouraged to mention the first thing that comes to mind. Do not digress into discussions related to personal satisfaction levels.

To explore the welfare of overseas students whilst studying in the UK.

1. Are you here on your own/with relatives? 2. Who is paying your fees?	It is likely that there may be more problems if the respondent is accompanied in
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<p>3. Have you any financial difficulties which may interfere with your study?</p> <p>4. Are you satisfied with your accommodation?</p> <p>5. Have you had any problems whilst studying here e.g. visa, health?</p> <p>6. Do you feel safe a) on campus b) in Manchester?</p>	<p>Britain.</p> <p>Respondent may be reluctant to answer. Stress that their experience will help increase awareness of student problems and that anonymity/confidentiality are assured.</p>
	<p>Has the respondent had a particular problem that has caused anxiety or stress?</p> <p>Did they know who to go to for help?</p> <p>Are they aware of personal safety issues? Has their attitude changed since arriving?</p>

To identify the future prospects and aspirations of overseas students.

<p>1. Do you believe that your time spent at UMIST will improve your job prospects and why?</p>	<p>Try to establish the important elements of a course of study in relation to job prospects. Are these views realistic e.g. do some believe that they will automatically get a job?</p>
<p>2. What are your plans for the future – are you currently looking for employment, returning to a job?</p>	<p>Where is the respondent going to next? Do most have a set agenda?</p> <p>Is looking for work whilst studying stressful?</p>
<p>3. Do you consider the money spent to be a good personal investment?</p>	<p>Does the answer vary depending on who is paying the fees e.g. self funding/sponsored. Do they regard the study period as an ‘investment’?</p>

To compare and analyse differences in culture between the country of origin and England, both in terms of daily life and university culture.

<p>1. What is the main difference between your homeland and England in your daily life?</p> <p>2. What is the main cultural difference between your homeland and England?</p>	<p>As these are wide ranging questions, the respondent should be given time to answer.</p> <p>Is it possible to see a connection between cultures? Do respondents have similar views?</p>
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Conclusion

Thank the respondent and ask if they have any questions.
 Reiterate how the information will be processed and that anonymity is assured.

App. 13

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: Group 2

August-September 2002

Introduction

- Welcome respondent.
- Introduce self and own position as researcher.
- Explain purpose of interview.
- Explain how data will be used and guarantee anonymity.
- Explain the estimated length, recording procedures and that questions may be asked throughout.
- Clarify that the respondent finds the format acceptable.
- State that they are not obliged to answer all the questions and that they may withdraw from the interview at any time.

To investigate the main factors which influence overseas students to come to England.

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When did you decide to do postgraduate study?2. What was your main motivation for postgraduate study?3. Did others expect you to continue?4. Why did you apply to a British university?-----5. Did you apply to another British university?6. Did you apply to another country?7. Were you aware of the reputation?8. Why did you select UMIST?-----9. How important was the use of the English language when making your decision?10. Will your degree improve your job prospects/personal development?	<p>DOMESTIC PRESSURES</p> <p>From what age or time did they decide to continue with postgraduate study? Why? Were they expected to carry on by their families/friends/employers? To what extent did this affect them?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>ACADEMIC REPUTATION</p> <p>Were they aware of the reputation of UMIST/UK before they arrived? To which extent did this affect their decision?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Do they believe that a UK/UMIST degree will improve their job prospects? To what extent is a UMIST degree important?</p>
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To explore the students' perception of the English culture.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is this your first time in England? 2. How did you learn about life in England? 3. Is it what you expected? 4. How does it differ from your expectations? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Do you like the buildings and environment? 6. Do you think Manchester is a safe place to live? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Do you think the standard of service in the UK is good? 8. Are standards of service and living different than your own country? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. In what way is the English culture different from your own? 10. Is the English language that is spoken here different than the English you learnt in your home country? 	<p>GENERAL BACKGROUND</p> <p>Try to establish the level of experience and knowledge the student has of English culture before their course of study.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS</p> <p>Did they think Manchester was old/new before they came? Aware of the crime rate?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>STANDARD OF SERVICE</p> <p>Do they believe the shops and banks are good and the British are 'time orientated'?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR & TRADITIONS</p> <p>Do they think we are non-religious, politically free etc.? What did they find different when they arrived?</p>
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To investigate the outcomes of cultural, both between the students themselves and the host community.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you here on your own/with relatives? 2. Did you find it difficult to adapt to a different culture and environment? 3. How did this affect your normal lifestyle and behaviour? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Do you think the English people are friendly? 5. Do you have any English friends? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Do you have friends from any other countries? If so, which? 7. Did you find it easier to relate to a certain group of people? Why? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Does the English language have an affect on your relationships with others? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Have you experienced anything new which has changed your lifestyle or views in some way? 10. Name ONE thing you like and ONE thing you dislike about England. 	<p>LIFESTYLE CHANGES</p> <p>How have they adapted to the new culture? What affect did it have on them?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH PEOPLE</p> <p>Have they met and interacted with many local people or just those in UMIST?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>FRIENDSHIPS/RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS</p> <p>Do they find it easy to relate to a certain group? Is it helpful to them?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>LANGUAGE PROBLEMS</p> <p>Does difficulty speaking affect friendships?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>NEW EXPERIENCES</p> <p>Have they learnt anything new, maybe by making a mistake? How has this affected them?</p>
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Conclusion

Thank the respondent and ask if they have any questions.
Reiterate how the information will be processed and that anonymity is assured.

App. 14

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: Group 3

February-March 2003

Introduction

- Welcome respondent.
- Introduce self and own position as researcher.
- Explain purpose of interview.
- Explain how data will be used and guarantee anonymity.
- Explain the estimated length, recording procedures and that questions may be asked throughout.
- Clarify that the respondent finds the format acceptable.
- State that they are not obliged to answer all the questions and that they may withdraw from the interview at any time.

To investigate the main factors which influence overseas students to come to England.

1. When did you decide to do postgraduate study?	DOMESTIC PRESSURES
2. What was your main motivation for postgraduate study?	1) From what age or time did they decide to continue with postgraduate study? Why?
3. Did others expect you to continue?	3) Were they expected to carry on by their families/friends/employers?
4. Why did you apply to a British university?	To what extent did this affect them?
-----	-----
5. Did you apply to another British university?	ACADEMIC REPUTATION
6. Did you apply to another country?	7) Were they aware of the reputation of UMIST/UK before they arrived?
7. Were you aware of the reputation?	To which extent did this affect their decision?
8. Why did you select UMIST?	8) Easy entry, cheaper, shorter course?
-----	-----
9. How important was the use of the English language when making your decision?	PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
10. Will your degree improve your job prospects/personal development?	10) Do they believe that a UK/UMIST degree will improve their job prospects?
	To what extent is a UMIST degree important?

To explore the students' perception of the English culture.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is this your first time in England? Are you here on your own? 2. How did you learn about life in England? Media, books, friends etc. 3. Is it what you expected? e.g. everything is how you thought it would be. 4. How does it differ from your expectations? <hr/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Do you like the buildings and environment? 6. Do you think a) Manchester is a safe place to live? b) alcohol is part of the British culture? <hr/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Do you think the standard of service in the UK is good? e.g. the GP service. 8. Are standards of living different than your own country? <hr/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. In what way is the English culture different from your own? 10. Is the English language that is spoken here different than the English you learnt in your home country? 	<p>GENERAL BACKGROUND</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do they feel lonely or are they happy to be on their own? 2) Try to establish the level of experience and knowledge the student had of English culture. 4) To what extent is everything different? <hr/> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Did they think Manchester was old/new before they came? Is it 'red' because of the brick buildings? 6) Have they been a victim of crime or just heard about it? What do they think about drinking? <hr/> <p>STANDARD OF SERVICE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7) Have they been to the GP whilst here? Do they believe the shops and banks are good? 8) Do people live alone or together? Are they from a collective/individualist society? <hr/> <p>SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR & TRADITIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) How big is this difference? 10) Do they have problems communicating?
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To investigate the outcomes of cultural interaction, both between the students themselves and the host community.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you find it difficult to adapt to a different culture and environment? e.g. it took a long time for you to feel familiar with the surroundings and to feel relaxed here. 2. How did this affect your normal lifestyle and behaviour? e.g. do you behave differently here. <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Do you think the English people are a) friendly b) patient c) allowed a lot of freedom? 4. Do you have any English friends? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Do you have friends from any other countries? If so, which? 6. Did you find it easier to make friends with people from a certain nationality/country/group? Why? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Does the English language have an affect on your relationships with others? <p>-----</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Whilst here, have you experienced anything new which has changed your lifestyle/views in some way? e.g. learning practice changed, attitude to opposite sex/another race changed, eating habits changed. 9. Overall, would you describe your time here as a) an educational experience b) life experience c) other, please explain. 10. Name ONE thing you like and ONE thing you dislike about England. 	<p>LIFESTYLE CHANGES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How have they adapted to the new culture? Did anything help them with the process? 2) What affect did it have on them? <p>-----</p> <p>PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH PEOPLE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Do they like the locals and do they feel 'free'. If so, why? 4) Have they met and interacted with many local people or just those in UMIST? <p>-----</p> <p>FRIENDSHIPS/RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Do they find it easy to relate to a certain group? Is it helpful for them to be able to interact with people similar to them? <p>-----</p> <p>LANGUAGE PROBLEMS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7) Does difficulty speaking affect friendships? <p>-----</p> <p>NEW EXPERIENCES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8) Have they learnt anything new, maybe by making a mistake? Could they have learnt new things which may have been forbidden or taboo in their own country? 9) Have they enjoyed their experience here, what has it meant to them? 10) This question may relate to an area which is totally unrelated to the above questions. It may also show how people differ in experience.
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Conclusion

Thank the respondent and ask if they have any questions.
 Reiterate how the information will be processed and that anonymity is assured.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Group 1

To explore the selection and admission process for overseas students applying to a British university.

1. Why did you apply to a British university?
2. Did you apply to another British university?
3. Did you apply to another country?
4. Why did you select UMIST?
5. What is your main motivation for postgraduate study?
6. Did you have any difficulty coming to England?

To explore the complexities of academic work conducted in a second language i.e. English.

1. Is English your first/second language?
2. What English qualification do you have? Did you attend an English preparatory course before starting your study?
3. Have you attended any ELTC courses at UMIST – were they useful?
4. Is the English language that is spoken here different than the English you learnt in your home country?
5. Do you have any difficulty understanding the English language?
6. If so, is it in a particular area(s) i.e. listening, speaking, reading or writing.
7. Do you feel that your progress may be affected?
8. Do you have any particular techniques to help you cope with academic study in English?

To attempt to establish if the students' preconceptions of student life in Britain are accurate.

1. Is this your first time in England?
2. Is it what you expected?
3. How is it different to your expectations?
4. Are the teaching methods similar to what you are used to?
5. Are you finding it difficult to adapt to a different culture?
6. Name the ONE thing that you like/dislike the most about England?

To explore the welfare of overseas students whilst studying in the UK.

1. Are you here on your own/with relatives?
2. Who is paying your fees?
3. Have you any financial difficulties which may interfere with your study?
4. Are you satisfied with your accommodation?
5. Have you had any problems whilst studying here e.g. visa, health?
6. Do you feel safe a) on campus b) in Manchester?

To identify the future prospects and aspirations of overseas students.

1. Do you believe that your time spent at UMIST will improve your job prospects and why?
2. What are your plans for the future – are you currently looking for employment, returning to a job?
3. Do you consider the money spent to be a good personal investment?

To compare and analyse differences in culture between the country of origin and England, both in terms of daily life and university culture.

1. What is the main difference between your homeland and England in your daily life?
2. What is the main cultural difference between your homeland and England?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Group 2

To investigate the main factors which influenced you to come to England.

1. When did you decide to do postgraduate study?
2. What was your main motivation for postgraduate study?
3. Did others expect you to continue? e.g. Family/friends/employers.
4. Why did you apply to a British university?
5. Did you apply to another British university?
6. Did you apply to another country?
7. Were you aware of the reputation of UMIST before you arrived?
8. Why did you select UMIST?
9. How important was the use of the English language when making your decision?
10. Will your degree improve your job prospects/personal development?

To explore your perception of the English culture.

1. Is this your first time in England?
2. How did you learn about life in England? e.g. from the media, books, friends etc.
3. Is it what you expected?
4. If not, how does it differ from your expectations?
5. Do you like the buildings and the environment?
6. Do you think Manchester is a safe place to live?
7. Do you think the standard of service in the UK is good?
8. Are standards of service and living different than your own country?
9. In what way is the English culture different from your own?
10. Is the English language that is spoken here different than the English you learnt in your home country?

To investigate the outcomes of cultural interaction, both between yourself and other students and the host community.

1. Are you here on your own or with relatives?
2. Did you find it difficult to adapt to a different culture and environment?
3. How did this affect your normal lifestyle and behaviour? e.g. what do you do differently here.
4. Do you think English people are friendly?
5. Do you have any English friends?
6. Do you have friends from any other countries? If so, which?
7. Did you find it easier to relate to a certain group of people? Why?
8. Does the English language have an affect on your relationships with others?
9. Whilst here, have you experienced anything new which has changed your lifestyle or views in some way?
10. Name **ONE** thing you like and **ONE** thing you dislike about England.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Group 3

To investigate the main factors which influenced you to come to England.

1. When did you decide to do postgraduate study?
2. What was your main motivation for postgraduate study?
3. Did others expect you to continue? e.g. family/friends/employers.
4. Why did you apply to a British university?
5. Did you apply to another British university?
6. Did you apply to another country?
7. Were you aware of the reputation of UMIST before you arrived?
8. Why did you select UMIST? e.g. easier entry requirements, cheaper living, shorter course.
9. How important was the use of the English language when making your decision?
10. Will your degree improve your job prospects/personal development?

To explore your perception of the English culture.

1. Is this your first time in England? Are you here on your own?
2. How did you learn about life in England? e.g. from the media, books, friends etc.
3. Is it what you expected? e.g. everything is how you thought it would be.
4. If not, how does it differ from your expectations?
5. Do you like the buildings and the environment?
6. Do you think a) Manchester is a safe place to live? b) Alcohol is part of the British culture?
7. Do you think the standard of service in the UK is good? e.g. the GP service.
8. Are standards of living different than your own country? e.g. people live alone/together.
9. In what way is the English culture different from your own?
10. Is the English language that is spoken here different than the English you learnt in your home country? Did it cause you any problems?

To investigate the outcomes of cultural interaction, both between yourself and other students and the host community.

1. Did you find it difficult to adapt to a different culture and environment? e.g. it took a long time for you to feel familiar with the surroundings and to feel relaxed here.
2. How did this affect your normal lifestyle and behaviour? e.g. do you behave differently here.
3. Do you think English people are a) friendly b) patient c) allowed a lot of freedom?
4. Do you have any English friends?
5. Do you have friends from any other countries? If so, which?
6. Did you find it easier to make friends with people from a certain nationality/country/group? Why?
7. Does the English language have an affect on your relationships with others?
8. Whilst here, have you experienced anything new which has changed your lifestyle/views in some way? e.g. learning practice changed, attitude to opposite sex/another race changed, eating habits changed.
9. Overall, do you think England is a good country to live in? Would you come again?
10. Name **ONE** thing you like and **ONE** thing you dislike about England.

App. 18

Extreme Value Dimensions and Ten Synthetic Cultures: Phase 1

	IDENTITY		HIERARCHY		GENDER		TRUTH		VIRTUE	
	Collectivism	Individualism	High power distance	Low power distance	Masculinity	Femininity	Uncertainty avoidance	Uncertainty tolerance	Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation
Study Incentives	✓	✓							✓	✓
Country Choice		✓	✓				✓			
University Choice		✓								
The English Language	✓	✓	✓						✓	
Social Conditions and Services	✓		✓					✓		
Attitudes to Work and Time	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓
Environmental Factors										
Personal Safety	✓						✓	✓		
Perception of People	✓	✓		✓		✓				✓
Perception of Culture	✓	✓	✓				✓			
Social Interaction and Friendship Networks	✓									
Adapting to a Different Culture	✓		✓				✓	✓		

App. 19

Extreme Value Dimensions and Ten Synthetic Cultures: Phase 2

	IDENTITY		HIERARCHY		GENDER		TRUTH		VIRTUE	
	Collectivism	Individualism	High power distance	Low power distance	Masculinity	Femininity	Uncertainty avoidance	Uncertainty tolerance	Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation
Study Incentives	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	
Country Choice	✓	✓					✓		✓	
University Choice	✓	✓					✓			
The English Language	✓	✓							✓	
Language and Relationships	✓		✓			✓	✓			
Social Conditions and Services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Attitudes to Work and Time	✓		✓					✓		
Environmental Factors										
Personal Safety							✓	✓		
Perception of People	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Perception of Culture	✓	✓			✓					✓
Social Interaction and Friendship Networks	✓									
Adapting to and Learning from a Different Culture	✓						✓	✓		

App. 20

Extreme Value Dimensions and Ten Synthetic Cultures: Phase 3

	IDENTITY		HIERARCHY		GENDER		TRUTH		VIRTUE	
	Collectivism	Individualism	High power distance	Low power distance	Masculinity	Femininity	Uncertainty avoidance	Uncertainty tolerance	Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation
Study Incentives	✓	✓								
Country Choice							✓			
University Choice		✓					✓			
The English Language		✓						✓		
Language and Relationships	✓						✓	✓		
Social Conditions and Services	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Attitudes to Work and Time	✓									
Environmental Factors										
Personal Safety							✓	✓		
Perception of People	✓	✓								✓
Perception of Culture	✓	✓	✓							
Social Interaction and Friendship Networks	✓									
Adapting to and Learning from a Different Culture		✓					✓	✓		