A Longitudinal Study of Cultural Identity Shifts and Social Contact of Postgraduate Student Sojourners at a British University

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Abstract

This study explores the cultural identity changes of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition and examines the relationship between cultural identities and social contact. A longitudinal mixed methods research design, using semi-structured interviews (N=18) and surveys (N=84), was employed. The study was conducted at a British higher education institution over 16 months, encompassing the re-entry phase, and participants were students enrolling in postgraduate taught programmes.

The research employed the Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation of Kim (2001) and the Acculturation model of Berry (2005) to argue that cultural identities are bidimensional, consisting of home and host cultural identification. Furthermore, their construction are suggested to be based on two components: emotional attachment and the acknowledgement of cultural membership (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005).

Findings showed that in addition to the two components mentioned above, the cultural identities of student sojourners were influenced by place attachment and the self-reflection of behaviours. After the sojourn, most participants became more aware of their identities. They developed a stronger sense of identification with home cultures and ‘foreign’ cultures, and usually referred to these as ‘mixed’ cultural identities. Shifts in cultural identities occurred in dynamic ways and were influenced by contact patterns, the ‘international’ contexts in higher education, adaptation and adjustment. Although student sojourners often regarded non-co-national internationals as the most popular contact source, grouping of students based on regions of origins and nationalities were frequently reported. Contact with host nationals remained limited throughout the sojourn.

Based on these findings, some modifications to the theories about cultural identities during cross-cultural transition, such as Acculturation model (Berry, 2005), were made to enhance their applicability to the case of student sojourners. A theoretical framework which integrates the cultural identification process, social contact and adaptation is introduced. Finally, some suggestions and practical implications for higher education institutions and educators to improve postgraduate students' overseas stay and reduce social grouping are also presented.

Overall, the study offers an enhanced understanding about the cultural identities of student sojourners and provides researchers in the intercultural communication field and higher education educators with helpful information of the students' adjustment and socialising experiences.

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List of Abbreviations

AAE	Adaptation to the Academic Environment
AI	Acculturation Index
CES-D	Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression
EU	European Union
GPA	Grade Point Average
HE	Higher Education
HID	Home Cultural Identification
HSID	Host Cultural Identification
IC	Intercultural Communication
IG	Interview Guide
ITCCA	Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
P1	Research Phase 1
P2	Research Phase 2
P3	Research Phase 3
PG	Postgraduate
SCAS	Sociocultural Adaptation Scale
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSAP	Student Satisfaction of Academic Performances
UK	The United Kingdom
USA	The United States of America
VIA	Vancouver Index of Acculturation

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter contains four parts. First, it provides the summary of the study (i.e., the context and the focus) (1.1). The current context of student mobility and its importance to the development of higher education (HE) in the UK is, then, presented (1.2), which leads to the discussion of the significance and the aim of this study (1.3). Some key words used in the study are then introduced (1.4). Finally, the structure of this thesis is provided (1.5).

1.1 Overview of the study

Student sojourners have started to gain greater research attention, however, compared to the large amount of research investigating adjustment and adaptation, the number of studies observing the students' sense of cultural identities remains relatively scarce. This is one of a few longitudinal mixed methods studies in the area that have examined changes in cultural identities and the patterns of social contact of postgraduate (PG) student sojourners in HE. The study encompassed three phases: early in the sojourn (3 months into the academic programme), late in the sojourn (9 months into the programme) and the re-entry phase (1-3 months in home country). Participants were one-year taught master's students at a British university.

The qualitative strand, using semi-structured interviews (N=18), explored three sources of social contact (i.e., host national, co-national and non-co-national international contact) and their roles in the students' social lives during the sojourn. Most importantly, it studied the cultural identification process of the students in the 'internationalised' British HE and reviewed how participants perceived their cultural identities (and any changes) after the sojourn.

Meanwhile, the quantitative research, using self-reported questionnaires (N=84), measured the adaptation outcomes of student sojourners across three domains (i.e., socio-cultural, psychological and academic) at the end of the sojourn, tracked the patterns of social contact (i.e., the quantity and quality of contact) throughout the sojourn and monitored changes in two dimensions of cultural identities (namely home cultural and host cultural identification) over time. It then scrutinised relationships among these examined variables. This helped examine the cultural identification process and investigate its relationship with social contact.

1.2 Expanding global market of international students and its influence on the UK

There is significant growth in the number of students pursuing HE beyond the boundaries of their countries of origins, from under three quarters of a million in 1997 to nearly a million in

2002 (Forest and Altbach, 2006). A year later, the number doubled, reaching 2.1 million and since then has continued to increase exponentially. In 2017, there were over 5.3 millions of international students worldwide (UNESCO, 2019).

In 2011, the UK was the country with the second largest population of international students and accounted for 13% of the market share; after the USA on 16.5% (Gil, 2014; Tickle, 2014). In 2003, international students accounted for 38% of the total population of full-time postgraduates in the UK (Bohm *et al.*, 2004), and rose to 46% from the recent period of 2015/16 (UKCISA, 2017). In 2017/18, international students accounted for 35.8% of the total population of postgraduates in the UK (UUKI, 2019).

International students have contributed remarkably to the economics of the host country where they live and study. The fee income contributed by international students dropped slightly to £3.6 billion in 2014/15, but still represented 26% of the total tuition-fee income of British universities (HEFCE, 2016). HE has been one of the main exporting industries of the UK (Bohm *et al.*, 2004) and international students have become the major financial funders for British HE institutions (Gil, 2014). International students help support the research base in sciences, technologies, engineering and mathematics in the UK; and sustain thousands of education-related jobs in colleges and universities as well as non-education related fields in the local area where they live (UKCISA, 2016).

In general, it is undeniable that the demand for overseas HE is expanding quickly worldwide. In the UK, international students have become a large and important group for the development of British HE. Within this group, PG students, especially the one enrolling for one-year taught programmes, is an important student cohort which has different needs and issues.

First, the relatively short duration of PG taught degrees (i.e., one year), compared to other PG programmes in the UK (i.e., PhD), increases challenges of academic adjustment, with PG taught courses being more intensively delivered and assessed (Zaitseva and Milsom, 2015). As McClure (2007) suggests, the typical period of the transition to the PG study for international students is around six months, which means that for PG taught student sojourners in British HE, the transition to the higher academic level accounts for almost half of the length of the sojourn. It is logical to assume that the pressure of shortening the academic transition and the intensiveness of the course is much higher for PG taught students in the UK than in other countries. Second, these students need to adjust socially and culturally to the host culture within a short period of time, which could intensify their acculturative stress, making this said group of students relatively different from other student groups. Therefore, this research focused specifically on examining the experience of this special sojourn group – international students undertaking one-year taught master's degree in the UK.

Whilst student sojourners bring various benefits to the host country where they live, the sojourn experience in a foreign country also benefits student sojourners in many ways. Yet, the experience overseas may not always be easy for the students. The next section provides some information about the opportunities and challenges that international students may experience. The section also focuses on discussing cultural identity changes of the students in cross-cultural transition and the challenge these may bring to their lives, leading to the importance of this research and its aims.

Note that in this study, the term 'student sojourners' was used interchangeably with 'international students' to refer to anyone that voluntarily and temporarily relocate to a new culture for an educational purpose. Further explanations of the term will be provided in 1.4.1.

1.3 Challenges of student sojourners

Research shows that the experience of study abroad brings many opportunities to student sojourners since they can experience quality education, different education systems and academic environments (Ward and Masgoret, 2004). It also marks a significant transition event in the life of the student sojourner (Cushner and Karim, 2004), has transformative power to personal development (Anderson, 1994) and allows the sojourner to reflect on his or her values and "the way of life" (Dolby, 2004, p. 150).

However, the sojourn presents many challenges. The adjustment process to a new country brings international students acculturative stress (Berry and Annis, 1974), culture shock (Oberg, 1954; Furnham, 2004), education or academic shock (Yamazaki, 2005) and language shock (Agar, 1994).

Although many student sojourners perceive the sojourn to be a chance to enhance international connections and intercultural communication (Forsey, Broomhall and Davis, 2012), the reality may not always be optimistic. Many studies have consistently found that exposure to the 'international' environment, such as studying with other students of various nationalities, together with the 'international' programme, for instance, participating in the international coursework or some co-curricular activities, may not always result in meaningful communication (Peacock and Harrison, 2009; Forsey, Broomhall and Davis, 2012; Soria and

Troisi, 2014). Social grouping on campus, or “semi-distinct social spaces within the university environment”, is often reported (Brown, 2009b; Harrison and Peacock, 2009, p. 884; Forsey, Broomhall and Davis, 2012). Studies have repeatedly shown that international students struggle to initiate and maintain meaningful relationships with students of the host country as well as local people in the ‘wider’ community (Brown, 2009b; Brown, 2009a; Wright and Schartner, 2013; Schartner, 2015; Pho and Schartner, 2019).

Various factors for this social grouping have been proposed, such as segregated on-campus accommodation (i.e., the ‘international’ halls of residences), and the perceived reluctance of local students to interact with their international peers (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Harrison and Peacock, 2010). The skewed student intake on many British one-year PG taught programmes is also suggested as another contributory factor to this phenomenon (Schartner, 2015; Pho and Schartner, 2019). For instance, it is common to find 90% of the student population in some of these programmes to be international (Schartner, 2015). Forsey, Broomhall and Davis (2012), therefore, insist that meaningful and deep cultural learning rarely happens in the academic sojourn, and students may only experience surface-level changes.

However, many studies have shown that profound influences are, indeed, possible and many student sojourners experience cultural identity shifts after the sojourn (Walling *et al.*, 2006; Pitts, 2009; Pitts, 2016). Specifically, these changes can be observable during the re-entry when the students return to home countries and struggle to re-adjust to their home cultures (Sussman, 2000).

Some “returnees” struggle with the dissonance of the new cultural identities nurtured during their sojourns and the old cultural identities originated before the sojourn, or some even need to redefine identities to fit with their home cultures (Martin, 1986; Walling *et al.*, 2006). As the students explain, they feel “a vague sense personal change” and the feeling of being “caught between the two worlds”: the host environment where they felt “at home” and the home environment where they no longer “fit in” (Pitts, 2016, p. 429). The changes are so significant that sometimes these returnees are seen as ‘cultural strangers’ to their own home cultures (Gudykunst and Kim, 1984).

However, some studies have observed there is no significant relationships between re-entry stress and the cultural identity change; and argued that this stress may be the problem of a specific group of demographic variables (e.g., nationalities and age) and personal traits (e.g., value differences) (Brabant *et al.*, 1990). Thus, further research is required to be conducted on this cultural identity shift.

1.4 Key words

Before further details about this study are presented, some key words used frequently in the study need to be defined. As some concepts (i.e., identity, culture and cultural identity) are complicated and contested and defining them would be impossible without discussing contemporary debates around them, Chapter 2 will unpack relevant concepts and philosophical movements and arguments behind them, for instance, the philosophical movements of the study of identity (2.1); and the distinctions between cultural identity, national identity and ethnic identity (2.1.3).

This section focuses mainly on defining and explaining how key words were employed in this study, such as student sojourners (1.2.1), intercultural and cross-cultural studies (1.2.2), cross-cultural transition and adjustment (1.2.3), cultural identity (1.2.4) and social contact (1.2.5). The research's approach and scope are clarified (where relevant).

1.4.1 Student sojourners – a unique sojourn group that needs research attention

Previously, student sojourners received less attention than other groups, such as immigrants, in the cross-cultural transition study (Bai, 2016), yet this is now a burgeoning research interest with an increasing number of studies in various areas such as international mobility in education, learning environment in HE, the cross-cultural adaptation of students and intercultural social network (Robertson *et al.*, 2010; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011; Hotta and Ting-Toomey, 2013; Young *et al.*, 2013; Glass *et al.*, 2014; McFaul, 2016; Young *et al.*, 2016).

Student sojourners not only experience acculturative stress, which are common for most of the sojourn groups, but also encounter academic stress caused by adjustment to the new education system and academic environment (Nilsson *et al.*, 2008). Some of the challenges that are frequently documented in the literature are understanding classroom instructions, lecturers' explanations and expectations, and participating in class activities (Desa *et al.*, 2012). The personal support resources to the academic stress of student sojourners are likely to be limited and less than that of established ethnic groups in the host culture (e.g., immigrants) and of domestic students (Hayes and Lin, 1994).

On the other hand, voluntary relocation, temporary overseas stay and their competence in communicating in the host cultures' languages often require student sojourners a certain amount of effort to adjust to the new host culture and the change in the academic environment (Ward, 2001), but this effort may not be as intense as of other sojourn groups (e.g. immigrants).

According to Ward and Kennedy (1994), the term ‘sojourner’ indicates a person that has voluntarily travelled to a new country with a particular objective (e.g., pursuing an educational purpose or searching for an occupational opportunity). Sojourners temporarily relocate to a new country and as Ward and Kennedy (1994) suggest, they usually expect to return to their home countries. Various terms, such as ‘international students’, ‘overseas students’, ‘foreign students’, have been used to refer to this group of students.

Note that HE institutions in the UK have usually categorised students into three groups based on fee status: home students (i.e., students from the UK), EU students (i.e., students from countries in the European Union) and international students (i.e., students from other countries). The word ‘international students’, therefore, has been usually employed in British HE to refer to non-EU and non-UK students.

However, in this research, the term ‘student sojourners’ was used interchangeably with ‘international students’ to refer to anyone that voluntarily and temporarily relocate to a new culture. These students usually stay abroad for the duration of their degrees after which they may relocate again or return home (Pitts, 2005).

1.4.2 Intercultural studies vs cross-cultural studies

Intercultural Communication (IC), in terms of the field of enquiry, studies the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds, their negotiations of perceived cultural and linguistic differences through interactions, the influence of these interactions on group relations, the individual’s identities, attitudes and behaviours (Hua, 2016). The terms ‘intercultural’ and ‘cross-cultural’ are often used interchangeably (Berry and Annis, 1974; Kim, 1988; Ward and Kennedy, 1992), yet they theoretically refer to different approaches in the IC field.

The study of cross-cultural communication originated from cultural anthropology and its objective is to examine the difference among communication behaviours across cultures (Gudykunst, 2003). Due to the increasing acknowledgement of cultural differences during the late 1980s and early 1990s in Europe, IC researchers at that time perceived this approach quite novel (Woodin, 2015). One of the most popular names in the field is Edward T. Hall with his books: “The silent language” and “Beyond Culture” (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 7). Most of the cross-cultural research is often comparative in terms of research design (Gudykunst, 2003). Although the cross-cultural approach can be highly informative, it is currently criticised due to its assumption of the homogeneity of the cultural group and the description of culture as a “predefined category” with a “static nature” (Woodin, 2015, p. 106).

The intercultural approach, on the other hand, refers to the study of communication between people with different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 1). Research following this approach concentrates more on interactions of people from different cultures and how cultures are made relevant during interactions, rather than on the significance of cultural differences in interactions (Woodin, 2015). This approach, hence, tends to rely heavily on discourse analysis (e.g., conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis) and makes relatively heavy reference to the role of language in intercultural interactions (Woodin, 2015). The line between these two approaches may seem blurry, yet it is based on the deep-rooted philosophical thoughts about cultures (discussed in 2.1.1).

In this study, I used the two terms interchangeably in the literature. However, in terms of methodology, I applied an intercultural approach in which cultural identity was treated as a trajectory (which could change, and its change could be monitored and examined over time) rather than an object variable (i.e., a contributory factor) in the adjustment of student sojourners. In other words,

1) The student sojourner was not classified into cultural groups at the beginning of the research. Instead, the cultural identities of the sojourners were examined throughout different phases of the research to investigate whether the students reflected any changes in their senses of cultural identities after the sojourn.
2) Instead of making assumptions or providing the descriptions of ‘Asian cultures’ or ‘Western cultures’, the research applied an inductive approach which examined the perceptions of student sojourners about their cultural identities and how they constructed cultural identities when living in an international and multicultural context. The discussion of ‘Asian and Western cultures’ was, thus, only included if these concepts were relevant and prominent themes emerging from the data.

1.4.3 Cross-cultural transition and three domains of adaptation and adjustment

Transition refers to the process in which individuals move from “one fairly stable state to another”, triggered by changes in their individual lives (Meleis, 2010, p. 11), and cross-cultural transition is usually used to indicate the transition of an individual when moving to a relatively new culture. Adjustment and adaptation are suggested as consequences of this transition

(Sussman, 2000). Both terms are often used interchangeably by many researchers and scholars, for instance, Ward and Kennedy (1992); Ward and Kennedy (1994); Leong and Ward (2000); Lin (2008); Pitts (2009); and Pitts (2016).

However, the distinction between the two concepts is worth noting as it contributes to the design of the present study. In particular, adjustment is theoretically a *process* of "modifying cognitions and behaviours" to improve interactions and experiences whereas adaptation is an *outcome* of this process (Sussman, 2000, p. 360). In this perspective, the adjustment process is best examined using a longitudinal research design whereas the adaptation outcome can be studied in cross-sectional research.

This research objective was to examine cultural identity changes and social contact patterns and explore how these were relevant to the adaptation of sojourners. Therefore, the study used a longitudinal design to examine changes in cultural identities and monitor contact patterns and used a cross-sectional design to measure adaptation outcomes. Based on the collected data, the relationships between the three were investigated. The two terms 'adjustment' and 'adaptation' were used interchangeably in this study.

Current studies of cross-cultural transition identify two domains of adaptation: 1) *psychological* (referring to the well-being and life satisfaction of individuals in a new culture) and 2) *sociocultural* (relating mainly with the performance of individuals in the daily social life in the new culture) (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Berry, 2005). These two domains are empirically interrelated with the correlation coefficients typically ranging around .3 to .4, yet they are conceptually distinct (Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Schartner, 2014). Personality, life-changing events and social support are considered as predictive factors of good psychological adaptation whereas residence length, cultural distance, cultural knowledge, positive attitudes and degree of contact with the host culture can predict the success of sociocultural adaptation (Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Berry, 2005).

As discussed in 1.4.1, student sojourners are distinguishable from other sojourn groups because of their academic achievement purposes and academic stress (Desa *et al.*, 2012). Student sojourners experience not only the change in the cultural environment, but also in the academic environment. Despite its importance, the academic domain has not been taken explicitly into consideration in most research on the adjustment and adaptation of student sojourners, such as the studies by Ward and Kennedy (1993); Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999b); Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000); and Zhou *et al.* (2008).

Thus, to examine the adaptation of student sojourners, it is necessary to include: 3) the *academic domain* (associated with the academic achievements and performances of student sojourners such as GPA or the class of the achieved degree). This domain interacts, connects closely with, and can impact the former two domains, and vice versa (Ward and Kennedy, 1994). In general, this study measured the adaptation outcomes of student sojourners in socio-cultural, psychological and academic domains.

Researchers in the IC field usually focus on studying the adjustment of sojourners in the host country. However, many studies have shown that the re-entry phase when sojourners go back to home countries are sometimes deemed to be more stressful than the adjustment process during the sojourn (Walling *et al.*, 2006; Martin, 1986). Even worse, the re-entry usually stuns sojourners since they never anticipate the changes in identities and the difficulty of returning home (Martin, 1986). The sojourner's re-entry has recently been defined as an extended process of cross-cultural adjustment (Martin, 1986). IC scholars have, thus, started to pay greater attention to the re-entry experience of the sojourner, for instance, the work of Martin (1986), Walling *et al.* (2006) and Pitts (2016).

This study, therefore, examined the re-entry of student sojourners. In the study, the term 're-entry' was used interchangeably with 'repatriation' to refer to the transitional experience when the sojourner returns and re-integrates to his or her home culture after the sojourn (Pitts, 2016).

1.4.4 Cultural identity – a contested concept

In Communication Theory of Identity, Hecht (2009) suggests that identity consists of four layers: 1) *personal identity* (i.e., how the individual 'sees' himself); 2) *enacted identity* (i.e., how the individual 'presents' himself in the society); 3) *relational identity* (i.e., how the individual 'sees' himself in association with others); and 4) *communal identity* (i.e., how the individual 'sees' himself as a member of a group) (see 2.1.3). Cultural identity is, therefore, understood as the largest layer of identity – communal identity.

In general, cultural identity is defined in the IC literature as the individual's sense of belonging or emotional attachment and affiliation to a cultural group (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005) and obtained from membership in a cultural group (Sussman, 2000). It is, thus, logical to conclude that there are two key components in the construction of cultural identity: emotional attachment (i.e., sense of belonging) and awareness of cultural membership.

Cultural identity is often confused with national identity as they are both seen as communal identity (see 2.1.3). However, whilst the latter is often more rigid and sometimes referred to be "passport identity" (Holliday, 2010, p. 170), the former is more latent to the individual and subject to changes in the environment. Exposure to new values and beliefs during cross-cultural transition can trigger the individual to re-define their cultural identity, resulting in identity changes (Knafo and Schwartz, 2001; Kwak, 2010; Dervin and Risager, 2014). This study, hence, aimed to gauge the influence of cross-cultural transition on the cultural identities of student sojourners and to explore how the students perceived their cultural identities (and their changes) after the transition.

It is important to note that IC scholars have recently emphasised the need to move away from the limited approaches of culturalism and essentialism which have usually portrayed the cultural identity of an individual to be singular and oversimplified (Holliday, 2006; Holliday, 2010; Dervin, 2012) (see 2.1.3). Identity has been suggested to be fluid and complicated (Dervin and Risager, 2014) (see 2.1.2), thus, the plural form ('cultural identities') were also employed in this study. A detailed review of the concept of 'identity', 'culture' and 'cultural identity', key philosophical movements and relevant theories will be presented in 2.1

1.4.5 Social interactions vs social contact

The two terms are sometimes applied interchangeably in the IC literature. Some researchers refer to the act of engagement with other people as 'social interaction' (Glass, 2012), some may call it 'social tie', 'social contact' or 'friendship network' (Bochner *et al.*, 1977; Young *et al.*, 2013; Schartner, 2015; Pho and Schartner, 2019). They are, however, theoretically different.

Social interaction is defined by Bardis (1979, p. 148) as how "personalities, groups or social systems act toward each other and mutually influence one another". While an individual is believed to be able to conduct 'interactions' alone (e.g., when he or she analyses an idea with himself or herself), the word 'social', however, indicates collectivity (Bardis, 1979). The study of social interaction, therefore, concentrates on examining the reciprocal interaction of two or more persons, particularly the interactions of people with various cultural backgrounds in the intercultural context (Bardis, 1979). Researchers studying intercultural interactions usually apply a qualitative design to study many aspects of the interaction such as the dominance of the interlocutor, the direction and the amount of the talk.

'Social contact', in addition, is a broad concept that covers 'social interaction' since for social interaction to occur, two persons need to have social contact (Mucha, 2006). In other words, social contact is the basic platform of communication of two people, which can determine their interactions (Mucha, 2006). Since social contact is critical in cross-cultural transition and can be measured, quantitative research is often applied to examine social contact. In particular, many researchers have explored the relationship between social contact of sojourners, specifically student sojourners, adjustment and adaptation during their oversea stays (see Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Young and Schartner, 2014; Schartner, 2015).

Instead of analysing the experience of the interaction per se and its influence on cultural identities, this study concentrated on discovering the influence of the sojourner's engagement with a certain cultural group on cultural identity changes and adaptation outcomes. Thus, the term 'social contact' was preferred in this present study. However, previous research has usually studied social contact as a predictive variable in adaptation; therefore, often employing a cross-sectional research design to quantify the amount of contact that sojourners have during the sojourn (c.f. Furnham and Alibhai, 1985; Kashima and Loh, 2006; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011). This study applied a new approach (i.e., a longitudinal research design) to monitor the changing pattern of social contact over the sojourn.

1.5 Recent research 'trends' of internationalisation of HE and the significance of this study

There is generally a lack of consensus on the meaning of internationalisation (Ray and Solem, 2009; Turner and Robson, 2007). For the purpose of this study, I employed the frequently cited work by Jane Knight (2004, p. 11) which defines 'internationalisation' as 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education'. Internationalisation is driven by the hope to strengthen mutual understanding by international mobility (Khoo, 2011); is expected to improve the quality of teaching and learning (de Wit *et al.*, 2015; Khoo, 2011) and enhance international connections and intercultural competence of the students (Brown, 2009c; Forsey, Broomhall and Davis, 2012; Knight, 2011; Rizvi, 2011).

Within the wide range of publications of studies on internationalisation of HE, there are generally two key research strands:

- Management of internationalisation of HE at the institutional level, including strategic development and partnership, the programme's quality and the curriculum

- Experience of the actors involved, such as students and their social, psychological and academic experiences, support structures, language learning, and influences on their identities

(Bedenlier, Kondakci and Zawacki-Richter, 2018)

From the early 2010s to the current period, the research foci have extrapolated from institutional management and development of internationalisation to improvement of the student experience beyond the purely academic and institutional context. When reviewing the literature during this period, I identified three broad research themes: 1) language learning and teaching, 2) cross- and intercultural transition and adaptation and 3) cultural identity and interculturality. Although these themes encompass a number of sub-themes and it is common that researchers can sometimes address more than two of these themes in one single study, they generally characterise the thematic landscape of the studies of the student experience in the UK.

The first theme includes research topics such as language development of students after study abroad (Wright, 2009; Wright, 2013) and students' perceptions and attitudes towards foreign language learning (Coleman, 1996; Coleman, Galaczi and Astruc, 2007). These studies, employing an applied linguistics approach, usually situate in Modern Language departments at universities and focus on examining the students' experiences in exchange programmes and how these influences their language learning and proficiency.

Some topics in the second theme are socio-cultural, psychological and academic adaptation of international students (Young *et al.,* 2013; Schartner, 2014; Schartner, 2015; Young and Schartner, 2014; Young, Handford and Schartner, 2016), interaction patterns and support networks (Pho and Schartner, 2019; Wright and Schartner, 2013; Yu and Moskal, 2019), and intercultural competence (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001; Byram, 2012, McKinley *et al.*, 2018). Using a social psychological approach, these studies examine the adaptation and adjustment of international students, intercultural interactions and how these may benefit the students. Participants are often postgraduate and undergraduate international students at UK HE institutions (see Young *et al*., 2013; Schartner, 2014; Yu and Moskal, 2019).

Finally, the last and also relatively new and emerging theme covers topics such as agency and identity (Bond, 2019; Wee, 2019; Yu, 2019), intercultural identity (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015; Ye, 2018), concentrating on the cognitive aspect of the experience. Participants are usually international students who stay in the UK for a long period (e.g., four years or more), such as undergraduate and doctorate students.

In terms of research methodologies, most of the studies in the field are cross-sectional approach, applying either a large-scale quantitative design (Wright, 2009; Wright, 2013;

Coleman, 1996; Coleman, Galaczi and Astruc, 2007; Yu and Moskal, 2019); or small-scale qualitative research on small groups of students, for example, Chinese and Singaporean student sojourners (We, 2019; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). Research findings, thus, often give impression that the experience of student sojourners is static and unidirectional since most research is usually conducted at one point in time and the analysis is based on deductive quantitative data. Therefore, it is advised that researchers should apply more diverse research methodologies (e.g., qualitative, mix-methods and longitudinal design) to better study the dynamics of the experience of student sojourners (Noels, Yashima and Zhang, 2012). Some examples of research using longitudinal mixed methods design are the work by Schartner (2014); and Young and Schartner (2014).

Among this small number of longitudinal studies, the majority investigate the students over the course of their oversea stays, but rarely look into the re-entry stage. However, the re-entry is crucial for the personal development (Hadis, 2005; Mesquita *et al.*, 2017) and intercultural learning of student sojourners (Arthur, 2003). This is the period when students can process their multi-cultural experiences, which enrich the bicultural (or multicultural) knowledge (i.e., the home and host culture) (Matic and Russell, 2019) and enhance their intercultural identities (Selby, 2008). Therefore, researchers are starting to pay more attention to the re-entry experience, for instance, the work by Martin (1986), Walling et al. (2006), Pitts (2016) and Gu and Schweisfurth, (2015).

Situated in the field of internationalisation of HE and using social psychological approach, this study ‘joined’ the two broad, yet strongly related, themes in the student experience research: cross-cultural transition and adaptation, and cultural identity. The study applied longitudinal mixed methods design to monitor and explore the experience of postgraduate international students during their time in the UK and the re-entry at their home countries.

It is, in fact, important to study cultural identities of student sojourners since they can impact the students’ sojourn experiences. Students who feel a stronger sense of belonging to the host culture usually adjust better to the socio-cultural environment of the host culture and experience fewer difficulties in communicating with local people of the host country (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000).

Social contact has been suggested to be the influential factor of cultural identities, in so far that friendships with people coming from the same cultural background could strengthen people’s sense of belonging to their home cultures (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ethier and Deaux, 1994). It is, therefore, unclear how student sojourners report changes in their cultural identities while living and studying in a ‘segregated campus’ during the sojourn. It is still ambiguous how international students experience cultural identity changes if they tend to have more contact with co-nationals than host nationals during the sojourn (Brown, 2009b; Brown, 2009a; Wright and Schartner, 2013; Schartner, 2015) (see 1.3).

This study, therefore, aimed to enhance our understanding of the cultural identity changes of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition and the role of social contact in this process. To do so, the present study concentrated on studying the following issues:

- To study the patterns of social contact and adaptation outcomes of student sojourners in the host country
- To investigate how student sojourners perceived and constructed their cultural identities and whether they experienced any changes in their senses of cultural identities after their stay in the host country.
- If so, to explore what the patterns of cultural identity shifts of student sojourners were.
- To examine some important factors in this cultural identification process, specifically the social contact patterns of the students and the students' adaptation to the host culture.

In this study, the re-entry was included as an extended phase of the sojourn experience (see 1.4.3).

Based on the findings, the research would revise the definition of cultural identity in the current literature in the field; propose a conceptual model of the key components in the construction of cultural identities, applicable primarily for student sojourners; and put forward a theoretical framework integrating the cultural identification process, social contact and adaptation of student sojourners.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The summary of each chapter is presented below.

Chapter 1 provides the overview of the present research (1.1); the current context of international mobility and the special case of PG student sojourners, specifically the taught PG student sojourners in the UK (1.2); the importance of studying cultural identity shifts of these students, leading to the significance of this research (1.3). The chapter also explains key terminologies employed in the study (1.4), the research gap in the field and the significance of this study (1.5), and finally, the outline of this thesis (1.6).

Chapter 2 presents a discussion of key concepts (i.e., culture, identity and cultural identity) (2.1); and a comprehensive review of contemporary approaches and key theories in the literature of the sojourner adjustment (i.e., Integrative theory of Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation, Social Identity Theory; Acculturation Model and Cultural Identity Shifts), and their applicability to the study of cultural identities (2.2). It then provides a review of theories, as well as a synthesis of recent research findings, to explore relationships of cultural identities, social contact and adaptation outcomes (2.3). The final section (2.4) proposes research questions and a conceptual framework of the present study.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology and the rationale behind it. In particular, the rationale behind the research's approach and design (i.e., longitudinal mixed-methods research conducted over an extended period of time, including the re-entry) (3.1 and 3.2), research sampling, setting and instruments (3.3, 3.4 and 3.5), data handling and analysis methods (3.6) are included. In this chapter, the criteria for evaluating mixed methods research and challenges when studying cultural identity are also discussed (3.7 and 3.8).

Chapter 4 presents quantitative data analysis (4.1), qualitative analysis (4.2) of social contact patterns, adaptation and social grouping on campus. The discussion of findings in relation to previous studies, based on which a model illustrating social contact and its influence on the adaptation of student sojourners, is then provided in 4.3.

Chapter 5 reports the quantitative data of the identification levels (5.1.1), the relationships of cultural identities, social contact and adaptation (5.1.2 to 5.1.4) and the changing patterns of cultural identification levels (5.1.5). The chapter, then, presents the qualitative findings of how student sojourners perceived and constructed their cultural identities in the current 'super-diversity' cultural context (5.2). Based on these, the chapter unpacks some limitations of the contemporary theories of cultural identities and provides a refined definition of cultural identities and a revised model of the key components in the construction of cultural identities of student sojourners (5.3).

Chapter 6 focuses on exploring the cultural identification process of student sojourners during the sojourn and in the re-entry. The interview data of how the students reflected and recognised identity changes during and after the sojourn are provided (6.1), followed by the discussion of the findings in relation to previous research (6.2). Based on this, the thesis puts forward a revised model of the cultural identification process of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition, which highlights its complex relationship with social contact and adaptation (6.3).

Finally, **Chapter 7** summarises key research findings and addresses research questions (7.1 and 7.2), discusses contributions (7.3) and reflects research limitations, based on which recommendations for other researchers in the field are suggested (7.4). The chapter is ended with the concluding remarks (7.5).

Chapter 2: Guiding Literature

This chapter provides a synthesis and a review of the literature important to this research. First, key concepts (such as culture, identity and cultural identity), philosophical movements and debates around them are discussed (2.1). Second, the historical development of the approaches to study cross-cultural transition and their relevance to the study of cultural identities of sojourners is presented (2.2). Third, a synthesis of key theories and findings of recent studies exploring the relationships between social contact, adaptation outcomes and cultural identities is included (2.3). Based on the literature review, research questions are proposed, followed by the clarification of the research approach and the proposition of its conceptual framework (2.4).

2.1 Key concepts, philosophical movements and contemporary debates around them

Cultural identity is multiple, multifaceted, complicated and contradictory (Hall *et al.*, 1992) and is deemed to be a "floating signifier" which conveys many different ideas (Dervin, 2012, p. 181). Trying to define cultural identity or what constitutes it seems to be an infeasible mission, especially when the two concepts, 'culture' and 'identity', embedded in 'cultural identity' are themselves "polysemic, slippery and illusory" (Dervin, 2012, p. 181). Hence, before unpacking the concept of 'cultural identity', it is important to first discuss 'culture' and 'identity' and the philosophical movements behind them.

2.1.1 Culture – a challenging concept to define

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) found 164 different definitions of the term 'culture' in the anthropology literature in the 1950s, and this number has continued increasing since then. As Williams (1988, p. 87) describes, *"culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language…"* since it has been applied in many concepts in diverse intellectual disciplines.

Culture can be explained as simple as "the way of life of a group of people" (Kidd, 2012, p. 6), "human-made part of the environment" (Lonner and Malpass, 1994, p. 7) or as complicated and detailed as:

> *"… a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival…, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other…" (Triandis, 1994, p. 27)*

The study of culture may have different approaches. The pioneering one is now known as ‘culturalism’ or ‘essentialism’, which suggests that understanding of a culture can lead to the understanding of an individual of that culture, and believes that culture can be presented as an objective account and a ‘static object’ (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006, p. 13).

Culturalism is supported strongly by positivist researchers who usually assume that culture is relatively stable and can be isolated to study, and results can be generalised (Hua, 2016). Cultural patterns, values and norms are claimed to be identifiable and measurable, thus, can be treated as variables (Hua, 2016). Nations are usually considered as research units (Hua, 2016). It is also believed that cultural values influence communication behaviours and can be used as explanatory variables for differences between cultures (Hua, 2016). The rationale of cross-cultural approach in Intercultural Communication (IC) (see 1.4.2) is heavily based on this school of thought.

The most well-known positivist psychologist in this paradigm is Geert Hofstede and his study of dimensions of cultures. By collecting 100,000 questionnaires from IBM employees in 40 countries, Hofstede tries to categorise nations in terms of cultural values and dimensions (Hofstede, 1984). His work is further developed by the cross-cultural psychologist Harry Triandis who attempts to conceptualise ‘individualism’ and ‘collectivism’ as a dichotomous dimension of culture (Triandis, 1994; Triandis, 1995). Most of his work has insisted that countries from Asia usually score high on collectivism while Western countries often rank high in individualism, resulting in the large cultural distance between these two ‘cultures’ (Triandis, 1994; Triandis, 1995).

Around the 1980s, anthropologists faced the “crisis of presentation” and “postmodern thoughts” in which they questioned the criticality of their methodologies, specifically ethnography and the data inducted from it (Dervin, 2012, p. 182). The depiction of culture as unchangeable, static, homogenous and representative of its members has been deemed implausible (Dervin, 2012). Culture has then been perceived as “an object of power” (Wikan, 2002, p. 86) and thought to be nothing but plural, adaptable and constructed (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). According to Bhatia (2007, p. 49), culture is always tied to “power relationships”, thus, always resulting in many conflicting representations.

Culturalism has then been criticised for ‘imprisoning’ culture in an unchangeable position, ignoring its movements, thus, perpetuating stereotypes (Dervin and Risager, 2014). Studies of cultural norms, patterns and values have been critiqued and considered as essentialist and over-generalised portrayals of cultures in which every member of ‘a culture’ is treated the same (Hua, 2016).

Following these movements, interpretivism and constructionism are two of many paradigms that have become increasingly influential in the IC field. Culture, since then, has been suggested to be socially constructed, subjective and can only emerge through interactions and relationships (Gudykunst *et al.*, 1988). Instead of studying cultural differences among cultural groups, the aim then is to study the process of interaction and what individuals can achieve after it (e.g. new ways of communicating and using languages, new values and new identities) (Hua, 2016). Some authors following these paradigms are Higgins (2007); Young and Sercombe (2010); and Hua (2013). These paradigms serve as the foundations for the intercultural approach (mentioned in 1.4.2).

Despite the complexity of the term ‘culture’, in this present study, ‘culture’ was used to indicate “the patterns of a social organisation” and the behaviours that are deemed to be ‘appropriate’ and ‘natural’ in a group of people (Kidd, 2012, p. 6). ‘Cultural pattern’ is an umbrella term which usually includes (but is not limited to) the way of life, customs, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions and rituals of a society (Samovar, 2007); and is learned through the social interactions among people within the same cultural group (Jandt, 2012). Culture connects people and provides them with collective symbols and rules, which allow them to understand and interpret the actions of other people in the group as well as of their own actions (Kidd, 2012). In other words, culture can shape how we perceive the world and sometimes influences the manners in which we live our life.

Although culture is collective, it does not necessarily mean that all individuals in a cultural group behave in the same way. As Samovar (2007, p. 133) expresses, “we are more than our culture”. The “cultural pattern” that essentialist scholars have frequently used to portray the whole nation or cultural group may indicate the “common pattern” of the dominant group of people in that country (Samovar, 2007, p. 133). It should be used to neither represent all individuals within that group nor categorise one cultural group from another. Culture should never be examined in terms of nations because “culture is not synonymous with countries” (Jandt, 2012, p. 6). Culture should not be studied as the only element that characterises an individual’s view of the world either; since other factors such as social status and personal experience can also play important roles (Samovar, 2007).

However, it is argued that culture is the most influential factor during intercultural interactions and communication. In particular, as cultural learning happens in the early stage of an individual’s life, culture becomes a fundamental part integrated into his or her way of thinking and behaving (Lynch and Hanson, 1992).

According to Dervin (2012) and Eriksen (2001), anthropologists have recently shifted their research attention from ‘culture’ to ‘identity’ and started to propose it to be the new central phenomena to study. With this approach, the individual’s agency, which was often neglected in previous studies, has now played a major role in social construction.

2.1.2 Identity vs ‘the self’

There are many terms that are used to indicate the concept of ‘identity’. Some scholars use the term ‘identity’, some prefer ‘the self’ or ‘selfhood’ and some call it ‘subjectivity’. The theoretical distinctions between these terms are often ignored in many studies since the differences are insignificant and they are closely related (Elliott, 2013). Scholars can rarely study one concept without touching the others.

However, it is worth noting the terminological differences as they influence the approach of the present research and its focus. In general, ‘the self’ and ‘identity’ both denote the concept of the individual’s subjectivity yet these two terms are not coextensive (Elliott, 2013).

a. ‘The self’

George Herbert Mead (1863 – 1931) is considered as the social psychologist setting the foundation for the theoretical thinking of the self and its social nature. According to Mead (1934), social interaction plays a constitutive role in the making of ‘the self’. As Mead (1934) explains, ‘the self’ is, on one hand, an *individual’s agency* to experience the interactions with others, and on the other hand, an *object* through which the individual reflects. The significance of Mead’s theory is his belief in an individual’s ability to examine his or her own ‘self’ from an observer’s viewpoint and with this ability of self-reflection, an individual can interpret actions of other people, take their attitudes and can identify with their viewpoints. As a result, our sense of ‘self’ is always constructed with reference to the way we think about ourselves and about other people’s perceptions of us, or in other words, “the self is a social product through and through” (Elliott, 2013, p. 32).

Despite their significant contributions, there are still many limitations of Mead’s theories. The most critical one is his over-emphasis on the consciousness and the cognition of the self at the expense of the attention to the emotional and unconscious aspect of the mind (Elliott, 2013). Hence, an individual seems to be too rational when constructing its sense of self. No feelings and emotions are attached to this process.

Moreover, Mead seems to idealise the relationship between the individual and the society in this self-constitution process (Elliott, 2013). The individual can reflect on its sense of 'self' and moderate it in reference to the perceptions of other people about the self, yet neither conflicts nor tensions are involved in the process. Therefore, Mead's viewpoints were criticised heavily by followers of Freud's study.

Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), in his theory of psychoanalysis of 'the self' (Freud and Strachey, 1962), conceptualises 'the self' as always struggling between the consciousness of the mind (the superego) and the unconscious desire and need (the id). This unconsciousness (desires, emotions and needs) is an important concept that distinguishes 'identity' and 'the self'.

b. Identity

There have been numerous definitions of 'identity' documented in the social science literature. Identity can be understood as "the person's conception of the self" derived from the social, geographical and cultural context (Yep, 1998, p. 61), "our reflective self-conception […] and […] other perceptions of our self-image" (Ting-Toomey, 2015, p. 212) or "who we think we are as a person" (Martin and Nakayama, 2010, p. 81). Some scholars define it as "a self-regulatory social-psychological construct that directs intention and influences information process and behaviours" (Adams and Marshall, 1996, p. 433); and "a psychological self-conception of the individual within the society" (Joseph, 2004, p. 15). One commonality among these definitions is that no matter how detailed or simple the definitions, they all involve the concept of 'the self'.

So far, the concept of identity can be explained as our perception of 'the self', or our reflection of 'the self', but it is not the same as the 'individual agency' and does not cover the concept of the unconsciousness of 'the self' (discussed in Freud's theories). For the present study, the term 'identity' was preferred to the term 'the self' because:

1) The term 'the self' indicates a certain level of concentration on idiocentrism – that is, the study of 'the self' usually has an individual as a focal point and the aim is often to uncover the self-constitution process at an individualistic level only. The term 'identity', however, connotes a sense of neutrality. Since it covers the idea of the collective identity of a social group, applying the term 'identity' in this research avoided confining the research scope to 'the idiocentric self' and it alone.
2) Since the concept of 'the self' contains the psychological and physiological aspect of an individual, the field of study is broad and can sometimes include psychology (the

psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud, for instance). This study, nevertheless, covered the socio-cultural factor of identity rather than the psychological one.

Therefore, in this study, if culture was defined as the way members of a group behave, identity was understood as to how we thought about ourselves in relation to other people within (or out of) the group and how we imagined them think of ourselves. "Identity can be expressed through culture" (Kidd, 2012, p. 7); and is "deeply embedded in the social-cultural context" (Szabo and Ward, 2015, p. 14). Identity gives us a sense of who we are, a place to stand in this world and reflects the sense of belongings we have within the society we inhabit.

c. Studying identity – a "daunting task of squaring a circle" (Bauman, 2004, p. 10)

The philosophical conception of 'identity' has changed significantly throughout the years. In pre-modern time, identity and its related attributes, such as gender and social status, were perceived as stable and fixed (Giddens, 1991; Lemke, 2008). Modernist theorists, however, have conceptualised 'identity' as self-reflexive and subject to change (Lemke, 2008).

Identity has, since then, been proposed to be socially constructed rather than biologically born with. Changes in the environment can possibly shape identity or evoke individuals to reorganise their sense of identity (Larrain, 2013). It is argued that the individual can reflect on his or her identity and redefine it according to the changing environment (Berger, 1966). Identity, hence, is supposed to be quite multiplex, fluid and plural, yet, identity change is believed to occur in a way that can maintain the "continuity of identity over time" (Elliott, 2013, p. 15). This grants an individual with a privileged sense of coherency, self-reflexivity and self-recognition (Larrain, 2013).

In the time of postmodernism, identity has been considered as a fragile concept and the idea of consistency and continuity of identity has recently been questioned (Elliott, 2013; Larrain, 2013). In fact, from the beginning of modernity, the scepticism about the continuity of identity has already been seeded. For instance, David Hume is one of the first scholars in modern societies who question the idea of 'identity' and its continuity (Larrain, 2013). As he explains:

> *"When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other… I can never catch myself, at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception."* (Hume, 2003, p. 252)

Because what we call identity is now claimed to be only a perception and it is suggested that we can never 'catch' our true self, the continuity of identity is now perceived to be nothing but an imagination.

This school of thought has been supported and developed by many postmodernists, for example, Laclau and Mouffe, who argue that identity is temporal and contingent (Larrain, 2013). Similarly, Hall *et al.* (1992, p. 277) emphasise that an individual in postmodern societies has no permanent and consistent identity. Each individual has many different identities responding to different social relations at different times, all of which may be too contradictory to be unified as a complete and integrated self (Hall *et al.*, 1992).

The term ‘identity’ has now come to mean discontinuous, disconnected and fragmented (Elliott, 2013); and as Kellner (2003, p. 213) expresses, “identity is a myth and illusion… a construct of language and society”. The scholar of the identity study has shifted from the hypothesis that ‘identity’ is an object to the ontology that ‘identity’ is a process of identification (Dervin and Risager, 2014). The highlight has now been on identity markers, how people construct their identities and factors evoking identity shifts (or changes) (Dervin and Risager, 2014).

Cross-cultural transition, such as the case of immigration, is considered as one of the important life-changing events that can evoke identity transformation. When encountering with alterities such as the new way of living or the new value and belief, the individual is believed to be able to self-reflect on his or her own cultural values and practices, which may result in the redefining of identity (Knafo and Schwartz, 2001; Kwak, 2010; Dervin and Risager, 2014). The extent of the identity change varies depending on the context of the migrant. In many cases, cultural identity is suggested to be heavily influenced after the transition.

In this study:

1) Fewer attempts were made to examine what the cultural identities of student sojourners were. The main aim was to gauge the extent of changes in cultural identities of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition and to explore how the students constructed their cultural identities.
2) Cultural identities were studied as an identification process rather than an object, therefore, was examined using a longitudinal research design. As cultural identity is always changing, disconnected and fragmented, its plural form (i.e., “cultural identities”) was also used. In this study, both terms “cultural identities” and “identification” were employed, with the former referred to the object and the latter the process.
3) The philosophical question “What is the student sojourner’s identity?” was replaced with a new set of questions such as “How does the student perceive of himself or

herself?", "How does he or she perceive cultures and identities?" and "How are the student's cultural identities constructed or changed during and after the sojourn?"

4) Social contact of student sojourners and its changing patterns were also this research's focus. Rather than studying the sojourner as an isolated object, qualitative interview was applied as one of the main tools to approach the participants in their daily-life context so as to capture the complexity of cultural identities emerging from the social life of the participants.

2.1.3 Defining cultural identities

a. Cultural identities – a communal layer of identity

In Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (2009), identity is conceptualised to consist of four layers, and cultural identity is regarded to be the largest layer, communal identity (see 1.4.4). Hecht's work has been extensively applied to study IC environment and its influence on the communal identity (Brooks and Pitts, 2015).

During the process of identity development, communication is the key element. Gudykunst *et al.* (1988) explain that identity is formed by communication and negotiation and that humans constantly make choices regarding social contact to secure their identities. Similarly, according to Jung and Hecht (2004, p. 266), "identity is a communicative and performative act" since individuals use communication to express their identities and position themselves in relation to others.

Identity is formerly a research interest in psychology and sociology and has recently captured the attention of scholars of IC (Jung and Hecht, 2004), yet IC scholars seem to concentrate more on studying the communal layer, specifically cultural identity and ethnic identity, rather than other identity layers. Cultural identity is proposed to be influenced by the individual's sense of belonging or emotional affiliation to a cultural or an ethnic group (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005), and the acknowledgement of membership in a cultural group (Sussman, 2000).

b. Cultural identity vs national identity vs ethnic identity

'Cultural identity' is often conceptualised as coterminous with 'national identity' and 'ethnic identity'. The reason for this terminological confusion is due to the confusion between culture, nation and ethnicity.

As mentioned in 2.2.1, culture is commonly thought as being representative of individuals in a country, hence, it is often equated with nation. However, in the study of the perception of people experiencing cross-cultural transition, Holliday (2010, p. 168) claims that national identity is perceived as “an external identity” that can be left behind. As one of the interviewees explained, she perceived national identity as “passport identity” and that her cultural identity still remained with her home culture (Holliday, 2010, p. 170). It is also proposed that while national identity is explicit to the individual, cultural identity is sometimes more latent.

As Sussman (2000) explains, surrounded by a familiar cultural environment, cultural identity is rarely recognised. Only when in contact with other cultures can the individual’s cultural identity be salient (Sussman, 2000). The recent qualitative research by Pho (2018) finds similar results which confirms that cultural identities are often too latent to be realised, as more than half of the participants are confused about their cultural identities. The ones who are certain of their cultural identities conflate them with national identities (Pho, 2018). It is logical to assume that national identities are more rigid whereas cultural identities are more latent, fluid and subject to changes in the environment.

The concept of ‘ethnic identity’, however, is quite coextensive with cultural identity since they both refer to the commonality, such as “a sense of common origin, common beliefs and values, common goals, in brief common cause” of a group of people (Devos, 1972, p. 435). Authors from applied linguistics and IC disciplinary areas usually define an ethnic group as a group of people sharing a common culture (Angouri, 2015).

Social psychologist Tajfel (1981) defines ethnic identity generally similar to cultural identity, which refers to the collective identity that is constituted based on the individual’s knowledge of his or her social-group membership and his or her emotional attachment to that membership. People from the same ethnic group usually share similar cultural patterns that can distinguish them from people of another ethnic group, hence, the two terms ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘cultural identity’ tend to be merged in practice (De George *et al.*, 2006).

The main difference is that ‘ethnic identity’ usually denotes a sense of inferiority of the ethnic group (the minority) to the dominant cultural group (the majority), or the sub-culture-and-mainstream-culture relationship. Some examples are the studies of the culture of ‘black’ people within a ‘white’ society by Du Bois and Edwards (2008) and the study of Black and Latino culture by Pahl and Way (2006).

In the field of IC, 'ethnic identity' is usually a term favoured in the study of acculturating people of various generations, specifically immigrants, and how they acculturate to the mainstream culture in the host country, usually known as their 'new home'. Some of the authors following this research topic are Ting-Toomey *et al.* (2000); Rumbaut Ruben (2001); Yip and Fuligni (2002); Phinney (2003); Phinney and Ong (2007); Khakimova *et al.* (2012).

Although it can be argued that student sojourners are also a minority group of people trying to adapt to the host culture, student sojourners are quite different from other acculturating groups since their overseas stay is relatively shorter and they may not remain permanently in a foreign country. Because of their re-entry to the home culture, the line between the *dominant* cultural group (the host culture) and the *ethnic* group (the home culture) in the case of student sojourners is blurry.

Thus, the present study preferred using the term 'cultural identity' to indicate student sojourners' sense of belonging or emotional attachment to a cultural group and their acknowledgement of in-group membership. Another interesting point is that the term 'cultural identity' embraces the new concept 'interculturality' in the IC field (see 2.2.2), which the other two terms (i.e., 'ethnic identity' and 'national identity') fail to cover.

c. Studying cultural identity without 'othering' and stereotyping

'Cultural identity', similar to its two embedded concepts (culture and identity) is a contested and controversial topic. IC scholars have recently emphasised the need to move away from limited approaches of culturalism and essentialism which usually portray a singular and oversimplified cultural identity of an individual (Holliday, 2006; Holliday, 2010; Dervin, 2012). These approaches have become anachronistic in the present global and complicated world in which people have been constantly challenged with the "crisis of belonging" and the "pluralisation of identity" (Dervin and Risager, 2014). Globalisation has led to the creation of the new fluid and complex mixture of cultures and the re-construction of identity (Bauman, 2004; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2009; Dervin, 2012; Dervin and Risager, 2014).

In addition, the imposition of cultures as the explanation for differences in communication and behaviours has also been criticised because it requires researchers to define cultures and distinguish one particular culture from another (Holliday, 2006; Virkama, 2010). If culture is still an ambiguous concept and cultural categorisation is perceived as oversimplification and overgeneralisation, then, defining one culture, for instance 'Asian culture', seems to be impossible without stereotyping and generalisation. As a result, in the IC field, it is critical to concentrate on studying “interculturality without culture”, and the diversity in cultures without “othering” different cultural groups (Dervin, 2012, p. 187). In particular, many scholars have now questioned the concept of ‘Asian culture’ and ‘Western culture’ and have wondered about the existence of such cultures (Mori, 2003; Higgins, 2007; Bhawuk, 2008; Holliday, 2010; Hua, 2015).

Nonetheless, compared to people from Western nations and other nations in Asia, people coming from countries in East Asia and South-east Asia usually share some commonalities in religious values and traditions, which are strongly influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism (Gudykunst and Kim, 1984). This results in some similarities in cultural beliefs (e.g. the importance of family and gender roles) (Samovar, 2007). However, caution must be taken before any attempt is made to define a set of values, beliefs and attributes as representatives of a cultural group.

In this study, in the beginning, student sojourners were not categorised into Asian or Western cultural groups, and less attempt was made to define ‘Asian’ or ‘Western’ cultures. The research applied an inductive approach in which these concepts would be discussed only once they emerged from the interview and when the students perceived them to be important. The discussion of differences of ‘Asian’ and ‘Western’ cultures in this study, therefore, reflected the perceptions of the students about these ‘cultures’ and ‘cultural differences’, and how the students employed these to construct their own cultural identities.

2.2 Key theories about cross-cultural transition and cultural identities

2.2.1. Traditional approaches: culture shock, the U-curve model and the W-curve model

Most of the research in the 1950s was atheoretical, descriptive and clinically oriented, utilised rigid research designs and inappropriate representative participants (Ward, 2001). These studies, reinforced by other research investigating migrants and mental health, portrayed the sojourn experience as anxious and depressive. Its main outcomes would be mourning, loss, confusion and feeling of incompetence, which were often referred to as aspects of culture shock (Furnham, 2004).

Oberg (1954, p. 1) is the one who first coined the term ‘culture shock’ which he explains as “the anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse”. Many authors have employed this concept of culture shock but referred to it with different terms, ‘cultural fatigue’ of Taft (1957) and ‘transition shock’ of Bennett (1976), for instance. Expanding on this concept, the U-curve model of Lysgaard (1955) is developed and since then has become one of the most frequently cited theories in the field.

Lysgaard (1955) suggests that sojourners might experience four stages of adjustment process (Figure 1):

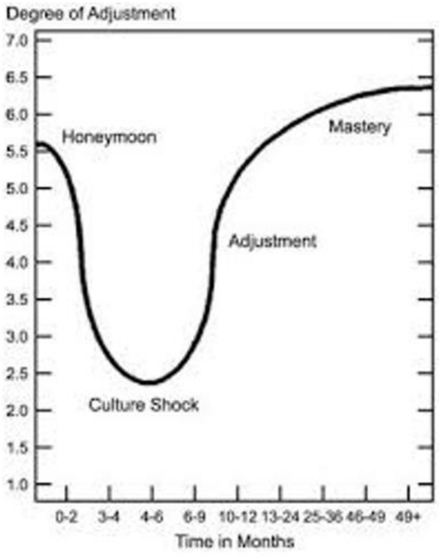


Figure 1: U-curve model, adopted from Lysgaard (1955)

1) **Honeymoon:** individuals feel optimistic and fascinated by the transition.
2) **Culture shock:** individuals experience hostility from the host culture; thus, may retreat to groups of fellow sojourners.
3) **Adjustment:** individuals recover from the shock and learn to adapt to the host culture.
4) **Mastery:** individuals accept and enjoy new customs and rarely experience anxiety.

An extended model of the U-curve model, called the W-curve model, is later presented by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), which includes the re-entry of the sojourner in the home country. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) believe that in addition to the four stages of adjustment to the host culture, sojourners might also experience another reverse four-staged adjustment when returning home (Figure 2).

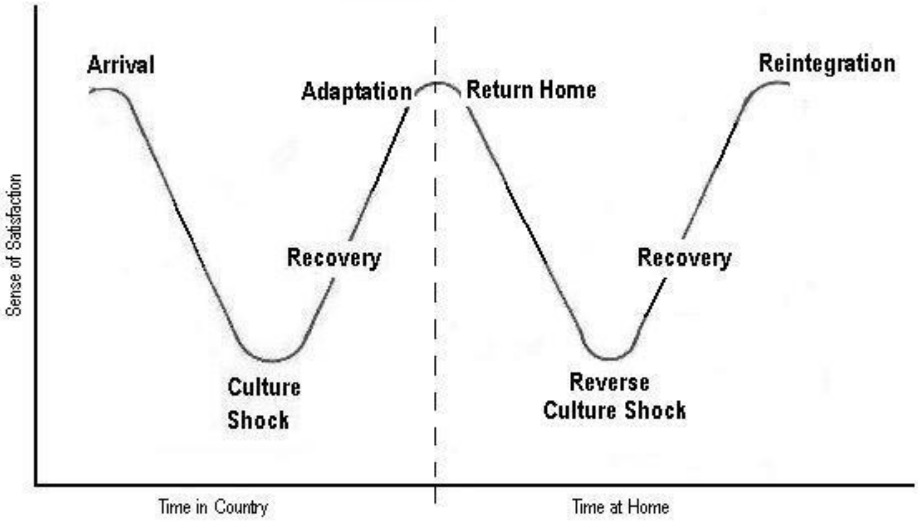

Arrival
Adaptation
Return Home
Reintegration
Recovery
Recovery
Culture Shock
Reverse Culture Shock
Sense of Satisfaction
Time in Country
Time at Home

Figure 2: W-curve model, adopted from Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963)

Despite their popularity, these two models have received little support from empirical research. Not all sojourn experience starts with a 'honeymoon' period and succeeds in reaching 'mastery' at the end of the sojourn (Klineberg and Hull, 1979). The research about the variation of depression and social adjustment over time of Japanese students studying in New Zealand of Ward *et al.* (1998, p. 286) shows no evidence of "euphoric honeymoon stage of entry". Instead, the 'arrival' stage of the participants is characterised by psychological stress. There is also no support in terms of improvement in adjustment over the first six months (Ward *et al.*, 1998). These results are strongly supported by previous research of cross-cultural transition and adaptation (see Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Kealey, 1989; Nash, 1991). More recent longitudinal research conducted by Demes and Geeraert (2015) shows even more complicated changing patterns of this psychological distress during the sojourn. Based on the quantitative data collected from nearly 2,500 international students staying in 50 countries around the world, Demes and Geeraert (2015) conceptualise five 'curves' of changing patterns of stress (see Figure 3).

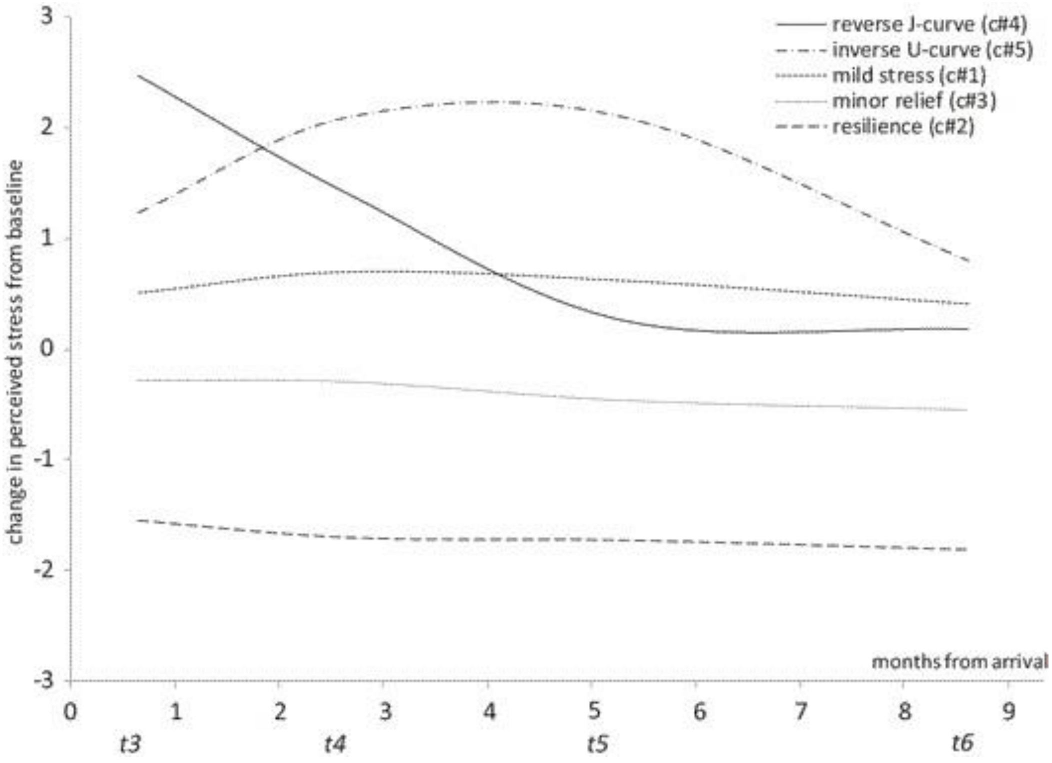


Figure 3: Five curves of patterns of perceived stress, adopted from Demes and Geeraert (2015)

Another theoretical problem with the concept of 'culture shock' is that it often blames the failure of adaptation on the individual inability and personality weakness; hence, required sojourners to seek counselling and appropriate clinical therapies (Ward, 2001). However, the contemporary IC research has approached the intercultural experience as a transformative and developmental process necessary to individual growth (Anderson, 1994). Some examples are the study of the development of intercultural competence (Lustig and Koester, 2003) and the theory of intercultural personhood after cultural interchange (Kim, 2008). Moreover, many scholars have suggested that the culture does not cause much shock and fatigue, but it is more likely the 'change' of the environment and the adjustment process that creates anxiety, shock and fatigue (Ward, 2001).

2.2.2 Contemporary approaches and their relevance to the study of cultural identities

The new research perspective has laid the foundation for the contemporary study of cross-cultural transition and resulted in two guiding theoretical approaches: 1) *cultural learning approach* and 2) *stress and coping* (Ward, 2001).

Furnham and Bochner have been the two dominant advocates of the *cultural learning approach*. They explain that cultural problems, which the individual experiences when transitioning to a new country, come from the challenges in dealing with daily social activities

(Ward, 2001). Thus, to adjust to the new culture in the host country, learning specific cultural skills to deal with these social encounters is highly required (Ward, 2001). In many studies, the *cultural learning approach* is often employed to conceptualise socio-cultural adjustment of the sojourner (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994).

On the other hand, the *stress-and-coping approach* implies that cross-cultural transition is “a series of stress-provoking life changes”, which demands coping strategies (Ward, 2001, p. 73). It is suggested that psychological adjustment and adaptation are closely related to and can be explained by the stress-and-coping framework (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Berry, 2005). This analytical framework also incorporates both individual factors such as personality (Ward and Chang, 1997) and coping styles (Ward and Kennedy, 2001); and situational factors such as social support (Hayes and Lin, 1994).

However, individually none of these two approaches can fully and satisfactorily describe the adjustment process. The cultural learning approach mainly focuses on the *behavioural* learning process of individuals which is skewed to the sociocultural domain whereas the stress-and-coping approach seems to favour psychological and *affective* factors. Each of these approaches holds a piece to solve the puzzle of cross-cultural transition.

The third approach complementing these two is based on the *social identity theory*. It focuses on the *cognitive* aspect of adjustment, which, in this case, is the perception of individuals of themselves and their in-group and out-group relationships (Ward, 2001). Therefore, this approach is closely related to the study of cultural identities. Since cross-cultural transition is considered as a life-changing event, the experience of the transition exerts a significant influence on identities of sojourners. The real concern in the field is to examine to what extent cross-cultural transition can influence the identity of the individual. It is argued that the identity layer that is most influenced by this transition is cultural identity. The next section will detail some theories in the field that explain the influence of adjustment and adaptation on cultural identity.

a. Integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation (ITCCA): intercultural identity as a measure of successful adaptation

This theory is developed by Kim (2001), based on the communication discipline and employing two approaches (i.e., the stress-coping framework and the social identity theory), to study the transformative impact that the adjustment process has on sojourners. It has been applied in many studies about the intercultural experience of the sojourner (c.f. Pitts (2009) and McKay-Semmler and Kim (2014).

According to Kim (2001), living in the host culture, the individual's internal order is constantly disrupted by the messages received from the new environment (i.e., the host culture), which leads to disequilibrium (or internal stress). Disequilibrium (or internal stress), in this case, triggers people to adapt to the new environment to maintain their inner balance (Kim, 2015).

Communication is then used as an adaptive response to relieve stress and maintain the balance. Through communication, individuals can explore the new culture, adjust behaviours and manage expectations (Pitts, 2016). Individuals will gradually adapt to the new culture as this process is repeated over time. After this successful long-term management of stress-adaptation, comes the psychological state called 'growth' where individuals have successfully learned new ways of managing social and cultural problems (Kim, 2015).

This stress-adaptation-growth dynamic has a spiral shape whose circular motion gets smaller by time, which indicates that drastic changes often occur in the initial stage of cross-cultural transition, but after a prolonged period, individuals become familiar with and adapt to the new culture; thus, the fluctuation lessens (Kim, 2015) (Figure 4).

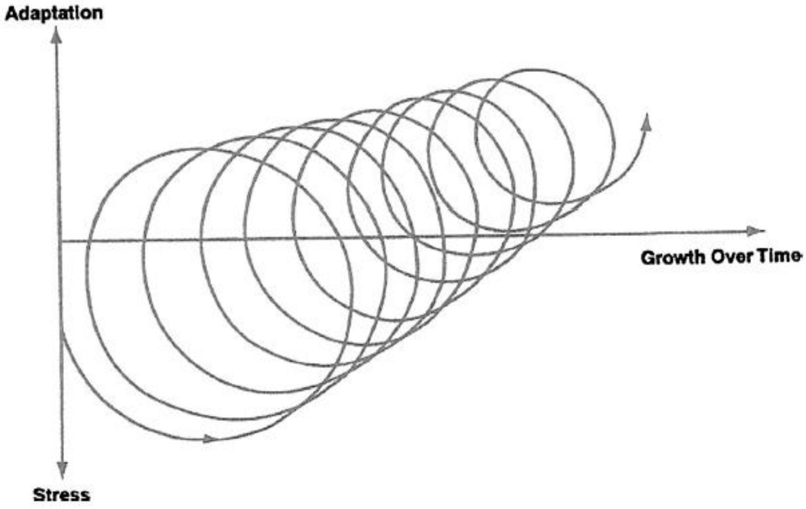


Figure 4: Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, adopted from Kim (2001)

Kim (2008) suggests three interrelated and direct adaptation outcomes that can be observed after the transition:

1) ***Functional fitness:*** After an intensive process of learning some of the host culture's values and unlearning some of the home culture's ones, the individual will deviate from accepted patterns of his or her home culture and obtain new patterns from the host culture. This will increase the congruence and compatibility between the individual's internal condition and

the host culture's condition. Kim refers to this compromise between an individual and the environment as 'functional fitness'.

2) ***Psychological health:*** The increased 'functional fitness' will reduce internal stress and, at the same time, increase communicative competence and psychological health. This concept is similar to the concept of the psychological domain of adaptation discussed in 1.4.3.
3) ***Intercultural identity:*** During this process, the 'native' cultural identity becomes less distinctive and rigid while a newly expanded and more flexible identity starts to flourish (Kim, 2008). This experience of stress-adaptation-growth develops a new sense of intercultural identity, which Kim (2008, p. 364) refers to as "an adaptive, transformative and meta-contextual self-other orientation". Individuals having intercultural identity usually see themselves not as members of a particular group, but as part of the larger whole consisting of many other groups (i.e., "citizen of the globe"). Similar concepts are "meta-identity", "transcultural identity" and "cosmopolitan identity" (Kim, 2008, p. 364).

ITCCA is a popularly cited theory in IC, which was originally created to study the experience of immigrants, and since then, has been widely used to examine the case of sojourners. It effectively consolidates and integrates theories from many fields (e.g., communication and cross-cultural adaptation).

However, the main criticism with the theory is its assumption of the unilateral impact of the cultural adjustment on the acculturating group and a single adaptation outcome of the identity shift (i.e., intercultural identity). Intercultural identity is perceived in the theory as the measurement of a 'successful' adaptation outcome (while the other two are increased functional fitness and improved psychological health), based on which other changes in cultural identity can be implied as failure cases of the cross-cultural adaptation. Kim's theory is in danger of elevating the position of the host culture when referring to immigrants as "strangers"; hence, implies their needs of internalising and accepting the host culture for the successful adaptation (Weinreich, 2009).

Recent research on adjustment of foreign women married into Taiwanese families shows that nearly half of the interviewed women insisted that they identified with their home cultures, only a quarter identified as having 'mixed' cultural identities, and the rest perceived themselves as Taiwanese (Sandel and Liang, 2010). Interviewees often expressed uncomfortable feelings towards members of the host culture (i.e., Taiwan): "there is a small feeling that they [the Taiwanese] excluding us" (Sandel and Liang, 2010, p. 265). However, for the ones claiming to feel identified with both cultures, none expressed the sense of "intercultural identity" discussed in Kim's theory. Many other studies also reveal similar results (c.f. Kramer, 2000; Croucher and Cronn-Mills, 2011; Croucher, 2013).

Thus, in his study, Kramer (2000) prefers using the term “cultural fusion” to describe these “mixed” senses of belonging rather than “intercultural identity”. According to Kramer (2000, pp. 220-221), there is a non-linear path in the cultural adjustment. In fact, this image of “a path” should be discarded since the process of adjustment is “a continual experiment” which has no end, and the direction is unpredictable and non-singular.

Despite some weaknesses, due to the rich descriptiveness and its detailed explanation of the cross-cultural adjustment and the process of cultural identity change, ICCTA is frequently used as the underpinning theory for many qualitative studies of immigrants and sojourners, (c.f. Pitts, 2009; Sandel and Liang, 2010; Croucher and Cronn-Mills, 2011; Croucher, 2013; McKay-Semmler and Kim, 2014; Pitts, 2016). For this research, ICCTA was employed as the main theoretical foundation for the qualitative strand.

b. Social identity theory

Social identity theory of Tajfel (1981) emphasises the salience of one’s original cultural identity; and at the same time, the emergence of a new communal identity, called outgroup membership, when individuals interact with another culture (Sussman, 2000). In particular, cultural identity is rarely recognised due to the familiarity of the home culture to the individual (Sussman, 2000). Once the individual interacts with another culture, the divergence between the home culture and the new cultural context heightens the impact of their home culture on their identities.

At the same time, out-group membership is formed when the individual develops a new sense of identity emphasising their ‘non-belongingness’ in the new culture (for example, foreign students in the host culture). These juxtaposed senses of identities, in return, may strengthen the original cultural identity (Sussman, 2000). Many studies have confirmed the affirmation of expatriates with the home culture rather than the host culture (Kosmitzki, 1996), and increased awareness of cultural identities of employees working in a multinational corporation compared to the ones from a mono-cultural organization (Stryker and Serpe, 1982).

However, this theory applies mainly for the temporary contact, but there seems to be a lack of evidence in empirical studies showing its applicability to the sustained contact, such as the case of the sojourner who usually stays in the host country for a long period of time. What will happen to the cultural identity of the sojourner after the short time of the first contact with the host culture? Will it be changed in a way that supports identification with the host culture or will it remain the same?

c. Acculturation model

There are three important concepts in the Acculturation Model of Berry (2005): 1) acculturation and acculturative stress, 2) acculturating strategies and 3) the role of the dominant group. Note that in his model, “the dominant group/ culture” and “the heritage culture” are used to refer to “the host national people/ the host culture” and “the home culture” respectively.

According to Berry (2005), *acculturation* is a cultural and psychological process where individuals are exposed to different cultures for a prolonged period of time, which leads to a shift in their attitudes, behaviours and cultural identities. Because of the increase in intercultural interaction, acculturation is usually accompanied by acculturative stress (Berry *et al.*, 1987), which is caused during adjustment to a new culture and can be observed by the deterioration in the individual’s psychological, somatic and social balance (Berry and Annis, 1974; Berry *et al.*, 1987). Usually, sojourners can experience different levels of stress, from a mild one to debilitating stress which increases over time (Berry *et al.*, 1987).

In the research about the level of acculturative stress of acculturating people, Berry and Kim (1988) reveal that the highest levels are often detected among refugees; and student sojourners, who were formerly expected to experience the least amount of stress, have surprisingly high levels of stress nearly approaching those of the refugees.

In terms of acculturating strategies, Berry (2005) has identified four types of strategies among acculturating groups: 1) *assimilation* means accepting the dominant culture and rejecting the heritage culture, 2) *integration* refers to the acceptance of both cultures, 3) *separation* is when acculturating people maintain the heritage culture and refuse the dominant culture and 4) *marginalisation* occurs when none of the cultures is preferred (Figure 5).

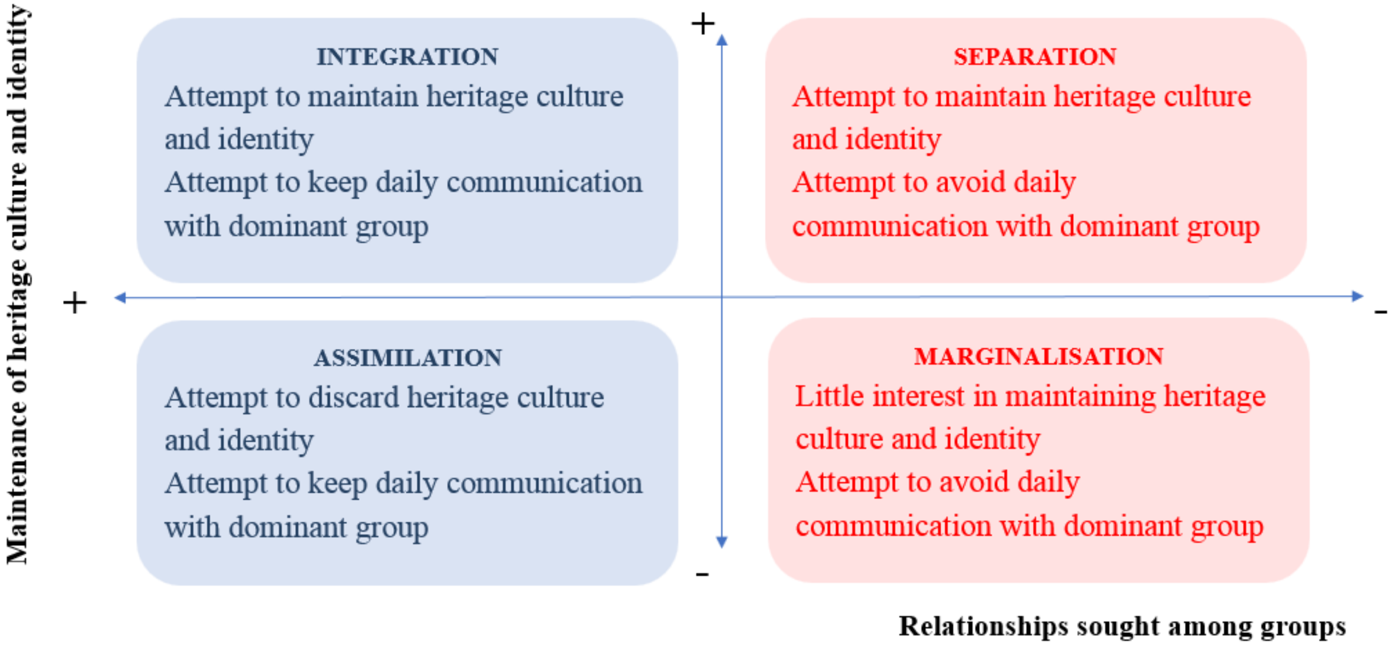

Maintenance of heritage culture and identity
+
+
-
-
INTEGRATION
Attempt to maintain heritage culture and identity
Attempt to keep daily communication with dominant group
SEPARATION
Attempt to maintain heritage culture and identity
Attempt to avoid daily communication with dominant group
ASSIMILATION
Attempt to discard heritage culture and identity
Attempt to keep daily communication with dominant group
MARGINALISATION
Little interest in maintaining heritage culture and identity
Attempt to avoid daily communication with dominant group
Relationships sought among groups

Figure 5: Acculturation strategies

Among the four strategies, integration and assimilation strategies are considered by Berry (2005) to be most beneficial to the process of acculturation. Previous research also confirmed that sojourners applying integration and assimilation strategies are less likely to struggle with psychological and socio-cultural adjustment (c.f. Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999b); whereas individuals using separation and marginalisation strategies seem to experience a higher level of acculturative stress, resulting in a decrease in psychological health (Berry and Sam, 1997).

The theory of acculturation also emphasises the third important issue which is usually neglected in the cross-cultural transition study: *the role of the dominant culture*, specifically, their orientations towards cultural diversity (or cultural pluralism) of its society (Berry, 2005). For example, if the dominant culture is positive towards cultural diversity, its policies will positively influence the acculturating strategy of the acculturating group, encouraging them to integrate or assimilate to the dominant culture.

Berry's theory, however, was developed and applied to the acculturating group with a permanent stay in the host culture (e.g., immigrants) (Sussman, 2000; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011); hence, may not be pertinent to the sojourner' cross-cultural experience. Since the sojourn is temporary, pressure for the 'full' acculturation of the sojourner is not as intense as this of the permanent acculturating group (e.g., immigrants).

Many researchers in cross-cultural transition still argue the possibility of the existence of the marginalisation strategy where individuals wish to attach to none of the cultures. Particularly, because the two concepts 'culture' and 'identity' are closely associated and that cultural identity is conceptualised as a layer of the individual's identity, attaching one's sense of belonging to none of the cultural groups may possibly impact the development and construction of the individual's identity (Weinreich, 2009). Weinreich (2009, p. 125) also suggests that in the globalised world where the distinction between cultural groups is often blurry, the depiction of acculturation as the strategy of "the wholesale acceptance or refusal" of the dominant or heritage culture is over-simplistic.

Berry (2005)'s model, however, makes significant contributions to the study of IC since it forms the foundation for researchers of cross-cultural transition, and proposes the idea that assimilation is not the only possible acculturating strategy. Berry has provided IC scholars with a theoretical model with high predictability, which can still maintain the diversity of the intercultural experience.

Furthermore, the theory implies the existence of multiple cultural identities within one individual (e.g., identification with both the dominant culture and the heritage culture), which does not accord with Kim (2008)'s indication of the existence of a singular completed cultural identity in one individual (specifically, she theorises that one's original cultural identity will be replaced by a new intercultural identity after the transition) (Leong and Ward, 2000). In particular, Berry (2005) indicates that these two dimensions of cultural identities (i.e., identification with the home and the host culture) can exist independently and harmoniously, rather than conflictingly, within an individual (Leong and Ward, 2000).

In general, Berry's acculturation model, with its predictability and connotation of the existence of two dimensions of cultural identities provided a good framework for the quantitative strand of this research since it offers an effective scale to measure the level of identification with the dominant culture and the heritage culture (or the home and the host culture in the case of the student sojourner). Hence, it can examine the identification process and gauge the changes in these two dimensions of cultural identities. One of the most frequently cited measurement scales based on this model is The Acculturation Index (Ward and Kennedy, 1994) (see 3.4.1). Note that in their study, Ward and Kennedy (1994) use the term "co-national identification" and "host national identification" to refer to "home cultural identification" and "host cultural identification".

d. Cultural identity as a predictive variable of positive adaptation outcomes

Berry's model is usually applied as the guiding literature for quantitative research to investigate adjustment of immigrants and sojourners, the influence of the home and the host culture on adaptation and adjustment, and cultural identities of acculturating groups (see Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Kennedy, 1999; Leong and Ward, 2000; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Lin, 2008; Ward, 2008; and Desa *et al.*, 2012).

Identification with the home culture and with the host culture has been identified as two dimensions of cultural identities that can influence adaptation outcomes. In particular, many research studies have emphasised that the former is positively related to the psychological well-being of immigrants; while the latter is strongly associated with sociocultural adaptation outcomes (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000).

In their research of sojourners in New Zealand, Ward and Kennedy (1994) find that sojourners with strong home cultural identification usually experience less depression, whereas those with strong host cultural identification experience fewer difficulties in socio-cultural adaptation since host cultural identification facilitates the social competence of the sojourner in the host culture. Similarly, the research by Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000) also shows that strong identification with the home culture can reduce the feeling of loneliness and decrement in the mood disturbance of immigrants, resulting in greater psychological satisfaction in life. However, their research finds no evidence for the relationship between identification with the host culture and psychological adaptation.

In general, most of these studies often concentrate on testing relationships between the changes in two dimensions of cultural identities and psychological and socio-cultural adaptation domains, yet there is little evidence of the relationship between cultural identities and the academic domain. Hence, this present research applied the Acculturation Model (Berry, 2005) as the theoretical foundation for the quantitative strand to investigate the identification process and to measure changes in cultural identities (specifically identification with the home culture and the host culture) and their relationships with adaptation outcomes in three domains (psychological, socio-cultural and academic).

e. Cultural identity shifts after adjustment and adaptation

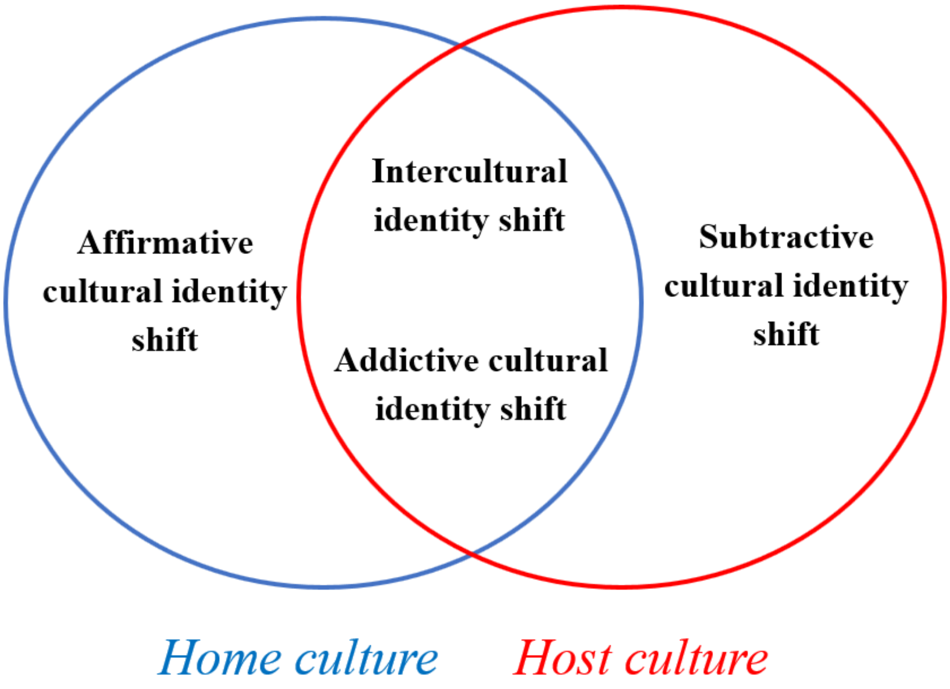
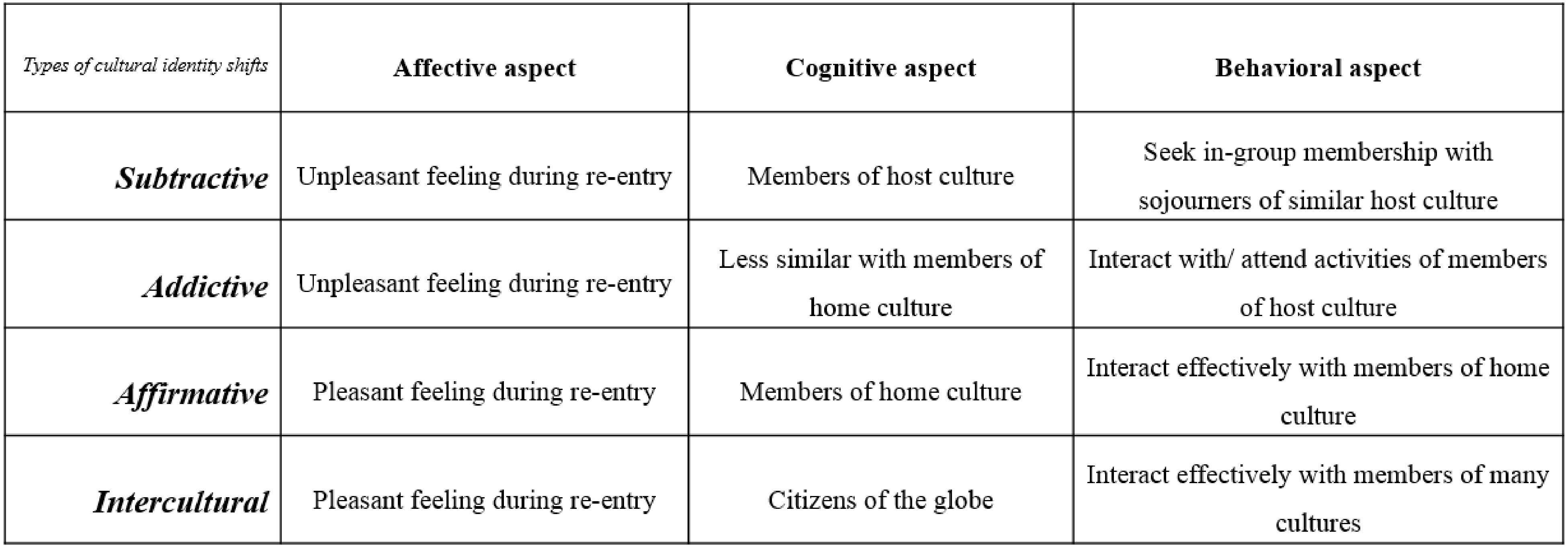

Affirmative cultural identity shift
Intercultural identity shift
Addictive cultural identity shift
Subtractive cultural identity shift
Home culture
Host culture

Figure 6: Cultural identity shifts after cross-cultural transition, adapted from the work by Sussman (2000)

Expanding on the concept of acculturation, Sussman (2000) develops the model of adjustment and identity shifts in which she identifies four types of identity shifts for sojourners after cross-cultural transition (see Figure 6).

Sojourners having the first two types of identity shifts, *subtractive and addictive*, experience negative feelings when returning to their home cultures and perceive themselves as less similar in cultural values with people from their home cultures. However, during the sojourn, they usually score high on sociocultural adaptation. The main difference between the two types is their behavioural consequence. Sojourners with *subtractive cultural identity shifts* may seek in-group membership with other sojourners returning from a similar host culture, whereas individuals with *addictive cultural identity shifts* have less ‘extreme’ behaviours. For instance, they may seek interactions or join in social activities with members from the host culture.

On the other hand, sojourners with *affirmative and intercultural* identity shifts welcome the repatriation with positive feelings. However, while sojourners with *affirmative identity shifts* perceive themselves as members of their home cultures; thus, have a difficult time adapting to the host culture, the ones with *intercultural identity shifts* refer to themselves as "citizens of the globe" and can interact effectively with many cultures (Figure 7).



Types of cultural identity shifts	**Affective aspect**	**Cognitive aspect**	**Behavioral aspect**
Subtractive	Unpleasant feeling during re-entry	Members of host culture	Seek in-group membership with sojourners of similar host culture
Addictive	Unpleasant feeling during re-entry	Less similar with members of home culture	Interact with/ attend activities of members of host culture
Affirmative	Pleasant feeling during re-entry	Members of home culture	Interact effectively with members of home culture
Intercultural	Pleasant feeling during re-entry	Citizens of the globe	Interact effectively with members of many cultures

Figure 7: Comparisons between different types of cultural identity shifts

Sussman (2000) contributes to the study of cross-cultural transition by adding the phase of repatriation. As explained earlier, cultural identity differs from other layers of identity in terms of its hidden existence. ‘Submerged’ in the familiar home culture, individuals are less likely to recognise their cultural identities (Sussman, 2000). Only when in contact with different cultures, their cultural identities may emerge.

Similarly, any changes in cultural identities during the sojourn may be too latent to be aware of, especially when individuals have adapted to the host culture. These changes (if any) may be more prominent when they experience a transition in the environment, such as returning to home countries. Therefore, Sussman (2000) insists on the inclusion of the repatriation as a part of cross-cultural transition to fully examine changes in cultural identities of sojourners. However, her cross-sectional research is designed to measure the cultural identity shifts at the re-entry only, which is a relatively small ‘piece’ in the picture of the sojourn experience; hence, cannot portray the whole changing patterns of identity shifts during cross-cultural transition.

In brief, building on Sussman’s study, the present research applied a longitudinal research design to study the cross-cultural transition experience of student sojourners, including the repatriation as an extended part of cross-cultural transition, since this allowed for a clear observation of changes (if any) in cultural identities. Sussman’s study and her research instruments were also used as the main guidance to design the interview during the re-entry.

2.3 Key theories about social contact, adaptation and cultural identity

IC scholars traditionally identify two sources of social contact of sojourners, which are 1) *co-national* (referring to the social engagement of the sojourner with the people from the same national background); and 2) *host national* (indicating the engagement with people from the host culture) (Bochner *et al.*, 1977). Recently, due to increased international mobility, another source of contact of sojourners has been added, 3) contact with *non-co-national internationals*, which means the socialisation of the sojourner with people from different nations (Young *et al.*, 2013; Schartner, 2015; Pho and Schartner, 2019).

Generally, two factors of social contact are often measured and tested in the study of student sojourners: quality and quantity. Some researchers measure the quality of the contact by the satisfaction of the sojourner with the contact or the pleasantness of the experience (c.f. Leong and Ward, 2000; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Leong, 2015), while some measure it by the strength and the function of the relationship (c.f. Pitts, 2009; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011; Schartner, 2014).

In addition, the quantity is defined as the degree of contact (c.f. Leong and Ward, 2000; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Leong, 2008; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011; Leong, 2015); or the frequency of contact, measured by the time spent with peers during a certain period (see Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Nesdale and Mak, 2000; Pitts, 2009; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011; Pitts, 2016).

Many of the studies of social contact in the sojourn measure the quantity of social ties but very few consider the contact's quality (see Arends-Toth and van de Vijver, 2006; Kashima and Loh, 2006; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011).

Previous research has shown that the quality of contact has a strong relationship with psychological adjustment and adaptation (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Searle, 1991). As Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000) explain, satisfaction with relationships with co-nationals and local people has a strong association with decrement in mood disturbance, whereas the amount of contact with either host national or co-nationals is not a significant predictor of positive psychological adaptation. Kashima and Loh (2006) emphasise the importance of the contact's quality in moderating adaptation outcomes and advise further research to examine both the quantity and quality of social contact.

As a result, this study measured both factors of social contact. The contact's quality was investigated based on the sojourner's satisfaction (i.e., the pleasantness) of the contact and the contact's strength (i.e., the closeness of the relationship); and the quantity of social contact was studied by the number and the frequency of the contact (see 3.4.2).

2.3.1 Social contact and its influence on psychological and socio-cultural adaptation

Sojourners may temporarily lose their familiar social networks and social support systems at home countries (Hayes and Lin, 1994), hence, may feel a lack of social connectedness (Ward and Kennedy, 2001) and are motivated to form new social ties in the new cultural environment (Ong and Ward, 2005). These new social networks are suggested to have positive influences on adjustment of student sojourners, such as reducing stress, increasing social skills and improving study performances (Searle and Ward, 1990; Monalco, 2002; Russell *et al.*, 2010). There are, nonetheless, many arguments in terms of the significance of the source of social contact (i.e., co-nationals, host nationals and non-co-national internationals) on adaptation outcomes. The most useful and efficient source remains a controversial topic.

a. Co-national contact

Some studies suggest that a co-national network can provide immigrants and sojourners with a network of social support (Sykes and Eden, 1985; Ying and Liese, 1991). Co-nationals are claimed to be "emotional support" or stress buffer and can increase life satisfaction of sojourners (Bochner *et al.*, 1977; Ye, 2006b; Woolf, 2007; Rui and Wang, 2015). For instance, Berry *et al.* (1987) find that Korean immigrants who maintain good relationships with their Korean friends often report a lower level of acculturative stress when relocating to Canada. A study on adaptation of Singaporean and Chinese students in New Zealand also shows a positive correlation between the satisfaction of relationships with co-nationals and psychological adaptation; yet no relationship is found between the satisfaction of relationships with local people and the decrease in stress (Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

Other scholars suggest short-term benefits yet long-term hindrances of the co-national network on adaptation. Particularly, Kim (2001) believes that forming social contact with co-nationals may lead to short-term satisfaction in psychological well-being, yet, might result in negative long-term consequences on socio-cultural adaptation.

Expanding on that, Fontaine (1986) highlights that friendships with host nationals may be problematic at first, but can be more rewarding and facilitative to adjustment over time. Similarly, in their research on the influence of social contact on adaptation, Rui and Wang (2015) discover that co-national contact can reduce stress for international students, nevertheless, a large number of interactions with co-nationals hinder communication opportunities with host nationals, which in turn increase uncertainty when they later interact with the host nationals.

However, incongruent with previous research, in their recent research about American student sojourners, Pedersen *et al.* (2011) report a near zero correlation between the quantity of social contact with co-nationals and host nationals, which indicates that spending time with other American students may not intervene with the strengthening of relationships with host nationals in the host culture. However, the research result confirms that a large amount of time spent with co-nationals is significantly correlated with negative psychological well-being (e.g., homesickness and feeling out-of-place) (Pedersen *et al.*, 2011).

b. Host national contact

The relationship between host national contact and positive psychological adaptation is, in fact, still ambiguous. Some studies confirm the positive link between the two variables (Berry *et al.*, 1987); while some emphasise the relationship between the extensive contact with host nationals and the increase in psychological distress (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

However, other research produces evidence of the significance of both sources of contact (i.e., co-nationals and host nationals) on psychological adaptation of student sojourners. In particular, Furnham and Alibhai (1985) and Furnham (2004) reveal that foreign students often perceive both sources of contacts as social support to reduce the feeling of loneliness and isolation, which are often reported in many studies as two of the strong predictors of poor psychological adaptation (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Searle, 1991).

Social contact with host nationals, in general, is suggested to have more positive influences on socio-cultural adaptation than co-national contact (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999b; Poyrazli, 2004) and to be positively correlated with life satisfaction (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011).

As Searle and Ward (1990) explain, contact with host nationals grants sojourners a chance to learn socio-cultural skills and provides them with social support in adjustment. According to Monalco (2002), individuals who have socialised with host nationals often report higher immersion to the host culture and higher satisfaction with the overseas cultural experience. In general, host contact is associated mainly with instrumental support (Wright and Schartner, 2013; Schartner, 2014; Pho and Schartner, 2019).

Other recent studies, however, reveal that negative experiences with host nationals, such as the sense of alienation, stereotypes and perceived discrimination, can force sojourners to retreat to their groups of co-nationals; therefore reduce their motivations to adapt to the host culture (Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, 2002; Halic *et al.*, 2009; Russell *et al.*, 2010; Brown and Brown, 2013). For instance, a recent qualitative USA-based study reveals that Asian students often avoid using social support from the host culture (i.e., the USA) because they evaluate that there is a lack of cultural sensitivity from host nationals, thus, rather opt for co-nationals for support (Yoon and Jepsen, 2008).

c. Non-co-national international contact

Due to the increase in 'internationalisation' in HE, student sojourners have more opportunity interacting with international students coming from other nations. Although the influence of non-co-national international contact on cross-cultural adaptation has recently become a burgeoning research interest (Wright and Schartner, 2013; Schartner, 2014; Young and Schartner, 2014; Schartner, 2015; Pho and Schartner, 2019); the study of non-co-national international contact and its function in cross-cultural transition is still underdeveloped (Marginson *et al.*, 2010).

International contact, in general, has a positive influence on psychological adaptation. For instance, a study by Kashima and Loh (2006) shows that student sojourners who build friendships with a large number of this said group also have better psychological adjustment and adaptation. Friendships with international students are perceived as functional and useful, which can provide the sojourners with academic support (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009). Due to the "shared foreignness", shared experience and openness to learn from different cultures, internationals can also provide emotional support for student sojourners and serve as a compensation for the loss of "familiar social support" (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011; Schartner, 2015, p. 235). Yet, no relationship was found between international social contact and sociocultural adaptation.

Interestingly, international contact is often reported as being found and formed mainly within the academic environment (e.g., classroom setting). In particular, in their longitudinal mixed-methods study of the experience of student sojourners in British HE, Schweisfurth and Gu (2009, p. 466) highlight that student sojourners praise the "multicultural nature of the British society", but insist that this context is usually constrained within the scope of the campus life. The campus-based environment accidentally constitutes "a bubble" which potentially limits social contact of student sojourners and isolates them from the 'wider' British society (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009, p. 466).

Likewise, in an Australian-based study, Kudo and Simkin (2003) emphasise the importance of accommodation arrangement in the development of international relationships among Japanese students. University accommodation can provide students with maximum opportunities but minimum efforts in instigating and maintaining international contact (Kudo and Simkin, 2003). Yet, this placement may hinder the chance of communication with host nationals (Harrison and Peacock, 2009).

d. Online social contact

It was formerly believed that moving abroad meant having to give up familiar social networks in home countries (e.g., friends and families), thus, magnified the need to form new social contact in the host country (Hayes and Lin, 1994; Ward, 2001). Consequently, when examining co-national contact, previous research has often regarded it as 'real' face-to-face contact with co-nationals currently located in the same host country as the sojourner (see Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward *et al.*, 1998).

However, due to advanced communication technologies, sojourners now can still maintain their 'former' contact in home countries. For instance, in recent longitudinal qualitative research from 2005 to 2012 on American student sojourners in France, Pitts (2016) reports that there is a significant increase in the use of new media and communication technologies (e.g., social networking sites such as Facebook and online communication applications such as Skype) among the studied sojourners within the research period. Interestingly, during the sojourn in the host country, new media are applied to maintain contact with co-nationals (e.g., families and friends in America), yet, during the repatriation, online media are used to communicate with internationals and host nationals whom the sojourners met in France (Pitts, 2016). Although the contact mainly serves as emotional support to the sojourners, during the sojourn, online social contact with co-nationals can 'pull' sojourners to the home culture; however, Pitts (2016) encourages further research to be done to fully understand the role of the new media in the sojourner's adaptation.

With the rising diffusion of online media, people now often opt for the new media as the main communication channel, which are specifically useful for student sojourners lacking face-to-face social support (Chen and Choi, 2011). Consequently, online media, particularly social networking sites, have turned into effective tools for student sojourners in search of social aid in order to deal with adaptation difficulties (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Previous research also confirms the supportive role of online social contact to reduce acculturative stress and improve psychological adaptation of student sojourners (Ye, 2006a; Wang *et al.*, 2016). Ye (2006b) also finds a negative correlation between online social support and 'real-life' social difficulties.

Since online media are not constrained by time and region, the source of contact found online is not limited to co-nationals but can include host nationals and even internationals. In particular, Wang *et al.* (2016) find that participating in online forums of people originating from diverse cultural groups yet sharing the same interests can help student sojourners to solve daily-life problems and provide them with a sense of belonging.

2.3.2 Social contact within the academic environment and its influence on academic adaptation

Academic adaptation is important to the study of international students since it distinguishes this unique group of sojourners from others. Nonetheless, compared to psychological adaptation and socio-cultural adaptation, the relationship between social contact and academic adaptation is under-explored (Morrison *et al.*, 2005). The majority of research on student sojourners has been focused on exploring the academic adjustment process of student sojourners (Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Kennedy, 1999; Ward and Kennedy, 2001; Oguri and Gudykunst, 2002; Ward and Masgoret, 2004; Li and Gasser, 2005; Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006), whereas there is remarkably little evidence of published papers on academic outcomes (e.g., pass and failure rates, GPA and the class of the achieved degree) (Morrison *et al.*, 2005)

Among the three sources of contact, co-nationals are suggested as essential sources for student sojourners to support adaptation to the new academic environment. Glass (2012) has conducted quantitative research on the academic experience of international students in the USA and finds that student sojourners who often interact with their compatriots are more likely to report more positive perceptions about the American academic environment. Other researchers also report that family support positively increases study success (Wilcox *et al.*, 2005); and that a sufficient number of friends from the said group improves academic performances (Severiens and Wolff, 2008; Russell *et al.*, 2010).

However, previous research reports the significance of international contact in improving academic adaptation. It is echoed in many UK-based studies on postgraduate student sojourners that the quantity of international contact is positively linked with good academic outcomes (Li *et al.*, 2010; Young *et al.*, 2013). Recently, a study by Pho and Schartner (2019) shows that both the quantity and the quality of international contact influence positively on academic adaptation, specifically overall taught scores (i.e., GPA) of student sojourners, while there is a negative correlation between the quantity of co-national contact and their GPAs. Neither the quality nor the quantity of host national contact correlates significantly with the GPAs of the students. This suggests that host national contact is not always a panacea for acquiring academic success (Young *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, more research is needed to examine this complicated relationship between social contact and academic adaptation outcomes of student sojourners.

2.3.3 Social grouping within the university environment

As Rienties and Nolan (2014) observe in their research, social grouping within the university is a prominent issue for students coming from a country with a large cultural distance compared to the host country. According to a study by Rienties *et al.* (2013), at the start of a bachelor programme in the UK, students from Confucian Asian countries (e.g., East Asia and Southeast Asia) usually interact more often with people from their in-group networks and maintain this frequency of interactions until the end of the programme.

Recent research on the influence of regions of origins on intercultural friendships also finds a significantly higher amount of contact with co-nationals from student sojourners originating from East, Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, compared to their peers from Europe (Glass *et al.*, 2014). Importantly, East, South-east and Southern Asian students report significantly less contact with host nationals than European students (Glass *et al.*, 2014). Previous research, for instance, Trice and Elliott (1993)'s, also shows that Japanese undergraduates in the USA often spend over 88% of their time in the university and 82% of their time outside with Japanese peers.

There are many factors contributing to this social grouping in the university environment. First, it is often documented in the literature that since both student sojourners and 'local' students usually assume multicultural group work to negatively influence their academic performances (De Vita, 2002; Harrison and Peacock, 2009; Harrison and Peacock, 2010), they often prefer working with people from similar cultural backgrounds on academic group projects and in-class activities (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Rienties *et al.*, 2012; Volet and Ang, 2012).

For instance, a large-scale qualitative study, using both focus groups and interviews, by Harrison and Peacock (2010) show that even in an 'internalised' environment in HE, British students still prefer working with their local peers due to "a perceived threat that an international student could bring the marks of the group down through his or her […] lack of knowledge of the UK or understanding of British pedagogy" (Peacock and Harrison, 2009, p. 494). This has created a "semi-distinct social spaces within the university environment"; and student sojourners who are readily accepted into the network of British students are more likely to originate from "European or Anglophone origin" (Harrison and Peacock, 2010, p. 884).

The second reason is the difference in academic goals (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009), learning styles and pedagogic norms (Harrison and Peacock, 2009; Peacock and Harrison, 2009; Harrison and Peacock, 2010), which are often explained by cultural differences. For instance, regarding learning styles, it is usually suggested that the academic discourse in most Western countries are characterised by critical thinking and logical argument (Hall, 1976; Paul, 1982; Paul, 1993) whereas in East Asian countries, more emphasis is put on harmony of relationships, avoidance of direct disagreements and restraint of expressing personal ideas (Biggs, 1996; Atkinson, 1997). Rote and reproductive learning are more valued in those countries (Ballard and Clanchy, 1997), thus, students from East Asian countries are often perceived as “cultural deficits” (Clark and Gieve, 2006, p. 55) and “less adequate in a Western setting” (Jones, 2005, p. 340). Student sojourners from this region are often portrayed in the literature as passive, less engaged with in-class participation and unwilling “to use critical techniques, their lax attitude to timekeeping and punctuality, etc.” (Harrison and Peacock, 2010, p. 885).

However, this tendency to automatically ‘revert’ to cultural differences and cultural deficits is recently criticised by many scholars (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000; Nisbett *et al.*, 2001; Floyd, 2011). Nisbett *et al.* (2001) emphasise that despite some differences in cognitive processes, no empirical evidence of deficits in critical thinking amongst East Asian students has been found or documented in the literature in the field. It is unlikely that some cultural groups are unable to use certain patterns of thinking and reasoning (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000). Floyd (2011) suggests that the heavy reliance on rote and reproductive learning can be the result of language proficiency, rather than a cultural phenomenon. The lack of host language proficiency can impede the deep-learning process; hence, students with a lower proficiency level of the host language will be more likely to apply memorisation strategies than others (Kirby *et al.*, 1996).

Indeed, language issues, especially the low host language proficiency, have been found in many studies as the main barrier preventing student sojourners from establishing and maintaining relationships with host national students (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Rienties *et al.*, 2012); and affecting their in-class interactions with other international and host national colleagues (Peacock and Harrison, 2009). The lack of language proficiency can also intervene with their academic adaptation in so far that it hinders their abilities to understand in-class instructions (Peacock and Harrison, 2009).

2.3.4 Social contact and its influence on cultural identities

Previous research has found the significant role of co-national contact in nurturing strong home culture identification (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Friendships with co-nationals could lead to strong identification with their home cultures; whereas those who fail to maintain contact with the said group usually experience weakened home cultural identification (Ethier and Deaux, 1994).

Recent research by Kashima and Loh (2006) reports that non-co-national international contact is a also significant predictor of home cultural identification while host national contact seems to have marginal contribution. Particularly, individuals who interact more frequently with other international students report stronger identification with the home culture (Kashima and Loh, 2006). This can be explained by the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel (1981) (see 2.2.2). In particular, contact with non-co-national internationals provides sojourners with a chance to reflect on their differences, which could enhance home cultural identification.

In addition, the quantity and the quality of the contact could impact the process of cultural identification. When examining the influence of the quality of host national contact on identity, researchers found that perceived discrimination can negatively impact host cultural identification (Lalonde *et al.*, 1992; Leong and Ward, 2000), since it strengthens the feeling of "exclusion from the culture" (Pedersen *et al.*, 2011, p. 883).

Moreover, many studies have reported a negative correlation between the quantity of co-national contact and identification with the host culture (Berry and Sam, 1997; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Furnham, 2004). Co-national communities provide sojourners with familiarity and social support at the expense of the experience and engagement with the host culture. Thus, student sojourners who spend more time with their groups of co-nationals often report feeling as if they were tourists living in a foreign country, instead of seeing themselves as members of the host culture (Citron, 1996). Indeed, quantitative research by Nesdale and Mak (2000) shows that host cultural identification is significantly predicted by the quantity of co-national contact, with the higher amount of time spent with co-nationals, the lower level of host cultural identification.

Despite its importance for cross-cultural transition, social contact and its relationship with identity shifts is under-researched. Studies focusing on this often employ cross-sectional qualitative research designs with small sample size (less than 10 participants) (c.f. Halic *et al.*, 2009; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009). Their concentration, however, tends to be the quality of social contact and its impact on changes in cultural identities. A wide range of research methods to study social contact and cultural identities is, thus, often encouraged.

2.4 Research questions, the proposed conceptual framework and the research approach

Based on the literature review presented above, eight research questions emerged:

RQ1: What are sources and patterns of social contact that student sojourners usually have?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social contact and adaptation outcomes?

RQ3: How do student sojourners construct their cultural identities in the international environment?

RQ4 – Exploratory question: Do student sojourners experience changes in their cultural identities after their sojourn abroad?

RQ5: If so, what are the patterns of cultural identity shifts among student sojourners?

RQ6: What is the identification process of student sojourners?

RQ7: What is the relationship between cultural identities and social contact?

RQ8: What is the role of adaptation and adjustment in the process of cultural identification?

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in detail in Figure 8. In this study, cultural identity of student sojourners was investigated as a process rather than a static object. Both social contact and adaptation were examined and considered as important parts of this cultural identification process.

To assist empirical testing and avoid over-scoping the research, the study applied a micro-level approach in which the framework was individual-based, specifically concentrating on the experience of an individual student sojourner, his or her perception of cultural identities and his or her interpersonal relationships. Although other macro-level factors illustrated in other conceptual frameworks are appreciated, examining these factors goes beyond the scope of this research.

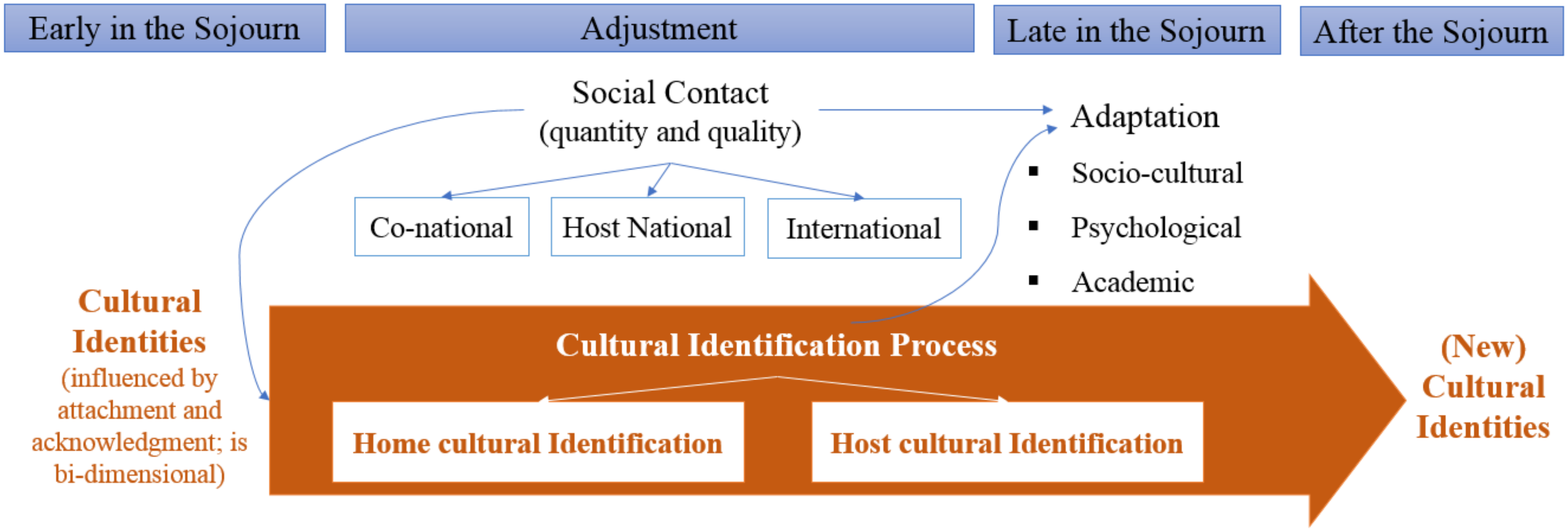

Early in the Sojourn
Adjustment
Late in the Sojourn
After the Sojourn
Social Contact
(quantity and quality)
Co-national
Host National
International
Adaptation
Socio-cultural
Psychological
Academic
Cultural Identities
(influenced by attachment and acknowledgment; is bi-dimensional)
Cultural Identification Process
Home cultural Identification
Host cultural Identification
(New) Cultural Identities

Figure 8: Conceptual Framework of the Present Research

Figure 8 indicates that cultural identities, in this study, were proposed to be influenced by: affectional attachment (i.e., sense of belonging) and the acknowledgement of cultural membership and contained two dimensions: home cultural and host cultural identification (Berry, 2005). Cross-cultural transition was conceptualised as a life-changing event that influences cultural identities of student sojourners (Kim, 2008). It was suggested that when adjusting to the host culture, the students would interact with co-nationals, internationals and host nationals, which was referred in this research as three main sources of social contact of student sojourners. Social contact (measured by its quantity and quality) could influence adaptation outcomes and the identification process of the sojourner. This identification process might (or might not) produce new cultural identities and could impact adaptation outcomes of the sojourner.

Based on the research questions and the conceptual framework, the research approach is detailed in Figure 9 below.

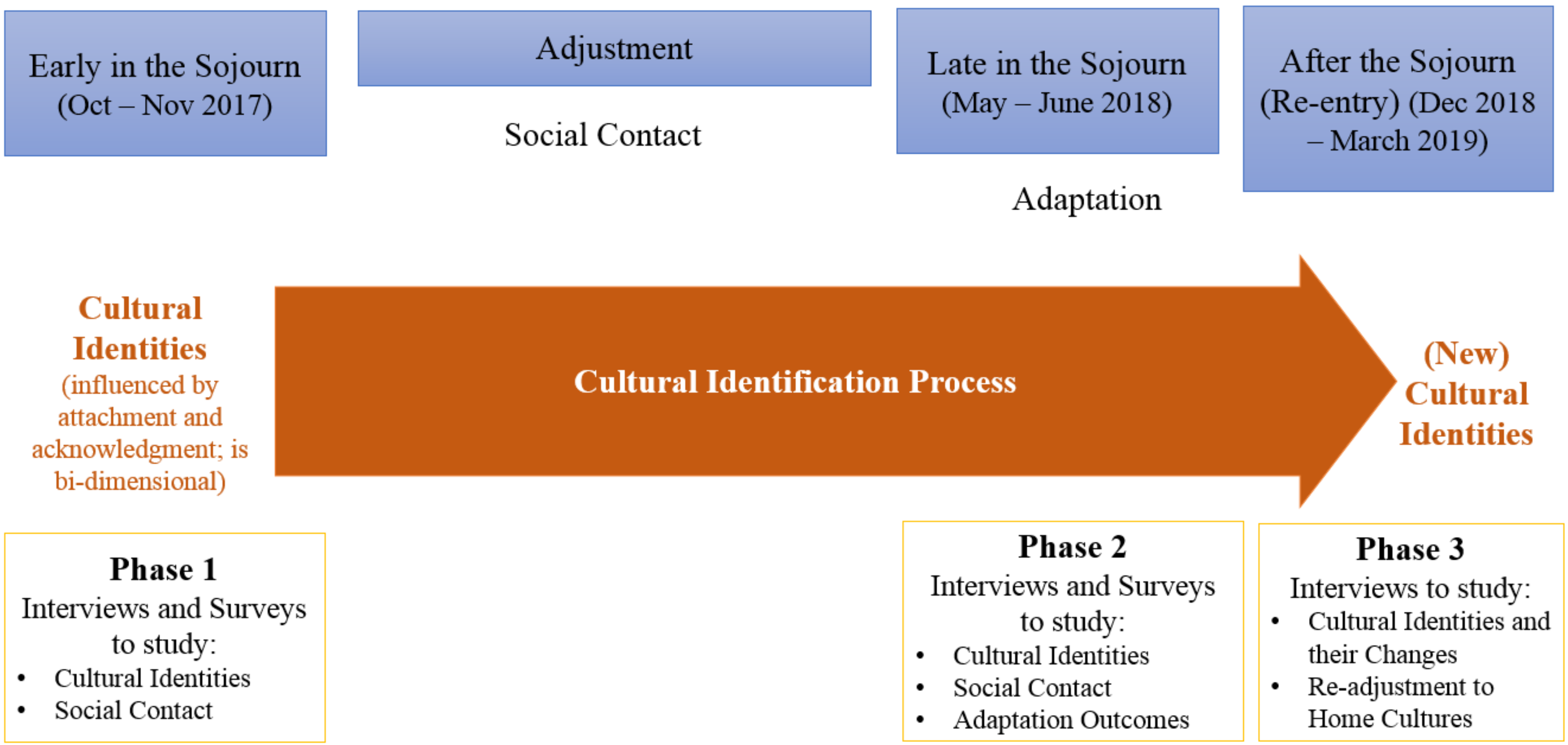

Early in the Sojourn (Oct – Nov 2017)
Adjustment
Social Contact
Late in the Sojourn (May – June 2018)
Adaptation
After the Sojourn (Re-entry) (Dec 2018 – March 2019)
Cultural Identities
(influenced by attachment and acknowledgment; is bi-dimensional)
Cultural Identification Process
(New) Cultural Identities
Phase 1
Interviews and Surveys to study:
• Cultural Identities
• Social Contact
Phase 2
Interviews and Surveys to study:
• Cultural Identities
• Social Contact
• Adaptation Outcomes
Phase 3
Interviews to study:
• Cultural Identities and their Changes
• Re-adjustment to Home Cultures

Figure 9: Approach of the Present Research to Study Cultural Identities, Social Contact and Adaptation of Student Sojourners

Figure 9 shows that in this study, cultural identities were examined as a process (i.e., cultural identification process), thus, were monitored at three stages over 16 months (i.e., in the early stage and the late stage of the sojourn, and in the repatriation). Two dimensions of cultural identities (i.e., home and host cultural identification) were measured quantitatively. As cultures and identities were sensitive and complicated topics, interviews were applied to allow for deeper discussions. The data from both strands were then triangulated and integrated after each phase. Patterns of social contact during the sojourn were monitored longitudinally in the first two phases, using surveys, so that any changes in the contact patterns could be tracked and quantified. Interviews investigated more in-depth issues such as functions of the contact and reasons behind the changing pattern. Finally, adaptation was conceptualised as outcomes of the adjustment process and was measured quantitatively by surveys at the end of the sojourn.

In summary, in this study, cross-cultural transition is seen as a life-changing event which influences cultural identities of student sojourners. However, the degree of impact depends on many factors, one of which is social contact (see Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993). The change in cultural identities of student sojourners and its relationship with social contact is still under-researched. Cultural identities are also found to have influences on socio-cultural and psychological adaptation outcomes (see Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000), but there is little evidence of the impact of cultural identities on academic adaptation.

The present study, therefore, aimed to enhance understanding of patterns of social contact and cultural identity changes of student sojourners; and to examine how the students constructed their cultural identities in cross-cultural transition. The research also sought to explore the complex relationships between social contact, cultural identities and adaptation. Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation (Kim, 2001) and Acculturation Model (Berry, 2005) were employed as the key guiding literature.

In addition, many studies in the cross-cultural transition field often use either cross-sectional quantitative research, or qualitative research with small sample size (less than 10 participants) (see Halic *et al.*, 2009; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Brown and Brown, 2013). This present research, however, applied longitudinal mixed methods research, with a relatively large sample size. The next chapter will provide further information about the research methodology and the rationale behind it.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter, firstly, explains the rationale for applying longitudinal mixed methods approach (3.1) and describes the design of the study and its validity and reliability (3.2). Secondly, the sampling and setting of the study are presented (3.3.), followed by the discussion of the research instruments (3.4 and 3.5). Finally, data handling and analysis methods are clarified (3.6), the criteria for assessing this study (3.7) and challenges when researching cultural identity (3.8) are discussed.

3.1 Research approaches

3.1.1 Longitudinal design

According to Wall (1970) and De Vaus (2001), a longitudinal study is the one which repeatedly measures the same sample over an extended time period, whereas cross-sectional research often examines different samples at one point in time. Thus, the longitudinal design is believed to be more dynamic to social or psychological changes, while the cross-sectional design is more "psycho- or socio-static" (Wall, 1970, p. 7).

As De Vaus (2001) and Malhotra (2010) explain, the longitudinal design is used to examine change, specifically the direction and the pattern of change, or stability with great accuracy, which the cross-sectional design is less likely to perform well at. In particular, for this study, applying a cross-sectional design would have allowed me to capture only a series of 'snapshots' of social lives of student sojourners, and to present them as a 'collage' of multiple 'frozen images' of the experience of student sojourners in the host country. Consequently, it may seem impossible to either detect the change in their social lives and cultural identities or to observe the direction of the change.

As Wall (1970) cited from the Colloquium convened in 1965 by the U.S. NICHHD (National Institute of Child Health & Human Development), the longitudinal design is the only method which allows for the observation of "the nature of growth, and the trace patterns of change in an individual". Although there is an argument that change can also be tracked using a series of repeated cross-sectional studies, this observed change is usually at the aggregate level (or macro change), instead of at the individual level (or often known as micro change) (De Vaus, 2001).

For example, suppose that I examined patterns of social contact of postgraduate student sojourners in the UK using a repeated cross-sectional design. Data are collected twice, before and after the academic year. The data may show that the change in the degree of contact is significant. However, as the participants in the two phases are not identical, the finding, therefore, may only show the change of the general cohort of postgraduate student sojourners, but could not show how each student progresses individually. Because the objective of this study is to explore how a student sojourner, as an individual, constructs his or her cultural identities in cross-cultural transition and how the process of cultural identification happens, the longitudinal design was preferred over the repeated cross-sectional one.

According to De Vaus (2001), there are two types of longitudinal design: prospective design which involves collecting data at multiple occasions from the same sample, and retrospective design which entails collecting the information necessary for the reconstruction of data over time at one point in time. The latter, thus, relies heavily on the human mind to recall or reflect on events at an earlier point in life, which, nevertheless, increases the risk of both intentional and unintentional distortion of information (De Vaus, 2001).

For instance, if the event happened for a long time ago, it may be difficult for the participant to recall it without some confusions or distortion. Although in this research, the academic sojourn was not long (i.e., one year), the experience involved some emotional and cultural experiences (e.g., social contact and cultural identities), some of which the participant might unconsciously fabricate or exaggerate (Wall, 1970). Therefore, this study applied a prospective design to avoid this risk.

One of the main criticisms of the longitudinal study relates to its sampling. On one hand, since its participants are selected based on their accessibility and co-cooperativeness, the sampling of the longitudinal study may be unrepresentative of the wider population, which hinders its generalisability (Wall, 1970). On the other hand, it is believed that the process of testing and re-testing the same sample over time of the longitudinal research may increase the threat of internal validity (Gorard, 2010, p. 86), which is often coined as "pre-test sensitisation" (Dooley, 2001, p. 120); or "panel conditioning" and "time-in sample bias" (Ruspini, 2002, p. 73). In other words, it is claimed that the involvement of the researcher in the first stage of the longitudinal study may change the result of the later stage, for instance, participants may consciously (or unconsciously) modify their behaviours.

However, these issues with sampling are rarely confined to only the longitudinal design. In fact, any study involving humans may be subject to these issues. During cross-sectional interviews or observations, participants can still modify their behaviours accordingly. The sample of the longitudinal study, nevertheless, may still be rendered representative in terms of variables such as age and gender; and there is still little empirical evidence of bias detected in this sample (Wall, 1970).

3.1.2 Mixed methods approach

In addition to the two traditional research paradigms (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) in social sciences, mixed methods research (MMR) has recently been on the rise to become the third one. Finding the exact term referring to a mixed methods design is, in fact, quite challenging since a consensus of the terminology has yet been accepted. Some popular ones are multimethod designs (Miles, 1994), multitrait-multimethod research (Campbell and Fiske, 1959), combining quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 1993; Creswell, 1994), methodological triangulation (Morse, 1991); mixed model studies (Datta, 1994); and mixed-method research (Greene *et al.*, 1989; Caracelli and Greene, 1993).

Generally, these terms highlight the idea of combining and integrating various research methods in one research. ‘Mixed methods’ is recently the most often cited term (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2014); and perhaps the most appropriate term since “mixing encompasses the multifaceted procedures of combining, integrating, linking and employing multiple methods” in one study (Creswell *et al.*, 2003, p. 212). The inference drawn from the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in MMR is called ‘meta-inference’ (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Although there are many different definitions of mixed methods, this research applied a definition developed by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 17):

> *“Mixed methods research is the class of research” in which both the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms (including techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or languages) are mixed into a single study. […] “Philosophically, it is the third wave or third research movement, a movement that moves past the paradigm wars by offering a logical and practical alternative… an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or constraining researchers’ choices.”*

The present research applied mixed methods design since this could offset the weaknesses of the qualitative and quantitative method and provide a stronger inference of the data. Quantitative research is confirmatory in nature, applies a deductive approach and involves theory verification whereas qualitative research is skewed to explanatory, utilises an inductive approach and aims at theory generation (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Thus, one of the advantages of the mixed methods design is its inherent power of solving both confirmatory and exploratory questions simultaneously; and its ability to test and build theories in one single study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

In addition, most of the studies in the IC field employ either a quantitative design reporting on influential factors of the sojourn, for instance, acculturative stress (Berry and Annis, 1974), personality (Ward and Kennedy, 1992) and social support (Hayes and Lin, 1994); or small-scale qualitative research on small groups of students, for example American student sojourners (Pitts, 2016) and Malaysian student sojourners (Ward and Kennedy, 1994). In terms of research methodologies, the majority is cross-sectional quantitative research. According to Yoon *et al.* (2017), qualitative research design only accounts for 12% of the total USA-based studies on student sojourners in 2014. In Europe, although there has been an increase in qualitative research, intercultural communication (IC) research in general and student-sojourner research in particular still relies primarily on quantitative data collected from survey methods (Noels *et al.*, 2012).

Until now, research findings in the IC field often give impression that the experience of student sojourners is static and unidirectional since most research is usually conducted at one point in time and the analysis is based on deductive quantitative data. Therefore, it is advised that researchers should apply more diverse research methodologies (e.g., qualitative, mixed-methods and longitudinal design) to better study the dynamics of the experience of student sojourners (Noels *et al.*, 2012).

In this study, half of the research questions (see below) focus on *tracking patterns* of social contact, *monitoring changes* in cultural identification levels of student sojourners and *confirming relationships* between three variables: social contact, cultural identification levels and adaptation outcomes. Hence, to answer these questions, the quantitative design, together with a deductive approach, was deemed relatively a better fit. The underlying theory based on which the relationships of these variables were hypothesised was the *Acculturation Model* (Berry, 2005). This theory, however, is originally established to study the experience of immigrants (see 2.2.2).

RQ1: What are sources and patterns of social contact that student sojourners usually have?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social contact and adaptation outcomes?

RQ7: What is the relationship between cultural identities and social contact?

RQ8: What is the role of adaptation and adjustment in the process of cultural identification?

Quantitative data could quantify such an abstract concept as cultural identity. Specifically, the change in the cultural identification level could be monitored and detected in the study. With its large sample size (N= 84), quantitative data also increased the generalisability of the research, and captured the heterogeneity and variance of the investigated sample (Kelle, 2006).

Since the quantitative data were descriptive, the use of the highly explanative qualitative data could offset this drawback and make these research findings more powerful. Particularly, the rest of the research questions (presented below) were approached by the qualitative strand. The goals were to *understand* the construction of cultural identities, *explain how* the cultural identification process happened in the 'international' context and *explore how* the change in cultural identities of student sojourners arose.

RQ3: How do student sojourners construct their cultural identities in the international environment?

RQ4 – Exploratory question: Do student sojourners experience changes in their cultural identities after their sojourn abroad?

RQ5: If so, what are the patterns of cultural identity shifts among student sojourners?

RQ6: What is the identification process of student sojourners?

I approached these contested and complex phenomena under the subjective perspective of the sojourner (e.g., their perceptions on cultures, identities and cultural identities; and how they define their home cultures and the host culture) and highlighted the individual's agency in the cultural identification process. The analysis of the qualitative data elucidated how the student sojourner, as an individual, constructed his or her cultural identities while maintained his or her social contact in the 'international' context during cross-cultural transition.

ITCCA of Kim (1988); (2001) (see 2.2.2) served as the main guidance for the development of the qualitative research instrument (i.e., interview guidelines). Yet, this theory is originally developed for immigrants, thus, may not be pertinent to the experience of sojourners. Therefore, the themes were inductively analysed from the interview data, instead of being extracted from the theory. The themes were, then, compared to the theory, which could allow for better modification of the theory and enabled me to conceptualise the model more applicable to student sojourners.

The findings of the two strands were then triangulated and integrated. Triangulation, also referred to as confirmation, is wherein researchers verify the findings derived from the data of one research method with those derived from another (Moore, 2008; Slonim-Nevo and Nevo, 2009; Small, 2011; Bronstein and Kovacs, 2013; Schartner, 2014).

For example, in this study, I firstly analysed data from the quantitative research using statistical tests to examine the changing patterns of social contact over nearly 9 months and to determine which contact sources (i.e., co-nationals, host nationals and internationals) were the most popular and highly favoured among student sojourners. I also used correlations and simple linear regression analyses to study the relationships between contact and adaptation outcomes (see 4.1). I then reported the results, their interpretations and summarised the findings.

Next, I analysed interview data using thematic analysis and reported key themes (see 4.2). I compared these findings with those derived the from the quantitative data. When reporting qualitative findings, I briefly mentioned when these findings confirmed or diverged from the other data type. For example, similar to quantitative findings, the interviewees consistently reported that they had limited contact with host national students and had more frequent contact with their compatriots throughout the sojourn. The qualitative data could provide further explanations on why there were such patterns of contact (see 4.2). When the findings diverged, I highlighted the differences and focused on scrutinising the reasons for the differences. For instance, while the quantitative data showed that students with high quantity of co-national contact were usually the ones achieving lower academic achievements (i.e., GPAs). In contrast, many interviewees often perceived co-national friends to be sources of academic support. One possible explanation could be that students who interacted frequently with their compatriots were also the ones having relatively lower English proficiency than others. Thus, forming study group with co-nationals sharing the similar issue might not be helpful for their study (see 4.2.1).

Finally, in the discussion, I summarised findings from both strands and discussed them in relation with findings from previous studies. Convergence of findings from both strands provided strong meta-inferences from the data, whereas divergence of findings offered different perspectives of the same phenomenon (see 4.4).

As Caracelli and Greene (1993) emphasise, complicated social phenomena, such as in this case, the construction of cultural identities in the ‘international’ context, need to be studied under different research “lenses”. Therefore, to best understand multi-faceted realities, create better inferences about these complexities, as well as to present a holistic image of the phenomenon, it is necessary to employ a variety of research methods, data sources and analyses.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods occurred at many stages (see Table 1). Firstly, the research questions were developed based on both approaches. Next, the integration also occurred in the instrument designing stage when the qualitative and the quantitative data collected from the earlier phases were used to modify the research instruments of the later phases. In addition, during the data analysis stage, the interview data were quantitised, which refers to the action of using the quantitative approach to deal with qualitative data (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). For example, the number of interviewees endorsing particular themes was counted (see 3.6.2). Finally, the findings of the two strands were triangulated and integrated to create strong meta-inferences of the experience of student sojourners.

Research Objective: understand the construction of cultural identities in an international context, the cultural identification process; the role of social contact and adaptation outcomes in this process		
	Quantitative Approach	**Qualitative Approach**
Employing the Literature	Acculturation model (Berry, 2005) - See 2.2.2	Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-cultural Transition (Kim, 2001) – See 2.2.2
Developing Research Questions	RQ1: What are sources and patterns of social contact? RQ2: What is the relationship between social contact and adaptation outcomes? RQ7 & RQ8: What is the role of social contact and adaptation in the cultural identification process?	RQ3: How do student sojourners construct their cultural identities? RQ4: Do student sojourners experience changes in their cultural identities? RQ5 & RQ6: If yes, what are the patterns of cultural identity shifts and the identification process?

Designing the Research	Questionnaires in the first two phases to: - Monitor the changes in cultural identification levels, and patterns of social contact - Deductively test relationships among of cultural identification levels, social contact and adaptation outcomes	Interviews in three phases to: - Explore the students' views on cultures, identities and the construction of cultural identities - Observe changes in cultural identities, social lives of students and their adjustment - Inductively develop the framework of the cultural identification process
Sampling	Interviewees were selected from the pool of participants of the quantitative research.	
Designing Research Instruments	Questionnaire responses were used to develop the interview guide. Quantitative and qualitative data collected at the former phase were used to modify research instruments at the later phase.	
Analysing Data	The quantitative analysis method was integrated with the qualitative one. For instance, the frequency and occurrence of themes and codes were noted, the number of interviewees sharing similar experiences were counted.	
Integrating Research Findings	Findings of two strands were triangulated, compared and integrated to see whether they confirmed and complemented or contrasted each other.	

Table 1: The Level of Integration of Two Research Approaches in the Present Study

3.2 Research design

I employed longitudinal sequential mixed methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), followed by a small qualitative phase (i.e., the repatriation) (see Figure 10 below). Quantitative data were collected slightly earlier than qualitative one (i.e., one to two weeks earlier), but both approaches were given equal priority since the nature of the research required equal contribution from both elements (see 3.1.2). The research was conducted over a period of 16 months.

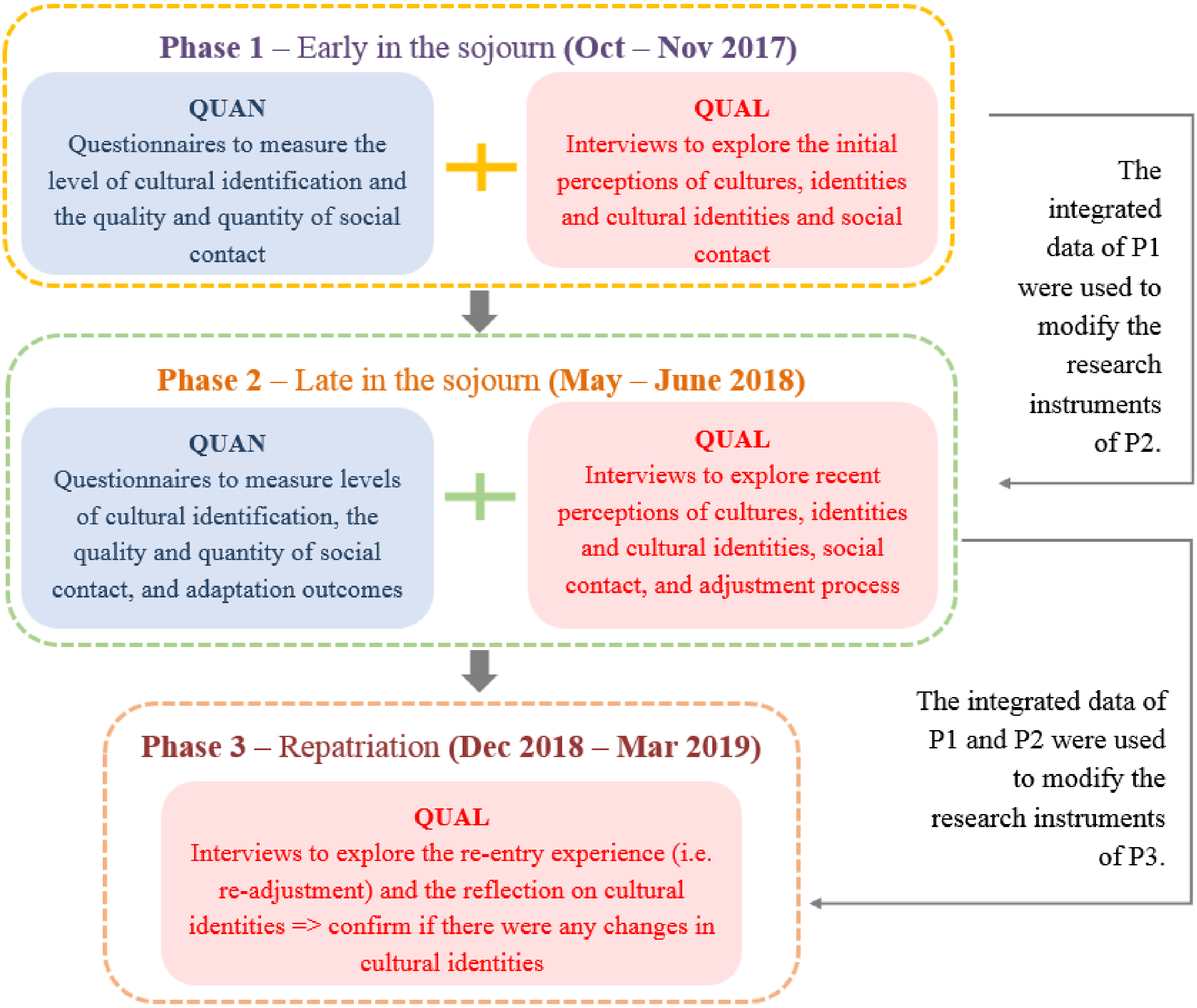

Phase 1 – Early in the sojourn (Oct – Nov 2017)
QUAN
Questionnaires to measure the level of cultural identification and the quality and quantity of social contact
+
QUAL
Interviews to explore the initial perceptions of cultures, identities and cultural identities and social contact
The integrated data of P1 were used to modify the research instruments of P2.
Phase 2 – Late in the sojourn (May – June 2018)
QUAN
Questionnaires to measure levels of cultural identification, the quality and quantity of social contact, and adaptation outcomes
+
QUAL
Interviews to explore recent perceptions of cultures, identities and cultural identities, social contact, and adjustment process
The integrated data of P1 and P2 were used to modify the research instruments of P3.
Phase 3 – Repatriation (Dec 2018 – Mar 2019)
QUAL
Interviews to explore the re-entry experience (i.e. re-adjustment) and the reflection on cultural identities => confirm if there were any changes in cultural identities

Figure 10: The Design of the Present Research

Phase 1 (P1) of data collection occurred from early October to early November 2017, which was the first few weeks when student sojourners arrived in the host country. Quantitative questionnaires were distributed first. Qualitative interviewees were recruited from the pool of participants of the quantitative strand. Qualitative interviews were conducted one to two weeks later. The data of both strands were then analysed, triangulated and integrated.

In P1, "fresh" data was collected when the sojourner had yet to encounter any contact with people from different countries, and to examine their initial perceptions of their home cultures and the host culture (i.e., 'British culture'), their perceptions about cultural identities, their social lives, and to what extent cultural identities influenced their preferred choices of social contact. Findings from P1 were used to modify the research instruments and guided the direction of Phase 2 (P2) data collection.

P2 happened from May to June 2018, which was around 9 months into their programmes (near the end of taught courses). Quantitative surveys were distributed, and qualitative interviews were conducted with the same participants. Within each strand, the P2 data were analysed and compared with the P1 data (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). The data from two strands were, again, triangulated and integrated. The findings were applied to adjust the interview guidelines for P3.

Data collected in P2 explored adaptation and adjustment of the students, their patterns of social contact and levels of cultural identification (and to track if there were any changes) and their reflections on cultural identities and identity changes until this phase.

Online interviews of P3 were conducted from December 2018 to March 2019 (one to three months after the students returned to their home countries). As discussed in Chapter 2: Guiding Literature, cultural identities are complex and latent, and the change in the cultural environment is necessary for any changes in cultural identities to become explicit to the individual. Hence, P3 was included as a confirmation stage in which the participant could 'look back' and reflect on the sojourn and acknowledge whether there were any changes in their cultural identities. Due to the complexity and sensitivity of the topic (i.e., cultural identities), qualitative interviews were applied (still with the same participants). The re-adjustment process of the students to home cultures was also explored.

Finally, the data from all three phases were combined and analysed to create strong inferences about the construction of cultural identities in the 'international' environment, the cultural identification process of student sojourners during cross-cultural transition, patterns in social contact and the students' adaptation during the sojourn.

3.2.1 Quantitative strand

First, a pilot test was conducted in July 2017, three months prior to the 'official' data collection, to test the reliability and the validity of the measurement scales used in the surveys. Based on the pilot study, the scales were modified. Two sets of self-report surveys (in English) were then distributed at two periods within one academic year (see Figure 11).

I did not collect the quantitative data in P3 when the students returned to the home countries, because 1) P3 was designed as a confirmatory phase in which the students could reflect on the changes in their cultural identities. Due to the complexity of the topic (i.e., self-reflection on cultural identities), qualitative interview was a relatively more suitable method. 2) There was an issue of restricted survey access. In particular, nearly half of the participants were from China (see 3.3.1), which had a strict governmental control of the Internet. The participants could not access online surveys created by a 'foreign' cloud-based software. Thus, distributing UK-based online surveys to these students once they returned home were challenging.

The P1 survey examined cultural identification levels of student sojourners and the degree of social contact at the start of the academic year (around three weeks into the study programme). The P2 survey tested the same variables, together with socio-cultural, psychological and academic adaptation outcomes, at the end of the academic year (around nine months into the programme). Survey data in the first phase were analysed and used as guidance to modify the survey in the second phase.

Quantitative data in two phases were then contrasted to monitor any changes over time. In particular, mean scores of cultural identification levels and the degree of social contact (i.e., the contact's quality and quantity) in two phases were compared to detect significant changes in the variables. Correlations and regression analyses were applied to examine relationships and directions of influences among variables.

Details about the sampling method and the measurement scales used in the two-phased survey will be presented in 3.3 and 3.4, respectively. The next part focuses on summarising the pilot study and its sampling procedure.

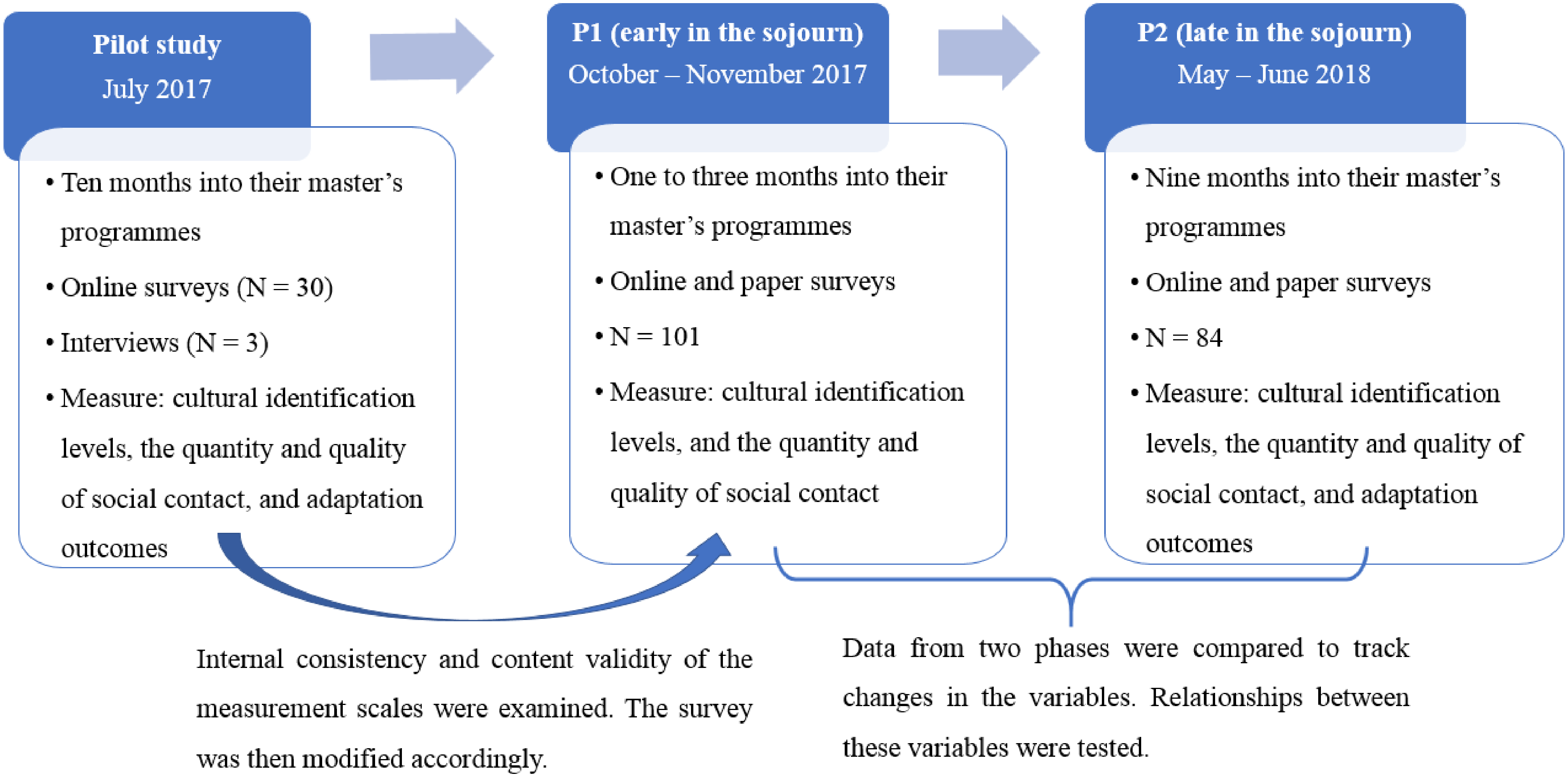

Pilot study
July 2017
• Ten months into their master's programmes
• Online surveys (N = 30)
• Interviews (N = 3)
• Measure: cultural identification levels, the quantity and quality of social contact, and adaptation outcomes
P1 (early in the sojourn)
October – November 2017
• One to three months into their master's programmes
• Online and paper surveys
• N = 101
• Measure: cultural identification levels, and the quantity and quality of social contact
P2 (late in the sojourn)
May – June 2018
• Nine months into their master's programmes
• Online and paper surveys
• N = 84
• Measure: cultural identification levels, the quantity and quality of social contact, and adaptation outcomes
Internal consistency and content validity of the measurement scales were examined. The survey was then modified accordingly.
Data from two phases were compared to track changes in the variables. Relationships between these variables were tested.

Figure 11: Design of the Quantitative Strand of the Present Research

The pilot study was conducted in July 2017 with a small sample of 30 international students (whose countries of origins were China, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam). There were 10 males and 20 females participating in the pilot. The students were 10 months into their master's degrees and studying in applied linguistics and business disciplines at a HE institution in England. Their age range was 21 - 40 years old.

The pilot survey was distributed online using a survey development cloud-based software called Survey Monkey. The students were recruited using snow-ball sampling. In particular, the survey's link was sent to friends within the researcher's social network who then circulated the link within their own networks.

The participants were filtered based on the criteria:

- Participants must be international students studying at the researched university.
- This must be the first time they had lived and studied in the host country (i.e., the UK).
- They must enrol for one-year taught master's degrees, with the minimum overall IELTS score of 6.5 or equivalent (i.e., the language requirement for master's courses at the researched university in the UK).

After quantitative data were collected, the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis was used to examine the internal consistency of the measurement scales (i.e., cultural identities, social contact, socio-cultural adaptation, psychological adaptation and academic adaptation). Higher reliability coefficient indicates higher internal consistency of the scales (Coaley, 2014).

Three students were randomly selected to participate in one-to-one semi-structured interview to test the survey's content validity (e.g., if they perceived any survey items as irrelevant or confusing, and whether any information was lacking). Each interview lasted for around 15 minutes. Based on the result of the reliability test and the feedback of the students, the measurement scales used in the survey were modified accordingly. The detail discussion of the scales and their modification will be presented in 3.4.

3.2.2 Qualitative strand

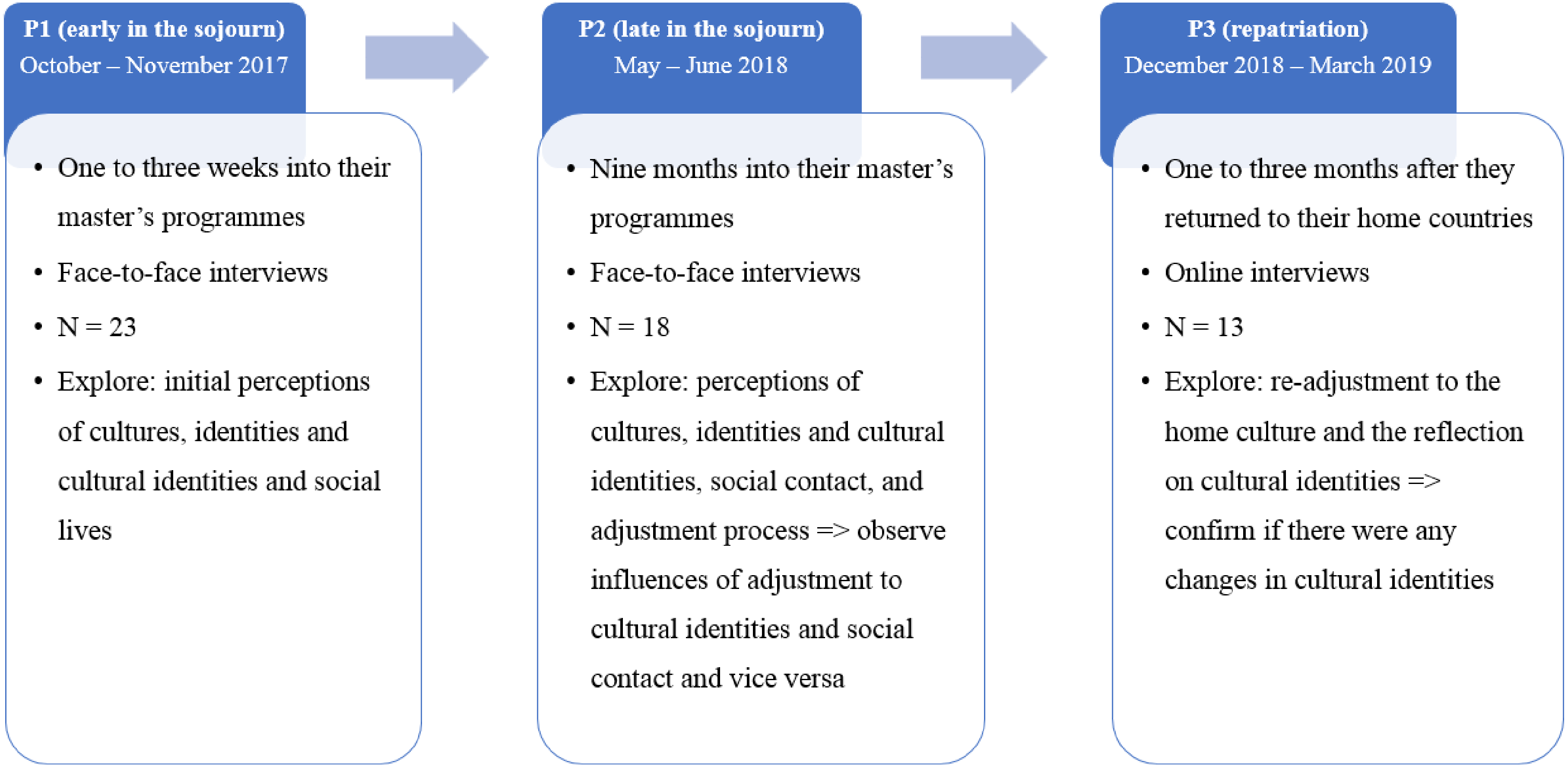
One-to-one interview was used which created a comfortable atmosphere for participants to express their viewpoints on sensitive research topics, such as cultural identities, their perceptions about their home cultures and the host culture. Otherwise, the validity and the quality of the data might have been influenced if other qualitative methods, for instance, focus groups and paired interviews, were employed, as social pressure (or peer pressure) could have impacted participants to modify their answers to 'fit' with the majority.

As Marczyk (2005) explains, the interview structure and the interview conduct are key factors. According to Marczyk (2005), a well-structured interview prevents the conversation from straying too far from the research focus, yet, may lose the spontaneity of the conversation. An open interview, in contrast, grants the interviewee an opportunity to express his or her subjective opinions on the research topic without being 'framed', which can allow the emergence of new themes; yet it gives the interviewee exceeding control, which may result in some off-topic discussions (Marczyk, 2005). The semi-structure is a good balance between these two, thus, was applied in this study.

Since interview is an interaction of the interviewee and the interviewer, the flow and the direction of the interview is usually situational and cannot be standardized (Marczyk, 2005). Hence, in the present study, even when being conducted using the same interview guide, different interviews yielded different results. In general, semi-structured interview allowed for abundant and rich data, while reflected the diversity in the individual's context and experience. This was especially important for this study since it involved participants of a wide range of national and cultural backgrounds.

The interview was conducted three times over a period of 16 months with the total participation of 13 students (refer to Appendix A for the profile of the interviewees). Interview data collected from the former phase were analysed and informed the design of the interview guide at the later phases. The gap between two interviews was approximately 6 months. Interviews in the first two phases were carried out on the university campus, and the P3 interviews were conducted online (see Figure 12).

The first two phases focused on investigating the sojourn experience of international students in the host country whereas the final phase aimed to explore the re-adjustment process to the home culture and to confirm if any changes in their cultural identities occurred. Interview data were then analysed thematically (refer to 3.6.2). Key themes throughout three phases were compared to monitor the changes in the perceptions and attitudes of the students.



P1 (early in the sojourn)
October – November 2017

- One to three weeks into their master's programmes
- Face-to-face interviews
- N = 23
- Explore: initial perceptions of cultures, identities and cultural identities and social lives

P2 (late in the sojourn)
May – June 2018

- Nine months into their master's programmes
- Face-to-face interviews
- N = 18
- Explore: perceptions of cultures, identities and cultural identities, social contact, and adjustment process => observe influences of adjustment to cultural identities and social contact and vice versa

P3 (repatriation)
December 2018 – March 2019

- One to three months after they returned to their home countries
- Online interviews
- N = 13
- Explore: re-adjustment to the home culture and the reflection on cultural identities => confirm if there were any changes in cultural identities

Figure 12: Design of the Qualitative Strand of the Present Research

The interviewees communicated in English fluently, but sometimes, miscommunication might happen (e.g., using the same English words or terms but referring to different meanings). However, I minimised misunderstanding and maintain the credibility of interview data by using member-check questions to summarise the main ideas of the interviewees every time they answered research-focused questions and employing the peer debriefing technique to cross-check the opinions of interviewees (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) (see 3.5). During the P2 interview, I also summarised the key points in the P1 interview to the participants and double-checked whether I understood and interpreted them correctly. The same process was applied in the P3 interview, which enhanced the credibility of my interpretation. Finally, the use of mixed methods to compare and triangulate the qualitative data with the quantitative one ensured that my account was rich and comprehensive (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

It is important to note that the views on political issues, cultures and people of those cultures presented in this thesis (particularly in 5.2) were those of the interviewees and did not reflect the position or opinions of the researcher.

3.3 Sampling and setting

The purposive (or nonprobability) sampling, which refers to the technique in which some criteria are applied to replace the "principles of cancelled random errors", was employed in this study (Kemper *et al.*, 2003, p. 279). The purposive sampling enabled me to intentionally select specific cases that could provide rich and valid information for the research questions. The logic of the purposive sampling lies in maximising the homogeneity of the sample size in a way that can best illuminate the phenomenon under investigation (Kemper *et al.*, 2003; Kelle, 2006).

In particular, as discussed in 1.4.3, since cross-cultural transition is a complicated process which has many contributory factors influencing the experience of sojourners, this study tried to control for some variables (e.g., previous overseas experience, the length of the sojourn, the study programme and the proficiency with the host language) to better examine the researched phenomena (i.e., the cultural identification process, patterns of social contact and adaptation outcomes of student sojourners).

The study was conducted at a university in the North East of England, which had a highly international environment and a rigorous agenda of developing more research activities on internationalisation on HE. Participants of this study were international students, including EU and non-EU students, pursuing one-year taught master's degree in the UK. They must neither hold any degrees from British universities nor have lived in the UK before enrolling for the current master's programmes.

The participants were recruited from applied linguistics and business departments. Their programmes were highly similar in terms of structure, programme content and assessment methods, including taught modules extending over a nine-month period, from October to May, and a student-led research project conducted in three months, from June to August. This would help maintain a degree of homogeneity across the sample (c.f. Young and Schartner, 2014).

These programmes were greatly international with 90% of the students from non-UK countries. Around 90% of the students from the programmes mainly used English as a second language and had the same level of English proficiency with the minimum overall IELTS score 6.5 or equivalent (which was the language requirement for master's courses in the researched university in the UK).

The majority of participants were from East Asia and Southeast Asia (approximately 60%). This represented the nature of the international student cohort in British HE, with the former accounting for 52% of the international enrolments in 2018/19 (HESA, 2019), and at the host university particularly (more than 3,060 East Asian and Southeast Asian students, accounting for 61.3% of the international student population in 2019/20) (data from the website of the researched university). Half of the participants were from applied linguistic department, particularly around 30% enrolled in a course specialising in cultural studies. A study by Young and Schartner (2014) suggests that cross-cultural communication education might enhance students' critical perspectives and understanding of cultures and identities (Young and Schartner, 2014). However, in this study, I examined the influence of departments of study on their adaptation, cultural identities and social contact, but the tests yielded no significant results (see Appendix O to R), indicating that there were no differences in the mean scores of students from applied linguistics and others. In general, I acknowledged that this skewness in the sample inevitably limited the generalisability of the research findings within the postgraduate international student cohort in the UK. I will address these limitations and provide recommendations for future research in 7.4.

3.3.1 Participants of the quantitative research

In P1, in the first three weeks of the academic year, paper surveys were distributed at the end of the induction workshops of their programmes or lecturers, and the online survey's link was circulated in the university through emails. 101 completed the survey out of approximately 156 students receiving it (a response rate of 64.7%).

In P2, near the end of their taught modules, online surveys were circulated through university emails, while paper surveys were distributed either at the start or the end of their lectures. Of 101 participants in the first phase, 84 students completed the survey in P2 (a retention rate of 83.17%).

Participants were diverse in terms of nationalities, but most of them came from East Asia and Southeast Asia, and a majority (approximately 70-80%) was female, which reflected the nature of the student population in British taught postgraduate programmes (cf. Wright and Schartner 2013; Young, Handford and Schartner, 2016) (see Table 2 below).

Demographics		***n* (%)**
Participants of the Quantitative Research in P1 (N = 101)		
Gender	Male	23 (22.8)
	Female	78 (77.2)
Geographical Region	Middle East	2 (2.0)
	Africa	2 (2.0)
	Americas	11 (10.9)
	Europe	27 (26.7)
	East Asia and Southeast Asia	59 (58.4)
Participants of the Quantitative Research in P2 (N = 84)		
Gender	Male	16 (19.0)
	Female	68 (81.0)
Geographical Region	Middle East	2 (2.4)
	Africa	1(1.2)
	Americas	8 (9.5)
	Europe	16 (19.0)
	East Asia and Southeast Asia	57 (67.9)

Table 2: Demographics of Participants of the Quantitative Research

3.3.2 Participants of the qualitative research

From the pool of participants of the quantitative strand, a sample of 23 students took part in follow-up interviews between October – November 2017 (P1 interview) (see Table 3). These were selected from 25 volunteers on the first-come-first-serve basis. 18 students participated in the second-phase interviews between May – June 2018 (a retention rate of 78.26%). Each interview was conducted on campus and lasted for around 30 to 45 minutes. All participation was voluntary. Information sheets were provided, and informed written consent forms were obtained prior to the interviews (see Appendix D for the consent form of the interview).

In P3 (December 2018 – March 2019), 13 students were interviewed online, after they had returned to their home countries for one to three months, using a variety of software, such as Skype – a Microsoft software for online audio or video calls. All online interviews with Chinese students were conducted via Wechat – the most popular social networking site in China. The retention rate was high (72.2%). Each interview lasted approximately 10 – 15 minutes.

All interviews were conducted in English (except one where the interviewee required to use her native language which was the same as the researcher’s), audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. A majority (approximately 60%) were from East Asian and Southeast Asian countries (see Table 3), their demographics broadly reflected those of the larger cohort (c.f. Pho and Schartner, 2019). Refer to Appendix A for the profile of the interviewees.

Demographics		***n*** **(%)**
Qualitative Data in P1 (N = 23)		
Gender	Male	3 (13.0)
	Female	20 (87.0)
Geographical Region	Middle East	1 (4.3)
	Americas	4 (17.4)
	Europe	4 (17.4)
	East Asia and Southeast Asia	14 (60.9)
Qualitative Data in P2 (N = 18)		
Gender	Male	3 (16.7)
	Female	15 (83.3)
Geographical Region	Middle East	1 (5.5)
	Americas	3 (16.7)
	Europe	3 (16. 7)
	East Asia and Southeast Asia	11 (61.1)
Qualitative Data in P3 (N = 13)		
Gender	Male	3 (23.1)
	Female	10 (76.9)
Geographical Region	Middle East	0 (0.0)
	Americas	3 (23.1)
	Europe	2 (15.4)
	East Asia and Southeast Asia	8 (61.5)

Table 3: Demographics of Participants of the Qualitative Research

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

All participation was voluntary without financial incentives. Information sheets were distributed, and informed written consent forms were collected prior to data collection (see Appendix B and C for the information sheet and the consent form, respectively). All participants were fully anonymised.

3.4 Survey design

Both sets of the surveys in P1 and P2 had three main parts: demographic information, cultural identities, and patterns of social contact. The P1 survey also acquired personal information of participants (i.e., the student number and the study programme) which supported the researcher in tracking and matching survey responses of participants in the second phase. The P2 survey had an additional part where it measured adaptation outcomes of the participants across three domains (i.e., socio-cultural, psychological and academic adaptation). The scales in the surveys were adapted and modified based on the measurement scales of previous research, which are discussed below.

3.4.1 Cultural identities

Cultural identity, as explained in 2.1.3, is a contested concept. The most appropriate scale measuring cultural identities of sojourners is still in dispute.

In particular, modernist scholars believe that despite being fluid and plural, the change in identities occurs in a way that can maintain identity continuity. Thus, a unidimensional approach should be employed to study cultural identities (Gordon, 1964; Triandis, 1988). This approach was first detailed by Gordon (1964).

Gordon (1964) develops the model of assimilation which asserts that after assimilating to the new culture, new cultural identities will arise and replace original cultural identities. Similarly, Ryder *et al.* (2000, p. 49) suggest that cross-cultural transition will influence cultural identities, in so far that individuals may shift from being identified with "exclusively heritage culture to exclusively mainstream culture". Therefore, cultural identities should be measured as a continuum (Ryder *et al.*, 2000). Another example of the scale measuring cultural identities as unidimensional and continuous is the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA) by Suinn *et al.* (1987).

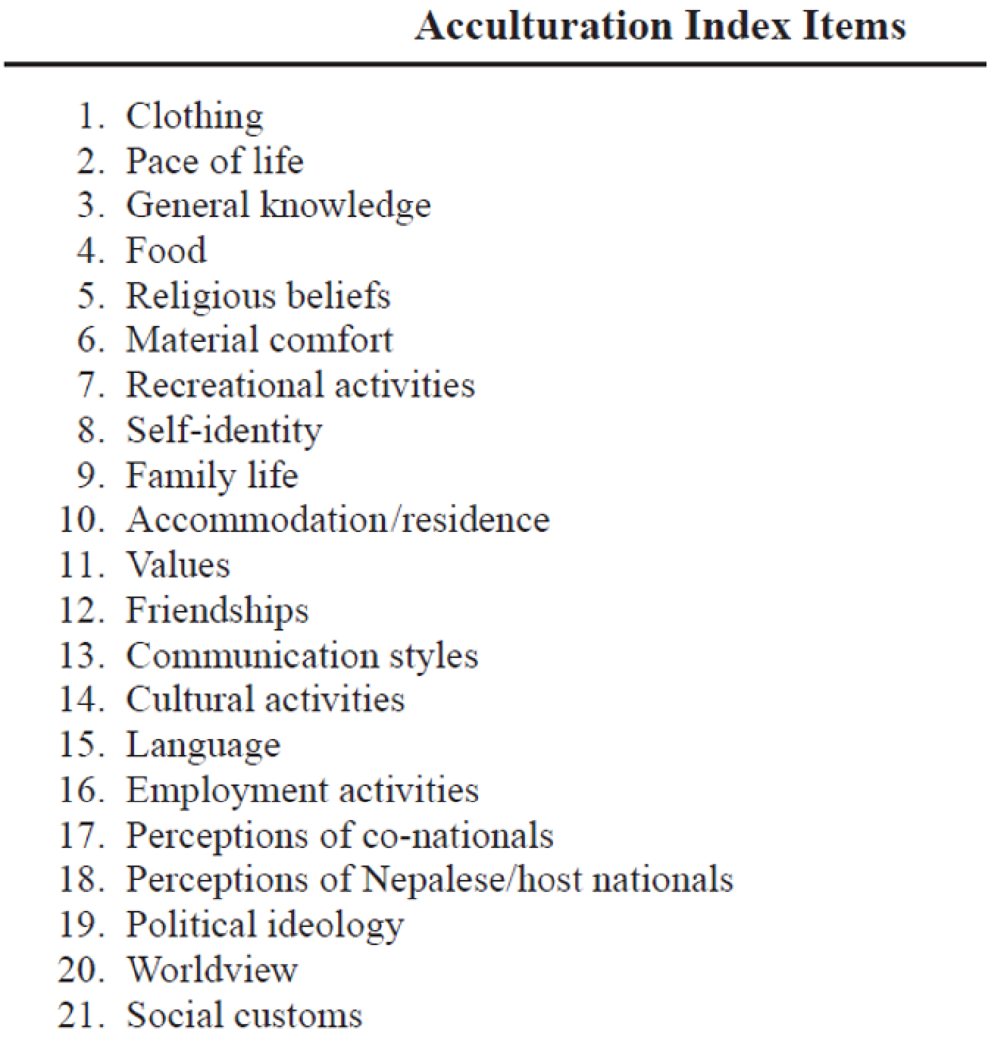
However postmodernist theorists have recently argued that identity is a fragile concept and that identity consistency and continuity is nothing but imagination (Hall *et al.*, 1992). Within every individual exist multiple identities which may sometimes be too contradictory to be unified into one singular identity (Hall *et al.*, 1992) (see 2.1.3). Cultural identities, hence, have been perceived to be multiplex and plural.

As postmodernist theorists explain, cross-cultural transition is a process in which both the home culture and the host culture can influence an individual, leading to the existence of two dimensions of cultural identities in the individual (Berry *et al.*, 1987; Berry and Kim, 1988; Ryder *et al.*, 2000). Many scholars, therefore, have approached cultural identities using the bidimensional model. The most widely used one is the Acculturation Model of John Berry (2005). In his theory, it is indicated that there are fundamentally two dimensions of cultural identities: identification with the home culture and with the host culture (Berry and Annis, 1974; Berry *et al.*, 1987; Berry and Sam, 1997) (see 2.2.2).

The application of the bidimensional model in the cross-cultural transition study allows for better observation of the complete picture. In particular, unidimensional models or instruments may fail to distinguish acculturating people with strong identification with the home and the host culture from the ones with low identification with both cultures (Ryder *et al.*, 2000). Moreover, if there is a dependent variable which is strongly associated with both dimensions of cultural identities, the two effects may neutralise each other and remain invisible to unidimensional instruments (Ryder *et al.*, 2000). Finally, the unidimensional approach neglects alternative experiences of acculturating people, such as the integration of two cultures, and focuses only on the assimilation towards the host culture (Ryder *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, this research applied a bi-dimensional approach to measure cultural identities.

Among the bi-dimensional instruments measuring cultural identities, the present research applied the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA) scale of Ryder *et al.* (2000), instead of the scale called Acculturation Index (AI), developed by Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999a).

In particular, AI requires participants to rate the similarity of their lifestyles with the lifestyles of people from the same home culture and of people from the host culture, with references to 21 cognitive and behavioural items (e.g., language, food and recreational activities). However, each item is expressed by simple words or phrases; and some items are too vague and general and encompass broad categories in life (e.g., family life and general knowledge) (see Figure 13 below).



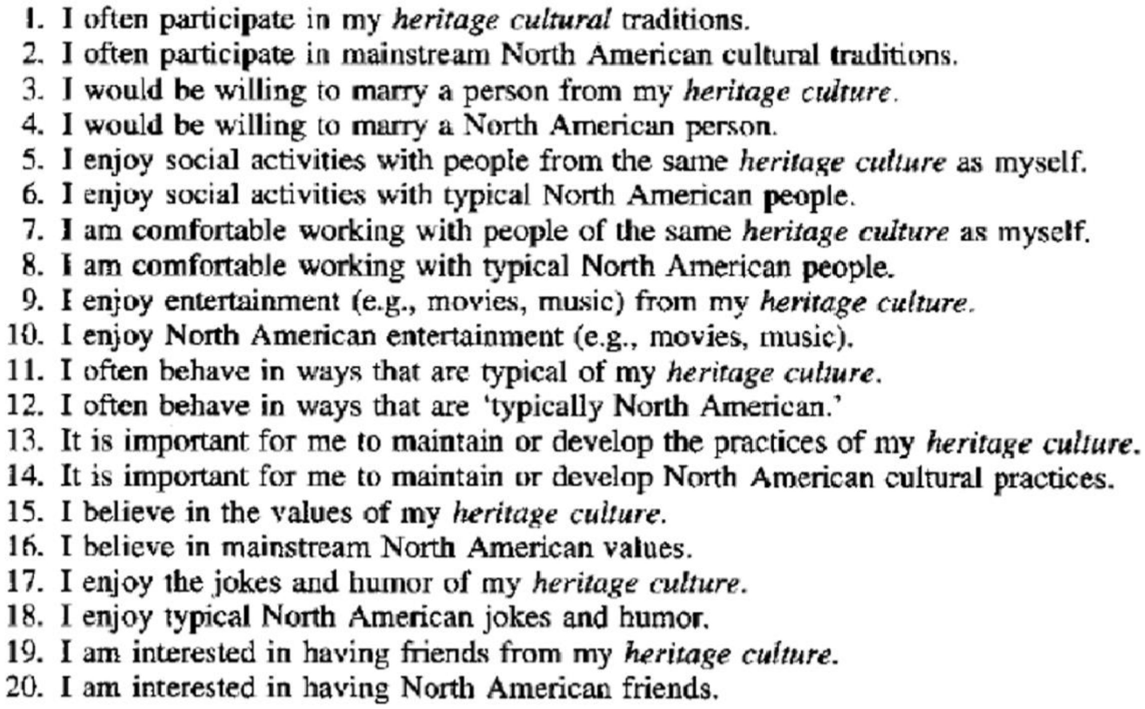
Acculturation Index Items

1. Clothing
2. Pace of life
3. General knowledge
4. Food
5. Religious beliefs
6. Material comfort
7. Recreational activities
8. Self-identity
9. Family life
10. Accommodation/residence
11. Values
12. Friendships
13. Communication styles
14. Cultural activities
15. Language
16. Employment activities
17. Perceptions of co-nationals
18. Perceptions of Nepalese/host nationals
19. Political ideology
20. Worldview
21. Social customs

Figure 13: Acculturation Index, developed by Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999a)

On the other hand, VIA consists of 20 items, measuring adherence towards the home culture and the host culture. Participants indicate the level of agreement towards each item using a 7-point Linkert scale. These items are general statements describing the behaviours, cognitions and affections of individuals towards the home and the host culture. Therefore, VIA appears to be more specific than AI (see Figure 14).

Yet, for this study, two items of the VIA scale (i.e., Item 3 and 4: *"I would be willing to marry a person from my heritage culture/ host culture"*) were deleted from the measurement scale due to their irrelevance to the cohort of student sojourners.



1. I often participate in my *heritage cultural* traditions.
2. I often participate in mainstream North American cultural traditions.
3. I would be willing to marry a person from my *heritage culture*.
4. I would be willing to marry a North American person.
5. I enjoy social activities with people from the same *heritage culture* as myself.
6. I enjoy social activities with typical North American people.
7. I am comfortable working with people of the same *heritage culture* as myself.
8. I am comfortable working with typical North American people.
9. I enjoy entertainment (e.g., movies, music) from my *heritage culture*.
10. I enjoy North American entertainment (e.g., movies, music).
11. I often behave in ways that are typical of my *heritage culture*.
12. I often behave in ways that are 'typically North American.'
13. It is important for me to maintain or develop the practices of my *heritage culture*.
14. It is important for me to maintain or develop North American cultural practices.
15. I believe in the values of my *heritage culture*.
16. I believe in mainstream North American values.
17. I enjoy the jokes and humor of my *heritage culture*.
18. I enjoy typical North American jokes and humor.
19. I am interested in having friends from my *heritage culture*.
20. I am interested in having North American friends.

Figure 14: Vancouver Index of Acculturation, designed by Ryder et al. (2000)

Nevertheless, the concept of cultural identities in this study is defined as "the sense of belongingness" rather than "similarity or adherence", as suggested in VIA (see 2.1.3). Thus, six more items to specifically measure this cultural sense of belonging were added (see Table 4 for the added items). These items were adapted from the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure Revised (MEI-R) scale of Phinney and Ong (2007); which is used in the USA-based study by Contrada *et al.* (2001) to measure ethnic identities of university students, and in the research by Lee and Yih (2010) on dual cultural identities of international employees.

As a result, the scale had two sub-scales, each of which consisted of 12 items to measure identification with the home culture and the host culture (i.e., the UK, in this case) (see Table 4). Participants were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with each scale item, ranging from *1-strongly disagree* to *7-strongly agree*.

Sub-scale 1: ***Identification with the home culture***

1. I often participate in the cultural traditions of my culture of origin.
2. I enjoy social activities with people from the same culture of origin as mine.
3. I feel comfortable working with people of the same culture of origin as mine.
4. I am interested in having friends from my culture of origin.
5. I enjoy entertainment (e.g., music, movies) from my culture of origin.
6. I enjoy jokes and humour of my culture of origin.
7. I often behave in ways that are typical of my culture of origin.
8. I believe in the cultural values of my culture of origin.
9. It is important for me to maintain or develop the practices of my culture of origin.
10. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own culture of origin.[1]
11. I feel proud to be a member of my culture of origin.[1]
12. I don't like to tell others which culture I am from.[1]

Sub-scale 2: ***Identification with the host culture (i.e. the UK)***

13. I often participate in the British cultural traditions.
14. I enjoy social activities with people from the UK.
15. I feel comfortable working with people from the UK.
16. I am interested in having friends from the UK.
17. I enjoy British entertainment (e.g., music, movies).
18. I enjoy typical British jokes and humour.
19. I often behave in ways that are "typically British".
20. I believe in British cultural values.
21. It is important for me to maintain or develop British practices.
22. I have a strong sense of belonging to the British culture.[1]
23. I have spent time trying to learn more about the UK (e.g., history and customs).[1]
24. I would not feel proud to be seen as a member of British cultures.[1]

Table 4: Measurement Scale of Two Dimensions of Cultural Identities

a. The Reliability Test of the Pilot Study

The Cronbach's α coefficient of the home cultural identification scale and host cultural identification scale in the pilot test showed very good results (α=0.829 and α=0.9, respectively), which indicated the high internal consistency of the scales (Coaley, 2014). However, when observing closely at the inter-item correlation, Item 12 *(“I don’t like to tell others which culture I am from”* in the home cultural identification scale) and Item 24 (*“I would not feel proud to be seen as a member of British cultures”* in the host cultural identification scale) had weak correlations with other items within each sub-scale.

---

[1] Added items

Moreover, both of these items had weak correlations with the total scores of the two sub-scales (r=0.278 and r=0.267 in the scale of home cultural and host cultural identification, respectively). The Cronbach’s α of the two scales increased to 0.831 for home cultural identification and 0.913 for host cultural identification when deleting these items. Therefore, the two items were then omitted from the final scales used in P1 and P2.

In terms of content validity, most of the items were considered as relevant to the cohort of student sojourners, but there were some terms (e.g., *“cultural traditions”*) deemed as confusing. Thus, these were rewritten, with more clarifications and examples (e.g., *“an example of a cultural tradition is participating in the New Year Festival”*).

b. The Revised Scale

The scale used in the pilot test originally had 24 items in total, yet after the pilot study, Item 12 and 24 were deleted from the final scales, reducing the number of the scale items to 22. The score of each item was added and averaged to create a total mean score. The higher the score, the stronger the cultural identification. See Appendix E for the revised scale used in the questionnaire.

Cronbach’s α of the revised scale was consistently high, which indicated high internal consistency among the items in the scales (Coaley, 2014)*:* α=0.874 and α=0.868 for home cultural and host cultural identification, respectively in P1; and α=0.917 and α=0.861 for home and host cultural identification, respectively in P2.

3.4.2 Patterns of social contact

Three sources of contact (i.e., co-nationals, host nationals and non-co-national internationals) with two factors (i.e., the quantity of the contact and its quality) were measured. The students self-reported their patterns of social contact. In particular:

- ***Quantity of contact*** was examined by two items: the *amount* and *frequency* of contact. Based on a 7-point scale, participants reported the amount of contact they had in the host country, (*1-none* to *7-very many/ more than 10 people*) and the frequency of the contact (*1-almost never/ annually;* to *7-almost every day*) (see Appendix F). The scale items were adapted from the research instruments of previous research by Brown *et al.* (1999); Brown *et al.* (2001); Voci and Hewstone (2003); Cox (2004); and Meng *et al.* (2017). The score of the amount and the frequency were multiplied to create the index of the quantity of contact (cf. Brown *et al.*, 1999; Brown *et al.*, 2001). The higher the score, the more contact and the higher the frequency.

- ***Quality of contact*** was initially measured by three items: the *pleasantness*, *closeness*, and *informality* of the contact, using a 7-point scale. For instance, participants rated the pleasantness of the contact (*1-very unpleasant* to *7-very pleasant*) and its closeness (*1-merely an acquaintance* to *7-a very close friend*). The scale items were based on the previous studies by Brown *et al.* (1999); Brown *et al.* (2001); Voci and Hewstone (2003); and Meng *et al.* (2017).

  However, the pilot study showed the item *"the informality of the contact"* correlated weakly with the rest of the items and the total score of the scale. Moreover, students interviewed in the pilot study either shared their confusions over the meaning of *'informality'* or found it irrelevant and often regarded it as similar with '*closeness'*. Thus, this item was later deleted from the scale. Only two items (the *pleasantness* and *closeness of the contact*) remained in the revised version (see Appendix F for the revised scale). The score of the pleasantness and closeness were multiplied to create the total score of the contact's quality. The higher score indicated the better the contact's quality.

3.4.3 Socio-cultural adaptation

This study originally adapted 18 items from the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) of Ward and Kennedy (1999). SCAS was first applied in research to study adaptation of Malaysian and Singaporean students in New Zealand (Searle and Ward, 1990) and since then has become a widely used scale to measure socio-cultural adaptation of sojourners.

The SCAS requires participants to evaluate the level of difficulty when performing some specific tasks in the host culture, using a 5-point scale (from *1-no difficulty* to *5-extreme difficulty*). The Cronbach's α of this scale in previous studies of student sojourners are generally high, ranging from 0.87 to 0.95 (Oguri and Gudykunst, 2002; Li and Gasser, 2005; Wang and Mallinckrodt, 2006; Zhang and Goodson, 2011).

In this study, some items of the SCAS were modified or omitted to ensure its relevance to the student cohort and to minimise misunderstanding. For example, the original items in the

SCAS were *"Finding your way around"* and *"Communicating with people of a different ethnic group"*, which were paraphrased as *"Finding the location which you need to go to"* and *"Interacting with people/ students from different countries apart from your country and the UK"*, respectively.

To increase the internal consistency of the scale, several items (such as *"Interacting with the British of the opposite sex"*), which had consistently low inter-item correlations with other items ($r < 0.3$) and low correlation with the scale's total score ($r=0.128$), were deleted.

Based on the general comments of interviewees in the pilot test, repetitive items such as *"Interacting with people/ students from different countries apart from your country and the UK"* were removed (as these items were already examined in the scale measuring social contact patterns). The final scale consisted of 14 items (see Appendix G for the revised scale). The Cronbach's α of the revised scale was generally high ($\alpha=0.903$). In this study, the items were reverse coded so that higher scores implying fewer difficulties in adjustment, thus, better socio-cultural adaptation.

3.4.4 Psychological adaptation measurement

Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D), created by Radloff (1991), was utilised to measure psychological adaptation of student sojourners. CES-D often examines the level of depression of an individual (Radloff, 1991). The higher the level of depression, the more depressed the students. However, in this study, the items were reverse coded, with higher scores indicating less depression, thus, better psychological adaptation.

CES-D was selected since it has been frequently applied in many previous studies of student sojourners (see Ying and Liese, 1991; Dao *et al.*, 2007; Wei *et al.*, 2007; Zhang and Goodson, 2011; Hamamura and Laird, 2014). Among the non-diagnostic instruments to measure depression, CES-D is one of the most widely used instruments which have consistently yielded valid and reliable data (Bieling *et al.*, 2004). Its Cronbach's α in previous studies was generally high (from 0.82 to 0.92) (Ying and Liese, 1990; Dao *et al.*, 2007; Wei *et al.*, 2007; Zhang and Goodson, 2011).

This study utilised 20 items of CES-D, rated on a 4-point scale. Participants reported the frequency of some feelings that they experienced in the preceding week (*1-rarely or none of the time* to *4-most or all of the time*). However, as most participants did not use English as their first language, some items were reworded to ensure clarity. For instance, *"I could not get going"*, *"I had crying spells"* and *"I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help* *from my family or friends"* were rephrased to *"I felt like I could not take initiative to work"*, *"I cried over nothing at all"* and *"I felt that I could not stop having depressive feelings even with help from my family or friends"*, respectively.

The Cronbach's α of the piloted scale was high (α=0.870), which indicated the high internal consistency among the items (Coaley, 2014) (the positive items were reversely coded during the Reliability Test). All items had moderate inter-item correlations and high item-total correlations. However, based on the feedback of students in the pilot test, two items (i.e., *"I did not feel like eating, my appetite was poor"*, and *"I felt that I could not stop having depressive feelings even with help from my family or friends"*), which were deemed as not very relevant, were omitted from the final scale. The revised scale, hence, contained 18 items (see Appendix H). The Cronbach's α for this revised scale was high (α=0.890).

3.4.5 Academic adaptation

As discussed in 1.4.1, student sojourners are different from other sojourning groups due to their adaptation to the academic environment in the host culture, yet not many research projects have focused on this adaptation domain. Therefore, in this study, several aspects of academic adaptation of student sojourners were examined, namely *adaptation to the academic environment (AAE)*, *student satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP)* and *academic achievements (measured by GPA)*.

- ***Adaptation to the academic environment (AAE)*** was measured by seven items, which were adapted from previous research by Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) and Schartner (2014). Based on a 5-point scale, students rated the difficulty level when performing specific academic tasks (such as *"Understanding lectures", "Taking notes of main points of lectures"* and *"Reading and understanding materials essential for your course [e.g., academic texts and textbooks]"*) (see Appendix I). The Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.895, indicating high internal consistency of the scale's items (Field, 2013). The items were reverse coded, with higher score implying fewer adaptation difficulties, hence, better adaptation.

- ***Student satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP).*** Students indicated satisfaction with their academic performances, including performances in written assignments, examinations and oral presentations, ranging from *1-very unsatisfied* to *5-very satisfied*. The Cronbach α of SSAP scale was high (0.72). This scale was adapted from various studies by Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006); and Hamamura and Laird

(2014). The score of each item was added and averaged to create the total mean score, with higher scores meaning more satisfaction.

- ***Academic achievements.*** Students reported their expected overall results (i.e. GPA) based on the taught modules which they had finished by the time they completed the survey (Schartner, 2014). GPA ranged from fail (<50%), pass (50%-59%), merit (60%-69%) to distinction (>70%), following the common marking scale for postgraduate taught degrees in the UK.

3.5 Interview guide

The interview guide (IG) served as guidance for the researcher and ensured all main research questions were covered in the interview. The IG was developed and modified based on interview instruments of several previous studies on adaptation, adjustment, and cultural identity changes of sojourners, for instance, studies by Pitts (2009); Pitts (2016), Sandel and Liang (2010), Schartner (2014), Kartoshkina (2015), and Starks and Nicholas (2017). Some questions remained intact while some were developed exclusively for this present study (see Appendix J).

Generally, interviews throughout three phases consisted of three main topics: *experiences in the UK*, *cultures and identities* and *social contact in the UK*. Interviews in each phase also contained additional topics which reflected its nature and purpose.

- P1 – early in the sojourn: the IG in this phase included additional sections, such as *expectations and motivations for study abroad* in general and for *the sojourn in the UK* in particular.
- P2 – late in the sojourn: the interview also focused on *adaptation across three domains* (socio-cultural, psychological and academic).
- P3 – repatriation: the interview concentrated on the *re-entry experience and feelings* of student sojourners while staying in the home country.

All interviews started with grand-tour questions[2] which could initiate participants to describe their worlds and express their perspectives (Spradley, 2016). These questions helped me collect the general or background information of the interviewees and create rapport with them. Open-ended questions were mainly used throughout the interview to allow new themes to spontaneously emerge from the individual’s viewpoint (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Yet, to reduce miscommunication, clarification[3] and member-check questions[4] were usually applied in combination with open-ended questions (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). To maintain credibility for interview data, peer debriefing technique[5] was utilised (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Probing was used to elicit information from interviewees and motivate them to rationalise and discover driving forces behind their behaviours (Anderson and Mirosa, 2014). During the interview, anecdotes and stories of personal experiences were often encouraged since these could involve interviewees in the conversation, help them to easily express their thoughts or feelings about research topics and clearly illustrate their points (Keyton, 2006). In the end, clearing-house questions[6] were asked to collect the feedback and comments of interviewees.

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[2] Examples of grand-tour questions used in the interview were “Please tell me more about you/ your hobbies/ your cultures…” and “Can you describe yourself to me?”

To avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication, I paraphrased each key question into different phrases or terms (see Appendix J). Hence, this IG was generally longer than other guides in previous research. Depending on the interview context and the participant's English competence, I flexibly applied the IG, for instance, some questions were skipped, while some were created spontaneously during the interview.

For instance, in most interviews, students were approached with two main questions "What is your cultural identity?" and "Do you feel belonging to your cultures?". Sometimes when the students were confused, the questions were paraphrased into different questions such as "Do you love your cultures?", "Do you feel proud to be a person of your culture?" and "Do you see yourself as a typical person from your culture?".

3.6 Data handling and research analysis methods

3.6.1 Quantitative data handling and analysis methods

Prior to data analysis, all survey answers were screened to identify missing data. Two types of missing data were recognised: 1) *item non-response* which occurred when no response was given to a survey item; and 2) *unit non-response* where the participant dropped out from the research (De Vaus, 2001). With the latter type, I discarded the data which had already been collected in the previous phase.

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[3] Examples of clarification questions used in the interview were "What do you mean by…?" and "What does that word mean?"

[4] Examples of member-check questions used in the interview were "So you mean…?" and "It seems like…, right?"

[5] Examples of peer-debriefing questions used in the interview were "Some even said/ argue/ think that… What do you think about it?"

[6] Examples of clearing-house questions used in the interview were "Is there anything else/ important thing you want to add?"

Item non-response, however, required a more complicated treatment, which is called "random assignment within groups" (De Vaus, 2001, p. 150). Firstly, the sample was divided into groups based on demographic variables (i.e., gender, age and nationality) which were likely to be correlated with the variable of the missing value. Then, the value of the same variable of the nearest preceding case was assigned to the case with the missing value. This tactic of handling missing data could avoid influencing either the variability of the sample or the strength of the correlation (De Vaus, 2001).

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 24) was employed for the analysis of quantitative data. Descriptive analysis was performed to examine the central tendency of the cohort. Other analysis tests such as independent-sample t-tests were performed to compare mean differences across groups and paired-sample t-tests were conducted to observe changes of the mean score over time. As most of the data were not normally distributed (see Appendix K, L, M and N), Spearman's correlation was applied to examine relationships between variables. Simple and multiple regression analyses were then used to clarify the directions of these relationships.

For results in the statistical tests, I used the 5% level of significance, which is mostly commonly used in quantitative research in social sciences (Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Jiao, 2006; Field, 2013). The p-value of 0.05 has been frequently reported and used in applied linguistic research as the acceptable cut-off point for indicating statistical significance (Farsani and Babaii, 2020).

Many scholars have proposed that when reporting statistical tests, researchers are highly recommended to report the effect size, in addition to the p-value. They stress the need to focus on both the practical significance, as judged by the effect size, and the statistical significance, as judged by the p-value, of the results. Lin, Lucas and Shmuelli (2013) raise a concern about the issue of studies with large sample sizes, as sample sizes increase, the p-values quickly approach zero. Relying purely on the p-values, thus, may be problematic. Lin, Lucas and Shmuelli (2013) suggest researchers to report the effect size as a way to address the p-value problem of large sample size studies.

Moreover, there is no straightforward relationship between the p-value and the effect size (Durlak, 2009; Sun, Pan and Wang, 2010). A small p-value cannot be interpreted as the large practical significance of the effect (Sun, Pan and Wang, 2010). It is important to report both values. Thus, in this study, when the tests' results were significant, I reported their effect sizes, together with their p-values.

In terms of interpreting the effect size, three benchmarks introduced by Cohen (1988) have been commonly used, which are ‘small’ (around 0.10), ‘medium’ (around 0.30) and ‘large’ effect size (around 0.50). However, Sun, Pan and Wang (2010) suggest that these values might be applied as general guidelines in the absence of knowledge of the field and previous research. It is inappropriate to strictly apply these conventions in the relatively well-established research field (Durlak, 2009; Sun, Pan and Wang, 2010). A good practice is to interpret the effect size in relation to those reported in previous studies in the area (Durlak, 2009; Sun, Pan and Wang, 2010). I applied the work of Plonsky and Oswald (2014) and Wei, Hu and Xiong (2019) as the benchmark system of the interpretation of the effect size in the applied linguistics field (see Table 5).

Method	**Effect size**	**Benchmark system from applied linguistic research**		
		small	medium	large
t-test	r	0.25	0.40	0.60
Correlation				
Pearson’s	r	0.25	0.40	0.60
Spearman’s	r^2	0.005	0.01	0.02 (0.09 as ‘very large’)
Regression	R^2	0.005	0.01	0.02 (0.09 as ‘very large’)

Table 5: Benchmark System for Effect Sizes in Applied Linguistic Research

3.6.2 Qualitative data handling and analysis method

A computer software called NVivo 11 was used to manage the qualitative data of this study. Thematic analysis, which is recommended by many researchers as the “most useful [method] in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set”; and is also known as the “most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research”, was applied in this study (Greg *et al.*, 2011, p. 10). There were a number of reasons behind this.

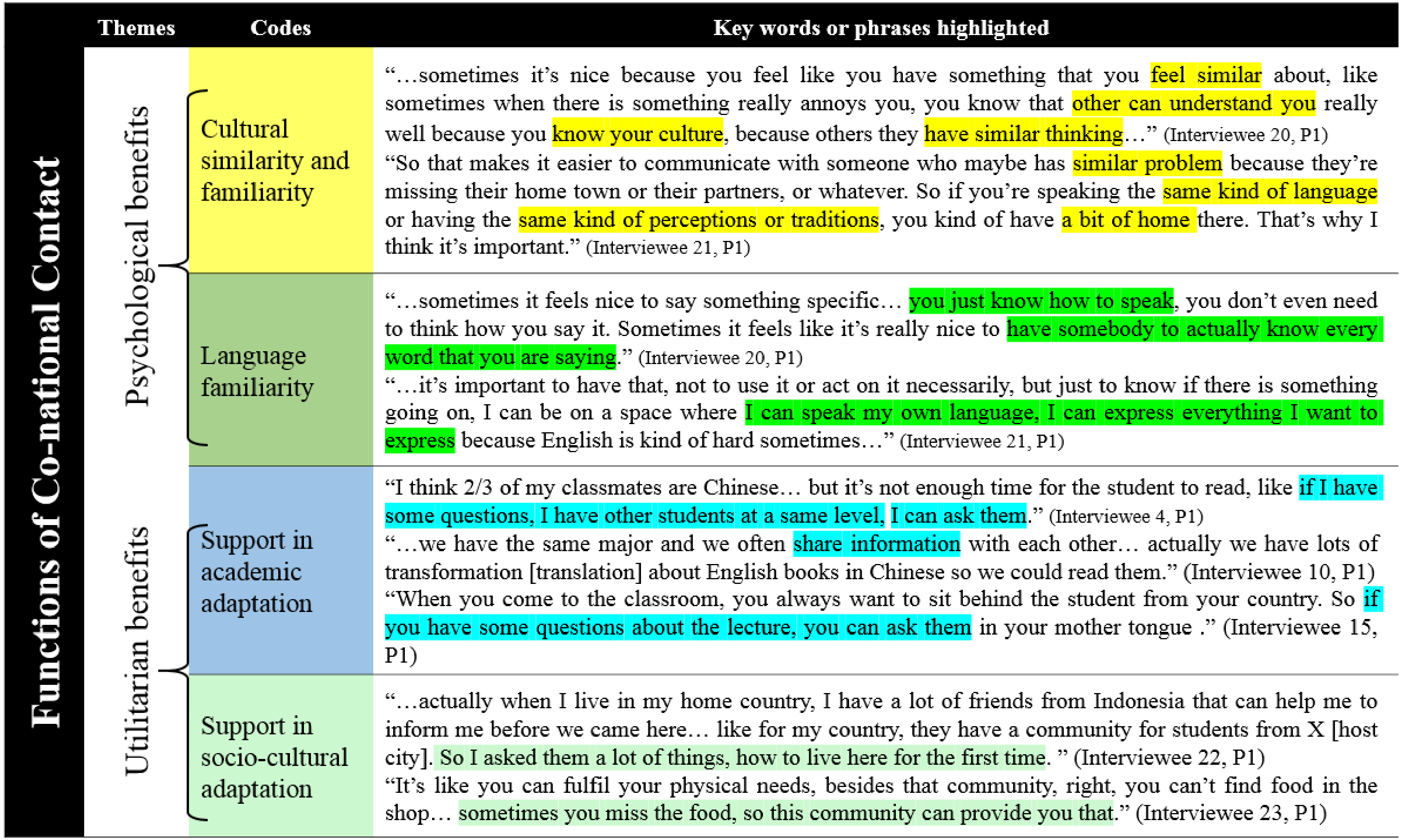
According to Greg *et al.* (2011, p. 10), thematic analysis is a method concentrating on identifying and describing the “explicit and implicit ideas within data”, which are often referred to as *“themes”*. A collection of themes identified within each interview, when being “glued” together, can provide researchers with a holistic image of the interviewee’s collective experience (Aronson, 1995; Hirsch, 2014).

Theoretically, themes are defined as units of patterns such as “conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs" (Taylor *et al.*, 2015, p. 131). By putting together “fragments of ideas or experiences”, which are usually perceived as useless when examined alone, researchers can identity themes arising within data (Aronson, 1995, p. 4).

Furthermore, thematic analysis allows researchers to work “a wide range of research questions, from those about people’s experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts” (Clarke and Braun, 2014, p. 120).

Nevertheless, one drawback of this method is there have been no universal procedures, protocols or techniques for theme generating, and that the procedure of data analysis generally remains implicit (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, it is important to explicitly report techniques of identifying and generating themes in this study. In general, despite employing the work of a number of authors (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Creswell *et al.*, 2003; Braun, 2006), this study applied Clarke and Braun (2014)’s guidelines as the main guidance on using thematic analysis.

First, transcripts were read a few times prior to data analysis so that I could have time to ‘digest’ and ‘familiarise’ with the data. Then, the transcripts were scrutinised. Key words and phrases were highlighted, and the ones that pertained the same behaviours were grouped together under the same category (Clarke and Braun, 2014). Then, these categories were labelled with a term which was often based closely on interviewees’ words. This process is referred to as “coding” (Clarke and Braun, 2014). Next, similarities and differences among the interviews were highlighted. Similar codes were put together. A term to generalise the meaning of a group of codes was developed and this was the “theme” (Clarke and Braun, 2014). The later themes were usually at a higher level and more abstract than the former ones (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Refer to Figure 15 below for examples of themes identified in the interview data in P1 of this study.



	Themes	Codes	Key words or phrases highlighted
Functions of Co-national Contact	Psychological benefits	Cultural similarity and familiarity	"…sometimes it's nice because you feel like you have something that you feel similar about, like sometimes when there is something really annoys you, you know that other can understand you really well because you know your culture, because others they have similar thinking…" (Interviewee 20, P1) "So that makes it easier to communicate with someone who maybe has similar problem because they're missing their home town or their partners, or whatever. So if you're speaking the same kind of language or having the same kind of perceptions or traditions, you kind of have a bit of home there. That's why I think it's important." (Interviewee 21, P1)
		Language familiarity	"…sometimes it feels nice to say something specific… you just know how to speak, you don't even need to think how you say it. Sometimes it feels like it's really nice to have somebody to actually know every word that you are saying." (Interviewee 20, P1) "…it's important to have that, not to use it or act on it necessarily, but just to know if there is something going on, I can be on a space where I can speak my own language, I can express everything I want to express because English is kind of hard sometimes…" (Interviewee 21, P1)
	Utilitarian benefits	Support in academic adaptation	"I think 2/3 of my classmates are Chinese… but it's not enough time for the student to read, like if I have some questions, I have other students at a same level, I can ask them." (Interviewee 4, P1) "…we have the same major and we often share information with each other… actually we have lots of transformation [translation] about English books in Chinese so we could read them." (Interviewee 10, P1) "When you come to the classroom, you always want to sit behind the student from your country. So if you have some questions about the lecture, you can ask them in your mother tongue ." (Interviewee 15, P1)
		Support in socio-cultural adaptation	"…actually when I live in my home country, I have a lot of friends from Indonesia that can help me to inform me before we came here… like for my country, they have a community for students from X [host city]. So I asked them a lot of things, how to live here for the first time. " (Interviewee 22, P1) "It's like you can fulfil your physical needs, besides that community, right, you can't find food in the shop… sometimes you miss the food, so this community can provide you that." (Interviewee 23, P1)

Figure 15: Examples of Themes identified under the Topic of "Functions of Co-national Contact" in the Sojourn

The study applied an inductive approach, in so far that themes identified were data-driven, rather than theory-driven. The inductive approach granted the author more freedom in terms of data analysis and did not limit themes to previous conceptions, which could enable new findings to emerge from the data (Greg *et al.*, 2011).

However, I understood that the coding process could be subjective to the interpretation of the researcher (Greg *et al.*, 2011). To maintain the credibility of research findings, the identified themes were re-interpreted and compared with guiding theories such as the ITCCA of Kim (1988) and the Acculturation Model of Berry (2005) (see 2.2.2). Qualitative findings found at the later phase were contrasted with those of the previous one. Qualitative findings from three phases were then triangulated and integrated with the ones from the quantitative strand. This method could increase the credibility of the study.

3.7 Criteria for evaluating mixed-methods research (MMR)

There are many guidelines in the literature to evaluate the quality of quantitative research, such as internal and external validity (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Onwuegbuzie, 2000), and qualitative method, for instance, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). There is, however, little consensus on criteria for assessing the quality of MMR.

Previously, researchers proposed using qualitative and quantitative criteria for assessing each of the separate component (Krathwohl, 1993; Newman *et al.*, 1998). As MMR is more than the sum of the two strands, many authors have suggested that the combination of the criteria cannot provide sufficient evaluation of MMR, and a core set of criteria for judging the validity of MMR is important for effective design and use of this method (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006; Leech *et al.*, 2010; Creswell *et al.*, 2011; Bryman, 2014; Creswell, 2014; Fàbregues and Molina-Azorín, 2017).

I applied Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006)'s model of assessing the validity of MMR which contains nine types of MMR's legitimation. The term 'legitimation' is preferred over the term 'validity' since the latter is usually associated with the quantitative research paradigm and the former denotes a sense of neutrality (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). This model is used here since it provides flexibility in assessing the whole MMR process, from philosophical stances to data inference (Dellinger and Leech, 2007).

3.7.1 Inside-outside

Inside-outside legitimation refers to the degree to which "the researcher accurately presents and appropriately utilises the insider's view and the observer's views", which allowed for better integration of the qualitative and quantitative sets of inferences (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p.57).

To obtain the justified outsider/ etic viewpoint, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) recommend that the researcher can have some outsiders to review the analysis and conclusions drawn from the data. I, hence, presented my work in academic settings for feedback from other colleagues and researchers, such as an international conference in Spain about intercultural communication, a British conference about higher education, and an informal networking event at a British university. To maintain the justified insider/ emic viewpoint, in each interview, I also used member-check and peer-debriefing questions to check my interpretations and understanding of the interviewee's ideas (see 3.5).

In addition, I acknowledge the importance of reflecting the researcher's position in this study. The experiences and background of researchers influence the research in various stages, such as the literature review process, the choice of research design and the dynamics between researchers and participants, especially in the qualitative method.

First, most of the interviews in this study were undertaken in English, which was the language popularly used among student sojourners (see 4.3.5). At the time the study was conducted, I was also a student sojourner in the UK. The shared background and language position connected me with the participants. I was regarded as an 'insider' in this community of non-UK students, which helped me to gain some trust and build rapport with them. This helped the students to feel more comfortable in discussing some sensitive issues such as cultural stereotypes, cultural identities and social grouping on campus.

Moreover, I was seen, to some extent, as an 'outsider' to the participants as I did not belong to these students' cohort (i.e., taught masters' students) and did not share the same cultural/ national background with the students. This position could enable me to maintain an objective view when examining the investigated phenomenon.

3.7.2 Paradigmatic mixing

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) and Onwuegbuzie *et al.* (2011) suggest that to successfully apply qualitative and quantitative approaches in MMR, researchers need to either combine or ‘mix’ the paradigms of the two approaches. Many researchers have recently started to support the idea of ‘mixing’ paradigms which advocates that instead of being viewed as dualisms, quantitative and qualitative approaches should be treated as continua. It is, thus, possible for mixed researchers to employ a combination of both sets of philosophical stances and assumptions in a study. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) recommend it is important for mixed researchers to explicit report the use of paradigm assumptions and critically reflect how these assumptions are approached and treated in their studies.

Here, I will discuss the philosophical stance of this study, pragmatism, and how this influence the research design.

Since the 1990s, pragmatism, proposed by Howe (1988); Howe (1992), has been developed by many classical pragmatists, for instance, C.S. Peirce, W. James and J. Dewey. In general, pragmatists suggest that there always exists a strong and intrinsic connection between thoughts and actions, theory and practice (Childs, 1961). Pragmatism places high regard for the process of the transaction between organism and environment, rather than endorsing the well-known epistemic distinction between subject and object (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In specific, organisms are suggested to be constantly adapting and responding to the new environment. We, through intelligence, determine our experience (Childs, 1961). Thus, a person should be judged only on their experiences and actions, rather than on anything else (Childs, 1961). Pragmatism, in the present time, has been regarded to be both an epistemology and a methodology itself.

Epistemological pragmatism proposes that knowledge is constructed “through an exercise of thought on experience” and that the production of knowledge is stimulated by nothing but doubt and uncertainty, and catalysed by the desire to search for the resolution to a problem (Maxcy, 2003, p. 76; Bernstein, 2011). Pragmatists, however, insist that the knowledge we obtain through experiments and experiences is only “the instrumental and provisional truth” which is not stagnant, subject to change and “is a matter of degree” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18). Some provisional truths may be perceived as ‘truer’ than others yet can still be dubbed falsehood in the few upcoming days.

Since pragmatism endorses the effect and consequence, methodological pragmatism proposes that effectiveness should be the only criterion that social scientists apply to justify their choices of research methods (Rescher, 1979). Instead of delving into the arduous paradigm wars, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that research questions should be the only driving force behind the chosen method(s). Pragmatism is, therefore, believed to be the "most appropriate epistemology for mixed methods" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Symonds and Gorard, 2008, p. 3). Many pragmatist researchers have tried to establish mixed methods as a separate field, or as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004); Johnson *et al.* (2007) have coined, 'the third paradigm'.

Pragmatism was applied as the epistemological and methodological standpoint for the present research, due to three main following reasons.

First, as postmodernist scholars suggest that identities and cultures are socially constructed and always changing, the continuity and coherence of identities is now seen as a fragile concept or "a myth" (see Chapter 2). It is possible for an individual to have so many contradictory cultural identities (e.g., identification with the home and the host culture) which cannot be unified into a singular self. The study of identity has recently concentrated on examining the construction of identities (i.e., the identification process). Pragmatism, with its endorsement of pluralism and eclecticism, is compatible with the postmodernist concept of the existence of multiple identities within one individual. Therefore, pragmatism allowed me to examine cultural identities under multiple and divergent perspectives. I could present the multifaceted and sometimes contradictory portrayals of cultural identities, without having to "mould" these identities to draw a coherent image of a singular cultural identity of a student sojourner.

Second, if the concepts of cultures and identities have already been regarded as "slippery and contested", examining these complicated concepts using one research method seems to be obsolete and may not accurately portray the all-inclusive pictures of these concepts. Pragmatism enabled me to use new and multiple research methods (i.e., mixed methods) to examine the topics; and to reconstruct and re-appropriate the research tools or techniques based on their workability without identifying and conforming to invariant prior knowledge, theories or valid rules.

Finally, following the epistemological pragmatism, the focus of this present research was concrete, which was to examine the cultural identification process of a student sojourner as a transition process of organism-environment, rather than falling into an old trap of regarding cultural identities as objects of investigation. The focus of the research, then, was shifted to the construction *process* of cultural identities as a response of a student sojourner to fit into the 'international' HE contexts, rather than on examining cultural identities and individuals under the traditional epistemic relationship of external objects and subjects.

3.7.3 Commensurability

This legitimation is developed on the rejection of the incompatibility thesis which insists that quantitative and qualitative methodologies should not and could not be mixed due to the incompatibility of their underlying paradigms (e.g., different ontologies, epistemologies and axiology of the nature of inquiry and research) (Howe, 1988; Guba, 1990). To satisfy this legitimation, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) recommend mixed researchers to learn to make "Gestalt switches" from quantitative to qualitative lens and vice versa. Through this iterative process, a new worldview which transcends the traditional either pure qualitative or quantitative viewpoint can be developed.

The longitudinal and sequential mixed methods design of this study, to some extent, helped me to achieve this legitimation. In particular, in each phase of the research, since quantitative data were collected a few weeks earlier than the qualitative one and the interviewees were selected from the pool of the participants of the quantitative strand, I first run the preliminary quantitative analysis to obtain some information about the interviewees and then conducted the interview. After that, both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed and reported. The process was repeated in the second phase of the research. These allowed me to go back and forth between the two 'lenses' multiple times, thus, helped me to have a more multifaceted view of the researched issue.

The thesis is also structured in a way that facilitates this "Gestalt switch" between quantitative and qualitative viewpoints. From Chapter 4 to Chapter 5, research findings are reported following a structure which starts with 'Quantitative Analysis', 'Qualitative Analysis' and ends with the discussion and integration of data from both strands.

3.7.4 Weakness minimisation

This legitimation deals with the extent to which mixed researchers design the MMR so that one approach's weakness is compensated by the other's strength (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006).

In this study, quantitative research, with a deductive approach, was employed to test and confirm the relationships between social contact, cultural identification levels and adaptation outcomes and to monitor changes in social contact patterns and cultural identities over time. It was also used to test the theory, Berry (2005)'s Acculturation Model in particular. Quantitative data also increased the generalisability of the research and captured the heterogeneity and variance of the investigated sample (Kelle, 2006).

However, the quantitative findings were descriptive and confirmatory, hence, could not explain how the cultural identification process occurred. The qualitative research, with an inductive approach, could address this issue and allowed for the generation or modification of the theory (see 3.1.2).

3.7.5 Sequential

Sequential legitimation refers to the extent to which the meta-inferences drawn from both sets of data could be influenced by the sequential design of MMR (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006; Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2011).

I acknowledge that the sequential design of this study (i.e., quantitative research, followed by the qualitative strand) possibly influenced the interferences of the data. However, as mentioned earlier, quantitative research, with its confirmatory nature, was used to confirm the relationships between the examined variables. Qualitative research, with explanatory nature, was used in this study as a tool to further explain the investigated relationships, for instance, the role of social contact on adaptation and identities, and the rationales behind the changing patterns of contact and identities. The qualitative strand was, therefore, designed in this sequence to accomplish this purpose.

3.7.6 Conversion

Conversion legitimation implies the extent to which the high-quality meta-inferences are made based on the conversation of data from one approach to the other (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006).

Particularly, in this study, the number of participants of the qualitative strand endorsing a particular theme was noted. For example, when analysing the interview data about co-national contact, I counted the number of interviewees who said that they often had a large number of co-national friends (12 out of 18 interviewees) (see 4.2.1). This counting method is considered as one of the most popular way of quantitising data (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2011).

3.7.7 Sample integration

This type of legitimation concerns the extent to which the sampling designs of the qualitative and quantitative strands impact the quality of meta-inferences (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006).

I am aware that the purposive sampling method of this study might reduce the generalisability of the inferences, and the selection of the qualitative from a small sub-set of the quantitative sample might impact statistical generalisation of the meta-inferences to the larger population. However, this sampling method was necessary as it enabled me to control for some variables (e.g., prior overseas experience, the length of the sojourn, the study programme and the proficiency with the host language) which are often reported in previous studies as contributory factors of the sojourn experience of student sojourners (see 3.3).

Since the findings from both quantitative and qualitative research were consistent (see Chapter 4, 5 and 6), the quality of the meta-inference would likely be enhanced (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2011). In addition, the purpose of this study, which was to enhance understanding of the investigated phenomena (i.e., the cultural identification process and social contact patterns of student sojourners) and to revise and modify some previous theories that may not be pertinent to the case of student sojourners, could still be achieved in the absence of statistical sampling methods (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006).

3.7.8 Multiple validities

This legitimation could be achieved if the validity issues specific for each component in MMR, together with MMR's quality issues, are addressed (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). I have discussed the validity issues of quantitative and qualitative research in 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 respectively.

3.7.9 Political

Political legitimation regards the extent to which the political context and landscape in which MMR is produced impacts the research design and how the meta-inferences drawn from quantitative and qualitative data are received (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006).

As Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) explain, due to differences in power and philosophical values, using different researchers to conduct quantitative and qualitative phases of the MMR can influence the meta-inferences of the study. This issue was avoided in this study since I was the primary researcher designing, conducting, analysing the data of both components and integrating the data.

Another issue is the difficulty in convincing the consumers of MMR to value the meta-inferences drawn from both sets of the approach, especially when MMR and qualitative research is not often highly valued (McLean, 2006; Maxwell, 2004). This might be the case in the IC field, however, recently, researchers have started to recognise the importance of MMR and value their contributions to the IC study. Therefore, a diversity in research methodologies has now been highly recommended (Noels *et al.*, 2012).

3.8 Challenges when researching cultural identities

I acknowledged some theoretical and methodological challenges when approaching the study and researching cultural identities.

First, when reviewing the literature, I realised that there was a lack of consensus of the definition of the concept of 'cultural identity'. 'Cultural identity' is often conceptualised as coterminous with 'national identity' and 'ethnic identity' and these terms are sometimes used interchangeably in many studies (see 2.1.3). This ambiguity led to some challenges for the researcher and confusions for participants. In particular, at the beginning of this study, I applied the 'simple' and commonly used definitions of 'cultural identity' in the IC field by Lustig and Koester (2003); Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) and Sussman (2000) (see 1.4.4). However, even when the explanation of the term was given to participants (such as a short definition of cultural identity provided in the written text in the survey and verbally to the interviewees), many of them were either bewildered about this concept, or had conflated it with 'national identity'. Over the duration of the research, the participants' understanding (as well as mine) of this concept was developed and enhanced as they used cultural identity to make sense of who they were and to differentiated themselves with others during intercultural interactions (see 5.2 and 6.1). Based on the participants' stories, I was able to draw findings and propose a revised definition of cultural identity.

Second, many of the social psychological studies in the IC area have drawn from the essentialist and culturalist approaches, which usually portray singular and oversimplified cultural identity of an individual (Holliday, 2006; Holliday, 2010; Dervin, 2012). Individuals from a similar cultural group are perceived to share behavioural similarities, thus, 'culture' is usually used to explain communication differences between people of 'different' groups. Researchers in this field, thus, often conceptualise cross-cultural adaptation of student sojourners to occur between 'two' cultures (i.e., *'host'* and *'home'* cultures), for instance, student sojourns need to learn new behaviours to adapt to the 'host' culture and unlearn 'old' behaviours of 'home' cultures (Sussman, 2000; Kim, 2001 and Berry, 2005). In the beginning, I had applied this perspective when approaching cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment, however, after analysing the data, I realised the complexity of the topic, in so far that the students' adaptation might not always 'follow' this categorisation of *'home'* and *'host'* cultures and they could sometimes create a sub-culture of international students in which they lived and studied (see 4.3.5).

Third, regarding the methodological challenges, I acknowledged the difference between the positivist approach in the quantitative strand, and the constructivist approach in the qualitative strand. As Hua (2016) explains, positivist researchers usually assume that culture is relatively stable and can be isolated to study, and results can be generalised (Hua, 2016). Nations are considered as research units, and cultural values or norms are assumed to be identifiable and measurable, thus, can be treated as variables (Hua, 2016). Cultural identity is perceived to be 'rigid', 'fixed' and binary (i.e., measurement of home and host cultural identification levels). Meanwhile, under interpretivism and constructionism, culture, has been suggested to be socially constructed, subjective and emerge through interactions (Gudykunst *et al.*, 1988). Cultural identity is, therefore, examined as 'fluid', dynamic and emergent from interactions and dependent upon the subject's interpretation.

However, I regarded this difference in perspectives as an advantage of MMR since it can combine and present different viewpoints of two research paradigms within one research project. We can examine cultural identity under different 'lenses', and the meta-inferences drawn from the data of two strands can offer a more thorough 'image' of cultural identity. Another advantage is that MMR can solve both confirmatory and exploratory questions simultaneously; and can test and build theory in one single study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). The main research's aim was to investigate the student sojourners' interpretation of 'cultural identities' and how they employed this in an intercultural and 'international' environment in HE contexts (see 2.4).

In this research, I could monitor and gauge changes in cultural identification levels over time using the quantitative data. Because surveys were distributed before interviews, I performed preliminary analysis of the survey data and openly discussed some key findings with the interviewees, inviting their opinions and interpretation of the findings. This allowed me to have an insightful look into the students' understanding of cultural identity, based on which I could propose some modifications to the bi-dimensional model of cultural identities of student sojourners, and propose findings in the construction of cultural identity in a 'super-diversity' cultural context (see 5.3.2 and 7.3.1).

In general, this chapter presents details of the research methodology, such as the rationale for the research's approaches and design (3.1 and 3.2), details of the sampling method and the research setting (3.3), the development of research instruments (3.4 and 3.5), the data handling and analysis methods (3.6), criteria for judging MMR (3.7) and some challenges when examining cultural identity (3.8).

Particularly, this research is one of the few studies in the area that have applied longitudinal mixed methods research design, using surveys and semi-structured interviews, to study cultural identities, social contact and adaptation outcomes of student sojourners. The research consisted of three phases (i.e., P1 – early in the sojourn, P2 – late in the sojourn, and P3 – re-entry) and was conducted over an extended period (i.e., 16 months). The participants were one-year taught PG international students at a HE institution in the UK. Longitudinal approach was used since it could monitor changes in cultural identities and social contact over time. The application of both surveys and semi-structured interviews helped offset the weaknesses of each of the method (i.e., increasing the credibility of research findings) and provided a stronger inference of the data.

Data analysis and findings are reported in the next three chapters: patterns of social contact, adaptation outcomes and their relationships (Chapter 4); cultural identities and how they were constructed (Chapter 5); and the cultural identification process and the repatriation (Chapter 6). Each chapter also consists of three small parts: quantitative data analysis, qualitative data analysis, discussion and integration of these two sets of data.

The chapters address several research questions, in particular:

- **Chapter 4** focuses on answering the first two research questions: "What are sources and patterns of social contact that student sojourners in the UK usually have?" and "What is the relationship between social contact and adaptation outcomes?"
- **Chapter 5** investigates how student sojourners perceived and constructed their cultural identities in the 'international' environment, "What is the role of social contact in the process of cultural identification?", and "What is the role of adaptation and adjustment in the process of cultural identification?"
- **Chapter 6** aims to answer the last three research questions: "Do student sojourners experience changes in their cultural identities after their sojourn abroad?", "If so, what are the patterns of cultural identity shifts among student sojourners?", "What is the identification process of student sojourners?"

Chapter 4. Patterns of Social Contact, Adaptation Outcomes across Three Domains and their Relationships

The first two research questions (listed below) are unpacked in this chapter.

RQ1: What are sources and patterns of social contact that student sojourners in the UK usually have?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social contact and adaptation outcomes?

The chapter firstly presents descriptive data of patterns of social contact of international students in the host country (i.e., the UK) during the academic sojourn; descriptive statistics of adaptation outcomes across three domains; and results of statistical tests exploring relationships between social contact and adaptation (i.e., correlation and regression analyses) (4.1). A detailed analysis of interview data which examines in depth the rationale for the patterns of contact and the role of social contact in adaptation is then provided (4.2). The chapter is finally concluded by the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data and the discussion of research findings (4.3), followed by the summary of key research findings (4.4).

4.1 Quantitative analysis

The quantity and the quality of social contact in two phases (i.e., early and late in the sojourn), changing patterns of contact, adaptation outcomes, and relationships of contact and adaptation outcomes are presented in this section.

4.1.1 Quantity of social contact

Three types of social contact (with *co-nationals, host nationals and non-co-national internationals*) were examined. Both the quality and the quantity of social contact were measured using a 7-point scale. The contact's quantity was examined by two items: *amount* and *frequency*. The score of the quantity of the contact was then formed by multiplying the total scores of these two items (see 3.4.2).

a. Descriptive analysis

Table 6 shows that in Phase 1 (P1) – early in the sojourn, the total mean score of the quantity of international contact was the highest among the three (M=21.08, SD=12.84), while this of host national contact was the lowest (M=13.89; SD=12.12). Interestingly, in Phase 2 (P2) – late in the sojourn, the mean score of the quantity of co-national contact quickly increased, becoming the highest (M=25.58; SD=14.62), this of international contact was slightly lower (M=24.95; SD=14.14). The quantity of host national contact again had the lowest mean score (see Table 5 below).

	Phase 1			Phase 2		
	QUAN Co-national	**QUAN Host**	**QUAN Intern'l**	**QUAN Co-national**	**QUAN Host**	**QUAN Intern'l**
M	19.92	13.89	21.08	25.58	14.14	24.95
SD	12.24	12.12	12.84	14.62	11.20	14.14

Table 6: Descriptive Analysis of the Quantity of Social Contact in P1 and P2 (N=84)

The data implied that the most frequent and popular sources of contact for international students in the academic sojourn were co-nationals and internationals. Meanwhile, despite living in the UK, the students seemed to have a limited number and frequency of contact with host nationals (i.e., British people and students).

In addition, East Asian and Southeast Asian students seemed to consistently contact more frequently with their co-nationals and less with host nationals and internationals than students from other regions since the independent t-tests of the mean scores of the quantity of social contact in two phases showed significant results (see Table 7).

Particularly, in P1, the mean score of the quantity of co-national contact of East Asian and Southeast Asian students was significantly higher (M= 23.49) than others (M=12.37). The same pattern was maintained in P2 (M=28.63 for those students and M=19.15 for others). However, they tended to contact less frequently with host nationals (M=11.28 for P1 and M=11.93 for P2) and other internationals (M=17.23 for P1 and M=21 for P2). Students from other regions, meanwhile, significantly contacted host nationals (M=19.41 for P1 and M=18.81 for P2) and internationals (M=29.22 for P1 and M=33.30 for P2) more frequently.

	P1 QUAN Co-national	**P1 QUAN Host**	**P1 QUAN Intern'l**	**P2 QUAL Co-national**	**P2 QUAL Host**	**P2 QUAL Intern'l**
M difference	11.12	-8.13	-11.99	3.39	-6.88	-12.30
t	4.28**	-3.01**	-4.42**	1.30**	-2.30*	-4.05**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Table 7: Analyses of Differences of the Quantity of Social Contact in P1 and P2 between East Asian and Southeast Asian Students and Others (N=84)

Several independent t-tests were run but none of the tests had significant results, indicating that in this study, there were not statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the quantity of social contact of the students, grouped by the demographic factors (i.e., genders, accommodation types and schools of programmes) (see Appendix O for the non-significant results).

Due to the significant K-S tests and the skewness problems, the data (i.e., patterns of social contact) were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests (such as Spearman's correlations) were applied to examine relationships of patterns of social contact and other variables. Refer to Appendix K for the frequency statistics and the K-S tests of patterns of social contact.

b. Quantity of contact and three adaptation domains

Significant correlations and regressions were found between the quantity of social contact and adaptation outcomes of international students. In general, the quantity of international contact and host national contact had positive impacts on academic adaptation of international students. The more international and host national friends and the more frequent contact the students had, the better the academic adaptation, the higher the academic satisfaction and the higher the GPA. The quantity of co-national contact, however, seemed to negatively correlate with GPA, in so far that the higher the quantity, the lower the GPA.

The results of correlation tests between the quantity of three types of contact and socio-cultural adaptation and psychological adaptation were not statistically significant. There is not enough evidence to say that having the large amount and frequent contact with co-national, host national and international peers may predict the students' socio- and psychological adaptation.

Detailed analyses of adaptation outcomes are provided in 4.1.3, 4.1.4 and 4.1.5. A brief summary of the test results is presented below.

Socio-cultural adaptation	1. Quantity of co-national contact correlated negatively with socio-cultural adaptation (r=-0.09), but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.44). 2. Quantity of host national contact correlated positively with socio-cultural adaptation (r=0.19), but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.08).

	3. Quantity of international contact correlated positively with socio-cultural adaptation (r=0.05), but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.65).
Academic adaptation *Academic adaptation was measured by three indicators: adaptation to academic environment (AAE), students' satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP) and academic achievements (measured by GPA) (see 4.1.4).*	1. Quantity of co-national contact correlated negatively with AAE (r= -0.14) but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.52). 2. Quantity of host national contact correlated positively with AAE (r=0.17) but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.11). 3. Quantity of international contact correlated positively with AAE (r=0.35, p<0.05) and significantly predicted AAE (β = 0.36, t(82) = 3.44, R2=0.126, p<0.05). 4. Quantity of co-national contact correlated negatively with SSAP (r= -0.07) but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.52). 5. Quantity of host national contact correlated positively with SSAP (r=0.25, p<0.05) and significantly predicted it (β = 0.25, t(82) = 2.33, R^2=0.062, p<0.05). 6. Quantity of international contact correlated positively with SSAP (r=0.51, p<0.05) and significantly predicted SSAP (β = 0.47, t(82) = 4.80, R^2=0.219, p<0.05). 7. Quantity of co-national contact negatively correlated with GPA (r= -0.27, p<0.05). 8. Quantity of host national contact correlated positively with GPA (r=0.21) but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.06). 9. Quantity of international contact positively correlated with GPA (r=0.48, p<0.05).
Psychological adaptation	1. Quantity of co-national contact correlated positively with psychological adaptation (r=0.11), but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.30). 2. Quantity of host national contact correlated positively with psychological adaptation (r=0.08), but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.45).

	3. Quantity of international contact correlated negatively with psychological adaptation (r=-0.06), but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.61).

c. Changing patterns of quantity of contact in academic sojourn

The difference between the mean scores of the quantity of host national contact in two phases was not normally distributed (see Appendix L), Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to compare the means of these two variables in P1 and P2. For other variables which were normally distributed, dependent paired-samples t-tests were applied. The results showed that there was an increase in the quantity of co-national and international contact while there was not a significant rise in the quantity of host national contact.

In particular, the quantity of co-national contact increased from M=19.92, SD=12.24 to M=25.58, SD=14.62, t(82)= 4.16, $p<0.05$, with moderate effect size, r=0.42. These results showed the increase had statistical and practical significance, indicating that after nearly nine months in the UK, student sojourners had a tendency to contact more frequently and with higher amount of contact with their compatriots.

The quantity of international contact increased from M=21.08, SD=12.84 to M= 24.95, SD=14.14, t(82)= 2.89, $p<0.05$, with moderate effect size, r=0.30. These results suggested that it was likely that student sojourners would interact with more international colleagues at a higher frequency after nearly nine months in the UK.

Although the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that there was a small increase in the quantity of contact with host nationals (from M=13.89, SD=12.12 to M=14.14, SD=12.20), this figure was not statistically significant (p=0.31).

It could be concluded that generally in the first three months into the academic year, student sojourners often communicated frequently with many co-national and non-co-national international peers, whereas they tended to communicate less frequently with a smaller number of host national people and students. These patterns remained relatively the same throughout the academic year, but there was a probability that the students would maintain a higher amount of and more frequent contact with their co-nationals and internationals (see Figure 16).

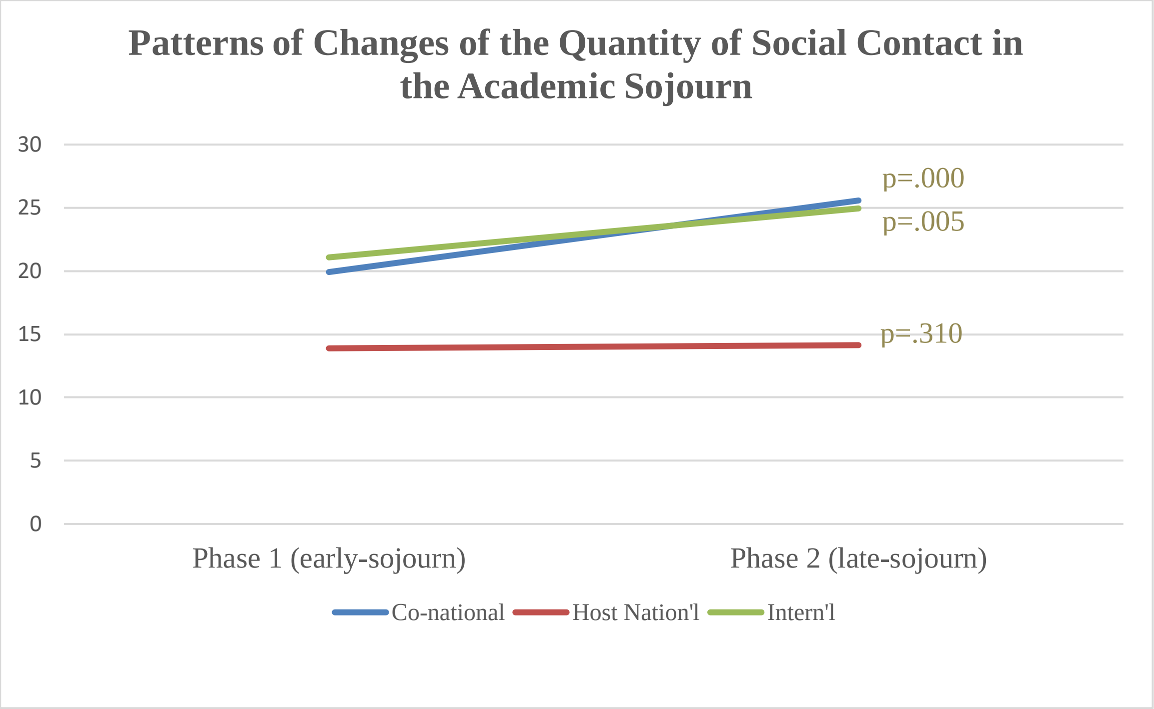


Figure 16: Changing Patterns of the Quantity of Social Contact (with p-value) in Two Phases (N=84)

Table 8 presents the differences[7] between the mean scores of the quantity of social contact of East Asian and Southeast Asian students in P1 and P2. The results implied that students from East Asia and Southeast Asia were more likely to contact their co-nationals, r=0.35, and other internationals more frequently and in a larger amount over time, r=0.30.

	DIFF QUAN Co-national	**DIFF QUAN Host**	**DIFF QUAN Intern'l**
M	4.89	0.63	3.61
SD	13.26	11.53	11.70
t	2.76**	.41	2.31*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 8: Analyses of Differences of the Quantity of Social Contact of East Asian and Southeast Asian Students in P1 and P2 (N=56)

Several independent t-tests were run to examine the differences in the changes of the contact quantity of student sojourners grouped by demographic factors (i.e., genders, departments of study and accommodation types), but none of the results were statistically significant (see Appendix R).

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[7] The differences between the mean scores of the contact quantity in two phases was calculated by the equation: M = P2 – P1.

d. Changing patterns of quantity of contact and three adaptation domains

Since the difference between the mean scores of the quantity of host national contact in two phases were not normally distributed (see Appendix L), Spearman's correlation tests were applied to examine the relationship between that variable and three adaptation domains. Pearson's correlation tests were applied for other normally distributed variables.

Data indicate that the change in the quantity of international contact positively correlated with GPAs, though the correlation was weak (r=0.27) (see Table 9). In other words, international students experiencing an increase in the quantity of contact with other non-co-national internationals after the academic sojourn in the UK tended to achieve higher GPAs.

	DIFF QUAN Co-national	**DIFF QUAN Host**	**DIFF QUAN Intern'l**
Sociocultural	.04	.17	.08
Psychological	.09	.12	.04
AAE	.11	.05	.20
SSAP	.06	.12	.04
GPA	-.07	.04	.27**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 9: Correlations of Patterns of Changes of the Quantity of Social Contact and Three Domains of Adaptation Outcomes (N = 84)

Notes: *Academic adaptation was measured by three indicators: adaptation to academic environment (AAE), students' satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP) and academic achievements (measured by GPA) (see 4.1.4).*

The simple linear regression was then performed to examine if the increase in the quantity of international contact could predict the GPAs of the students and if so, how much of the variance could be explained by the predictor.

Table 10 shows that the increase in the quantity of international contact significantly predicted GPAs though it could explain only a small amount (7%) of the variance. This result implied that students who had an increasing number of non-co-national international friends and kept frequent contact with these friends usually acquire better academic results. This result, again, confirmed the important role of international contact in academic adaptation of student sojourners, but it also suggested that there could be other factors that predicted the GPAs of the students, besides the quantity of international contact.

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	R^2	F change
	Beta	Std. Error	β				
DIFF QUAN Intern'l	.02	.01	.27	2.45	.016	.070	6.022

Table 10: Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Patterns of Changes of the Quantity of International Contact and GPA (N = 84)

4.1.2 Quality of social contact

The quality of social contact was measured by the *pleasantness* and *closeness* of contact. The scale items were adapted from previous research by Brown et al. (1999); Brown et al. (2001); Voci and Hewstone (2003); Cox (2004) and Meng et al. (2017). The score of the quality of contact was then formed by multiplying the score of these two items (c.f. Brown *et al.*, 1999; Brown *et al.*, 2001) (see 3.4.2).

a. Descriptive analysis

Table 11 shows that in P1, the total mean score of the quality of co-national contact was the highest among the three (M=28.76, SD=13.71), while this of host national contact was the lowest (M=18.61, SD=11.14). This pattern stayed the same throughout the year. In P2, the mean score of the quality of co-national contact remained the highest (M=31.98, SD=11.05). The mean score of the quality of host national contact in P2 again was the lowest (see Table 11 below).

	Phase 1			Phase 2		
	QUAL Co-national	QUAL Host	QUAL Intern'l	QUAL Co-national	QUAL Host	QUAL Intern'l
M	28.76	18.61	25.40	31.98	19.69	25.90
SD	13.71	11.14	12.10	11.05	10.52	12.21

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics of the Quality of Social Contact of Student Sojourners in the Sojourn

It was logical to assume that in this study, co-nationals appeared to be the most favourable source of contact for international students since most of the students often maintained close relationships and had pleasant experiences with the said group. This pattern was even enforced after nearly nine months in the UK.

Several independent t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores of the quality of social contact of the students grouped by demographic factors. Regions of origin appeared to play an important role. Particularly, students from East Asia and Southeast Asia kept significantly closer relationships with their co-nationals while maintaining superficial relationships with their international peers early in the sojourn (see Table 12).

Table 12 indicates that in P1, the mean score of the quality of relationships with their compatriots was relatively higher (M=31.23) than those of students from other regions (M=23.56), r=0.31. In P2, the mean score of the quality of their contact with non-co-national internationals was, however, lower (M=23.21) those of other students (M=31.59), r=0.38.

	P1 QUAL Co-national	**P1 QUAL Host national**	**P1 QUAL Intern'l**	**P2 QUAL Co-national**	**P2 QUAL Host national**	**P2 QUAL Intern'l**
M difference	7.67	-4.18	-3.66	3.87	-4.28	-8.38
t	2.47*	-1.62	-1.30	2.89	-1.76	-3.09**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Table 12: Analyses of Differences of the Quality of Social Contact in P1 and P2 between East Asian and Southeast Asian Students and Others (N=56)

There were, however, no significant differences in the mean scores of the quality of social contact grouped by other demographic factors (i.e., genders, accommodation types and schools of programmes) since the tests' results were not significant (see Appendix O).

b. Quality of contact and three adaptation domains

Significant correlations and regressions were found between the quality of social contact and the adaptation of international students.

Overall, the results show that the quality of host national contact positively predicted socio-cultural adaptation, in so far that the better the relationships with host nationals, the better socio-cultural adaptation. There were, however, not enough evidence to support the relationships between the quality of co-national contact, international contact and socio-cultural adaptation. In other words, having good quality of contact with compatriots and international friends may not influence the students' socio-cultural adaptation.

The good quality co-national contact, meanwhile, could help improve psychological adaptation of international students, as the simple linear regression showed a significant result, but there were no relationships between the quality of host national contact, international contact and psychological adaptation, as the tests' results were not statistically significant.

Moreover, students with better relationships with non-co-national internationals and host nationals tended to achieve better academic adaptation, feel more satisfied with their academic performance and have higher GPAs. However, the good quality of contact with compatriots might not be helpful for their study as there were no significant relationships between the quality of co-national contact and academic adaptation, satisfaction with academic performances and GPAs.

Detailed analyses of adaptation outcomes are provided in 4.1.3, 4.1.4 and 4.1.5. A brief summary of the test results is presented below.

Socio-cultural Adaptation	1. Quality of co-national contact correlated positively with socio-cultural adaptation (r=0.01), but the test was not significant statistically (p=0.92). 2. Quality of host national contact correlated positively with socio-cultural adaptation (r=0.24, p<0.05) and significantly predicted it (β= 0.26, t(82)= 2.42, R^2=0.067; p<0.05). 3. Quality of international contact correlated positively with socio-cultural adaptation (r=0.09), but the test was not statistically significant (p=0.43).

Academic Adaptation *Academic adaptation was measured by three indicators: adaptation to academic environment (AAE), students' satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP) and academic achievements (measured by GPA) (see 4.1.4).*	1. Quality of co-national contact correlated negatively with AAE ($r=-0.04$), but the test was not significant statistically ($p=0.71$). 2. Quality of host national contact correlated positively with AAE ($r=0.27$, $p<0.05$) but the simple linear regression test with the quality of host national contact as the predictor of AAE did not yield significant result ($\beta = 0.21$, $t(82) = 1.96$, $R^2=0.05$, $p=0.05$). 3. Quality of international contact correlated positively with AAE ($r=0.39$, $p<0.05$) and significantly predicted AAE ($\beta = 0.39$, $t(83) = 3.84$, $R^2=0.152$, $p<0.05$). 4. Quality of co-national contact correlated positively with SSAP ($r=0.07$), but the test was not significant statistically ($p=0.54$). 5. Quality of host national contact correlated positively with SSAP ($r=0.34$, $p<0.05$) and significantly predicted it ($\beta = 0.34$, $t(82) = 3.29$, $R^2=0.116$, $p<0.05$). 6. Quality of international contact correlated positively with SSAP ($r=0.47$, $p<0.05$) and significantly predicted SSAP ($\beta = 0.46$, $t(82) = 4.63$, $R^2=0.208$, $p<0.05$). 7. Quality of co-national contact correlated negatively with GPA ($r=-0.09$), but the test was not significant statistically ($p=0.41$). 8. Quality of host national contact correlated positively with GPA ($r=0.16$), but the test was not significant statistically ($p=0.16$). 9. Quality of international contact positively correlated with GPA ($r=0.40$, $p<0.05$).
Psychological Adaptation	1. Quality of co-national contact correlated positively psychological adaptation ($r=0.24$, $p<0.05$) and significantly predicted it ($\beta = 0.39$, $t(82) = 3.87$ and $R^2 = 0.154$, $p<0.05$). 2. Quality of host national contact correlated positively with psychological adaptation ($r=0.21$), but the test was not significant statistically ($p=0.06$).

	3. Quality of international contact correlated positively with psychological adaptation (r=0.06), but the test was not significant statistically (p=0.58).

c. Changing patterns of quality of contact in academic sojourn

The difference between the mean scores of the quality of social contact in two phases was normally distributed (see Appendix L), hence dependent paired-samples t-tests were applied. Results shows that there was a significant increase in the mean score of the quality of co-national contact but there was not a significant increase in the quality of host national and international contact.

In particular, the quality of co-national contact increased from M=28.76, SD=13.71 to M=31,98, SD=11.05, t(82)=2.10, p<0.05, with small effect size of r=0.22. This showed that the increase had statistical and practical significance, indicating that after 9 months in the UK, there was a small tendency that student sojourners could feel more bonded with their compatriots.

Meanwhile, the quality of host national contact increased from M=18.61, SD=11.14 to M=19.69, SD=10.52, and the quality of international contact from M=25.40, SD=12.10 to M=25.90, SD=12.11. However, these differences were not statistically significant (p-values <0.05) and the effect sizes nearly approached zero (r=0.09 and 0.03, respectively), indicating no effect. This meant that by the end of their nine-month prorgammes, student sojourners might not feel closer to their host national and international friends.

It can be concluded that at early in the sojourn, most of the international students in this study were more likely to have close and pleasant relationships with co-national and international friends. However, after nearly nine months in the UK, they seemed to develop relatively better and closer friendships with their co-national peers (see Figure 17).

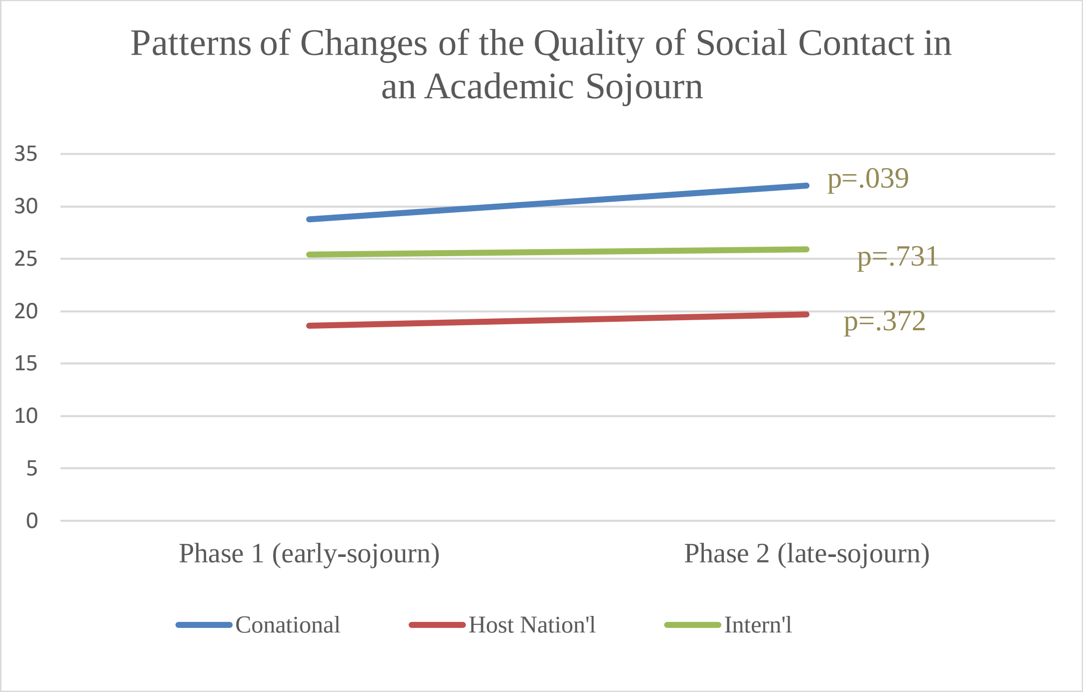

Figure 17: Changing Patterns of the Quality of Social Contact (with p-value) in Two Phases (N=84)

Several independent t-tests were run to examine relationships of demographic factors (i.e., genders, accommodation types and schools of programmes) and changes in the quality of social contact. Results show that there was a significant difference in the changes in the quality of co-national contact between students of different accommodation types. Students in in private accommodation usually experienced an increase in the quality of co-national contact (M=6.83, SD=12.93), while students living in university accommodation tended to experience a decrease in the quality of co-national contact (M= -0.10, SD= 14.37) after nearly nine months in the UK. This difference was statistically significant, t(81)=-2.31, p=0.02, yet, the effect size was quite small with r=0.26. Other independent t-tests, however, did not yield significant results (see Appendix R).

d. Changing patterns of quality of contact and three adaptation domains

Table 13 indicates that the changes in the quality of co-national contact and host national contact positively correlated with psychological adaptation with r=0.29 and r=0.22, respectively, though the correlation was weak (see 4.1.3, 4.1.4 and 4.1.5 for data analyses of adaptation across three domains). In other words, international students who could strengthen relationships with their co-national and host national peers after approximately nine months in the UK tended to achieve better psychological well-being.

Pearson’s correlation tests also showed significant correlations between the change in the quality of international contact and academic adaptation and GPA. This meant that the students who could build closer and better-quality relationships with the said group over time were more likely to achieve better academic adaptation and higher GPA.

	DIFF QUAL Co-national	**DIFF QUAL Host**	**DIFF QUAL Intern'l**
Sociocultural	.15	.21	.18
Psychological	.29**	.22*	.02
AAE	.12	.12	.34**
SSAP	.13	.14	.11
GPA	.05	.07	.22*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 13: Pearson's Correlations of Patterns of Changes of the Quality of Social Contact and Three Domains of Adaptation Outcomes (N = 84)

Notes: *Academic adaptation was measured by three indicators: adaptation to academic environment (AAE), students' satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP) and academic achievements (measured by GPA) (see 4.1.4).*

Several simple linear regression analyses were performed to identify if these patterns of changes could predict the adaptation outcomes and how much of the variance could be explained by the predictors. Table 14 shows that the increase in the quality of co-national contact significantly predicted psychological adaptation and could explain 7.1% of the variance. The increase in the quality of host national contact also influenced psychological adaptation but could only explain a small amount (4.7%) of the data variance. In other words, building better and closer relationships with co-nationals and host nationals during the sojourn might help international students experience less psychological depression when studying in the UK. However, the results also suggested that there were other possible factors influencing psychological stress of the students.

		Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	R^2	**F change**
		Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**				
Model 1	DIFF QUAL Co-national	.01	.00	.29	2.72	.008	.071	7.38
Model 2	DIFF QUAL Host	.025	.01	.22	2.02	.047	.047	4.06

Table 14: Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Patterns of Changes of the Quality of Social Contact and Psychological Adaptation (N = 84)

The increase in the quality of international contact also predicted academic adaptation of the students and GPA. 11.2% of variance in academic adaptation and nearly 5% of the GPA's variance could be explained by this variable (see Table 15 below). This suggested that while the increase in the quality of international contact played an important role in predicting academic adaptation of student sojourners, it played a relatively minor role in predicting their GPAs. The results implied that if international students could strengthen and deepen their relationships with international friends, they were more likely to achieve better academic adaptation and higher GPAs at the end of the year.

		Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	R^2	**F change**
		Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**				
Model 1	DIFF QUAL Intern'l	.02	.01	.34	3.22	.002	.112	10.39
Model 2	DIFF QUAL Intern'l	.01	.01	.22	2.03	.046	.049	4.11

Table 15: Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Patterns of Changes of the Quality of International Contact as the Predictor of Academic Adaptation (Model 1) and GPAs (Model 2) (N = 84)

4.1.3 Socio-cultural adaptation outcomes and their relationships with social contact

Socio-cultural adaptation was measured in the second phase of data collection (May – June 2018), using a 5-point scale. The score of the scale was reverse coded so that the higher the score, the better the adaptation (see 3.4.3).

Socio-cultural adaptation's total score, in general, was high (M = 4.09, SD = 0.55), which indicated that international students encountered little difficulty in adapting to the new socio-cultural environment in the UK. Specifically, more than half achieved high mean scores (above 4 out of a five-point scale), and only 1.2% scored it below 3 (see Table 16).

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Low (below 3)	1	1.2
Moderate (from 3 – 4)	35	41.7
High (above 4)	48	57.1

Table 16: Frequency of Socio-cultural Adaptation Outcomes (N=84)

Due to the skewness issue (refer to Appendix M), socio-cultural adaptation scores were not normally distributed, thus Spearman's correlation tests were performed to detect relationships between socio-cultural adaptation and patterns of social contact. Results of the tests show no significant correlations between the quantity of social contact and socio-cultural adaptation, however, the quality of the contact, specifically the quality of host national contact, correlated positively yet weakly with the mean score of socio-cultural adaptation (r=0.24; see Table 17 below).

	r
Quantity of social contact	
QUAN Co-national	-.09
QUAN Host Nation'l	.19
QUAN Intern'l	. 05
Quality of social contact	
QUAL Co-national	. 01
QUAL Host Nation'l	.24*
QUAL Intern'l	.09

**p<0.05 (2-tailed)*

Table 17: Spearman's Correlations of Social Contact and Sociocultural Adaptation (N = 84)

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine whether the quality of host national contact could predict socio-cultural adaptation. If so, how much of the variance of socio-cultural adaptation could be explained by the contact quality. The result shows the quality of host national contact significantly predicted socio-cultural adaptation ($\beta = 0.26$, $t(82) = 2.42$, $p<0.05$) but accounted for only 6.7% of the data variance (see Table 18). This meant that international students who had close-knit relationships with host nationals usually encountered fewer difficulties in adapting to the socio-cultural environment of the host country, but there might be other possible factors influencing socio-cultural adaptation.

	Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig**	**R^2**	**F change**
	Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**				
QUAL Host	.01	.01	.26	2.42	.018	.067	5.85

Table 18: Simple Linear Regression Analysis with the Quality of Host National Contact as the Predictor of Socio-cultural Adaptation (N=84)

Reasons for the relationship between these two variables will be presented in the next part, qualitative analysis (4.2).

Several independent t-tests were performed to examine the differences in the mean scores of the socio-cultural adaptation of international students, grouped by demographic factors (i.e., genders, departments of study and accommodation types), but none yielded significant results (see Appendix P).

4.1.4 Academic adaptation outcomes and their relationships with social contact

Academic adaptation was measured by three indicators: adaptation to academic environment (AAE), students' satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP) and academic achievements (measured by GPA) (see 4.1.4).

a. Student's Adaptation to Academic Environment (AAE)

Seven items to measure the student's adaptation to the new academic environment (AAE) at the end of the sojourn were adapted from previous research by Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) and Schartner (2014). The items were reverse coded so that the higher the score, the better the adaptation (see 3.4.5). The total AAE's mean score ranged around moderate to high (M = 3.84, SD = 0.77), which was measured on a five-point scale.

Table 19 shows that the majority achieved moderate adaptation outcomes (46.4% scored from 3 to 4) and 40% achieved good outcomes. Only a very small amount experienced relatively bad outcomes of adaptation.

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Low (below 3)	11	12.1
Moderate (from 3 – 4)	39	46.4
High (above 4)	34	40.5

Table 19: Frequency of Adaptation to the New Academic Environment (AAE) (N=84)

In addition, there was a significant relationship between regions and AAE score. Specifically, East Asian students appeared to experience more difficulties in adapting to the new academic environment since their AAE's total score was significantly lower (M = 3.68, SD= 0.09) than students from other regions (M = 4.17, SE = 0.16); t(82) = -2.89, p= 0.005), r=0.30.

Several independent t-tests were performed to examine the differences in the mean scores of the academic adaptation of international students, grouped by other demographic factors (i.e., genders, departments of study, and accommodation types), but none yielded significant results (see Appendix P).

Table 20 shows that there was a positive and moderate correlation between the degree of non-co-national international contact and AAE (r=0.35 for the contact's quantity, r=0.39 for the quality); which meant that students who had large quantity of international friends were also the ones who adapted better to the new academic environment.

International students with closer relationships with host national students tended to achieve better adaptation, since the result indicates a weak correlation between the quality of host national contact and AAE (r=0.27, p<0.05). The correlation between co-national contact and AAE was, however, not statistically significant.

	r
Quantity of social contact	
QUAN Co-national	-.14
QUAN Host Nation'l	.17
QUAN International	.35**
Quality of social contact	
QUAL Co-national	-.04
QUAL Host Nation'l	.27*
QUAL International	.39**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 20: Spearman's Correlations of Social Contact and AAE (N = 84)

Simple linear regression analysis was then run to examine its role as the predictor of AAE and how much variance explained. The result showed that the quantity of international contact exerted moderate influence on AAE (β = 0.36, t(82) = 3.44, p<0.05) and could explain 12.6% of the variance. Similarly, the quality of the contact also predicted AAE (β = 0.39, t(82)=3.84, p<0.05) and accounted for 15.2% of the variance (see Table 21 below). These results, again, confirmed the importance of the quality of contact with non-co-national internationals to the academic adaptation of the students.

		Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	R^2	**F change**
		Beta	**Std. Error**	**B**				
Model 1	QUAN Intern'l	.02	.01	.36	3.44	.00	.13	11.84
Model 2	QUAL Intern'l	.03	.01	.39	3.84	.00	.15	14.73

Table 21: Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Social Contact and AAE (N = 84)

b. Student's satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP)

Students reported their satisfaction with academic performances (i.e., oral presentation, written assignments and exams) using a 5-point scale, with the higher the score, the more satisfaction (see 3.4.5).

In general, international students were moderately satisfied with their academic performances (M=3.52, SD=0.99). More than half of them achieved moderate satisfaction, 19% had high satisfaction and only 16.7% experienced low satisfaction (see Table 22).

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Low (below 3)	14	16.7
Moderate (from 3 – 4)	54	64.3
High (above 4)	16	19.0

Table 22: Frequency of Student's Satisfaction of Academic Performances (SSAP) (N=84)

International contact had significantly moderate correlation with SSAP (r=0.51 for the quantity of contact and r=0.47 for the quality) (see Table 23 below). In particular, the more international friends the students had and the closer they bonded, the more satisfied they felt with their study. Interestingly, host national contact also correlated with SSAP though the correlations were not as high (r=0.25 for the quantity and r=0.32 for the quality). This meant that students who were satisfied with their academic performances were usually the ones having close and frequent relationships with many host national students.

	r
Quantity of social contact	
QUAN Co-national	-.07
QUAN Host Nation'l	.25*
QUAN International	.51**
Quality of social contact	
QUAL Co-national	.07
QUAL Host Nation'l	.34**
QUAL International	.47**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 23: Spearman's Correlations of Social Contact and SSAP (N = 84)

The quantity and the quality of host national contact significantly predicted SSAP. However, the quantity of the contact explained only a small amount (6.2%) of the data variance (β = 0.25, t(82) = 2.33=, $p<0.05$), while the quality of the contact explained 11.6% of the variance (β = 0.34=, t(82) = 3.29, $p<0.05$) (see Table 24). This suggested that the quality of host national contact was more important than its quantity in predicting SSAP.

The quantity and the quality of international contact significantly predicted SSAP (β = 0.47, t(82) = 4.80, $p<0.05$ for the quantity; and β = 0.46, t(82) = 4.63, $p<0.05$ for the quality). The quantity of international contact explained 21.9% of the variance of the mean score of SSAP while its quality explained 20.8% of the data variance, indicating the important role of international contact in the students' satisfaction (see Table 24). These results suggested that having more and closer relationships with internationals and host nationals could make international students feel more satisfied with their academic performances.

		Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig**	***R^2***	**F change**
		Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**				
Model 1	QUAN Host	.02	.01	.25	2.33	.02	.062	5.44
Model 2	QUAL Host	.03	.01	.34	3.29	.00	.116	10.79
Model 3	QUAN Intern'l	.03	.01	.47	4.80	.00	.219	23.00
Model 4	QUAL Intern'l	.03	.01	.46	4.63	.00	.208	21.47

Table 24: Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Social Contact and SSAP (N = 83)

Several independent t-tests were performed to examine the differences in the mean scores of the students' SSAP grouped by demographic factors (i.e., genders, departments of study and accommodation types) but none yielded significant results (see Appendix P).

c. Academic achievement - students' results of taught modules (measured by GPA)

International students reported their estimated final grades for their taught modules (GPA) at the end of the academic year. The students generally achieved good results in the taught modules of their master's programmes. Within the sample size of 84 (with 7 missing cases), 50% of the students achieved a Merit band score (GPA from 60% to 69%), 26.2% of the students received Pass (GPA from 50-59%) and 22.6% passed with Distinction (GPA above 70%). There was only one student whose score was below average (GPA below 50%).

Table 25 shows that the quantity of co-national contact negatively correlated with the GPAs of the students. In particular, the more they contacted with their co-nationals, the lower their GPAs ($r=-0.27$, $p<0.05$), yet the correlation was weak. Spearman's tests of the quantity and the quality of international contact and GPA also yielded significant results with positive and moderate correlations among the tested variables (Table 25). The results indicated that the more the students contacted with their international peers, the higher GPA they achieved ($\beta = 0.48$, $p<0.05$). Also, the closer and more pleasant the relationship they had with the said group, the better their GPAs ($\beta = 0.40$, $p<0.05$).

	r
Quantity of social contact	
QUAN Co-national	-.27*
QUAN Host Nation'l	.21
QUAN International	.48**
Quality of social contact	
QUAL Co-national	-.09
QUAL Host Nation'l	.16
QUAL International	.40**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 25: Spearman's Correlations of Social Contact and GPA (N = 84)

4.1.5 Psychological adaptation outcomes and their relationships with social contact

To measure psychological adaptation outcomes of the students, this study utilised 20 items of the CES-D of Radloff (1991), rated on a four-point scale. The items were then reversely coded, so that the higher the total score indicated the better the psychological adaptation (see 3.4.4).

International students, in general, experienced little psychological depression at the end of the sojourn since the total score of psychological adaptation remained high (M=3.29, SD=0.51). In fact, nearly three quarters of the students achieved high mean scores (above 3) and only a small amount experienced low psychological adaptation outcomes (see Table 26).

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Low (below 2)	1	1.2
Moderate (from 2 – 3)	21	25.0
High (above 3)	62	73.8

Table 26: Frequency of Psychological Adaptation Outcomes (N=84)

Several independent t-tests were performed to examine the relationships of demographic factors (i.e., genders, schools of master's programmes and types of accommodation) and psychological adaptation, yet the results were not statistically significant.

Since patterns of social contact were not normally distributed (see Appendix K), Spearman's correlation tests were applied to test the relationship of psychological adaptation and contact patterns. Table 27 indicates that there was a moderate correlation of the quality of co-national contact, instead of the contact's quantity, and psychological adaptation (r=0.34, p<0.05).

		r
Quantity of social contacts		
	QUAN Co-national	.11
	QUAN Local	.08
	QUAN International	-.06
Quality of social contacts		
	QUAL Co-national	.34**
	QUAL Local	.21
	QUAL International	.06

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 27: Spearman's Correlations of Social Contact Patterns and Psychological Adaptation (N = 84)

Simple linear regression analysis was then performed to examine if this variable could. predict psychological adaptation outcome, and if so, to measure how much of the variance explained. The quality of the contact significantly predicted psychological adaptation (β = 0.39, t(82) = 3.87, $p<0.05$ and $R^2 = 0.154$, $p<0.05$), and accounted for 15.4% of the data variance (see Table 28). In other words, close and pleasant relationships with co-nationals had large effects on psychological adaptation of international students during the sojourn as they could help reduce psychological stress.

	Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig**	R^2	**F change**
	Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**				
QUAN Co-national	.01	.00	.15	1.39	.17	.02	0.17
QUAL Co-national	.02	.01	.39	3.87	.00	.154	14.95

Table 28: Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Social Contact and Psychological Adaptation Outcomes (N = 84)

The next sub-section will present findings from the qualitative research and explore the benefits of social contact in the life of student sojourners.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

Similar to quantitative findings, co-nationals and internationals were perceived by many interviewees as the most popular and preferable sources of contact, whereas contact with host nationals, despite being regarded as desirable, was often reported as limited and superficial. These patterns remained relatively unchanged throughout the academic year. Discussion of these patterns and rationales behind them are detailed in the next sections.

4.2.1 Contact with co-nationals

For the first three months of arrival, the attitude of interviewees to co-national contact was divided. Some preferred to maintain a large amount of contact with their compatriots while some avoided it. The quality of the relationships, on the other hand, was consolidated. The interviewees tended to feel strongly bonded with their compatriots after nine months abroad.

a. Maintenance of co-national contact

The majority of the interviewees (12 out of 18) had a large amount of and high frequency of contact with people from their countries. Students in the programme with a large number of co-nationals tended to perceive their compatriots as convenient and readily accessible sources of social contact.

As Interviewee 8, from China, explained in the first interview:

> *"…my major belongs to Business school and Business school has many Chinese so that I meet with Chinese students more than the foreigners so […] I spend more time with them."*

The proximity in accommodation, be it university or private accommodation, facilitated interactions between the students and their co-nationals. Interviewee 15, from China, living in university accommodation, shared in P1:

"Now my 3 best friends are from China, and 2 of them live with me in the same building, and another one is in the same group, so actually more than 70% of my day, I have to spend with them."

Interviewee 23 (P1), an Indonesian student who lived in private accommodation with her co-nationals, said: *"I often hang out with my flatmates, two of them are from Indonesia."*

Although it was early in the sojourn, these students appeared to develop close-knit relationships with their co-nationals who were often regarded as *"friends"* (Interviewee 4, 8, 15 and 22), or *"gang"* (Interviewee 23, P1). There seemed to be a clear distinction between co-nationals and non-co-national internationals. For instance, Interviewee 4 (P1), a Chinese student, compared her relationships with non-co-national internationals as *"colleagues"* while referring to her co-nationals as *"friends"*, which can be observed in the conversation below:

> *"Respondent: If I want to go out, first person comes to my mind is always my Chinese friend, but if I just want to go to supermarket, I will knock on the door of the Greek girl and say "Let's go together if you want."*
>
> *Interviewer: ok why?*
>
> *Respondent: it's just like if… even when you are in your country, you'll ask your friends to go with you but not your colleagues to go with you."*

Interviewee 23 (P1), an Indonesian student, even used the word *"brotherhood"* to refer to her community of Indonesians in the host city.

> *"Here we have some community for Indonesian people, so I usually join the event every week. You know it's like brotherhood... maybe... because we're from the same culture."*

Due to the close relationships, interactions with co-nationals usually occurred outside the academic environment. Types of activities varied from daily chores, travelling to places (i.e. different cities and towns), to *"going out/ hanging out"* (Interviewee 4, from China, and Interviewee 23, from Indonesia).

For example, Interviewee 8, from China (P1) recalled some activities she experienced with her co-national friends.

> *"...we will do some cooking together, though I don't know how to cook, besides cooking, we will also go to the library together. [...] On the weekend, sometimes we will go to nearby cities or other places."*

Topics of talks were diverse, usually about socio-cultural and psychological matters (e.g. hobbies), besides academic issues (i.e., lectures and assignments).

> *"[...] if I talk with people from China, it's more about which places we are going to, something like that, going travel."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P1)

For the students with lower levels of English, co-nationals also provided them with the convenience and relative ease of communication (i.e., sharing the same language).

> *"If you meet people who can speak the same language with you, not English, you will prefer to use that because it will make your conversation easier, more efficient."* (Interviewee 4, from China, P1).
>
> *"...but when you talk with ohm speakers using another language, you have to think about it in your language, then translate it in another language, but with students from the same country, you just think about it and then you talk to them."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

Students with a small number of co-nationals in their programmes tended to opt for "old" co-national contact at home countries. Online and telephone were, thus, the main communication vehicles, as seen in the conversation with Interviewee 5 (P1) below.

> *"Interviewer: uhm so far can I ask how often do you contact with or communicate with friends from your country?*

> *Respondent: everyday, because we have a group on Whatsapp. We also have a group on Instagram and Snapchat, so mostly talking with each other every day. We also videocall almost every day, yeah."*

Similarly, Interviewee 16, from Taiwan (P1) shared:

> *"I attach with my friends in Taiwan and family very much, because I contact with my friends and family like once a week. What do we call that? We use the phone."*

Although the amount of this contact appeared to gradually decrease, by the end of the academic year, most of the students were more likely to strengthen their networks of co-nationals. In other words, the students shared that they often contacted more frequently with and felt closer to their compatriots (see Table 29 below).

	Phase 1 (P1 - early in the sojourn)	**Phase 2 (P2 -late in the sojourn)**
Interviewee 8, from China	*"[...] I meet with Chinese people students more than the foreigners so [...] I spend more time with them."*	*"I think as we get closer, I think the main friend circle is also in the Chinese group."*
Interviewee 15, from China	*"Now my 3 best friends are from China, and 2 of them live with me in the same building, and another one is in the same group, so actually more than 70% of my day, I have to spend with them."*	*"[co-nationals] quite close friends, I think. [...] just because we are familiar with each other, so if I want to go shopping, I can just ask them."*

Table 29: Samples of Interviewees Who Maintained Frequent and Close Contact with Co-nationals in P1 and P2

In P2 - late in the sojourn, as the relationships were strengthened, co-nationals were often referred to be *"best friends"* (Interviewee 19, from China), *"close friends"* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam; Interviewee 13, from Japan, Interviewee 14, from the USA and Interviewee 23, from Indonesia) or even *"families"* (Interview 8, from China).

For instance, Interviewee 8, a Chinese student, shared in P2 the reason why she celebrated Spring Festival with her close friends, most of whom were also her co-nationals:

> *"...because that festival is just like Christmas [when] every family member gets together [...] So in Britain, we, our friends, we have to get together."*

These types of social activities and topics of talks remained the same throughout a year and sometimes, could get more personal (e.g., chat about intimate relationships) as the friendships with compatriots got stronger. The students tended to participate in more social activities together. Interviewee 14, for example, reported that she normally went to bars and parties with her co-national friends in the second semester.

> *"...it's only like drinks at their houses. It could be going to bars or clubs. It's usually partying or going out to birthday party to celebrate, ohm so outside of class, it's that."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

As interviewee 8 shared, her favourite topics with close co-national friends were usually personal interests.

> *"We can talk about our interesting topics or some other things, just like, you know my interests, and I also know yours."* (Interviewee 8, from China, P2)

By the end of the year, as academic adaptation and adjustment got more intense, there appeared to be an increase in the frequency of contact with co-nationals at home countries (e.g., family members). Many students, especially the ones with psychological turmoil, emphasised the importance of 'old' co-nationals in dealing with stress and depression.

> *"I do often call my best friend. She's living in Spain right now, teaching English, and I talk to her quite often. Let's see. I mostly talk to people in Messenger on Facebook, WhatsApp […] I think of the longevity of our friendship, my best friend and I have been friends for like 20 years."* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2)

In brief, many students instigated and maintained close and frequent contact with a large number of co-nationals early in the sojourn. Over time, these relationships were consolidated and endearing terms/ words, such as *"best friends"* and *"families"*, were often used to refer to this said group. Interactions and contact usually occurred outside the academic environment. Types of activities varied from daily chores, travelling to places (i.e., different cities, towns) to joining social activities. Topics of the talk were more personal, such as personal interest and intimate relationship issues. Interestingly, former networks of co-nationals (i.e., families and friends at home countries) were still preserved and were often perceived to be important sources of psychological support during the sojourn. Online communication vehicles, such as social networking sites, were employed to keep this contact.

b. Restraint of co-national contact

On the other hand, there were some students (e.g., Interviewee 3 and 14) showed a certain degree of resistance towards keeping contact with co-nationals early in the sojourn.

> *"It's weird to say but I don't like… hanging out with Chinese here. […] For Hongkongnese friends, maybe we meet 2-3 times a month because it's like 2 of my Hongkongese friends."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P1)

> *"I can have an American friend, but I'm not interested in having an American friend, I'm trying to get away from… I'm trying to have international friend base."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P1)

As the students reported, one of the most common reasons for this disinterest was their strong interest in the host culture, also called *"Anglophilia/ Anglophiles"* (as in Interviewee

2's words). On one hand, host nationals were regarded as representatives of the host culture, these students, therefore, would prefer to spend more time with host nationals (see 6.1.2 for further discussion). On the other hand, some students perceived academic sojourn as a unique life chance which could offer them new experiences, whereas their home cultures were often considered as something old and repetitive. Co-nationals, which were strongly associated with 'old' home cultures, thus, should be limited (see 6.1.4 for more analysis).

> *"I don't expect to be with my… to be with people from my country in the UK. I don't expect to see that, but I'm still ok with that. […] ohm I don't expect to stay all the time with people from my country."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P1)
>
> *"I think it's important that when you are abroad, you meet different people because that's the plan, I'm not here to meet people from my country."* (Interviewee 19, from Germany, P1)

Another reason was the indirect association of co-national contact with the hindrance in the development of English proficiency. As some students clarified, the more time spent with co-nationals, the fewer chances to practice English, hence, the worse their English. This can be observed in the conversation with Interviewee 13, from Japan, in P1.

> *"Respondent: One of the reasons why I chose this city is because there is no Japanese [his co-nationals] ... less Japanese students in the school.*
>
> *Interviewer: why?*
>
> *Respondent: because I don't want to speak Japanese. I came here, to an English-speaking country, I don't want to speak Japanese."*

Similar perceptions were recounted in other interviews.

> *"If you want to improve your English… like if you really want to improve your English, you maybe want to try to make friend with others [internationals]."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P1)
>
> *"[…] she's [her co-national friend] also like me, she doesn't want to speak too much Italian because we are here, you know, we want to be always in contact with the English to become so… fluent in English. I don't know I kind of feel that speaking Italian kind of keeps you away from that."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1)

After nine months in the UK, there were a few students (e.g., Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong) who still appeared to maintain this pattern of contact. However, some students slowly changed their minds (e.g., Interviewee 6, from China, and Interviewee 14, from the USA). The resistance seemed to be replaced by the acceptance of co-national contact. The number and the frequency of contact, as well as the closeness of relationships, gradually increased (see Table 30 below).

	P1 (early in the sojourn)	**P2 (late in the sojourn)**
Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong	*"It's weird to say but I don't like… hanging out with Chinese [...] For Hongkongese friends, maybe we meet 2-3 times a month ..."*	*"No, I feel like I hang out with them less. [...] I mentioned earlier, I don't have many Hongkongese friends here."*
Interviewee 6, from China	*"I don't like Chinese people [her co-nationals] studying together. I want to study with foreigners. I think maybe teachers can help by separating the Chinese students and mix them together."*	*"Uhm I always stay with my Chinese friends [...] I've got quite many close friends."*
Interviewee 14, from the USA	*"I can have an American friend [co-national], but I'm not interested in having an American friend, I'm trying to get away from… I'm trying to have international friend base."*	*"I do hang out with many American people here [...] I do have plenty of American friends. No question, I do obviously hang out with lots of American people [...]so often I go out I would say 2 or 3 times throughout the week strictly with the American people [...] I'm actually close to 1-2 really good friends from the USA."*

Table 30: Samples of Interviewees Who Had Limited Contact with Co-nationals in P1 and P2

As the interviewees explained, the difficulty in communicating with host nationals and internationals was the main reason for this increase of co-national contact (see 4.2.2 and 4.2.3). For instance, in the first semester, Interviewee 6, from China, used to be excited to meet and befriend host nationals and internationals. However, cultural differences *("It's very difficult to understand why something is funny, why they laugh at something...")*, language barriers *("They speak different languages, they always change very suddenly")* and the lack of confidence in

English communication skills *("I don't have enough vocabulary to speak to them"*) appeared to discourage her from contacting these two said groups. Instead, she opted for co-nationals as her frequent and favourite sources of contact.

On the other hand, Interviewee 14, from the USA, shared that before the sojourn, she expected to have *"an international friend base".* During the sojourn, after some interactions with her co-nationals, the resistance to this group was relatively reduced since she realised that *"they are international themselves"* (Interviewee 14, P2). Nationality was, then, deemed irrelevant in defining the *"internationality"* (or cultural identity) of an individual, as she explained:

> *"The American I do hang out with are still very international and they themselves are still similarly rejecting of the typical American. So even though they are not your typical girl from the mid-west who doesn't speak any foreign languages, they actually are the people who live in very cosmopolitan cities. They worked outside of America before. They have experience with international travel. They themselves view themselves as... international citizens of the world, so... there are still some international aspects of them."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

In brief, there were some student sojourners who, at first, preferred avoiding contact with their compatriots. Numerous reasons were given, such as the strong interest in the host culture, the interest in enhancing international connections, and the indirect association between this contact type and the hindrance to the development of the host language proficiency. Some students appeared to maintain this pattern of contact while some gradually changed. In particular, due to cultural differences, language barriers and the lack of confidence in English proficiency, these students started to contact more frequently with their co-nationals. Moreover, there were some students who started to acknowledge cultural identities and differentiate them with nationalities. The following section will provide the analysis of the perceived benefits of co-national contact during the sojourn.

c. Perceived benefits of co-national contact

At the beginning of the sojourn, co-nationals were already associated with the ***psychological benefit*** of sharing the cultural similarity and familiarity. For instance, *"same cultures, same background [...] similar ideas"* (Interviewee 9, from China, P1), *"similar thinking"* (Interviewee 20, from Germany, P1), *"similar problem… same kind of language ... same kind of perceptions or traditions"* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P1).

On one hand, this sense of cultural similarity and familiarity connected the students from the same countries, giving them more relevant topics to talk to each other.

> *"I think ohm because you are in an exchange experience, you may want someone close to you, someone from the same cultural background. Yes, from the same background. For me, I think I have more things to talk with them."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

> *"…the problem is every time I speak with somebody and I know that he's an Italian, we start to speak about food and food is something that connects everyone."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1)

> *"…it's kind of familiar, ohm […] make me happy to have someone from your country there… it's just to share because you're using the same kind of… consumption, maybe. If you tell somebody from Germany, I would really fancy this and that type of chocolate which they don't have it here, it's just something that bonds people…"* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P1)

On the other hand, as many students shared, this sense of cultural similarity and familiarity enabled better understanding and sympathy among them, thus, turned co-nationals into *"a bit of home"* for international students in a foreign country (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P1). Co-nationals became sources of psychological support when they struggled with psychological adaptation, as indicated by Interviewee 21 (P1).

> *"…because sooner or later you're gonna run into homesick. Sooner or later you're gonna hit the cultural shock point,"* he said. *"So that makes it easier to communicate with someone who maybe has a similar problem because they're missing their hometown or their partners, or whatever. So, if you're speaking the same kind of language or having the same kind of perceptions or traditions, you kind of have a bit of home there."*

Or in the words of Interviewee 20, from Germany (P1):

> *"… sometimes it's nice because you feel like you have something that you feel similar about, like sometimes when there is something really annoys you, you know that other can understand you really well because you know your culture, because others they have similar thinking… Sometimes it can be nice, sometimes it feels like you have such a home."*

Co-nationals also provided the students with the comfort of sharing language familiarity. As many students explained, communicating in their first languages was relatively more soothing and less tiring than in a foreign language (i.e., English). They were able to express their ideas fully, knowing that they were completely understood.

> *"I don't care speaking English to them but uhm sometimes it feels nice to say something specific… you just know how to speak; you don't even need to think how you say it. Sometimes it feels like it's really nice to have somebody to actually know every word that you are saying." (Interviewee 20, from Germany, P1)*

> *"I kind of think it's important to have that, not to use it or act on it necessarily, but just to know if there is something going on, I can be on a space where I can speak my own language, I can express everything I want to express because English is kind of hard sometimes…" (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P1)*

Late in the sojourn, cultural and language familiarity and similarity continued to be mentioned as the main factor bonding international students and their co-national friends. Again, "*same jokes, same common sense"* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P2), *"same points of views"* on certain topics (Interviewee 8 from China and Interviewee 21 from Germany, P2) and *"same traditions and values"* (Interviewee 8, from China, P2) were often cited.

However, the attitude towards co-nationals as psychological support seemed to divert. For some interviewees, co-national friends met in the host country continued to be their sources of psychological 'helplines'.

> *"…if there is something, let's say, mental or emotional going on, it's always easier to talk to somebody from your own country, of course, because of the language, and the views are similar."* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P2)

For others, when under stress, anxiety and depression, they were more likely to contact their 'old' co-nationals at home countries (e.g., best friends and families). The strong and long-time bonding of families and close friends at home, which was something the compatriots met in the UK could never provide, made the students comfortable to confide their psychological problems. This can be observed in the conversation with Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, in P2.

> *"Interviewer: Can I ask like who do you think of first when you feel depressed, not really depressed, tired?*
>
> *Respondent: my best friend back home*

> *Interviewer: why?*
>
> *Respondent: oh yeah, maybe because I'm used to her and I don't have to explain much because things gonna be awkward like she's the one person that really gets me so that's why she's the one that popped in my mind first."*

In addition, due to the convenience in communication (i.e., sharing the same language), early in the sojourn, co-nationals were often regarded as one of their sources of ***academic support***. The students could, for example, formed study groups with or ask for assignment advice from their co-nationals.

> *"Most of them, we have the same major and we often share information with each other [...] the students from China could speak it in Chinese and I can understand more. And actually, we have lots of transformation [translation] about English books in Chinese so we could read them."* (Interviewee 10, from China, P1)
>
> *"When you come to the classroom, you always want to sit behind the student from your country. So, if you have some questions about the lecture, you can ask them in your mother tongue [...] I will talk with my classmates, my friends from China, we can have the interactions about these problems, the assignment..."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

After nine months into the programme, co-nationals continued to be considered as helpful sources to support their academic adaptation and adjustment, as Interviewee 6, from China (P2) indicated:

> *"Interviewer: when you told me you have some problems with maths, who do you usually ask for advice?*
>
> *Respondent: my Chinese friends, because we can discuss it in Chinese, because it's easier to understand"*

It was observed from the interview that interviewees who preferred contacting their co-nationals for academic support tended to be the ones with a relatively lower level of English proficiency (i.e., IELTS score of 6.5). English proficiency then became the barrier preventing them from communicating and building closer relationships with other two contact sources (i.e., host nationals and non-co-national internationals). These students also experienced more difficulties in keeping up with lectures, which negatively impacted their studies, especially when they often formed group study together.

As Interviewee 8 (P2), a Business student from China, recalled, despite the convenience in communication, her study group with co-national friends sometimes *"don't perform well"*, since: *"…it's difficult, and if someone don't understand the lecture, they can't do that."*

Moreover, co-nationals offered ***support in socio-cultural adaptation and adjustment***. Even before the sojourn, some students had joined the community of co-nationals in the host city, which often provided them with advice or tips in adjusting to life there.

> *"…like for my country, they have a community for students from Indonesia. So, I asked them a lot of things, how to live here for the first time. […] so, I have known some people who already did the master since last year. They gave us a lot of information as well and how to adapt… and told us what things you should bring here… what things you don't need to…"* (Interviewee 22, from Indonesia, P1)

Interestingly, in the early phase of the sojourn, for a few students, particularly the ones who either lacked the confidence in their English communication skills or studied in the programmes with a large number of co-nationals, co-national contact was perceived to be an alternative to host national and non-co-national international contact for practising the host language.

> *"… actually, although you from the same country, you can use English in the seminar work or in the lecture. It's ok, the problem is whether you want to use English or not."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

> *"I have three friends in my class from Indonesia, but sometimes we speak English as well, the four of us. You know because I want to make my spoken English fluently, so I just want to push myself to try to speak English as much as I can."* (Interviewee 22, from Indonesia, P1)

However, at the end of the sojourn, this was seldom mentioned. Compatriots were then mainly associated with socio-cultural benefits such as accompanying the students to do daily chores, travelling and socialising (i.e., drinking and partying).

> *"…we'll only go to other cities like Edinburgh or Manchester to pay a visit, during the weekend."* (Interviewee 8, from China, P2)

> *"If it's like Chinese friends, I will often like text them like 'do you wanna hang out some time?'."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P2)

In general, in this study, co-nationals appeared as one of the most prominent sources of contact for student sojourners. Most of them tended to have a large number and a high frequency of co-national contact, as well as close relationships with this said group, early in the sojourn. After nine months, the students seemed to consolidate their networks in so far that they felt strongly bonded with their compatriots. Endearing terms, such as *"best friends"*, *"closest friends"* and *"families"* were used to refer to their co-nationals. A few students, on the other hand, showed high resistance towards maintaining close relationships and frequent contact with their co-nationals very early in the sojourn. However, by the end of the year, the resistance seemed to be replaced by the acceptance towards this said group.

Due to cultural and linguistic familiarity, co-nationals were generally associated with psychological support. This group was sometimes considered as sources of academic support and socio-cultural support, especially for the students with relatively lower levels of English proficiency or lack of confidence in English communication skills.

4.2.2 Contact with host nationals

a. Low quantity and low quality of host national contact

Early in the sojourn, 11 out of 18 interviewees shared that they had a limited amount and low frequency of contact with host nationals. These contact patterns stayed unchanged until the end of the academic year (see Table 31). Therefore, a strong desire for more host national contact was expressed across the sample, both in the early and late stage of the sojourn.

	P1 (early in the sojourn)	P2 (late in the sojourn)
Interviewee 13, from Japan	*"I rarely meet British students in the school. In X program, most of them are Chinese, or European or American, not many British."*	*"I think I say in the first meeting, I've never had a chance to get to know a UK student."*
Interviewee 14, from the USA	*"We have more international students then we have local students, like British students so I'm not getting much of the British cultures."*	*"Interviewer: Do you have lots of British friends?* *Respondent: oh very very few..."*
Interviewee 15, from China	*"Most students from my program they are from China. Actually, there are not so many opportunities to speak with native speakers."*	*"…all the contact are about the study. If we have to do the group work, we will contact each other."*
Interviewee 18, from Italy	*"…actually, I thought there would be more British people, but in my class, there are so many international, there are so few British…"*	*"Uhm from the UK, I just have 1, that's 1 of the 2 that are doing the internship with me […] and there is 1 girl that I kinda start to speak to more but it's not like we go out."*
Interviewee 19, from Germany	*"I would say we are like 70% Asian people in my course and about 20% of them are European or maybe 25% and only 5% are local people and in my opinion, that's not what I expected."*	*"…but the people I was staying with are mainly Germans and uhm some Chinese, Taiwanese…"*

Table 31: Samples of Interviewees' Patterns of Host national Contact in P1 and P2

Host nationals were, in the first three months, often regarded as *"classmates"* or *"foreigners"*. Relationships with host nationals remained superficial, as in the words of Interviewee 2, from the USA (P1):

> *"I know them [British students] but I don't really know them. I just know their names, faces and stuff like that."*

Contact, therefore, stayed within an academic environment (i.e., lectures and seminars). Topics of talks revolved around academic issues, such as group assignments, but were seldom about personal or socio-cultural topics (i.e., hobbies and relationships).

> *"I have British classmates, absolutely but I do make a distinction between classmates and friends because X and I, she and I, maybe as a group, meet for Y [the assignment], but I don't consider her a real friend, I don't have her to come over. I'm not in constant communication with her. We are not on very personal phases. I don't tell her about like you know guys I like or whatever."* (Interviewee 14, P1)

Overall, even after nearly nine months in the UK, the majority of the interviewees still referred to host national students as *"classmates", "not friends"*, or for some interviewees, they were just *"native speakers"*. Relationships stayed superficial, and most of the contact was still framed within the academic environment and rarely exceeded beyond that "bubble", as indicated by Interviewee 5, from Kuwait (P2):

> *"British [students]? I wouldn't call them friends. We normally talk in class and talk about assignments, but outside classroom, it's mostly international students that I talk to."*

More than half of the interviewees, when being asked for the reason of this lack of contact, repeatedly explained that *"…there aren't many English students in my class"* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1) or *"I rarely meet British students in the school"* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P1).

Most of the students, for instance, Interviewee 18 from Italy and 23 from Indonesia (P1), also observed *"small groups"* of host national students staying together throughout the course. As Interviewee 20, from Germany (P1) explained, most of the local students seemed to retreat within their formerly built networks of friends:

> *"I think UK students, they came here and it's not new, like when you've been here before, you have yourself a group of friends."*

Interestingly, as some interviewees emphasised, social grouping on campus was quite common. Even though in the 'internationalised' academic environment, the students appeared to usually group together, either based on nationality or geographical location (e.g., *"Europe"* and *"Asia")*. As Interviewee 12, from Grenada (P1), described:

> *"Within the class, there are groups of people, you know, even in the building I stay, you can see that Asian people stay together with the Asian. They have groups of Indian guys together; they have groups of the UK guys together."*

Interviewee 14, from the USA, (P1) was even able to draw a seating map of the students in her class.

> *"Our classrooms are definitely divided in terms of nationality because generally in the front right or front middle or the right front or right middle, there are American, English and Germany, all together consistently."*

Social grouping on campus was deemed a challenging issue for many international students, a problem left unsolved until the end of the sojourn (see 4.2.4).

> *"All the people in the class have created these groups, like all the Asian people are in the front together, the English in the back, and all the others we are kind mixed together."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P2)

At the end of the sojourn, language barrier, or the lack of confidence in English communication skills, was frequently mentioned as another reason for the limited and superficial contact. Some interviewees expressed that they felt *"much pressured"* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2) or even *"scared"* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, P2) when speaking English to host nationals.

> *"…when they are native speakers, Welsh or English, maybe you will feel a bit of the pressure because they will give you words that are sometimes kind of difficult to understand, but anyway, they will explain it to you if they see you don't understand it."* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2)

Other students, meanwhile, emphasised that cultural differences hindered their communication with local students, thus, psychological distanced them from host national peers. As Interviewee 5, from Kuwait (P2), explained:

> *"I don't know maybe because humour or something, I don't know, I don't get British people pretty much, British references, it's kind of awkward for me. I don't know, I don't get British people. […] British sense of humour or whatever, it doesn't match."*

In general, many students tended to have limited contact and superficial relationships with host nationals early in the sojourn. This pattern of contact remained the same until the end of the sojourn.

The few students who could develop closer relationships with people from the said group were usually the ones with higher English proficiency (as they came from countries who used

English as the first language, such as the USA and Grenada). Most of the students appeared to perceive local students as *"classmates"* or even *"native speakers"*. Interactions stayed within academic settings (i.e., classrooms) and topics of talks revolved around academic issues. Some reasons for this pattern included a limited number of local students in the programmes, the already built 'former' networks of these students, cultural differences and language barriers (or the lack of confidence in English communication skills). Social grouping on campus, with small clusters of students based on nationalities or regions of origins (e.g., *"Asia"* and *"Europe"*), were also frequently reported (see 4.2.4).

b. Perceived benefits of host national contact

At the end of the sojourn, many interviewees expressed their regrets of not having many host national friends after nearly nine months in the UK. Some commonly identified advantages of befriending host national students revolved around ***utilitarian benefits*** such as assistance in socio-cultural adaptation and adjustment, improvement in English proficiency and reduction in miscommunication.

Since the first few weeks were often deemed the most difficult period of socio-cultural adaptation and adjustment, host national friends were expected by many international students as helpful sources to deal with these adjustment challenges.

> *"I have a friend who lives in X [the host city] before so he brings me to different market and told me which market is cheaper and you can buy it there. I think it's very helpful."* (Interviewee 8, from China, P1)

> *"I have to ask them, but I really like that because you get so much… you learn so much more about the culture. […] there are just things that are really hard to find out if you are not from here."* (Interviewee 19, from Germany, P1)

Moreover, since host nationals were also perceived as representatives of the host culture, befriending them was, therefore, considered to be a way of experiencing and emerging into the host culture. As Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, explained in P1:

> *"…because I'm now here, in the UK, and I need to adapt to the situation. To adapt, I think I need to make friends from this country… it's a part of adapting, I think."*

For others, more local students in the group of friends meant fewer communication problems and more chances to practise the host language, thus better English communication skills.

> *"…you know that moment when someone try to find a word and couldn't find it because it's on the tip of her tongue and she doesn't find it. The Brit can just jump in and 'Are you looking for a word XY?' That just makes the whole thing a bit easier and also easier to communicate because they kind of help you to develop your English too."* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P1)

At the end of the sojourn, the assistance in socio-cultural adjustment was then generalised as one of the distinctive benefits of host nationals. For instance, Interviewee 2 (from the USA), in her second interview, referred to befriending host nationals as an important aspect of socio-cultural adaptation adjustment.

> *"I'd advise them to make English or British friends if they can, because I think it helps,"* Interviewee 2 (P2) laughed while sharing her experience. *"It helps to become acculturated I think, and to understand something of British culture, whatever it is, English culture, and to establish some friendships in the country you are living. It's almost, I don't wanna say that it depicts the purpose of coming to England, but I think it's important facet of going to a country and living and studying there."*

In addition, in the second interview, most interviewees mentioned an additional advantage of local students, which was their understanding and familiarity with the education system.

> *"…basically, they really know what they are doing…"* (Interview 1, from Vietnam, P2)

> *"But obviously if they are UK students, they will be able to help you out, but if you have a very small group of friends that are not UK students, it will be a lot harder to adapt because you won't have the familiarity and experience…."* (Interview 14, from the USA, P2)

In this study, host nationals were generally associated with utilitarian benefits such as helpful sources of socio-cultural and academic support. However, the quantity and quality of host national contact appeared to be consistently low throughout the sojourn. Local students were overall perceived as *"classmates"* or even *"native speakers"*. The interactions were mainly within the academic environment. Desires for more contact with this said group were, therefore, prominent across the sample.

Student sojourners explained that reasons for this contact pattern were the limited number of local students in the programme, the already built 'former' networks of these students, cultural differences and language barriers (or the lack of confidence in English communication skills). Social grouping on campus, with small student groups based on nationalities or regions of origins (e.g., *“Asia”* and *“Europe”*) were also reported as an important issue that persisted throughout the sojourn.

4.2.3 Contact with non-co-national internationals

Non-co-national international contact, together with co-national contact, was generally perceived as the most prominent and frequent sources of social contact for international students in the academic sojourn.

a. High quantity and the increase in the quality of international contact

The amount and frequency of international contact were consistently high across the sample in both two phases (see Table 32). The main reason for this contact pattern was, as the students explained, the large number of international students in their socio-cultural (i.e., living accommodation) and academic contexts (i.e., classroom setting). Non-co-national internationals, therefore, were seen as an easily accessible source of contact.

	P1 (early in the sojourn)	**P2 (late in the sojourn)**
Interviewee 1, from Vietnam	*"I often hang out with Asian people the most."*	*"Of course, because we have Facebook, Instagram so we can catch up with each other..."*
Interviewee 2, from the USA	*"Most of the friends I met are international, they are like worldwide."*	*"I do hang out with a lot of international friends because I live like a 5 of them so I hang out with them a lot."*
Interviewee 13, from Japan	*"…I often sit in the lecture theatre with 2 girls, 1 from Taiwan, 1 from Ecuador […] I contact them very often so personally I see them as a friend…"*	*"Most of the time, I go out with other 2 students from other countries…"*
Interviewee 14, from the USA	*"I thought the 40% of student would be like diverse in like all of the programs, but my program, it's extremely international. […] I started a Facebook page or Facebook messenger group, uhm where we have students, like Chinese, European, American or whatever, all in the group…"*	*"No question, I do obviously hang out with lots of Americans but at the same time, […] it's also lots of international students such as Germans, and now it's lots of Greeks in my second semester and also in X Department, I have also lots of international friends like Europeans."*
Interviewee 21, from Germany	*"…there're lots of flats where you can't find all of the people coming from the same place. For example, I live in a flat with a girl from Greece, a girl from South Korea, a girl from China, a guy from Brazil and a guy from Balama. That's really cool. […] usually the flats are very international…"*	*"The people I hang out the most right now are British people, Dutch uhm Greek from time to time, but as I mentioned, the group has been split up a bit, and Americans."*

Table 32: Samples of Interviewees' Patterns of International Contact in P1 and P2

However, in the first three months, the quality of international contact was generally superficial, with 12 out of 18 interviewees reporting so. For some students, the challenging academic adjustment (i.e., intensive master's programmes) limited their chances of socialising, making it harder to strengthen relationships with the mentioned group.

> *"Well, we haven't done much socialising outside the class yet, [...] I would still call them classmates"*, Interviewee 12, from Grenada (P1), said. *"The only students I met so far is through groupwork, ... we only make contact when it's about the group, like we haven't gone out socially or anything like that."*

> *"...the problem is that the master's, it takes so much time from your free time,"* Interviewee 18, from Italy (P1), complained. *"I'll always be on my computer searching for something or studying something. That's another problem when you want to make friend with somebody. You have to many things to do."*

> Interviewee 23, from Indonesia (P1), agreed: *"...everyone seems to be so busy, it's a bit hard to find time to go out together."*

The lack of confidence in English communication skills was frequently mentioned by many student sojourners as the main reason demotivating them to initiate conversations with non-co-national internationals. As the students explained, they often felt *"not confident"* (Interviewee 4, from China, P1), *"afraid... embarrassed"* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P1), *"stupid... depressed"* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, P1), *"shy"* (Interviewee 6, from China, P1) and *"not convenient"* (Interviewee 10, from China, P1) when communicating with other international students.

> *"Not everyone can speak really well English so sometimes they might want to... try to hang out with foreigners, but at the same time they are afraid of like they can't communicate well with them, they feel embarrassed when speaking English in front of a lot of different people so..."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P1)

Due to superficial relationships, in the first three months of arrival, non-co-national internationals were sometimes regarded as *"classmates"*, *"flatmates"* or even as *"foreigners"*. Contact, hence, happened within an academic environment (i.e., classroom setting). Even when the contact occurred in a relatively more personal environment (i.e., living accommodations), topics of talks still circled around academic issues (i.e., modules, lectures and assessments). Some student reported that most of the time, conversations they had with their international friends were *"nothing but small talks"*.

> *"...when we do groupwork, when we discuss, they [internationals] all welcome us, but it's like when I say this, they will reply back, and that's it."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1)

> *"If I'm talking to foreigner people, other than my people, in kitchen, or someone I'm not familiar with, sometimes I just talk about group discussion or seminar work, but if I'm talking with people from China, it's more about which places we are going to, something like that, going travel."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P1)

Meanwhile, some students were able to develop and maintain close-knit relationships with a few non-co-national internationals very early in the sojourn. Interviewee 14, for instance, explained that since she lived in university accommodation with many international flatmates, she could have more chances interacting with them, which helped enhance their relationships.

> *"My flatmates have become my friends now. For my flatmates, we absolutely celebrate birthday together, we talk, I make cookies for them, I help them. We have truly become like friends, like we even meet outside of the kitchen area. Uhm but so that's a living situation, we are not classmates. We're living together as individual, it doesn't matter international students or not, we are living together, it's like a living situation where we've become friends."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P1)

Interviewee 21, from Germany (P1), recounted similar experiences.

> *"I have to say now we're kind of like friends as we do a lot of things together. Everyone is very warm to each other. I think I would say friends. I'm really lucky that… to have all of my flatmates… we all become friends and we get along really really well.*

Chat topics between them and international friends varied, and sometimes included personal and socio-cultural issues (e.g., intimate relationships). Interactions were not restricted within the scope of the academic environment.

> *"Some of them, I will tend to say friends now, because we share… after class… we go out together… so I can say we are friends now. And we talk about things that are personal like boyfriend, or things like that."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P1)

In the second semester, most students had successfully built close-knit relationships with their international friends (11 out of 18 students). They tended to have more social activities together. The types of activities varied, such as doing daily chores, travelling to places (i.e., different cities or towns), partying and clubbing. In general, in P2, the contact with non-co-national internationals could occur outside the 'academic campus-based bubble'.

There were, however, seven students reporting of superficial relationships with non-co-national internationals. Language barriers, specifically the lack of confidence in English communication skills and the inconvenience in language and communication, continued to be voted as the main reason.

> *"It's very difficult to be on the same page when discussing some problem. For example, when we discussed an issue in English, for example a Japanese or Chinese student expressing ideas in English... it's so difficult to get across an idea."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P2)

> *"I don't have enough vocabularies to speak to them […] it's very difficult, very hard, I'm tired."* (Interviewee 6, from China, P2)

Overall, besides co-nationals, non-co-national internationals was regarded as another favourable and important source of contact. Although most of the students appeared to have high quantity of international contact, partially due to the skewed intake of the international student population in the study programme, the students generally had superficial relationships with international friends early in the sojourn. The lack of confidence in English communication skills and the pressure of the academic adaptation were recounted as the main barriers.

However, near the end of the sojourn, most of the students tended to strengthen their relationships with friends from other countries. Interactions were no longer framed within academic settings but went beyond to include a variety of social settings, such as bars and pubs. Topics of talks could involve socio-cultural issues. Students living in 'international' accommodation halls often reported more chances of interactions with students from different nationalities.

b. Perceived benefits of international contact

First, non-co-national internationals were often perceived as ***psychological support***. They were often regarded as sharing *"same experience"* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1), *"same worries"* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2), *"same motivation… same difficulties"* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P1); owning *"same level of English"* (Interviewee 4 from China and 5 from Kuwait, P2) and sharing the bond of being *"foreigners"* in the British culture (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1 and Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2). This sense of commonality and similarity created bonding and a connection between international students, as indicated by Interviewee 18 below:

> *"It's the kind of connection we make with people. Yeah, but you know, we are on the same boat, so it's not like being in the same classroom or being in the same course makes the difference, it's that we all experience the same thing, the same difficulty."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1)

Some interviewees expressed that they felt *"much pressured"* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2) or even *"scared"* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, P2) when speaking English to host nationals. However, they often described the feeling of *"more confident"* (Interviewee 20, from Germany, P1) and *"more comfortable"* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, P2) when communicating in English with their international friends, or in the words of Interviewee 4, from China (P1):

> *"Sometimes language is a barrier, but I think if you try to get in with the people whose first language is not the same with you, they can bare you. [...] other people will not think about 'Oh, your English is not good, I won't talk to you anymore'."*

Interviewee 18, from Italy (P2), also shared similar perception: *"we have [are from] a lot of uhm countries but they speak like me and you."*

On the one hand, the lack of confidence in English communication skills impeded their contact with host national students; and on the other hand, the perceived similarity in the English proficiency level and the shared *'foreignness'* of the British culture appeared to act as pulling factors that drew student sojourners to their international networks.

Due to the superficial and infrequent contact with host nationals, many students often opted for non-co-national internationals as alternatives for ***support in socio-cultural adaptation and adjustment***. Sometimes international friends could either offer adaptation advice and tips or practice English with them.

> *"From the first day on, basically I was the last one to arrive and they [international flatmates] were always really friendly and open and like went to the shop with me, and show me where the shop is and yeah, and say like 'We are going out, do you want to come?'"* (Interviewee 19, from Germany, P1)

> *"Ohm so that would be a thing that makes it easier to communicate with people from other countries because you actually have to use English as lingua franca and there is no way of kind of escaping that."* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P1)

However, in the second phase, student sojourners mainly associated non-co-national internationals with helpful sources of ***academic support.*** Some international students often formed study groups to prepare for examinations, as Interviewee 19, from Germany (P2), a business student, recounted:

> *"… we did like a little study session where everybody said like 'Well this topic* is very *important, have a look at that' or maybe we would just ask each other random questions, just to see if we know the materials, something like that. Or if you have any question, you can just ask it, and the others would explain it to you."*

Similarly, Interviewee 13, an applied linguistics student from Japan, who mostly had written essays as his main assessments, shared in the second interview: *"…we help each other to write and we do the proofreading and things."*

Interestingly, at the beginning of the academic year, many interviewees, especially students who used English as their second language, mentioned difficulties in communication as the main factor that demotivated them to contact non-co-national internationals. As Interviewee 16 from Taiwan (P1) shared:

> *"Yes, at the beginning, my friend from Ecuador, she talked like really fast, I couldn't understand like most of the time…"*

Nevertheless, after several months of frequently spending time with her international friends, Interviewee 16 could then confidently communicate with them in English. Many students who maintained a high quantity of international contact also observed an increase in confidence in their English communication skills at the end of their academic year.

> *"…I become more comfortable about speaking English, like I don't really care about making mistakes so much…"* (Interviewee 19, from Germany, P2)

> *"…I think language is not really a problem here, as long as you use English… because when you spend that much time with them, that makes me feel not much pressured when communicating with them."* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2)

The increased confidence in English communication skills and academic support provided by close international friends might explain why the students with the large quantity and high quality of international contact often had better academic adaptation (as found in the quantitative data).

Finally, internationals were commonly related to ***enhancement in multi-cultural diversity and cross-cultural knowledge***, which was perceived as their distinctive benefit. In the first interview, 12 out of 18 students mentioned that the more international friends they had, the more cross-cultural knowledge they gained.

> *"Even if like we speak English now, we have different cultures, like the hobbies, the music, the likes are different so… but I see it as a good thing, at least you can learn more about other cultures."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P1)
>
> *"I try to learn from them in terms of learning about their cultures, so I definitely try to listen and understand what like their differences."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P1)
>
> *"When I talk to students from other countries, they can share something that I don't know about their countries and I can share something about my country that they don't know."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P1)

At the end of the academic year, the students appeared to realise that frequent contact and close relationships with internationals could influence their cognitions and ways of thinking, thus, *"widen your horizons"*.

> *"...you can see differently from the way you are thinking about things so it's gonna be... adding your knowledge about things [...] I also hang out with friends from other countries because I also want to get some new perspectives."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P2)

In brief, international contact was becoming a more important source of contact for student sojourners. Non-co-national internationals appeared to be associated with numerous benefits, such as psychological support (due to the shared 'foreignness'), socio-cultural and academic support, and enhancement of multi-cultural awareness. Some of the students who often contacted frequently with their international friends also reported the improved confidence in English communication skills and self-development (i.e., changes in values and perspectives).

4.2.4 Social grouping on campus

Grouping in the 'international' academic environment was a prominent theme emerging across the interviews in both phases. Types of grouping varied, but in general, it appeared that student sojourners tended to group based on: (1) geographical region and (2) nationality. The former referred to grouping of students from the same world region (e.g., East Asia, Middle East and Europe), which may or may not include their co-nationals, while the latter occurred when international students interacted and stayed exclusively with people from the same nationality (e.g., British, American and Chinese).

a. Regional student grouping

For instance, Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, reflected on her patterns of social contact in the first three months.

> *"I often hang out with Asian people the most [...] but there aren't many English students in my class so they [international students] usually group together, and the European usually groups together."*

Other students also reported similar regional grouping, the most common of which were *"European"* and *"Asian"* student grouping (as in the interviewee's words).

> *"…if you are European then you will ideally find European countries' people and you don't say that we are just judging people when we are studying together but you are doing the same thing."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P1)
>
> *"Maybe because I came from Asia, sometimes, it's easier for me to come to Asian friends first and then after that, I can mingle with friends from other countries as well."* (Interviewee 22, from Indonesia, P1)

This regional student grouping, according to the interviewees, still persisted until the end of the academic year.

> *"I think that's the universal thing actually. In our class it would always be like entire second or third rows are Asian students, and they would kind of seem like you know cling to their people… from their own countries."* (Interviewee 12, from Grenada, P2)
>
> *"I think in the first day, Asian students tend to talk with Asian, European students tend to talk with European, and they continue to meet over the course of their study."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

b. Co-national student grouping

Grouping based on nationality was commonly discussed in many interviews in both phases, indicating the high tendency of students to group with their co-nationals throughout the academic year. Table 33 shows some quotes of the students implying that social grouping in the 'international' academic environment persisted throughout the sojourn. Interviewee 13, in the second interview, was even able to draw a seating map of student grouping in the lecture room.

P1 (early in the sojourn)	P2 (late in the sojourn)
"They have groups of Indian guys together. They have groups of the UK guys together. So, I think people do look for that kind of comfort level, something that's familiar." (Interviewee 12, from Grenada)	*"Maybe because I know one thing for sure is that Arabs like to stick with Arabs, especially guys like they quickly get in groups and stuff."* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait)
"Our classrooms are definitely divided in terms of nationality because generally in the front right or front middle or the right front or right middle, there are American, English and Germany, all together consistently. Uhm and then you have in the left middle, you always have a few Americans and maybe a few Germans, and the rest are entirely like Chinese…" (Interviewee 14, from the USA)	*"Can I write on this? This kind of group… like this is Chinese, and America, some Europeans there, that's the grouping… kind of."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan) *"We do have small groups in our class, well most of the Chinese students, they all get together in the class."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan)

Table 33: Regional and National Grouping Patterns of International Students in an Academic Sojourn

c. Rationales behind social grouping on campus

Regarding regional grouping, student sojourners usually explained that due to the high cultural similarity between their cultures and cultural practices of nearby regions, they felt *"safer"* and more comfortable contacting people from perceived 'same' regions. Meanwhile, as cultures from geographically distant regions were believed to have strong contrast with theirs, interactions with people from perceived 'other' regions were expected to result in *"awkwardness"* (see 5.2.3).

> *"People from same cultures will have same interests, right? […] The reason why I hang out more often with Vietnamese or Asians because I get used to them. I know what they are like, how I should behave when I'm with them, and that I feel safe when I'm with them."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1)

It is worth noting that when being asked to share their experiences with non-co-national internationals early in the sojourn, many students emphasised that although the experiences were nice and pleasant, there were some cultural differences between students from *'the East'* and *'the West'*, especially differences in communication styles. Interviewee 9, from China, (P1), for instance, shared that she always felt as if there was an invisible wall distancing her and her international flatmates from the 'other' region.

> *"If you're talking to a foreigner, you can communicate but they are keeping a distance, like you can communicate, you can talk about a lot of things, but they tend to keep a certain distance… like they are more… likely to join in the conversation, but not having a close contact with you."*

Whenever differences occurred, the students tended to generalise some attributes as generic for a particular cultural group, as shown in the quotes below.

"…they will stress more important on themselves, like now, you are willing to listen to all my answers, but they are trying to express themselves […] I don't have a problem listening to others but I'm more willing to express me more."
Interviewee 9, from China, P1

"…they might be quite more quiet and then not outgoing and they will not say what they think, and you will always have to ask like 'What do you think? Or can you please explain it? Is it easy for you to write it down?"
Interviewee 19, from Germany, P1

However, in the first few months, the students seemed relatively receptive towards these differences.

> *"Cultures still have some effects… uhm I know that British cultures and Chinese cultures are a little bit different, but I can understand the culture here. I believe that everyone is different, no matter you are Chinese, or you are English."* (Interviewee 8, from China, P1)

The lack of confidence in English communication skills, on the other hand, was perceived by many students to be the biggest challenge. Students with lower levels of English tended to lack confidence in expressing ideas and socialising with other internationals, which then sometimes might negatively influence their psychological well-being.

> *"…for Italian friends, I just don't understand what she's talking… and they don't have patience […] I will be embarrassed. I will be shy like 'Oh, I'm very bad at speaking so I don't have confident talking with other people."* (Interviewee 6, from China, P1)

Meanwhile, many interviewees perceived that students from Asia usually had lower levels of English proficiency. Students with a higher level of English proficiency often regarded conversations with international students from the said group to be frustrating and tiring since they usually needed to accommodate themselves to the same English levels of others (see also 5.2.3).

> *"I talk slower and uhm I have to think about which word to use, uhm especially I'll change the word if I don't think they might know it because I don't have to explain to them, you know."* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P1)

> *"With international people, it's often that they are using... uhm... only a smaller amount of vocabulary and so I feel like I, myself, also go down in the level of vocabulary because we are all in 1 level and I can make sure that everything is understood."* (Interviewee 19, from Germany, P1)

Tensions and struggles in communication between internationals with different English levels can be observed in the quotes below.

"I can understand what they are talking about, but I cannot give back the reaction, so it's very hard for me to join in the conversation [...] You will feel not very confident. You will think 'Oh, they can speak English so smoothly. I'm the only one who cannot join in the topic'. It will make you feel a little embarrassed."
Interviewee 4, from China, P1

⟩⟨

"...I can't tell them 'Please speak up!'. It's kind of rude, but I'm just like I don't understand, so I constantly say 'huh or what' and half of the time, I don't understand what they say. It's so frustrating."
Interviewee 14, from the USA, P1

By the end of the year, if these conflicts remained unsolved, they could intervene in intercultural communication. For example, students who experienced cultural and communication conflicts in cross-cultural groupwork, then, seemed to concentrate more on cultural differences rather than cultural similarities; thus, tended to differentiate themselves from their international friends.

> *"You know those kinds of things and cultural differences which at the beginning were so much fun have now, I don't wanna say it's gone bad or anything, that would be too much, but these differences have become differences that also show by people from different cultures aka nationalities. I know I'm not supposed to say this."* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P2)

It's worth noting that students who appeared to struggle to deal with cross-cultural communication in the first few months tended to continue to find it challenging to initiate and maintain conversations with people from different countries at the end of the sojourn (see Table 34).

	P1 (early in the sojourn)	**P2 (late in the sojourn)**
Interviewee 6, from China	*"When they tell some jokes, but I can't understand why it's funny."*	*"Why don't I stay with my foreigner friends? Because it's very difficult to understand why something's funny, why they laugh at something..."*
Interviewee 8, from China	*"Cultures still have some effects… uhm I know that British cultures and Chinese cultures are a little bit different, but I can understand the culture here. I believe that everyone is different, no matter you are Chinese, or you are English."*	*"Because last time, we have foreign friends, we have uhm fewer same topics like with Chinese friends. We meet each other less time after the studying time […] because we have fewer same topics and we don't contact with each other, nothing to say I think."*

Table 34: Samples of Interviewees with Difficulties in Cross-cultural Communication in P1 and P2

Some student sojourners, therefore, wished that they could have learnt about these cultural differences before working in cross-cultural group projects, as Interviewee 18, from Italy, described near the end of the sojourn:

> *"…you need to be in charge, that's one thing. The second thing is you need to explain everything from the start, because if you don't, they kind of get stuck, they don't really know what to do. Then if you explain, they do what they are asked, that's it. But like If I have known this before, it'd have been better because you expect them to be as you, be the same as you…"*

In brief, despite close relationships and frequent contact with many non-co-national internationals, some student sojourners still struggled with cross-cultural communication challenges (i.e., different English levels and different communication styles), especially when interacting with students from perceived 'different' regions. If left unsolved, these issues might make student sojourners differentiate themselves from their international peers.

In terms of groupings based on 'nationality', as explained in 4.2.1, due to the perceived psychological benefit of sharing cultural similarity and familiarity, together with communicative difficulties among people from different countries (i.e., cultural differences, language barriers and lack of confidence), students preferred staying in their co-national groupings. Because of a large number of Chinese students in the postgraduate programme in British higher education, groupings of these students seemed to be reported more often than others.

When being asked for the rationale for maintaining social grouping patterns until the end of the sojourn, most of the interviewees explained that they simply followed the patterns which were set in the beginning.

> *"...because I always find myself stay with the few people I've met at the beginning and also a few I've been approached with. [...] when I go to class, they are the first ones I see so I kind of just sit next to them. Yeah, I feel like I should speak more with others in the class, because I always find myself searching for the 3 or 4 people that now I know"* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1)
>
> *"In the one group I'm working with, I already knew these people on the first day I started the course, like on the first day of the course, we already went out for lunch and then we sometimes hang out or something."* (Interviewee 19, from Germany, P1)

Interestingly, Interviewee 14 who lived in the same flat in university accommodation with one of her classmates, shared that she, in fact, rarely communicated with her flatmate in class because they sat in different groups which were formed during the first few weeks. No one wanted to break those seating patterns.

> *"I mean I'm comfortable and familiar with X. We are flatmates, but still in our seminar class, she sits elsewhere, and I sit another place, we don't even interact there. It's just the patterns in the beginning and it's just hard to break the patterns once it's set in stone. It's just that in a week or two, you have to have a constant mix up, uhm of seeing and constantly mix up with who you are talking to and that would break the patterns."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P1)

The importance of the first few weeks was highly emphasised by the students. Once set, these grouping patterns were maintained until the end of the academic year, with very few and minor modifications, or as in the words of Interviewee 14, *"it's just hard to break the patterns once it's set in stone."*

> *"I think that kind of group is already quite… grouped from the first day of this course. I think at the end of September, there was a welcoming meeting or something, if they get to know each other at that day, they continue to meet over the course of their study."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

> *"I think the first 2-3 months are quite important for you to settle down with people, to life here. You quite like develop a kind of pattern, one kind of pattern, in the next few months."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2)

> *"All of us, I think, tend to stay in the starting group which we created at the beginning."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P2)

Some students clarified that they were less likely to change grouping patterns in the academic environment since they worried this might offend their classmates sitting in the same groups.

> *"If I change my place to sit, they may find something strange, like 'why not sit here?'"* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

Other students thought it was too much time and effort to set up new patterns and create new social networks, especially during these intensive academic programmes.

> *"Unless you really start from the beginning, sitting next to each other, so you start to create this group of study… That's kind of the only way to create friendship here because there isn't any time left to do anything else."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P2)

Overall, social grouping was reported frequently by many interviewees as a prominent issue in the 'international' academic environment. Clusters of students based on nationalities and regions of origins (e.g., *"Asia"* and *"Europe"*) were often observed on campus. Due to the skewed intake of the student population in the programmes (with a large number of Chinese students), it was also more difficult for Chinese students to interact with other international students. The perceived psychological benefit 'pulled' student sojourners towards their co-national groupings whilst communicative difficulties among people from 'different' regions and countries (i.e., cultural differences, language barriers and lack of confidence) 'pushed' them away from non-co-national international friends. These grouping patterns were formed early in the sojourn and were usually maintained until the end. Students were reluctant to break these 'shaped' patterns.

In general, in this study, co-nationals and internationals were regarded as the two most prominent and favourable sources of contact of student sojourners. Co-nationals were often associated with psychological benefits while internationals seen as helpful sources of academic support. Students with a lower level of English proficiency and lack of confidence in their English communication skills tended to rely more on their co-nationals for socio-cultural and academic support. Frequent contact with non-co-national internationals, meanwhile, could help improve the confidence in English communication skills of the students, enhance their cultural awareness and broaden their perspectives.

Although host national contact was strongly linked with socio-cultural support and sometimes considered as part of socio-cultural adjustment, the demand for frequent and close contact with host nationals was mainly unmet. Some of the main reasons were the skewed intake of the student population in the postgraduate programme in the UK, the lack of confidence in the host language communication skills and cultural differences.

Furthermore, social grouping on campus was often reported as a challenging puzzle that remained unsolved until the end of the sojourn. Grouping based on nationalities and regions of origin (i.e., *"Asia"* and *"Europe"*) was popular in the academic setting (i.e., classrooms and student accommodation halls) and was formed fairly early in the sojourn.

The next section provides a discussion of the research findings in relation to previous studies about social contact patterns of student sojourners (4.3.1, 4.3.2, and 4.3.3). The section also unpacks relationships between social contact and adaptation of the students (4.3.4), social grouping in the 'international' academic environment and its relevance to cultural identities (4.3.5).

4.3 Discussion

Findings from this present research presented a rising trajectory in the degree of social contact of international students in the academic sojourn (Figure 18 below). There were overall increases in both the quantity and the quality of all three types: co-national, international and host national contact, however the extent of changes varied vastly among these three. Note that the quantity and the quality of social contact were self-reported by participants.

Particularly, co-national contact was the most preferable and popular type, with a sharp and rapid increase in both the quantity and quality of the contact over the sojourn. In the initial stage of the sojourn, international students also reported a high degree of contact with non-co-national internationals and this degree of contact rose steadily throughout the year but was still not as high as the degree of contact with co-nationals. Lastly, despite a small and gradual growth by the end of the sojourn, the degree of contact with host nationals remained limited compared to the other two types. International students, in general, continually reported a low degree of host national contact throughout the sojourn. Reasons for such patterns are unpacked below.

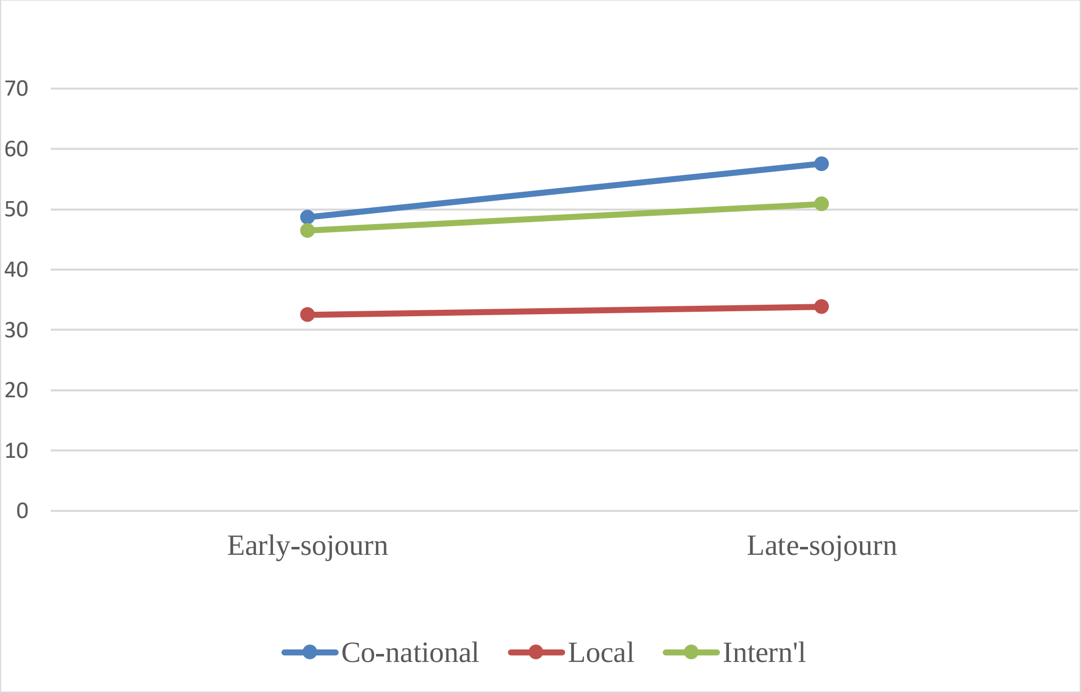

Figure 18: Patterns of Social Contact of International Students in the Academic Sojourn

***Notes:** Figure 18 was created based on the data collected from surveys in P1 and P2. The degree of social contact was calculated by adding up the mean score of the quantity and the quality of the contact. The degree of contact in P1 was then subtracted by the degree of contact in P2.*

4.3.1 Changing patterns of co-national contact

Findings from the present research indicated that among the three types of contact, co-national contact was the most popular one (see 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.2.1). Quantitative results showed that the mean scores of the quantity of co-national contact (measured by the amount and frequency of the contact) remained high throughout the sojourn, which were fairly similar to those of international contact. Nevertheless, the quality of interactions with compatriots outweighed that of international interactions.

There was an increase in both the quantity and the quality of co-national contact after the academic sojourn. This indicated after study abroad, the students contacted more frequently and felt closer to their compatriots. Similarly, interviewees explained that perceived linguistic and cultural similarity made them feel bonded with their co-nationals. Hence, endearing terms such as *"close friends"*, *"best friends"* or even *"families"* were usually used to refer to co-nationals. Interactions with compatriots exceeded beyond academic settings and topics of talks consisted of both academic and personal issues.

This concept of cultural and linguistic similarity has, in fact, appeared in the literature of the IC study for a long time, and is usually covered in the concept of 'homophily'. According to Merton and Lazarsfeld (1954), 'homophily' refers to the tendency of people to contact with others having similar traits, be it physical or cultural characteristics, rather than with people with dissimilar traits. As Van Oudenhoven and Eisses (1998) explain, we are drawn to 'similar' others since they confirm that our opinions and behaviours are right. This validation of ideas and behaviours gives us a sense of reward, which motivates us to build and maintain those relationships. Heterophilic contact, meanwhile, could cause a less rewarding relationship due to invalidation of ideas and behaviours, which may lead to anxiety and uncertainty (Samochowiec and Florack, 2010). It can also result in miscommunication and message distortion (Rogers and Bhowmik, 1970; Rogers, 1999).

The idea of invalidation and miscommunication was repeated frequently among interviewees in this study who emphasised the struggle in initiating and maintaining conversations with people from different nationalities, especially with host nationals, due to different interests and communication styles, and inconvenience in communication (see 4.3.2).

Furthermore, for some interviewees in this study, especially the ones with lower English proficiency, contact with co-nationals was perceived to be more convenient and less stressful than with host nationals and internationals. The influence of the host language proficiency and linguistic confidence on the choice of contact types has echoed in many studies about motivations and predictors of intercultural contact (Brooks and Waters, 2011; Sawir, 2012; Yu and Shen, 2012; Young *et al.*, 2013). Low levels of English proficiency and confidence 'push' students away from host national and international groups and 'pull' them towards their co-nationals (Brown, 2009b; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011; Yu and Shen, 2012).

In addition, in this study, international students' perceptions and attitudes towards co-national contact were relatively more complicated than other contact types. Some students perceived the host culture as new and interesting, whereas their home cultures were often considered as something old and repetitive. Co-nationals which were associated strongly with 'old' home cultures were, therefore, avoided.

This is in stark contrast with the concept of 'homophily' discussed above. As Ujitani (2006) explains, curiosity and interest in differences brought by heterophilic interactions may be a vital motivation for intercultural contact, whilst a lack thereof is considered as a hindrance (Takeda and St John-Ives, 2005). Dunne (2013), in his research, also identifies self-interest and curiosity in different cultures as key incentives for intercultural interactions.

Arasaratnam (2004) expands this idea further by proposing the concept of 'sensation seeking', referring to the individual need of new and novel stimuli as another motivation behind intercultural communication and contact. Although previously applied in health studies, the correlation between intercultural contact and sensation seeking has recently become a burgeoning research topic (Arasaratnam and Banerjee, 2007; Arasaratnam and Banerjee, 2011).

Another key theme emerging across the interviews was an indirect association of co-national contact with the impediment in developing English proficiency. As some students repeatedly mentioned, the more time spent with compatriots, the fewer chances to practice English, hence, the worse their English skills might become.

Recent research on adaptation of Chinese students at a British university by Yu and Moskal (2019) shows that English practice is regarded as an indispensable part of the sojourn and the lack thereof is seen as *"losing meaning of international learning"*. The desire for English practice opportunities has been documented in many studies (Yu and Shen, 2012; Pham and Tran, 2015; Yu and Moskal, 2019). Host national and non-co-national internationals are generally associated with more opportunities for English speaking practices (Yu and Moskal, 2019), and improvement in linguistic competence, the host language proficiency and self-confidence (Sawir, 2005; Brown, 2009b; Sawir, 2012). There is, however, a lack of quantitative and empirical data to support the relationship between the degree of co-national contact and the (decreased) proficiency in the host language.

4.3.2 Changing patterns of host national contact

The quantitative results demonstrated that among the three contact types, the quantity of host national contact had the lowest mean score in P1 and increased slightly but not statistically significant in P2. Less than 20% of the research participants reported a high degree of contact with host nationals during the sojourn. The mean score of the quality of host national contact remained the lowest and approximately 30% of participants experienced high quality of contact with host nationals.

Qualitative research suggested similar findings, with the majority of the interviewees referring to local students as *“native speakers”* or *“not friends”* even nearly nine months in the host country. Relationships stayed superficial, and most interactions were framed within the academic environment; and rarely exceeded beyond that ‘bubble’. The limited number of local students in the programme and the ‘segregation’ of local students from international peers (since local students had already had formerly built networks) were reported as two main reasons for this apparent lack of host national contact.

Similar factors have been identified in the literature, for instance, the skewed intake of students on many UK programmes (resulting in a large and predominant number of international students), on-campus social grouping, and perceived low inclination of local students to interact with their international peers (Harrison and Peacock, 2009; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Wright and Schartner, 2013; Glass and Westmont, 2014). International students appear to struggle to initiate and maintain meaningful ties with host nationals, including both students and local people in the wider community (Brown, 2009b; Brown, 2009a; Wright and Schartner, 2013; Schartner, 2015). Interactions with host nationals, besides university staff, are often reported to be largely pleasant but tend to remain purely small talk and formulaic conversation (Schartner, 2015). International students often report staying within their co-national networks and having limited and unsatisfied amount of contact with host nationals (Yu and Moskal, 2019).

Individual-level factors, for instance, the lack of confidence in English communication skills and English proficiency, also contribute to this dearth of host contact (Yu and Shen, 2012). Particularly, proficiency in English was implicitly indicated across the interviews as an important reason in facilitating interactions with local students. In this study, due to their relatively advanced levels of English (i.e., IELTS score of 7.5 or above), five students (from Grenada, Germany, the USA and Hong Kong) were able to build close or intimate relationships with host nationals after the sojourn.

In general, international students in this study seemed to feel dissatisfied by the limited contact with host nationals. A strong desire for more contact with host nationals was, overall, prominent across the interview, which is also a recurrent finding among various studies about social interactions and contact of student sojourners (Schartner, 2015; Yu and Moskal, 2019).

4.3.3 Changing patterns of non-co-national international contact

On one hand, the lack of confidence in English communication skills impeded international students' contact with host nationals. On the other hand, the perceived similarity in the English level and the shared 'foreignness' of the British culture, and being, usually, second language speakers of the host language appeared to act as pulling factors that drew student sojourners to their international networks. Due to the large number of international students in socio-cultural (i.e., living accommodation) and academic contexts (i.e., classroom setting), non-co-national internationals became an easily accessible source of contacts for these students. Quantitative results showed that the mean scores of the quantity and quality of international contact remained high throughout the sojourn. There was also a significant increase in both the quantity and the quality of international contact after nearly nine months.

Although early in the sojourn, many students referred to non-co-national international students as *"flatmates"* or *"classmates"*, indicating frequent yet superficial relationships, near the end of the sojourn, the majority had successfully built close-knit relationships with their international peers. Interactions then occurred outside of the academic setting and topics of talks varied, including personal issues, such as relationships and future plans.

Previous research also reports similar findings, with non-co-national internationals becoming more important for student sojourners by the end of the sojourn. The gravitation towards non-co-national international relationships, both in terms of emotional and instrumental support, is now becoming a burgeoning research interest (Kashima and Loh, 2006;

Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Young *et al.*, 2013; Schartner, 2015; Pho and Schartner, 2019).

In the present study, language barriers, specifically the lack of confidence in English communication skills and the inconvenience in language and communication, were frequently cited as the main reasons for the avoidance of international contact early in the sojourn. However, by the end of the sojourn, students with a higher degree of contact with non-co-national internationals appeared to experience increased communicative competency in the host language and confidence in communication skills.

The correlation between international contact and language proficiency is still in dispute. Brown (2009a), for instance, in her ethnographic study, observes that host nationals are the best source to *"acquire necessary social skills for the host culture"*, and the lack thereof may defer enhancement of the host language proficiency. She argues despite a possible slight increase in language skills, international contact is actually *"a long delay in improvement in linguistic competence."* (Brown, 2009a). In contrast, Yu and Moskal (2019) explain that having international friends broadens the chance for English practice since they can establish an English-speaking environment among student sojourners who usually are second language users of the host language. This environment nurtures the self-confidence of the students and creates a 'safe' zone to express themselves in English, which then enhances their proficiency in the host language (Yu and Moskal, 2019). Improvement in the host language proficiency facilitates self-confidence in communication skills (Sawir, 2012).

In general, the present study demonstrated the increasing importance of international contact to student sojourners. More importantly, frequent contact with non-co-national internationals appeared to have a positive influence on the proficiency and the confidence of student sojourners on their English communication skills.

4.3.4 Perceived benefits of social contact to adaptation and adjustment

Both quantitative and qualitative data showed that social contact played a significant role in adjustment and adaptation of student sojourners (see 4.1 and 4.2). Due to the cultural and linguistic similarity, student sojourners frequently interacted with their compatriots and maintain deep bonds with them. Co-national contact was, therefore, associated mainly with psychological (or emotional) support, and could positively influence psychological adaptation of student sojourners. Meanwhile, contact with host nationals remained limited and superficial and was attached closely with the utilitarian benefit of assisting socio-cultural adaptation. Host national contact was, in fact, able to positively influence academic adaptation of international students, as long as the students could develop and maintain friendships with their host national peers. Finally, international contact influenced positively academic adaptation, academic satisfaction and academic results of international students. Figure 19 below illustrates the impact of social contact on the three adaptation domains.

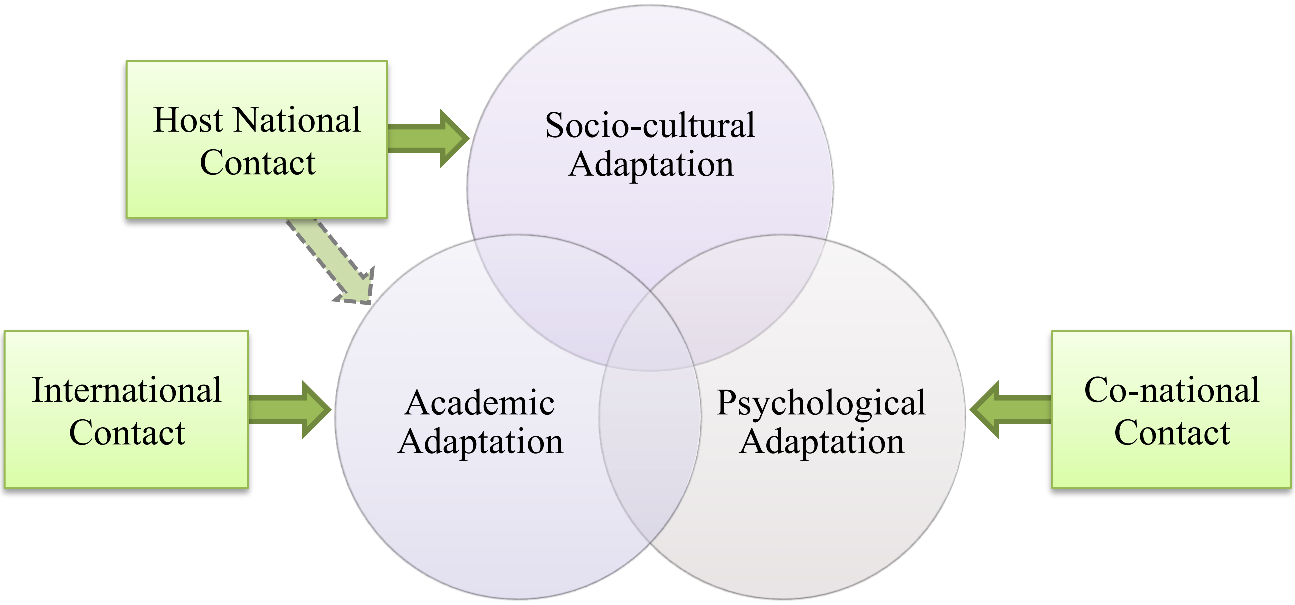

Figure 19: Social contact and Its Influence on Three Adaptation Domains

In particular, quantitative data confirmed that the high quality of co-national contact correlated positively with psychological adaptation and significantly predicted it (see 4.1.5). Indeed, interviewees shared that cultural and linguistic similarity with compatriots reduced miscommunication and created a sense of connection among them, thus, turned co-nationals into *"a bit of home"* for them in the foreign host country. A community of compatriots could, therefore, ease homesickness and loneliness (see 4.2.1). For some students, "former" personal relationships with co-nationals in home countries (i.e., families and close friends at home) were deemed a more helpful source to 'combat' homesickness than newly made friendships.

The positive relationship between co-national contact and psychological adaptation is echoed in the IC literature, with co-nationals perceived as sources of emotional support and buffers of acculturative stress (Bochner *et al.*, 1977; Ye, 2006b; Woolf, 2007; Rui and Wang, 2015).

In the present study, qualitative data showed that co-national friends were sometimes regarded as sources of academic support, especially for the ones with a lower level of English proficiency (see 4.2.1), however, quantitative results presented a stark contrast. The quantity of co-national contact negatively correlated with overall scores of taught modules (GPAs) of international students (see 4.1.4).

Note that in this study, the participants reported the expected GPAs, based on the results of the taught modules they achieved by the time the research was conducted. All students had the overall IELTS score of 6.5 and above (which was the language requirement for the taught master's programmes in the host university).

The reason for such difference could be that English proficiency 'intensified' the challenge of adapting to the academic and social environment. On one hand, English proficiency might prevent international students from building and maintaining relationships with host national and international peers and pushed the students to retreat to their compatriot networks, as shown in research by Brown (2009b); Brown (2009a) and Hendrickson *et al.* (2011). On the other hand, students with lower English proficiency tended to experience more difficulties in their studies (e.g., understanding lectures). Group-study with other co-nationals facing similar challenges might therefore not be conducive. Therefore, it was logical to say that perceived the low level of English proficiency, rather than co-national contact per se, was the main underlying factor that could impact academic results.

In addition, quantitative findings from this study presented positive correlation and significant regression results between the quality of host national contact and socio-cultural adaptation outcomes (see 4.1.3). In other words, students who had close host national friends were more likely to achieve better adaptation to the host culture. Similarly, interview data showed that local students were mainly attached with *utilitarian benefits* such as improvement in English proficiency and assistance in socio-cultural adaptation and adjustment (see 4.2.2). Befriending host nationals was also considered as an important aspect of socio-cultural adaptation in the host culture.

Consistent with these findings, many studies have reported that host national contact is frequently associated with instrumental support (Wright and Schartner, 2013; Schartner, 2014), which positively impacts sociocultural adaptation (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999b; Poyrazli, 2004). Friendships with host nationals also correlate with life satisfaction of sojourners (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011). As Searle and Ward (1990) explain, contact with the said group grants sojourners a chance to learn socio-cultural skills and provides them with social support when adapting to the host culture. Sojourners who frequently interact with local people often report high immersion to the host culture and high satisfaction with the sojourn experience (Monalco, 2002).

In contrast with previous research which portray host national students as less willing to have academic exchange with international students (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009), this study found that host national friends could, in fact, assist their international peers in academic study. Quantitative results indicated that host national contact, in terms of both its quantity and quality, correlated positively with and predicted academic adaptation outcomes and academic satisfaction of student sojourners (see 4.1.1 and 4.1.2). As some interviewees who had close relationships with host national students explained, local students retained better understanding and familiarity with the education system in the host country. Having them in group assignments allowed for better communication with less misunderstanding among members (see 4.2.2).

Nevertheless, contact with host national students remained low in both amount and frequency; and was described as relatively superficial, compared to the other two types of social contact. As a result, although host national students were often attached with more academic benefits (and actually provided a few international students with academic support), they were rarely perceived by the majority of student sojourners as “sources” of academic support (see 4.2.2).

Another key finding from this study was the increasingly significant role of international contact in academic adaptation of student sojourners. Among the three contact types, the quantity and quality of non-co-national international contact emerged as significant predictors of academic adaptation outcomes, overall scores of taught modules (GPAs) and academic satisfaction (see 4.1.4). Qualitative data also supported this finding, with student sojourners being more likely to rely on their international peers for academic support. Due to close-knit relationships and frequent contact, it was very common that international students often formed study groups and provided academic exchange to each other. As explained in 4.2.3, regular interactions with international colleagues could improve students’ host language proficiency and boosted their confidence in host language communication skills.

Findings from previous studies also confirm this, emphasising that it is not only the quantity of contact (amount and frequency), but also the quality of these interactions that can influence academic adaptation of student sojourners (Young *et al.*, 2013; Pho and Schartner, 2019). This means that if international students have frequent contact with other international peers or are able to maintain close and meaningful relationships with the said group, they tend to adapt better to the academic environment, achieve higher academic results and feeling more satisfied with their overseas study.

Despite perceived benefits attached to each contact type, qualitative data showed that the proficiency in the host language (i.e., English) and the confidence in English communication skills might moderate how international students actually utilised and employed the contact as support for adaptation. Figure 20 below, drawn from the qualitative findings, illustrates the process of finding support sources when international students encounter adaptation issues and the importance of English proficiency and the confidence in English communication skills. It is worth noting that these observations, derived from the qualitative strand, are relative and there is a lack of statistical data to confirm them.

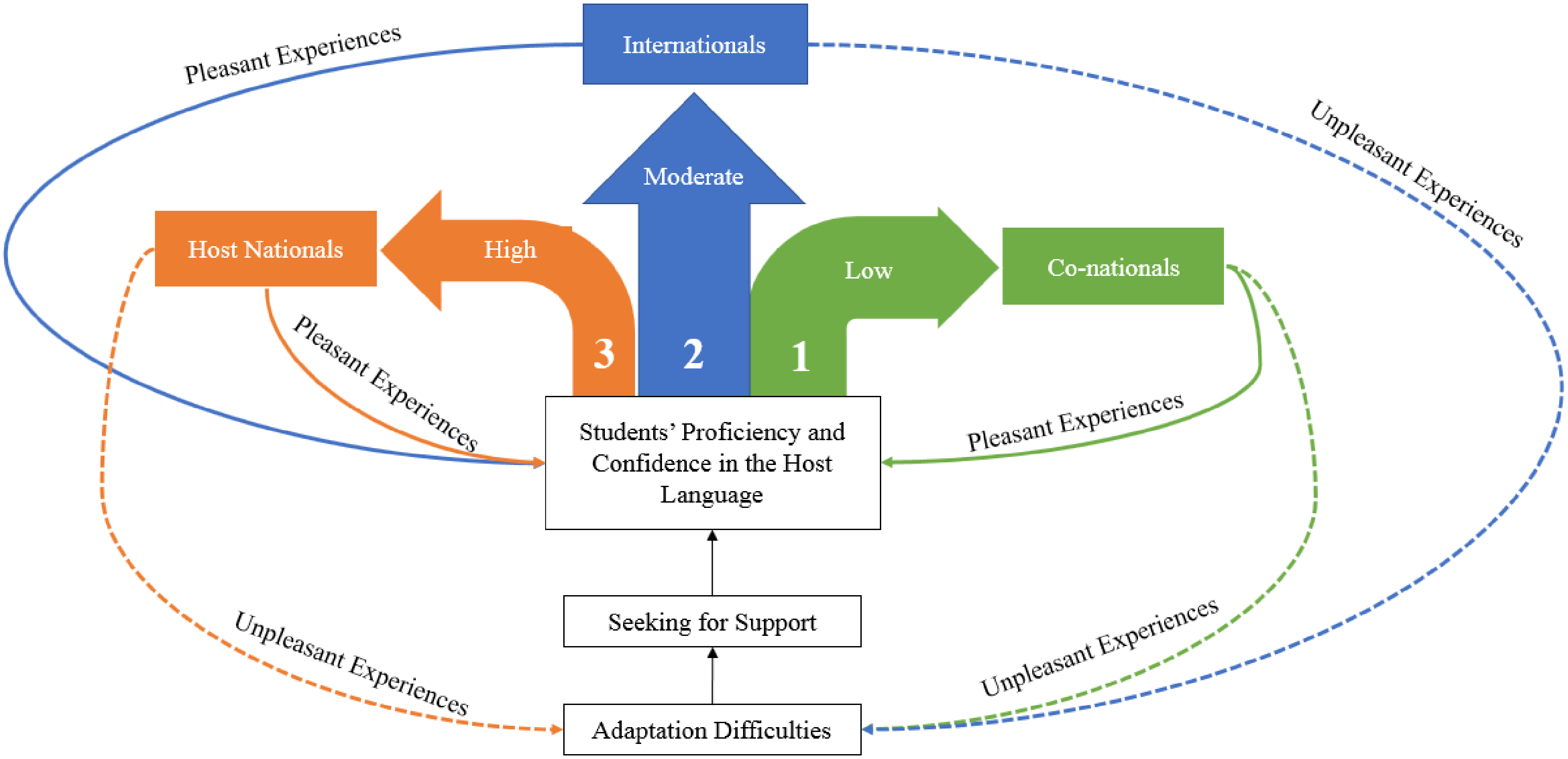
Internationals
Pleasant Experiences
Unpleasant Experiences
Moderate
Host Nationals
High
Low
Co-nationals
3
2
1
Pleasant Experiences
Pleasant Experiences
Students' Proficiency and Confidence in the Host Language
Seeking for Support
Adaptation Difficulties
Unpleasant Experiences
Unpleasant Experiences

Figure 20: Students' Levels of Proficiency and Confidence in the Host Language and their Influences on Social Contact

In particular, although co-national contact was mainly associated with psychological or emotional benefits (e.g., stress buffer), students who had low proficiency in the host language and lack confidence in their communication skills could avoid approaching host nationals or internationals for assistance. This explained why many students in this study turned to their compatriots for help when being confronted with academic and socio-cultural challenges. Co-nationals were then regarded as accessible sources of academic and socio-cultural support and preferable substitutes for the other two contact sources (illustrated by Route 1 in Figure 24). Previous research has suggested that this may have a cyclical effect since the more comfortable the students are within these networks, the less motivated they are in seeking interactions with other two contact sources, and consequently a further reduction in interactions with these two groups, and so on (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011).

Likewise, students with a relatively higher level of proficiency and confidence in the host language appeared to have a large number of international companions or close host national friends. Hence, when encountering adaptation issues, there was a high tendency that they would opt for these international or host national ‘buddies’ for help (shown as Route 2 and 3 in Figure 24). Pleasant experiences with the said groups meant fewer incentives to approach co-nationals. However, if their experiences were unpleasant or found not helpful, the students might turn to the other contact source for support. For instance, in the early stage of the sojourn, many students expressed the desire for friendships with internationals, however, cross-cultural conflicts in group work could separate them from their international friends. Thus, at the late stage, the increase in the quantity and quality of co-national contact were reported and the key role of this contact in diminishing psychological turmoil had been recognised and appreciated by the majority of the students.

Previous studies have suggested language proficiency is the pre-condition factor to host-national and international contact, and a key factor to ‘smoothen’ adjustment (Sawir, 2005; Sawir, 2012; Yu and Shen, 2012; Young *et al.*, 2013). As Ryan (2005) explains, some host national students may be hesitant to maintain friendships with international students if conversations are difficult and communication styles are markedly different. High proficiency in the host language can diminish the difference, facilitate conversation and increase the chance of acceptance to the community of host nationals (Brown, 2009b; Brown, 2009a). Language difficulties even negatively affect psychological adjustment of the students (Lin and Yi, 1997). Yeh and Inose (2003)’s research confirms that English fluency predicts the level of stress of student sojourners.

Indeed, language barriers emerged as the biggest challenge in cross-cultural communication for many interviewees in the present research. Students with a lower level of English proficiency struggled to express ideas and socialise with other internationals, while the ones with more fluent English were frustrated by miscommunication and misunderstanding during conversation.

These findings, however, did not indicate high proficiency and confidence in the host language alone could guarantee better and more interactions with host nationals and internationals, but suggested that these factors could have strong influences on how student sojourners utilised contact sources as support for their adjustment. There were, overall, many factors that might impact contact patterns and social grouping in the 'international' academic environment, which will be discussed in the following section.

4.3.5 Social grouping on campus and cultural identities

a. Multi-layer social grouping in the 'international' higher education contexts and its relevance to cultural identities

In this study, because of a large number of Chinese students in the British postgraduate programme, grouping of Chinese students was reported more often than others. The results of statistical tests also showed that the overall mean score of the quantity of co-national contact of East Asian and Southeast Asian students (with 65% of them were Chinese) were markedly higher than others'; and this figure significantly increased after nearly nine months (see 4.1.1).

This finding is congruent with previous studies about the adjustment of Chinese student sojourners in the UK particularly (Yu and Moskal, 2019). From 2000 to 2016, China was the country with the largest number of international students worldwide, accounting for 31% (Education, 2016) and may continue to be so for the next few years. In 2017, the number of Chinese students accounted for nearly 20% of international students in the UK (HESA, 2017), meaning in every five international students, there is one Chinese student. Yu and Moskal (2019), in their study, refer to this phenomenon as *'Chinese schools in UK universities'* and share one case study in which only 10% of the students in the class was non-Chinese.

For one-year taught postgraduate students in the UK, the skewed distribution of students may have a detrimental impact on student sojourners. This density of Chinese students and the homogeneity of nationality could reduce students' interest and curiosity in other groups

(Dunne, 2013), making them feel less inclined to build friendships with host nationals (Yu and Moskal, 2019). Despite their strong desire in having contact with local students, being the dominant cohort, it is also harder for students from China to interact with the said group. These issues are, in fact, not exclusively of Chinese students, but rather the issues that most students from East Asia and Southeast Asia encounter, since they are also a large group of students in the British postgraduate programme (Li and Stodolska, 2006).

Furthermore, previous research confirms that students' regions of origin are one of many predictors of the degree of contact with host nationals in the socio-cultural environment (Glass *et al.*, 2014). As Rienties and Nolan (2014) explain, students coming from a country with a large cultural distance compared to the host culture are more likely to be 'segregated' from host nationals, since they usually struggle to maintain conversations with host nationals and to attend social events and activities in the host culture (Wang, 2016). Many studies report that students from these regions often stay within their co-national networks (Glass *et al.*, 2014) and have a high tendency to group together (Hanassab, 2006; Gareis, 2012). Student sojourners who are readily accepted into the network of British students are more likely to originate from European or Anglophone origin who are often perceived to have higher language proficiency and less cultural distance (Harrison and Peacock, 2010; Wang, 2016).

Regarding the academic environment, both student sojourners and host national students appear to avoid multicultural groups on academic group projects and in-class activities since they assume these groups may negatively influence their academic performance (De Vita, 2002; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Rienties *et al.*, 2012; Volet and Ang, 2012). On one hand, host national students usually perceive international students as 'potential threats' to the marks due to their unfamiliarity with British pedagogy (Harrison and Peacock, 2009; Harrison and Peacock, 2010). On the other hand, student sojourners often find it difficult to establish relationships with host national students since the latter group have already had their existing well-established network of friendships (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011; Rienties *et al.*, 2012). These, in general, are suggested as key factors that create *"semi-distinct social spaces within the university environment",* in which international and host national students rarely interact (Harrison and Peacock, 2010, p. 884).

In general, international students are often portrayed in the literature in the IC field as a counterbalance (or a 'rival' group) to host national students; and both said groups are treated in many studies as homogenous groups (Brown, 2009b; Peacock and Harrison, 2009; Harrison and Peacock, 2010; Fincher and Shaw, 2011; Glass and Westmont, 2014). Although regarded as a relatively more heterogenous cohort in some studies, international students are then divided based on their geographical regions and nationalities. Students originating from Asia (or East Asia), and China in particular, are usually represented as a ‘disadvantaged’ group who are expected to experience more difficulties in socialising and integrating into the host culture, especially if the host country is one of the ‘Western’ countries (e.g., the USA or the UK) (Rienties *et al.*, 2013; Glass *et al.*, 2014; Glass and Westmont, 2014; Slaten *et al.*, 2016; Wang, 2016).

Interview data of this study, nevertheless, presented another viewpoint which suggested that social grouping in higher education was complex and multi-layered; and there was none so-called ‘disadvantaged’ group. Three key findings emerged from the qualitative study.

First, social grouping within the university environment was a dominant theme in many interviews. Many types of student groups were reported, such as groups of ‘local’ students, ‘Asian’ and ‘Western’ students, and small groups of students of the same nationality (e.g., Chinese, Indian and American students). Words such as *“international”*, *“local”*, *“Asian”* and *“Western”* were frequently used by many interviewees to ‘label’ the groupings they observed in the host university.

It can be induced that there were three levels of grouping observed in the ‘international’ academic environment, which were based on: (1) institutionalised student status (e.g., home and international students); (2) geographical region (e.g., East Asia, Middle East and Europe) and (3) nationality (e.g., America and China) (see Figure 21 below).

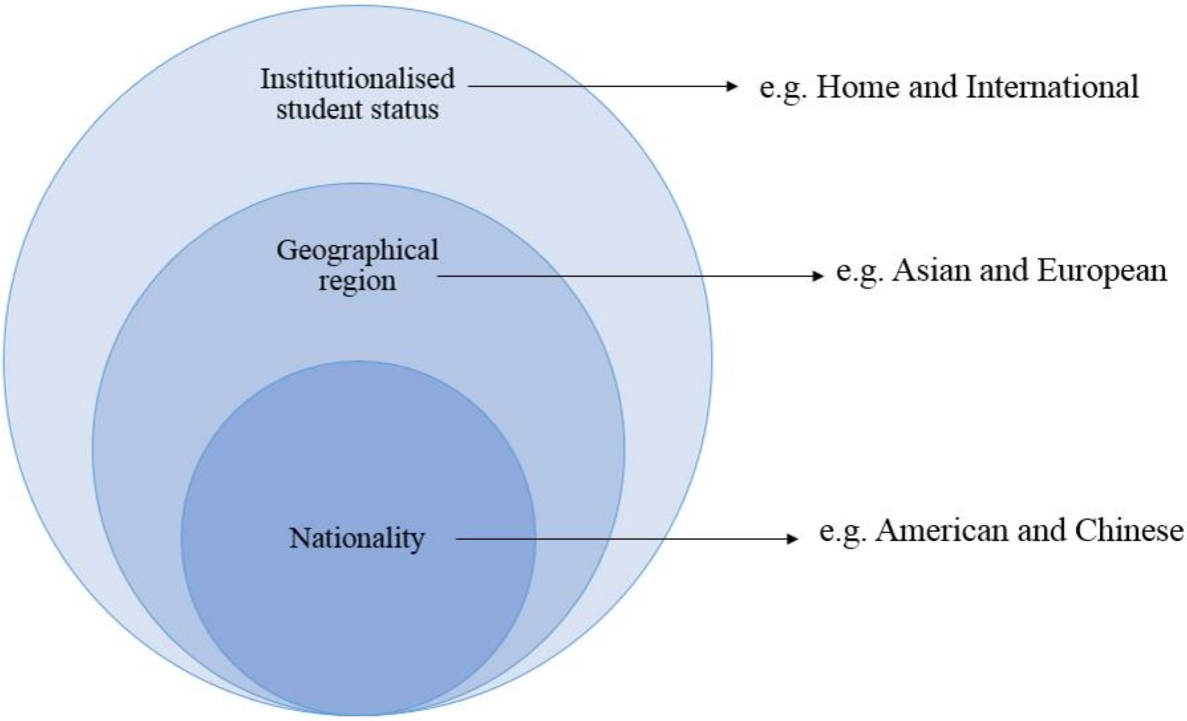
Institutionalised student status
e.g. Home and International
Geographical region
e.g. Asian and European
Nationality
e.g. American and Chinese

Figure 21: Three Levels of Grouping of Student Sojourners Within the 'International' Higher Education Context

Second, students could be members of multiple groups, depending on different contexts. For instance, Interviewee 4 shared that within the classroom setting, she usually sat with her co-nationals, but at her university accommodation, she befriended with her flatmates who were mostly international (see 4.2.4).

Finally, cultural identities indeed influenced contact patterns. The qualitative data showed that despite having a large amount of contact with non-co-national international colleagues, student sojourners generally tended to experience difficulties in communicating with international students perceived to be from 'different' regions. For instance, some students from Europe or America usually expressed they felt *"awkward"* when conversating with classmates from East Asia and Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, students from East Asia and Southeast Asia also perceived that conversations with students from 'other' regions (e.g., 'Western' and Europe) were challenging and felt *"safer"* to contact people from the 'same' region. Generally, contact with students perceived to be originated from 'other' regions was deemed to be *"difficult"*, thus, was minimised or sometimes avoided (see 4.2.4).

The discussion of how cultural identities influenced this pattern of grouping is detailed in the next two chapters (Chapter 5 and 6). Due to social grouping on campus, it is emphasised in many studies that international environments may not always guarantee international collaboration and interactions (Wright and Lander, 2003; Brown, 2009b). Chapter 7 will provide some suggested solutions for this issue.

In brief, social grouping in the ‘international’ higher education context was complicated and multi-layered. A student could be a member of various groupings. Social grouping was also influenced by cultural identities of the students, in so far that communication with international students perceived to be members of ‘different’ regions was often deemed challenging. As discussed in 4.3.2 and 4.3.3, the majority of the students in this study had close relationships with their co-national and non-co-national international friends, while maintaining limited contact with host nationals. The groupings based on institutionalised student status and nationalities were, thus, very popular. In addition, the ‘segregation’ of international students from host national students resulted in a sub-culture of international students and, to some extent, had influenced adjustment of the students. The next section will discuss this in further details.

b. A sub-culture of international students

Due to the apparent academic stress from the intensive assessment schedule at the end of the academic year, most of the interviewees concentrated extensively on their study and shared that they often avoided socialising and attending social events or activities during this period. Similarly, quantitative data suggested that student sojourners experienced greater difficulties in socialising by participating in social events and activities since the mean score of adaptation of this item (M=3.73, SD=1.13) was lower than the average score of the Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale (SAS) (see 4.1.3). Students’ lives were constrained within the campus (e.g., university library and classrooms). After the sojourn, regrets of not participating in many social activities or volunteering in social events, together with the desire to gain more exposure to the ‘wider’ host culture and more contact with host nationals, were frequently expressed.

One striking finding from many studies on student sojourners is that despite the high frequency and amount of international contact, the students’ social lives largely occur within the campus. Contact with local students generally happens within the classroom setting (Harrison and Peacock, 2010). The desire for more local contact outside of the university is, thus, is evident across the studies (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009; Harrison and Peacock, 2010; Wu and Hammond, 2011).

Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) argue that these students’ experiences are part of *“a youth subculture ... conceptualised spatially within the unique university environment”* – a convenient yet isolating *“bubble in which most students lived, studied and socialised, and in some cases, worked”* which is *“not broadly representative of the wider culture”*. Within this academic and campus-based “bubble”, some students chose to socialise and live with their co-national and non-co-national international colleagues (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.3). Some students even perceived co-nationals and non-co-national internationals as preferable substitutes for host national students (see 4.3.4).

In this research, it seemed that participants with relatively little contact with host nationals tended to struggle to adapt to the local language even after nearly nine months. However, since these students’ lives were usually framed within the academic campus-based “bubble”, they generally encountered few difficulties in daily communication. This may explain why despite being the item with the lowest mean score (M=3.08, SD=1.01) in the SAS, understanding the local accent/ language rarely emerged as a key issue of adjustment in the second interview near the end of the sojourn. Only when being probed, the students admitted that until the end of the sojourn, they still found it impossible to understand the local accent.

It is logical to conclude that on one hand, this “bubble” partially alleviated difficulties of socio-cultural adjustment to the *“wider”* host culture and reduced the acculturation stress; on the other hand, it limited international students’ exposure to the socio-cultural environment of the *“larger”* host culture (as shown in Figure 22 below). This leads to an important question: how can we evaluate socio-cultural adjustment of student sojourners?

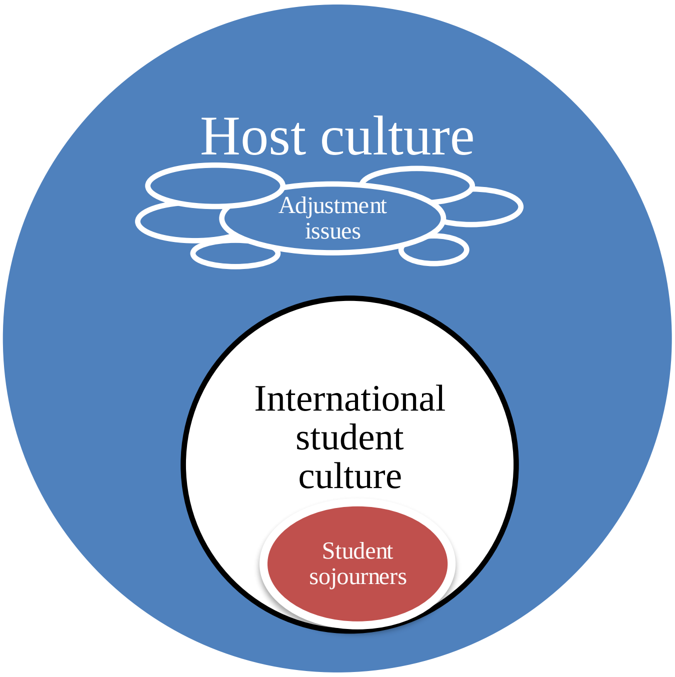

Figure 22: The International Student Culture Created by International Students during The Sojourn

If adjustment is evaluated by the ability of individuals to perform in daily social life in the new culture, most students in this study (as well as in many other studies of student sojourners such as Schweisfurth and Gu (2009)'s) adjusted relatively successfully. In particular, in the second interview, the majority of participants expressed satisfaction with the social life, showing their pride in being able to build close relationships with many non-co-national international and co-national friends in the UK. Some even reported improvement in the host language proficiency and growing confidence in communication skills. These findings are much in line with previous studies positing that the sojourn is an opportunity for self-development and personal growth (Montuori and Fahim, 2004; Gu and Maley, 2008). Acquiring specific skills to deal with daily social activities in the new culture is necessary for successful socio-cultural adjustment (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward, 2001).

However, as Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) explain, this was, by no means, the normally understood *"host culture"*, but rather a *"youth subculture"* created by international students within the academic bubble, or in Wu and Hammond (2011, p. 435)'s words *"international student culture"*.

> *"Such a culture is defined by its widespread use of English; participation of students from a range of national backgrounds; and a focus on achieving academic success."*

It should be highlighted that students in this study and many other studies, such as the work of Harrison and Peacock (2010) and Wu and Hammond (2011), did not adjust well, if adjustment is understood as acceptance of the host culture's socio-cultural environment, as defined by Ward and Kennedy (1992); Ward and Kennedy (1994) and Brislin (1981). For instance, they might have contact with host nationals (i.e., British students) but primarily, the contact remained superficial, solely for the academic purpose (such as completing groupwork) and rarely exceeded beyond the classroom setting (see 4.3.2). This could explain why many international students reported to be generally satisfied with their social lives, but often expressed a desire for more exposure to the host culture and host national contact, or exposure outside the academic campus-based 'bubble', to be exact.

In general, there were two key findings in this sub-section. First, socio-cultural adjustment of student sojourners was relatively more complicated than this of other sojourn groups and was influenced strongly by the students' social contact patterns. The application of Ward and Kennedy's work may not allow for a better evaluation of the adjustment process of the students. Second, this study demonstrated the active and important role of the individual's agency in cross-cultural transition, in so far that individuals could construct the socio-cultural environment in which they lived, experienced and socialised (i.e., the academic 'bubble' of the international student culture); which helped to moderate the tension in adjustment to the 'host culture'. With these in mind, there is a need to reconsider the approach to cross-cultural transition, adjustment and adaptation, which should regard the individual's agency as playing an active role in this process, instead of perceiving it as being subdued and in need of changing to 'fit' with the 'host culture'.

4.4 Summary of findings

Findings from this study showed that despite having an increase in terms of the quantity and quality of social contact, the changing pattern of each contact type (i.e., co-national, non-co-national and host national) varied. Co-national contact was the most preferable and popular, followed by international contact. Contact with host nationals remained low throughout the sojourn.

First, most of the students felt closer and more connected with their compatriots after the sojourn, due to the perceived linguistic and cultural similarity and familiarity; and the lack of confidence in the host language's proficiency (presented in Figure 23). However, the attitude to co-national contact was divided. On one hand, contact with co-national were generally regarded as a buffer to psychological turmoil (i.e., homesickness), on the other hand, it was associated with the impediment to the improvement of the host language's proficiency. Yet, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the latter association.

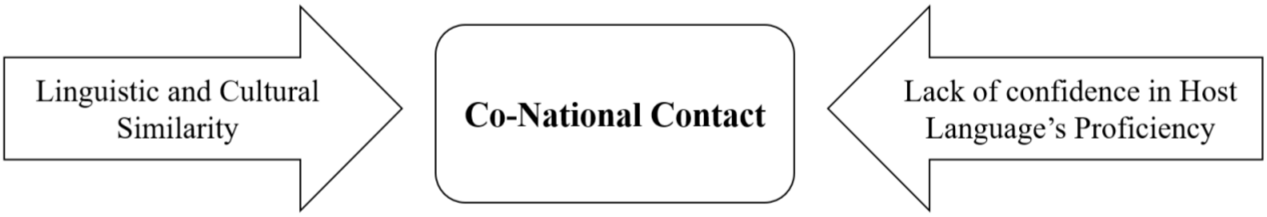
Linguistic and Cultural Similarity
Co-National Contact
Lack of confidence in Host Language's Proficiency

Figure 23: 'Push' and 'Pull' Factors Keeping Student Sojourners in Their Co-national Networks

Co-national contact has been implied in the literature as having short-term benefits yet long-term hindrances on adaptation of sojourners (Kim, 2001; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011). However, this study recognises the important role of co-national contact in alleviating psychological stress and proposes that instead of '*administratively interfered with, regulated against*' (Bochner *et al.*, 1977, p. 292), it should be encouraged. The lack thereof could possibly 'damage' psychological adjustment of student sojourners.

Second, relationships with host nationals stayed superficial during the sojourn. Most interactions were framed within the academic environment; and rarely exceed beyond that 'bubble'. This finding is not new. The limited contact with host nationals was, in fact, due to both individual and contextual factors (see Figure 24). Particularly, it is often suggested in the literature that struggles to initiate conversations and maintain relationships with host nationals are attributed to the unwillingness of host nationals (Harrison and Peacock, 2009) and the lack of confidence of student sojourners in the host language proficiency (Yu and Shen, 2012). The skewed intake of students on many UK programmes (leading to the small population of host national students and the large number of international, or Chinese students specifically) also contributes to this dearth of host national interactions (Yu and Moskal, 2019).

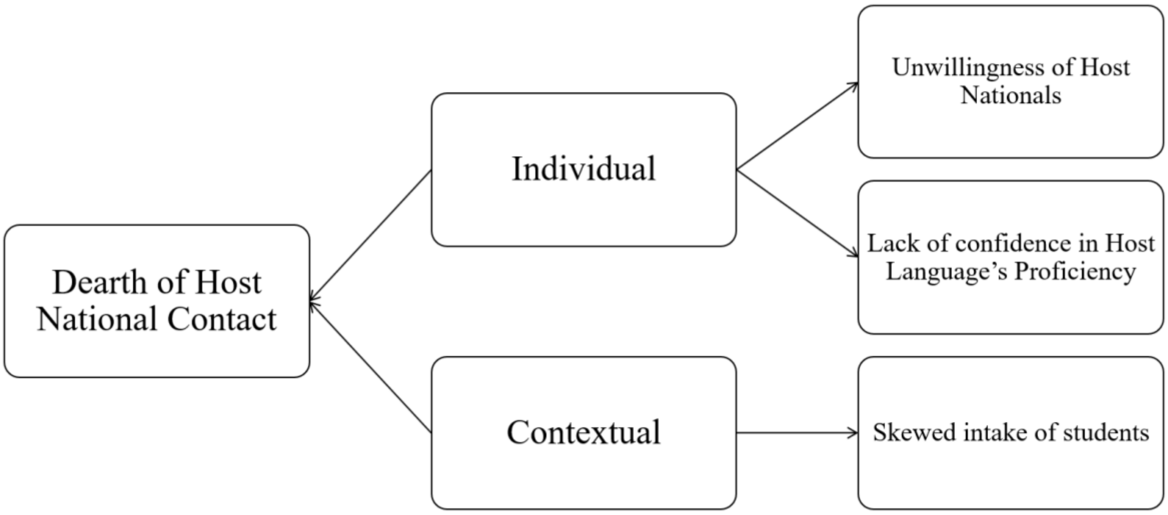
Dearth of Host National Contact
Individual
Contextual
Unwillingness of Host Nationals
Lack of confidence in Host Language's Proficiency
Skewed intake of students

Figure 24: Reasons for the Limited Contact of Host Nationals of Student Sojourners

Despite some benefits to academic adjustment, in this study, host national students were rarely considered as sources of academic support, due to their superficial relationships and limited contact with student sojourners, but directly linked with utilitarian support for socio-cultural adjustment. A desire for more contact with host nationals was a dominant theme across interviews.

Third, non-co-national internationals became increasingly important contact sources of student sojourners and were usually regarded as instrumental support for academic adjustment. There was an increase in the quantity and quality of the contact by the end of the sojourn. For students with closer relationships with non-co-national internationals, the said group could offer socio-cultural and emotional support. It is believed that frequent interactions with non-co-national internationals could result in improved proficiency and confidence in communication skills in the host language.

Finally, social grouping on campus is a predominant issue. There appeared to exist a *"sub-culture"* of international students in which student sojourners lived, studied and socialised. This sub-culture could alleviate the stress of adjustment to the host culture, at the same time, refrained students' interactions with host nationals and the 'wider' host culture. These findings suggested socio-cultural adjustment of student sojourners was complicated and the students could play an active role in cross-cultural transition by constructing their own socio-cultural environment (e.g., the sub-culture of international students) to alleviate the adjustment's stress.

Groupings on campus were complex and multi-layered. Within this sub-culture, the students also grouped into smaller cohorts of people perceived to be from a 'similar' region (e.g., *'Asia'* and *'Europe'*). Interactions with the 'other' region were frequently refrained to avoid awkwardness and misunderstanding. These findings suggested that cultural identities could predict the pattern of social contact. Data analyses and discussion of relationships between these variables will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 provides the quantitative and qualitative data analyses of cultural identities of student sojourners, how they constructed their identities, and impacts of cultural identities on social contact patterns and adaptation (5.1 and 5.2). The chapter then offers a critical review of the current literature in relation to the research findings, based on which, a revised definition and a model explaining the construction of cultural identities of student sojourners are provided (5.3). The chapter is concluded by a summary of key findings (5.4).

Chapter 5. Cultural Identities and their Relationships with Social Contact and Adaptation Outcomes across Three Domains

This chapter aims to answer the three research questions below. These questions were grouped together because they deal with the topics that are complex yet highly relevant (e.g., cultural identities, social contact and adaptation). These findings offered some prerequisite knowledge for better understanding of the students' perceptions and the construction of cultural identities during cross-cultural transition.

RQ3: How do student sojourners construct their cultural identities in the international environment?

RQ7: What is the relationship between cultural identities and social contact?

RQ8: What is the role of adaptation and adjustment in the process of cultural identification?

The chapter firstly presents the descriptive statistics of the cultural identities of international students at the start (Phase 1 – P1) and the end of the sojourn (Phase 2 – P2) (5.1.1). The relationship between cultural identities, social contact and adjustment is also clarified (5.1.2, 5.1.3 and 5.1.4). Changing patterns of cultural identities in two phases are presented (5.1.5). Qualitative analysis (5.2.1 to 5.2.3) explores the perceptions of 18 students, who participated in the interview in two phases, about cultures and identities; and how they constructed cultural identities in the 'international' environment. Finally, the chapter is concluded by the discussion of the quantitative and qualitative findings in relation to the current literature in the field, based on which a refined definition of cultural identities and a model of the key components in the construction of cultural identities, applicable to student sojourners, are developed (5.3).

5.1 Quantitative analysis

In this study, cultural identities were conceptualised to consist of two dimensions, namely home cultural identification (HID) and host cultural identification (HSID). The scale was adapted and revised from the Vancouver Index of Acculturation of Ryder *et al.* (2000); Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure Revised of Phinney and Ong (2007); and other research of Contrada *et al.* (2001) and of Lee and Yih (2010); using a 7-point Linkert scale (see Chapter 3: Methodology).

5.1.1 Descriptive statistics

The overall mean scores of HID in two phases were high while those of HSID was slightly lower (see Table 35).

	Phase 1		**Phase 2**	
	HID	**HSID**	**HID**	**HSID**
M	5.09	4.64	5.12	4.45
SD	.88	.82	1.06	.87
Min	2.00	3.00	1.55	2.09
Max	7.00	6.73	7.00	6.36

Table 35: Descriptive Analysis of Two Cultural Identification Dimensions in P1 and P2 (N=84)

Table 35 also shows that although early in the sojourn, student sojourners generally identified strongly with the host culture, with the mean score of HSID around 4.6 (out of 7).

For better comparisons, the scores were converted into new values, with scores from 3 and below coded as low level of identification, from 5 and above as high, and the rest as moderate level (see Figure 25). In P1, more than half (53.6%) of the international students had a high level of HID while more than a third (36.9%) of them identified strongly with the host culture. However, at the end of the academic year, nearly two-thirds of them (63.1%) identified strongly with home cultures while less than a third (28.6%) achieved a high level of HSID.

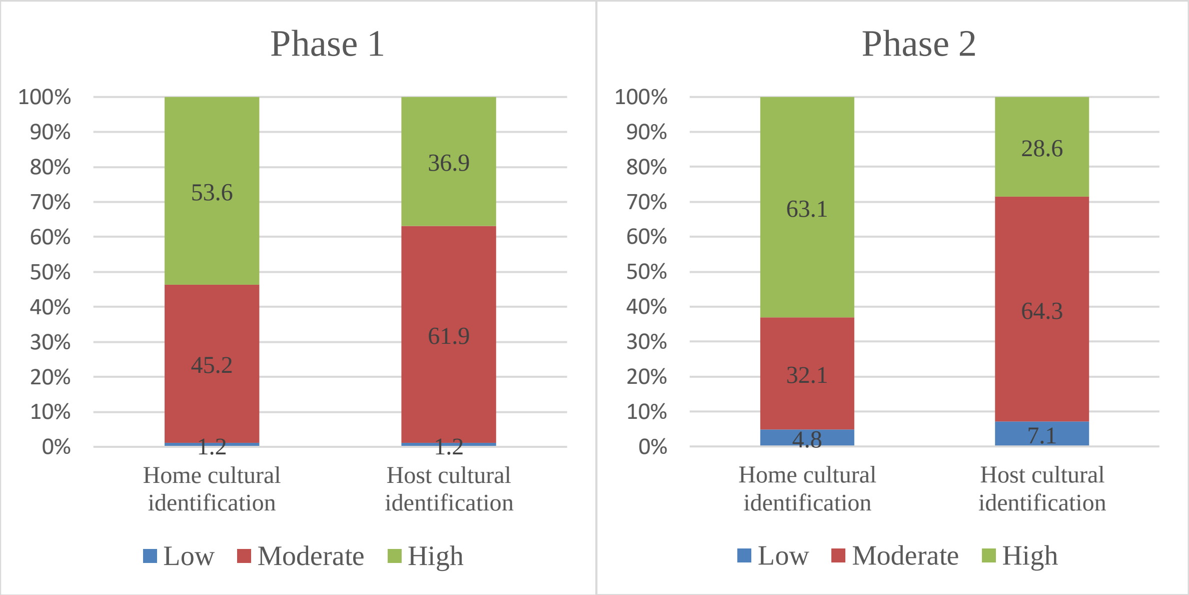

Figure 25: Frequencies of Identification Levels towards Home and Host Cultures in Phase 1 and 2 (N=84)

HID in both phases did not vary depending on regions of origin of the students since t-tests' results were not statistically significant. Several independent t-tests were also employed to examine the difference of cultural identification of the students categorised by demographic factors (i.e., genders, schools of programmes, and accommodation types); yet none of the tests' results were significant (see Appendix Q).

5.1.2 Cultural identities and patterns of social contact

To examine relationships between cultural identities and patterns of contact, correlation tests were applied, followed by regression analyses. Since the quantity and the quality of three types of social contact were not normally distributed (see Appendix K), Spearman's tests were employed.

a. Cultural identities and quantity of contact

Table 36 shows that in both phases, significant positive correlations were found between HID score and the quantity of co-national contact; and between HSID score and the quantity of host national contact. Interestingly, in P1, the correlation test between HSID score and the quantity of international contact showed a significant and positive result ($r = 0.38$). Yet there was a negative correlation between HID and the quantity of international contact in P2 ($r = -0.26$).

The data suggested that students who often contacted with people from their home countries were usually the ones who felt identified to their home cultures; and students interacting frequently with host nationals and non-co-national international friends tended to have strong host cultural identification. In contrast, students who hang out more frequently with and had a large number of international friends often experienced a lower sense of identification with their home cultures.

	Home cultural identification (HID)	**Host cultural identification (HSID)**
Phase 1 (early-sojourn)		
QUAN Co-nationals	.38**	.04
QUAN Host nationals	-.15	.40**
QUAN Intern'ls	-.21	.37**
Phase 2 (late-sojourn)		
QUAN Co-nationals	.38**	.08
QUAN Host nationals	-.18	.40**
QUAN Intern'ls	-.26*	.08

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 36: Spearman's Correlations of Cultural Dimensions and Patterns of Social Contact in P1 and P2 (N = 84)

Regression analyses were then performed to determine if HID could predict the quantity and quality of contact and explained how much variance of the variables (see Table 37). Results shows the test was significant ($p<0.05$), but 7.1% of the variance of the quantity of co-national contact in P1 were explained by HID's mean score (Model 1), indicating that HID played a small role in predicting the co-national contact's quantity early in the sojourn and there could be other factors influencing this variable.

HID significantly predicted the quantity of co-national contact in P2 and explained 14% of the data variance (Model 2). It predicted the quantity of international contact in P2, with the higher the HID score, the lower the quantity, but could explain a small amount of the data variance (4.6%). This suggested that HID played a relatively more important role in predicting the quantity of co-national contact later in the sojourn. Although HID could predict the quantity of international contact, there might be other more influential factors predicting this variable.

Similarly, HSID had a strong impact on the quantity of social contact, both early and late in the sojourn. Table 37 shows that HSID significantly predicted the quantity of host national contact and international contact in P1, and the quantity of host national contact in P2. It explained a relatively larger percentage of the data variance, 14.5% (Model 4), 14.3% (Model 5) and 18.1% (Model 6).

These results might indicate that early in the sojourn, international students with a stronger sense of identification with their home cultures tended to prefer having more and frequent contact with their co-nationals. Later in the sojourn, the influence of HID on the quantity of contact became more significant, in so far that these students could prefer having more and frequent contact with their compatriots. Meanwhile, a strong sense of HSID might lead to preference in a large quantity of contact with non-co-national internationals and host nationals early and late in the sojourn.

		Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**	**t**	**Sig**	**R^2**	**F change**
Model 1[a]	P1 HID Score	3.72	1.49	.27	2.51	.014	.071	6.28
Model 2[b]	P2 HID Score	5.19	1.42	.38	3.67	.000	.140	13.44
Model 3[c]	P2 HID Score	-2.87	1.44	-.21	-1.99	.050	.046	3.95
Model 4[d]	P1 HSID Score	5.65	1.51	.38	3.73	.000	.145	13.94
Model 5[e]	P1 HSID Score	5.94	1.61	.38	3.70	.000	.143	13.65
Model 6[f]	P2 HSID Score	5.48	1.29	.43	4.25	.000	.181	18.08

a. Dependent variable: P1 QUAN Co-nationals
b. Dependent variable: P2 QUAN Co-nationals
c. Dependent variable: P2 QUAN Intern'ls
d. Dependent variable: P1 QUAN Host nationals
e. Dependent variable: P1 QUAN Internationals
f. Dependent variable: P2 QUAN Host nationals

Table 37: Simple Linear Regression Analyses with HID Score and HSID score as the Main Predictors of the Quantity of Social in P1 and P2 (N = 84)

b. Cultural identities and quality of contact

Table 38 shows there were positive correlations between HID score and the quality of co-national contact, and between HSDI score and the quality of host national contact in two phases. The correlation test of HSID score and the quality of international contact was significant in P1 (with $r=0.33$, $p<0.05$), but was not statistically significant in P2 ($r=0.14$, $p>0.05$).

	HID	HSID
Phase 1 (early-sojourn)		
QUAL Co-nationals	.42**	-.08
QUAL Host nationals	-.10	.33**
QUAL Intern'ls	.11	.33**
Phase 2 (late-sojourn)		
QUAL Co-nationals	.39**	-.02
QUAL Host nationals	-.05	.38**
QUAL Intern'ls	-.13	.14

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 38: Spearman's Correlations of Cultural Dimensions and the Quality of Social Contact in P1 and P2 (N = 84)

To confirm the if cultural identification could predict these variables and to measure the percentage of the variance explained, simple linear regression analyses were conducted (see Table 39). HID significantly and positively predicted the quality of co-national contact in P1 and in P2 and explained 17.6% and 12% of the variance of the variables, respectively (Model 1 and 2). These results suggested that HID had a strong effect in predicting the quality of co-national contact early and late in the sojourn, with a stronger sense of identification with home cultures could result in better and closer relationships with co-nationals.

Similarly, HSID could predict the quality of contact with host nationals in two phases, though the impact might not be as strong. In particular, HSID explained 8.8% and 10.6% of the variance of quality of host national contact in P1 and P2, respectively (Model 3 and 4). It can be concluded that in both phases, a high level of identification with the host culture might lead to strong and close relationships with host nationals.

Interestingly, HSID significantly predicted the quality of international contact in P1 and explained 9.7% of data variance ($p<0.05$) but the result of the regression analysis in P2 was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$) (Model 5 and 6). This might suggest that at the early stage of the sojourn, a strong sense of host cultural identification could make the students feel relatively more bonded with non-co-national internationals, but this might not result in closer relationships with international friends at later stage in the sojourn.

		Beta	Std. Error	β	t	Sig	R^2	F change
Model 1[a]	P1 HID Score	6.56	1.57	.42	4.19	.000	.176	17.51
Model 2[b]	P2 HID Score	3.63	1.08	.35	3.35	.001	.120	11.23
Model 3[c]	P1 HSID Score	4.01	1.44	.30	2.81	.006	.088	7.89
Model 4[d]	P2 HSID Score	3.94	1.27	.33	3.11	.003	.106	9.70
Model 5[e]	P1 HSID Score	4.62	1.55	.31	2.97	.004	.097	8.84
Model 6[f]	P2 HSID Score	1.99	1.54	.14	1.30	.198	.020	1.69

a. Dependent variable: P1 QUAL Co-nationals

b. Dependent variable: P2 QUAL Co-nationals

c. Dependent variable: P1 QUAL Host Nationals

d. Dependent variable: P2 QUAL Host Nationals

e. Dependent variable: P1 QUAL Intern'ls

f. Dependent variable: P2 QUAL Intern'ls

Table 39: Simple Linear Regression Analyses with HID Score and HSID score as the Main Predictors of the Quality of Social Contact in P1 and P2 (N = 84)

In general, these data again confirmed the important role of cultural identities in changing and "shaping" social communication (or in this study, patterns of social contact) in cross-cultural transition. Students with a higher sense of identification with home cultures tended to prefer having more and frequent contact with their compatriots whilst might be reluctant to interact with people from other countries. Students with a stronger sense of host cultural identification, on the other hand, were more likely to maintain large quantity of contact with host nationals and non-co-national internationals. In addition, a stronger sense of home cultural identification could lead to better and closer relationships with co-nationals, while stronger host cultural identification could make student sojourners feel more bonded with host nationals and non-co-national internationals.

5.1.3 Cultural identities and changing patterns of social contact

Table 40 shows that there was a negative correlation between the change in the quality of international contact over time and the mean score of HID in P2 ($r= -0.23$, $p<0.05$). This suggested that the closer the relationships with their non-co-national international peers, the less identified the students felt with their home cultures. Changes in the quantity of social contact, however, did not significantly correlate with the two dimensions of cultural identification.

	DIFF QUAN Co-national	DIFF QUAN Host	DIFF QUAN Intern’l	DIFF QUAL Co-national	DIFF QUAL Host	DIFF QUAL Intern’l
HID	.15	-.06	-.19	.17	-.08	-.23*
HSID	.10	.14	.04	.02	.09	.03

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 40: Pearson’s Correlations of Patterns of Changes of Social Contact and Two Cultural Identification Dimensions (N = 84)

Simple linear regression analysis was then performed to examine if the change in the quality of international contact predicted the HID score in P2 and to measure the percentage of the variance explained by this variable. The result was significant, with the change in the quality of non-co-national international contact negatively impacted HID score, though it predicted only 5.2% of the variance in HID score (see Table 41). This result meant that the increase in the pleasantness and the closeness of the relationships with non-co-national internationals for a long duration of time might result in a decrease in home cultural identification later in the sojourn, though its effect on this dimension of identification was not strong. There might be other factors influencing home cultural identification.

	Beta	Std. Error	β	t	Sig	R^2	F change
DIFF QUAL Intern’l	-.02	.01	-.23	-2.13	.036	.052	4.53

Table 41: Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Changing Patterns of the Quality of International Contact and HID Score (N = 84)

5.1.4 Cultural identities and three adaptation domains

Cultural identities were measured by two dimensions: home cultural identification (HID) and host cultural identification (HSID) (see 3.4.1). Detailed analyses of two dimensions of cultural identities and their changing patterns are presented in 5.1. In this section, the results of the analysis tests to examine the relationship of adaptation and cultural identities are discussed.

Table 42 presents correlation tests of adaptation and cultural identification scores. HID negatively correlated with sociocultural adaptation (r= -0.26, p<0.05) and AAE (r= -0.22, p<0.05). Overall, this implies that the stronger the students identified with their home cultures, the more difficulties they experienced in sociocultural and academic adaptation. Table 42 also shows that HID, however, did not correlate with psychological adaptation (p>0.05), and HSID did not correlate with any of the adaptation outcomes.

	HID	**HSID**
Sociocultural	-.26*	.16
AAE	-.22*	.19
SAAP	-.16	.18
GPA	-.17	.10
Psychological	.01	.04

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 42: Spearman's Correlations of Three Domains of Adaptation and Two Dimensions of Cultural Identification (N = 84)

Note: Academic adaptation was measured by three indicators: adaptation to academic environment (AAE), students' satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP) and academic achievements (measured by GPA) (see 4.1.4).

Multiple regression analysis with two dimensions of cultural identities as the predictors of sociocultural adaptation yielded significant results (see Table 43). HID negatively influenced sociocultural adaptation (β = -0.32, t(82) = -3.01, p<0.05) whereas HSID positively impacted it (β = 0.27, t(82) = 2.53, p<0.05). 13.5% of the variance of sociocultural adaptation could be explained by the model (R^2 = 0.135, F(2,82) = 6.42, p<0.05). In other words, cultural identification strongly affected socio-cultural adaptation, with the stronger the students identified with their home cultures, the lower score of sociocultural adaptation they might get. The more they identified with the host cultures, the better their adaptation.

	Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**		
Cultural Identification Dimensions as Predictors					
Constant	4.19	.37		11.4	.000
HID Score	-.17	.06	-.32	-3.01	.004
HSID Score	.17	.07	.27	2.53	.013

Note: R^2 = 0.135 for Model with Cultural Identification Scores as Predictors

Table 43: Multiple Regression Analysis of Cultural Identification and Sociocultural Adaptation (N = 84)

Table 44 presents multiple regression analysis with HID and HSID as the main predictors of academic adaptation. HID negatively influenced academic adaptation and HSID positively affected this adaptation domain. The model, however, explained a small amount (8.3%) of the variance of academic adaptation. This result suggests that cultural identification might play a small role in predicting academic adaptation, with strong home identification leading to lower scores in academic adaptation, while strong host cultural identification could help the students adapt better to the new academic environment.

	Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Beta	**Std. Error**	**β**		
Cultural Identification Dimensions as Predictors					
Constant	3.77	.53		7.13	.000
HID Score	-.17	.08	-.23	-2.10	.039
HSID Score	.21	.10	.24	2.16	.034

Note: R^2 = 0.083 for Model with Cultural Identification Scores as Predictors

Table 44: Multiple Regression Analysis of Cultural Identification and Academic Adaptation (N = 84)

Because the impact of cultural identities (i.e., home and host cultural identification) on psychological adaptation could be influenced by the patterns of co-national contact (i.e., the quantity and quality of contact), a number of one-way ANCOVA tests were run to determine whether there were any differences between groups of students with high and low home cultural identification levels; and high and low host cultural identification levels on psychological adaptation outcome, with the quality and the quantity of co-national contact being the covariates.

The one-way ANCOVA tests of the differences in the adjusted means of psychological adaptation of students with high and low home cultural identification levels, with the quantity and the quality of co-national contact as the covariates, yielded no significant results, since F(1,83)= 0.285, p= 0.595 and F(1,83) = 0.306, p= 0.582, respectively

Similarly, there weren’t significant differences in the psychological adaptation’s adjusted mean between students with high and low host cultural identification levels, with the quantity and the quality of co-national contact as the covariates, as F(1,83)= 0.136, p= 0.713 and F(1,83)= 0.012, p= 0.911, respectively.

These results indicated cultural identities might not influence psychological adaptation, even when the patterns of co-national contact were controlled.

Overall, these data highlighted the importance of cultural identities in social and academic adaptation and adjustment of international students. In this study, strong home cultural identification could hinder the students' adaptation to the socio-cultural and the academic environment in the host culture, while strong host cultural identification might facilitate it.

5.1.5 Changing patterns of cultural identities

In general, international students seemed to experience an increase in the mean scores of HID (M = 5.09, SD = 0.88 in P1; and M = 5.12, SD = 1.06 in P2) and a decline in HSID after a one year in the UK (M = 4.64, SD = 0.82 in P1; and M = 4.45, SD = 0.87 in P2).

However, to confirm if these patterns of changes were statistically significant, paired-samples t-test was applied to test the difference of HSID scores in P1 and P2. As the differences of the mean score[8] of HID was not normally distributed (see Appendix N), Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to examine the difference of HID scores across two phases.

The mean score of HID increased 0.08 from P1 to P2, yet the p-value of Wilcoxon signed-rank test was 0.182, indicating the non-significance of the increase in the mean scores (see Table 45). Similarly, despite the slight decrease (with the mean difference of 0.18) in HSDI, this mean difference was not statistically significant (p=0.067).

	DIFF HID	**DIFF HSID**
M	.08	-.18
SD	1.03	.90
t	1.33	1.86

*p<0.05; **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 45: Analyses of Differences of Two Dimensions of Cultural Identities in P1 and P2 (N=84)

Several independent t-tests were performed to examine the differences in the changes of the cultural identification scores of student sojourners grouped by demographics factors (i.e., genders, departments of study and accommodation types), but none of the test results were statistically significant (see Appendix R).

---

[8] Mean differences of cultural dimensions in P1 and P2 were calculated by the equation: M = P2 – P1.

These results indicate that student sojourners in this study did not experience significant changes in the two dimensions of cultural identities (i.e., home cultural and host cultural identification). However, as explained earlier, these data were collected near the end of the sojourn when the students were still in the host country. Changes to their cultural identities might not be prominent to be realised, explaining the statistically-not-significant results. It is, thus, necessary to study the re-entry to clearly confirm whether any changes happened, which will be analysed in Chapter 6.

5.2 Qualitative analysis[9]

Since culture and identity are two contested concepts in social sciences, the concept of cultural identity is also very "slippery" (see 2.1.3). Instead of delving into the ongoing dispute and about the concept of cultural identity, the main purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of international students about their cultural identities and examine how the students constructed their cultural identities in the 'international' HE contexts[10].

5.2.1 Perceptions about cultures and cultural identities

Although not explicitly stated by all of the students, it was observable across the interview that whenever discussing the topic of cultures; language, food, costumes and entertainment were frequently mentioned and were perceived as key signifiers of a culture.

> *"…cultures can be food, entertainment, movies…"* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1)
> *"…language is culture, right?"* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P1)

The students usually discussed cultures, though indirectly, as if *'a culture'* were a concrete and conscious agent that could define behaviours of members of a cultural group. One noticeable similarity between these students was that they often instinctively regarded cultures as nations or countries. They believed that a country/ nation usually had its own *"national culture"* which consisted of its *"national language"* (or *"native language"*), specific types of food, costumes (*"traditional food and costumes"*) and entertainment. As Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, emphasised in the second interview in P2:

> *"I speak the national language, and I hold the belief that my country is the best, of course […] I have* identity, *which is national identity, there, as an Indonesian."*

---

[9] The views on political issues, cultures and people of those cultures presented in this chapter were those of the interviewees and did not reflect the position or opinions of the researcher.

People from the same ‘culture’ (or ‘nation’, as the students perceived), therefore, were supposed to own similar sets of characteristics and probably behave in certain ways.

> *“I think it goes back to our cultures, we are not used to like living independently or alone, we always need our family. That’s how we are, I think, because of the culture, you know.”* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, P1)
>
> “*Italian are usually, you know, openness makes a person.”* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1)
>
> *“For example, people in Germany generally often complain. So, when the machine at my flat didn’t work, I kind of complain, but I didn’t complain that hard but just kind of saying it. [...] Also, that kind of punctuality thing...”* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P1)

Phrases such as *“People from X are…., Y people are…”* were quite common across the interviews, as shown in the quotes below.

> *“You know, you kind of notice that there are some differences in how people do certain things. It’s the fact, you can’t change it. […] I mean you cannot say that for the whole population or whole nation where people are different, but uhm that’s I think that I would say it’s different, British people are a bit more indirect than German people who often are indirect as well. American people often tend to be direct as well…”* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P2)
>
> *“I think that’s some characteristics of the Japanese because I also had another Japanese friend. She’s also around my age but she’s much calmer and very polite and quite distant, but us, we are more friendly and noisy.”* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P2)
>
> *“Uhm, so I think that I actually talked that with a friend that you actually have stereotypes about certain cultures, and we talked about that and some of them are just true. For instance, about German, we are always punctual. I’m not always precisely on the minute but if you see like people from southern Europe for instance, they are always half an hour late, always. It’s typical for them to be half an hour late. We uhm always try to be on point, we like to make plans, organise things.”* (Interviewee 19, from Germany, P2)

Since many students often conflated cultures with nations, they seemed to associate cultural identities with nationalities or national identities. For some students, the answer to this question was written on the passport. For them, if an individual was born and raised in a country, spoke the “*national language”* and was a citizen of that country, he or she certainly belonged to that country or that *"national culture"*, therefore, must be attached to that country. There should be no doubt about it.

> *"Of course, I'm a product of Vietnamese cultures. I'm constantly in contact with it. I grow up with it."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1)
> *"When I was born in China, definitely I'm a Chinese so this culture is deeply in my heart."* (Interviewee 8, from China, P2)

Early in the sojourn, cultural identities, for some students, were sometimes too latent to realise, therefore, they appeared to struggle to find the answer. Three out of 18 students, in the first interview, replied that they were uncertain of their cultural identities. Interviewee 23 (from Indonesia), for instance, when being approached with this topic in the first interview in P1, seemed rather reluctant.

"It's a difficult question. I'm not sure about that!" she said.

Even when the question was rephrased several times, she still seemed relatively unsure, as seen in the conversation below.

> *Respondent: ...I do just like my cultures... but...ohm... what's the question again?*
> *Interviewer: Do you feel a strong sense of belonging... like do you feel like you belong to the culture?*
> *Respondent: maybe... because I'm here now, other cultures also influence me... just like something...not really exactly*

Among the interviewees, there was one special case in which it was impossible for him to name one 'culture' to be the home culture. Interviewee 12, in particular, explained that being a second-generation of Indian immigrants in Grenada; he had always lived and grown up with multiple cultures; hence always felt identified, though not entirely, with people from these 'two' cultures. He seemed to be bewildered by the term '*home culture'* and had a difficult time choosing between the two, Indian and Grenadian cultures (or *"black cultures"* as in his words). He, therefore, often used the word *"hybrid"* or *"mixed"* to refer to his cultural identities.

> *"I'm not typical because the island is 90% black and I'm Indian. My parents are originally from Indian so... but I was born and raised in the island so my home life wouldn't be the same with the one who's lived for generations there. [...] I'm not totally different. All my friends in school are... you know... you adapt to people from your school, and as I said, I grew up there but [...] you know you don't grew up the same*

> *way, though your parents are still trying to install things that they grew up with. So that's the difference."* (Interviewee 12, from Grenada, P1)

Although not a recurrent theme, at the end of the sojourn, internationality or *"citizen of the world"* was sometimes referred by some students as their *"preferable"* cultural identities, as indicated by Interviewee 14, from the USA, (P2):

> *"I mean I still very much prefer to have more international... like you know like citizen of the world as opposed to strictly American."*

Near the end of the sojourn, while acknowledging cultural diversity and differences, some students, especially the ones having frequent contact and building friendships with non-co-national internationals, shared that they also learnt to accept and respect these differences.

> *"...experience everything on your own, it kind of makes you like more... not open-minded, but it's just good to do something new, like you can walk on a different road, try some different food and make some new friends. New things are always good."* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2)

> *"You are open to many sources now and you are open to many things that people don't want you to be able to see sometimes..."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P2)

> *"It's just that we are different, we need to know that. We have those differences and it's not a bad thing. [...] Don't try to make me just like them, I'm nothing like you, so I'm quite open to others. [...] We all come from different backgrounds, different places where you are brought up, so you need to respect that even though you don't agree with it."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2)

Many students expressed that they had developed cross-cultural communication skills after the sojourn.

> *"...be more confident when you have conversations with others, even not in your mother language"* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2)
>
> *"You learn a lot about how to communicate with people that do not come from where you are, and it's not about the language only, but it's also about how do I find out what this person really means."* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P2)

In general, early in the sojourn, international students appeared to perceive ‘culture’ to be a concrete and conscious agent that could define the behaviours of members of a cultural group. They, therefore, regarded cultures as nations and tended to conflate cultural identities with national identities or nationalities. Meanwhile, some students shared that they were confused and uncertain about their cultural identities in the early stage of the sojourn. Cultural essentialising and homogenising happened frequently throughout the sojourn when the students usually compared behaviours of people from different nations and regions. At the end of the sojourn, it was likely that the students acknowledged cultural diversity and were more open to cultural differences. Some emphasised that their cross-cultural communications skills were enhanced after the sojourn.

The next section will clarify how international students constructed cultural identities in the ‘international’ HE contexts.

5.2.2 Key components in the construction of cultural identities

Whenever the issue of cultural identities was discussed, student sojourners seemed to (1) *reflect on their attachment towards these cultures* and (2) *to reflect on their behaviours and compare them with members of these cultural groups*. More similarities (or differences) in their behaviours and those of people of the home culture (or the host culture) could lead to (3) *the acknowledgement of cultural membership* (i.e., perceive themselves as members of a cultural group).

It is important to note that in this study, due to the nature of the socio-cultural environment, international students usually had more frequent contact and close relationships with their co-nationals and non-co-national internationals, rather than with host nationals (see Chapter 4), reflections of emotional attachment and behavioural comparisons were, therefore, usually made between their home cultures and other *“foreign”* cultures, instead of the host culture (i.e., ‘British culture’).

a. Attachment towards a cultural group

In both phases, when discussing cultural identities, it was inevitable for the students not to mention sense of attachment. For some students, this sense of attachment was associated with *sense of belonging* or *emotional attachment/ affection to a particular ‘culture’* (i.e., the home culture and the host/ foreign cultures). Strong attachment towards home cultures would mean relatively stronger identification with home cultures, while low attachment would denote lower identification with their home cultures. Words such as *"love"*, *"proud of"* and *"feel attached to"* were often used to describe strong affection to either home cultures (e.g., Interviewee 15 and 23) or 'foreign' cultures (e.g., Interviewee 14).

> *"I don't see myself as a typical American because I love other countries and cultures so much more than America whatever."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P1)
>
> *"I love my Chinese cultures. I think they are very good."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)
>
> *"...you have your community, your family there so you feel attached to them and that makes who you are. Even though you are here, and you feel comfortable here but people not... you are not feeling attached to the people, that's the difference."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P2)

Attachment, for others, would mean *sense of place* or *attachment to a particular place* where they lived or grew up (i.e., *"place of origin"*), be it regions, countries, states or cities, since this could partially define their identities.

> *"I'm from Texas, I can't change that. I just can't. Uhm yeah, it's just intrinsic even if I want to change that, right? Just different, I'm still from Texas at the end of the day, I'm still born there so I think that plays as part of who I am, even if I'm atypical."* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2)
>
> *"...I wish that someday, everybody in Taiwan kind of have like strong belonging to our land, our small island."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2)
>
> *"I like my city because of the history and because it's beautiful in itself."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1)

Or for some, it could be *detachment* to their places of origin.

> *"I mean if I could move to another country and live there for the rest of my life, I would, like I have no attachment to the USA."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P1)

Although sense of place was rarely mentioned in the early stage of the sojourn, this theme became more dominant near the end of the sojourn when the students had almost finished their study and were then confronted with a difficult decision: whether to come back to their countries.

Students with strong identification with home cultures, such as Interviewee 23 (with average home cultural identification score of 5.05 in two phases), seemed to have a strong sense of place and were excited to come back. For them, their countries would always be their *"home"* while the host country might only be seen as a sojourning place.

> *"The feeling that you feel is like your home is there, not really where you are studying like here, but you are going to go back to your country."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P2)

Students with relatively lower identification with home cultures (i.e., Interviewee 14, with average home cultural identification score of 4.78 [11]), however, were relatively less attached to home countries; thus, were hesitant and reluctant for the upcoming re-entry. Words to describe space such as *"here"* and *"there"*, as well as phrases of movements, for instance *"staying"*, *"sticking around"*, *"going back"*, *"coming"*, *"leaving"* and *"getting out"*, were, therefore, frequently used to create this "*sense of space"*.

> *"Well, I'm always gonna be American. That's frightening, but I don't think I consider myself British… but sense of belonging, I'm not looking forward to coming back to the USA, I'm not like 'OMG I'm going back home'. They could just come and visit me, I don't wanna go there.* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

In the second interview, a more nuanced view of cultural identities was developed. Students usually perceived their cultural identities as *"mixed"* or a combination of several elements. This was a recurrent theme among the sample (with 12 out of 18 students implying so), which was closely linked with the sense of place. The students' sense of place was no longer bound to a specific place in either the home or host country. The 'broader' the sense of place, the higher the identification with 'other' cultures. Thus, the students were more likely to perceive themselves as having *"mixed"* cultural identities, as explained in the quotes below.

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[11] The mean home cultural identification score of interviewees in Phase 1 was 4.93 and increased to 4.98 in Phase 2.

> *"I think it's [cultural identity] mixed because I feel like even after this, if I have to study in some EU countries, it's still fine, I won't have a problem adapting to life there."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P2)

> *"Oh, how German am I from the scale of 100 basically? How German am I? Wow that's a rough one… Uhm I mean this is a boring answer but it's probably 50%. […] It's 50% knowing that I could go somewhere else if I get a good offer but uhm the other 50% is wanting to go back home."* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P2)

> *"I feel like I'm open to more choice, not even in the UK, because some of my friends, they graduate in America and then they find a job like in Canada. Another friend, she studies here but get a job in Japan, so this thing is good. I think I have some friends in Hong Kong as well. […] I think the study experience here gives you like more choice for your life."* (Interviewee 4, from China, P2)

In general, in the first few months of the sojourn, international students tended to report strong emotional attachment to their home cultures and a relatively 'narrow' sense of place. However, later in the sojourn, although their emotional attachment still sustained, their sense of place was more likely to be widened and rarely bound to a particular place. The students, therefore, appeared to usually consider their cultural identities to be *"mixed"*.

b. Self-reflection of behaviours and acknowledgement of cultural membership

Besides sense of attachment, during the discussion of cultural identities, most of the students also instinctively reflected on their socio-cultural experiences with people from perceived 'similar' cultural groups (i.e., co-nationals) or 'different' groups (i.e., internationals and host nationals). Due to the nature of social contact patterns (limited contact with host nationals - see Chapter 4), the students had the tendency to compare their behaviours with other non-co-national internationals and their co-nationals, rather than with host national peers.

Student sojourners tended to generalise some behaviours as typical or common for people of a particular cultural/ national group; and then perform some behavioural comparisons. If more similarities among them and members of their home cultures (i.e., co-nationals) were identified, the students were more likely to acknowledge themselves as members of home cultures. Home cultural identification was, thus, strengthened.

> *"I can't copy their accents as well… because my accent is like… you know… Asian accent, you know, right? […] our accents are not very different, right?"* (Interviewee 22, from Indonesia, P1)

> *"I am a typical Chinese. […] I have interactions with my friends and all of them are Chinese so… my problem is their problem. We have the same problem about life, about our study here. […]"* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

More differences, on the other hand, could draw boundaries, setting them apart from their co-nationals, which might weaken their identification with home cultures. Interviewee 13 (from Japan) and 18 (from Italy), for instance, in the first interview, shared that they did not identify strongly with their home cultures since they thought they behaved differently from most of their co-nationals. Note that the P1 interviews were conducted a month after their arrivals and these two students had little to no overseas experience prior to the sojourn.

> *"I don't think I'm a typical Japanese student because many Japanese… not want to go abroad to study, but I came here, so it's different… It's because Japanese people are very comfortable in Japan. They don't want to leave their home country or home cultures."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P1)

Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 5, however, shared that they had various experiences with 'other' cultures (i.e., 'British' and 'American' cultures) prior to their sojourn, leading to their divergences in behaviours (i.e., ways of cooking and ways of talking); and thus, lower identification with their home cultures.

> *"Most of the people I know from Hong Kong or from China, even they come here to the UK, they still cook Hongkongnese food or Chinese food in their own apartments. For me, I've been here for almost 2 months, I've only cooked Hongkongnese food for 3 times. The rest of the time, I've just ate out with my friends in American diner or sometimes other Asian food or I've made pasta, spaghetti…"* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong P1)

> *"I even get it from people from my country. They kind of like 'You are kind of different. Why are you so Westernised?' But I think it's because I kind of have different background from people from my country. Even when I talk to them in Arabic, it's not all Arabic, I could switch and they are like 'Just talk in Arabic, why you have to do that?' and I like 'I don't know'."* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, P2)

The lower the identification with home cultures, the less inclined they were to maintain contact with people from their home cultures.

> *"It's weird to say but I don't like… hanging out with Chinese in here."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P1)

The same applied to behavioural comparisons of theirs and people from perceived 'different' cultural groups (i.e., internationals and host nationals). Similarities would make the students perceive themselves as members of 'foreign' cultures, leading to higher identification with *"foreign"* cultures. These students also experienced less difficulties adapting to life in the UK.

It was observable across the interview that behavioural differences were less likely to result in awareness of membership. In other words, student sojourners did not tend to see themselves as members of 'foreign' cultures because they thought they behaved differently from people of home cultures, but rather because they believed they shared more behavioural similarities with people of 'foreign' cultures.

> *"I think I look like a Chinese, but inside I'm like… maybe a foreigner. […] I think I fit the foreign culture more. […] I like... when the sun is out, I like sitting outside, having a pint of beer. None of the Hong Kong people will do that so I feel like... I'm more tend to the Western type."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P2)

Since language, food, costumes and entertainment were important cultural signifiers, they were also some of the most frequent topics of comparisons. However, not all comparisons yielded congruent and consistent results.

Sometimes there were some behaviours that students could identify with and there were some they simply couldn't. There were also some cases in which sense of attachment was incongruent with self-reflection of behavioural comparisons. When incongruence occurred, the students were more likely to feel confused and puzzled of their cultural identities.

Interviewee 18, for example, shared that while she felt connected with people from her home cultures (i.e., shared interest in their food), there were some behaviours she could not identify with (i.e., openness). The more conflicts she had, the lower she felt identified with her home cultures. She could neither feel identified with the host culture (i.e., British culture) since despite some similarities in behaviours (e.g., shared interest in football), there were some significant differences (e.g., perceptions of alcoholic issue). Conflicts happened within both dimensions of cultural identities could lead to lower identification with both home cultures and ‘foreign’ cultures; hence, uncertainty (or confusion) in cultural identities (as illustrated in Table 46).

		Differences in Behaviours	Similarities in Behaviours
Interviewee 18, from Italy, P1	**Home Cultures** (home cultural identification score in P1: 4.36)	*"…usually people are more open but I'm not so open. I just said that I always push myself to be more open. Italians are usually, you know, openness makes a person. Obviously, it generalises, but uhm I'm kind of not so Italian myself."*	*"The problem is every time I speak with somebody and I know that he's an Italian, we start to speak about food and food is something that connects everyone and so you become an Italian anyway. […] So you can say I'm an Italian because I like my food."*
	Foreign Cultures (host cultural identification score in P1: 4.91)	*"… because of the problem with the alcohol I notice…that makes me more Italian, because we don't look at the alcoholic the same way. […] it's so strange to see people maybe uhm on the pavement of walkway completely gone or… I don't know… the alcoholic is the biggest thing that makes us so different."*	*"…the football in Italy is the same. I don't like it, but there's the same obsession for football."*

		Differences in Behaviours	Similarities in Behaviours
Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P1	**Home Cultures** (home cultural identification score in P1: 4.73)	*"…because I speak* local language, *I mean my native local language in my daily life,* and *I speak national language with my Indonesian friends* and *now I speak English […] when I talk to my parents, I use local language. When I speak to my two Indonesian friends, I speak national language, and now outside home, I speak English."*	*"Maybe it's the way I dress… oh people can tell from the way I dress and say 'Oh you're from Indonesian.'"*
	Foreign Cultures (host cultural identification score in P1: 4)	*"…my program has some kind of… ohm you know… meeting in the pub. It's time for people to hang out and get to know each other, but I'm a Muslim, I don't go to the pub."*	*"…because I'm here now, other cultures also influence me… […] I don't find it so difficult to adapt here, except the food. The first thing is language, right? But I'm getting used to English now… I'm getting used to hearing it now."*

Table 46: Examples of Conflicts Within Dimensions of Cultural Identities of Interviewee 18 and 23

In general, due to the nature of patterns of social contact, cultural identities of international students in this study appeared to consist of two dimensions: home cultural identification and foreign cultural identification. Both dimensions existed simultaneously. Three components in the construction of cultural identities were found, which were (1) the sense of attachment/ affection to a particular cultural group or a particular place and (2) the self-reflection of behaviours and (3) the acknowledgement of cultural membership. The higher sense of attachment, more similarities between the students' behaviours and those of members of a cultural group and the strong acknowledgement of membership could result in stronger identification, while the lower sense of attachment and more differences in behaviours could lead to lower identification. Note that behavioural differences might not result in awareness of cultural membership.

5.2.3 Perception of 'East vs West' and its relevance to social grouping and cultural identities

'East vs West' was also a dominant theme during the discussion of cultures. The students tended to essentialise and homogenise "*Eastern"* (or *"Asian"*) and *"Western"* (or *"European"*) cultures as having distinctive and behaviour-defining features.

> *"…my emotional life is still very much Vietnamese, Asian style. I still let my emotions lead my life, but I like it that way […] I don't have much chance working with Westerners. I've only worked with Asian and I think we are the same."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1)

> *"But if you are Chinese, I mean, not only Chinese but Asian people, if I meet them, I just pass by and think 'Oh here's the Chinese', I don't stop and talk. I'm not sure about English people, but I know Greek people they can talk for 1 hour with somebody they just meet. […] I think because maybe Asian people are like 'I know you from Asia, maybe you are also not good at English'. It can be like… because we speak the same level of English so…"* (Interviewee 4, from China, P1)

Although not explicitly discussed by many students, the perception of 'East vs West' was one of the influential factors of social grouping on campus, especially in the early stage of sojourn. As analysed in 4.3.5, groupings between people from 'similar' regions of origins was very common at the beginning of the sojourn, which was maintained throughout the year. As the students explained, this was because of the high cultural similarity between their cultures and cultural practices of other nearby regions, as well as the strong contrast between theirs and the practices of people from geographically and culturally distant regions.

> *"…we have people of which, you may say, are culturally close, like German people and British people, uhm or just German or just British people. [...] So, we have like suddenly European people that do more together, or middle or central European people that do more together, uhm so yeah, we had a big group in the beginning, and it splits up. You know you kind of notice that there are some differences in how people do certain things, it's the fact, you can't change it."* (Interviewee 21, from Germany, P2)

For instance, Interviewee 1, a Vietnamese student, expressed that during the first few months, she tended to initiate and maintain contact with students from East Asia and Southeast Asia (e.g., Japan and Indonesia) since she felt relatively connected to and identified with some characteristics of these students.

> *"People from same cultures will have same interests, right? [...] Cultures can be food, entertainment, movies, it can be traffic… and common interests are based on those things [...] but if I talk about this with the Europeans, they don't know, we will miscommunicate [...] I've only worked with Asian and I think we are the same. [...] I can talk about anime or manga with the Japanese girl, and the Japanese girl can ask me about where to go in Vietnam, besides Ben Thanh market, something like that."* (Interviewee 1, P1)

By the end of the year, she had developed and maintained close relationships with them. Her essentialist perceptions of cultural differences between Asians and Europeans seemed to be enhanced, and at the same time, her cultural identities became more prominent after these prolonged interactions. The process of essentialising home cultures while 'othering' different cultural groups usually occurred simultaneously. Home cultural identification, 'Asian cultures' in this case, was constructed against the juxtaposition with *"other"* cultures, 'European/ Western cultures' specifically. This can be observed in the quotes below.

> *"I feel like I belong to Asia more because I feel like Asian friends are usually more affectionate. I mean they care more about emotions. For example, when we talk, we care more about the body language, facial expression and even the atmosphere of the talk so that we can modify accordingly, but the friends I met here, they are like… they just want to talk no matter what [...] For us, we like… I talk what I like but I also give*

> *you some space to talk what you like […] but for the Westerners, they dominate.”* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P2)

Regardless of the veracity of these statements, differences of *“Asian people”* and *“Western/ European people”*, or behavioural differences between people from these two cultural groups to be exact, were sometimes regarded to be too intense to manage. During the first three months of the sojourn, student sojourners tended to avoid breaking out of their bonded regional groupings to prevent *“difficult situations”*. As Interviewee 22 from Indonesia (P1) explained:

> *“Maybe because I came from Asia, sometimes, it’s easier for me to come to Asian friends first and then after that I can mingle with friends from other countries as well. […] we came from the same region so it’s easier for me to talk with them. And I can understand them better, when I want to talk with the … somebody who come from other regional countries… I don’t know, sometimes I feel nervous and when I feel nervous, I’m speechless. I don’t know what to say.”*

For some, staying within the perceived ‘same’ cultural groups also gave them familiarity, comfort and safety, which decreased adaptation difficulties. Once this pattern of grouping was formed, it was usually maintained until the end of the sojourn.

> *“The reason why I hang out more often with Vietnamese or Asians because I get used to them. I know what they are like, how I should behave when I’m with them, and that I feel safe when I’m with them. So of course, within limited time, we would prefer “safe choice”. So, it helps reduce the complexity when adapting to life here.”* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P2)

> *“For example, if they talk about political things and you all think ‘I haven’t heard their names before today’, but if you are from like Japan or Korea, because we are neighbour countries, so at least I know what they are talking about like singers or stars, movies… that’s the problem I think.”* (Interviewee 4, from China, P1)

Interestingly, although English was used as lingua franca in communication among international students, different ways of using and speaking English were also seen as distinctive features of these two cultural groups. For instance, many students tended to assume that ‘European’ students had a higher level of English than students from ‘Asia’, due to the similarity between their native languages, as indicated below.

> *"I think because maybe Asian people are like "I know you from Asia, maybe you are also not good at English". It can be like… because we speak the same level of English …"* (Interviewee 4, from China, P1)

> *"I think the speed, how they speak and how they use English are different. […]* Europeans speak quite fast, *but I think it's because they share some structure or some words with their mother languages […] like Germany, Spanish, English… they share some commonality, the language, and the speed is faster, the speed and the knowledge of the words…"* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

> *"…because my accent is like… you know… Asian accent, you know, right? […] our accents are not very different, right? […] it seems different, students from European countries, I think, they are more fluent than us, from Asian countries, even though English is not their first language."* (Interviewee 22, from Indonesia, P1)

Despite their strong influences on the construction of cultural identities and patterns of social contact of international students, membership of these cultural groups was rarely acknowledged by the students. In other words, whenever asked about their cultural identities, student sojourners tended to discuss about their national identities and seldom explicitly regard 'Asian' or 'Western/ European' as their cultural identities. Only three interviewees regarded 'the East' and 'the West' as their home and host cultures and acknowledged their cultural membership, as shown in the quotes below.

> *"I feel like I belong to Asia more."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P2)
> *"I'm more tend to the Western type."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P2)
> *"I even get it from people from my country. They kind of like 'You are kind of different. Why are you so westernised?'"* (Interviewee 5, from Kuwait, P2)

In general, three key points emerged from the qualitative data. First, early in the sojourn, student sojourners in this study appeared to conflate cultures with nations and often regarded cultural identities as similar to national identities/ nationalities. A few students felt uncertain about their cultural identities. It was also very common to find the students who identified weakly with home cultures and strongly with the host and/ or 'other' cultures early in the sojourn.

Second, due to the nature of social contact patterns, cultural identities of the students consisted of two dimensions: home and foreign cultural identification. Three components in the construction of cultural identities were identified: (1) emotional and place attachment, (2) the self-reflection of behaviour differences and similarities and (3) the acknowledgement of cultural membership.

Finally, the perception of East vs West was influential to patterns of social contact of international students. Student sojourners tended to essentialise and homogenise the cultures of the ‘East’ and the ‘West’. ‘Eastern’ (or ‘Asian’) cultures were often perceived to be in strong contrast with ‘Western’ (or ‘European’) cultures. Student sojourners, therefore, usually preferred avoiding contact with people from perceived ‘different’ regions since these interactions were often expected to be awkward and difficult. However, membership to these cultural groups was often implicit and latent for most of the students.

In the next section, I will discuss the research findings in relation to previous research, propose some modifications for the current definition of cultural identities and suggest the model of the key components in the construction of cultural identities of student sojourners.

5.3 Discussion

As discussed in Chapter 2, this study applied the ITCCA of Kim (2001) and the Acculturation model of Berry (2005) as its theoretical foundation. However, as these theories were originally developed for immigrants and refugees, they may be of little pertinence to student sojourners. This research aimed to identify and analyse issues when applying the theories to the case of student sojourners, based on which a new (tentative) conceptual model of the key components in the construction of cultural identities of student sojourners during cross-cultural transition was proposed.

5.3.1 Cultural identities of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition

a. Confusion between cultural identities and national identities

In this present study, many interviewees appeared to conflate cultural identities with national identities, and it was not surprising to find that they were, initially, puzzled by the question about cultural identities.

There were two reasons for this terminological confusion. First, the students seemed to believe that a country or nation has its own *“national culture”* which consisted of its *“national language”* (or *“native language”*), specific types of food, costumes and entertainment, thus, often equated cultures with nations. Due to the essentialist view of cultures, they often regarded ‘a culture’ as a concrete and conscious agent that could define behaviours of cultural members. People from the same nations were, therefore, thought to be influenced by their national cultures, and consequently, would own some similar sets of characteristics and probably behave in certain ways. Hence, ‘a culture’ was commonly thought of as being representative of individuals from a country.

Second, national identities, which are also known as *“passport identities”*, are explicit to individuals (Holliday, 2010), whilst cultural identities are more latent. As Sussman (2000) explains, surrounded by a familiar cultural environment, cultural identities are rarely recognised. They may be triggered and become salient to individuals only when individuals are exposed to other cultures (Sussman, 2000). Thus, when their cultural identities were confronted, some students in the study were perplexed while some unconsciously conflated them with the other ‘overt and visible’ identities (i.e., national identities).

Nevertheless, after studying and living abroad, cultural identities became more apparent to all students. In the second interview, all could confidently discuss their cultural identities and could distinguish them with national identities.

b. Issues of contemporary theories about cultural identities of student sojourners

There seemed to be a gap between how the students perceived cultural identities and what had been captured in the literature. Particularly, cultural identities are theoretically defined as the individual’s sense of belonging or emotional attachment and affiliation to a cultural group (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005), and are obtained from membership in a cultural group (Sussman, 2000).

In line with the literature, the present study confirmed that the construction of cultural identities was influenced by emotional attachment and the acknowledgement of cultural membership. In other words, to answer the question of cultural identities, participants often reflected whether they ‘felt’ belonging to any cultures and ‘saw’ themselves as a member of any particular cultural groups.

However, this study also found that the construction of cultural identities of student sojourners was far more complicated. Regarding the sense of attachment, besides the well-documented ‘sense of belonging’, attachment to a particular place was a dominant theme emerging across the interviews.

This place attachment, theoretically known as ‘sense of place’, is in fact quite popular in environmental psychology and has recently been the focus of health geography and sociology analysis (Agyekum and Newbold, 2019). Sense of place is defined broadly as the perception of a particular place, including emotional bonding and symbolic meanings of a place to an individual (Kudryavtsev *et al.*, 2012). Each person has unique sense of place which is fuelled by past experiences, personalities and backgrounds, such as childhood experiences and political engagements (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013). Sense of place is a process that is always evolving depending on individual experiences and is influenced by global mobility and migration (Adams, 2013; Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013; Russ *et al.*, 2015; Bork-Hüffer, 2016).

Place attachment has been found to correlate with the mental health of immigrants (Williams and Kitchen, 2012; Agyekum and Newbold, 2019), the integration of immigrants to the host country (Agyekum and Newbold, 2019) and the identity construction of young immigrants in transnational communities (Adams, 2013). Second-generation immigrants, born and raised in the bicultural environment, who usually need to negotiate a sense of place between their places of birth and places of 'origin', can develop 'hyphenated' cultural identities (Liu, 2015).

Place attachment of immigrants to the host country has recently received a growing research interest from scholars, however, there is little evidence about the research of sense of place of sojourners, especially student sojourners. This study is one of a few that have shed light on this issue.

Qualitative data revealed that if in the early stage of the sojourn, place attachment was rarely acknowledged by student sojourners and was relatively 'narrow', later in the sojourn, it was recognised and to some extent, broadened. After study abroad, the students were bonded with not only their home 'places' (i.e., hometowns, cities or countries) and the host place (i.e., city or country), but also with other places around the world, despite never physically setting foot in those places. This could be explained by their close connection with non-co-national international friends met during the sojourn, the quickly growing popularity of global mobility and the increased self-confidence in their ability in surviving in a new environment.

The 'international' environment, rather than the sojourn itself, helped enhance students' connections with different cultures, 'freed' them from geographical boundaries, and widened their 'sense of place'. The lower the attachment to a particular place (i.e., either home or host country), the 'broader' the sense of place; the higher the identification with 'foreign' cultures. Thus, 'mixed' cultural identities of the students were formed and strengthened (refer to 2.2.2 for the review of the concept of 'mixed' or 'fusion' of cultural identities).

In addition, when discussing cultural identities, student sojourners also self-reflected on their behaviours and tended to compare them with those of people from home or ‘other’ cultural groups. The students appeared to generalise behaviours of people from a cultural group whom they contacted to ‘distinctive’ behaviours of all members of that cultural group. They then self-reflected on their own behaviours and performed some behavioural comparisons. More similarities would lead to acknowledgement of their cultural membership, and consequently, stronger identification with the cultural group.

Although these have not been explicitly mentioned in the literature in the cross-cultural transition study, many findings from previous research have pointed in the same direction. First, living in a multicultural environment can evoke psychological responses which activate essentialist mind-sets (Torelli *et al.*, 2011). Individuals are thus more likely to regard cultures as behavioural defining (Shore, 2002). As Morris *et al.* (2011) explain, since exposure to values and viewpoints from ‘foreign’ cultures may produce ambiguity and uncertainty to epistemic values of a person; and his or her cultural identities (Proulx and Heine, 2010), he or she has a high tendency to generalise and essentialise members of other cultural groups (Chiu *et al.*, 2009), which is a mechanism against identity threats and epistemic uncertainty (Morris *et al.*, 2011).

Second, some studies suggest that identities are relational, in so far that individuals always self-define themselves in dialogue or in comparison with others (Ang, 2001; Lee, 2003; Louie, 2004). This indicates two important things in the self-defining process: the conception of ‘others’ and the act of comparing oneself with what conceived to be ‘others’. In other words, it is common for people (or in this case, sojourners) to define themselves (or the cultural group they belong to) by comparing themselves in relation to ‘others’.

Third, many studies also propose that behaviours, together with feelings and attachment, are two of the key discourses that are often employed to provide an account for identities (Verkuyten and deWolf, 2002). In their study about Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands and Canada, Belanger and Verkuyten (2010, p. 154) show that *“doing”* or *“acting Chinese”*, such as performing some attributes considered to be distinctive of the culture, is an essential factor for the immigrants to perceive themselves as *“real Chinese”*.

In brief, findings from this study suggested that cultural identities of student sojourners were complicated, and the current concept of cultural identities in the literature may need to be revised. Besides emotional attachment and the acknowledgement of cultural membership (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005), place attachment and behavioural comparisons between sojourners and people perceived to be of ‘different’ cultural groups were additional components that student sojourners usually considered when constructing cultural identities.

In addition, cultural identities have been proposed in the literature to have two dimensions: home cultural identification and host cultural identification (Berry, 2005) and sojourners are commonly depicted in the literature as having high identification with their home cultures prior to the sojourn (Leong and Ward, 2000; Kim, 2001; Kim, 2008) (see 2.2.2).

Findings of this research, however, suggested a different pattern. Quantitative data showed that despite having high home cultural identification early in the sojourn, some students also had high mean scores of host cultural identification (see 5.1). Similarly, many students in the first interview shared their strong interests and attachment to the host culture or ‘foreign’ cultures. It was not uncommon to have some students mention that they had felt weakly belonging to their home cultural groups even prior to the sojourn. This could explain why the students with stronger host cultural identification could adapt better to the host culture.

As the interviewees explained, they had exposed to not only cultural products of other cultures, but also the ‘international’ environment for a long time prior to the sojourn (i.e., studying in international schools and universities; or working for international companies), which partially altered their cultural identities, particularly the home cultural identification dimension. Regression analyses showed that home cultural identification negatively predicted socio-cultural adaptation, while host cultural identification was a predictor of academic adaptation.

Finally, interview data revealed that when cultural identities were discussed, behavioural comparisons between members of ‘the home culture’ and other ‘foreign’ cultures, rather than the host culture, were often made, together with reflection on sense of attachment towards ‘foreign’ cultures. Only when being asked and prompted, the students started to compare their experiences with the host culture. This raised the question about the binary opposition of home and host cultural identification in Berry’s work (2005).

A closer look into the socio-cultural environment of student sojourners in the present study could explain this phenomenon (see Chapter 4). The students usually had more frequent and close contact with their co-nationals and non-co-national internationals, yet limited contact with host nationals. A sub-culture of international students was constituted in which the social life of international students was generally framed within the ‘campus’ environment (e.g., university's campus and accommodation). Cultural identities were, therefore, constructed based on the identification with their 'home' cultures and other 'foreign' cultures met within this sub-culture, instead of the British culture - the 'supposedly' host culture.

It is reasonable to say that two dimensions of cultural identities of international students in this study seemed to be constructed based on identification with *home cultures*, or the familiar culture, and *'foreign' cultures*, or the perceived different 'cultural others'. Home cultures, in this study, were usually perceived as the cultures that the students were raised and lived in or felt familiar with, which was not always the same as the 'mainstream' or 'national' cultures of their home countries, especially for students coming from places with sensitive and political disputes such as Taiwan and Hong Kong or growing up in immigrant families. For example, among participants, there was one student who was the second-generation of Indian immigrants in Grenada. He considered himself as having *"hybrid"* cultural identities, mixing between Indian and Grenadian cultures (or *"black cultures"* as in his words).

Many studies have also found similar findings. Due to the emergence of global mobility and migration patterns since the early 1990s, it is increasingly common for people to migrate to more places (Vertovec, 2007; 2010), forming an unprecedented diversity of cultures (Cohen, 2008). Adding to this complication, the global popularity of the Internet, together with other forms of mobile communication technologies, has created a "network society" (Castells, 2011), in which people share cultural products and are exposed to cultures of others from half the globe away. The cultural distinction between cultural groups are often blurry in this globalisation era. Vertovec (2007); (2010) coins this phenomenon as diversification of diversity, or a transition from 'diversity' to "superdiversity" of cultures.

Many studies have recently reported the diversity of identity, as a result of the current 'superdiversity' of cultures (Van de Vijver *et al.*, 2015). Recent research by Ferguson *et al.* (2012) point out that the exposure to the 'American culture' on media (i.e., American TV series and products) influence identities of Jamaican adolescents even when only a few of them have visited the US. The construction of cultural identities of student sojourners in the diversely intercultural environment is usually continuous and complex (Zhang, 2018). As a result, many scholars have questioned the over-simplistic distinction of home and host cultures as the 'mainstream' culture of the home country and the host country, and the validity of the traditional bidimensional model of cultural identities in the cross-cultural adjustment (Van de Vijver *et al.*, 2015).

In brief, these findings challenge the over-simplistic binary conceptualisation of the ‘home’ and ‘host’ culture (Van de Vijver *et al.*, 2015), which fails to reflect the diversity and flexibility of ‘cultures’. This dichotomous definition of ‘home and host cultures’ as the ‘mainstream’ cultures of home and host countries, to some extent, also confuse cultures with nations. Thus, although this study applied the bi-dimensional model of cultural identities, proposed by Berry (2005), a slight modification was made, with identification with *‘foreign cultures’* replacing identification with *‘the host culture’* as the second dimension of cultural identities.

The term *‘home cultures’* was used to refer to any cultures that student sojourners were born in, grew up with or regard as familiar cultures, while the term *‘foreign cultures’* was employed to indicate cultures that are perceived as different or unfamiliar to student sojourners. Plural forms of these terms were applied to reflect the superdiversity and instability of cultures. A new model of the construction of cultural identities of student sojourners is presented below.

5.3.2 Construction of cultural identities in the “superdiversity” cultural context

The research’s findings showed that cultural identities of international students consisted of home cultural identification and foreign cultural identification, both of which could exist simultaneously and harmoniously. Student sojourners constructed their cultural identities based on the sense of attachment (*‘feel’*), the reflection of behaviours *(‘do’*) and the acknowledgement of cultural membership (‘*see’*). Figure 26 below illustrates three components in the construction of the cultural identities of student sojourners.

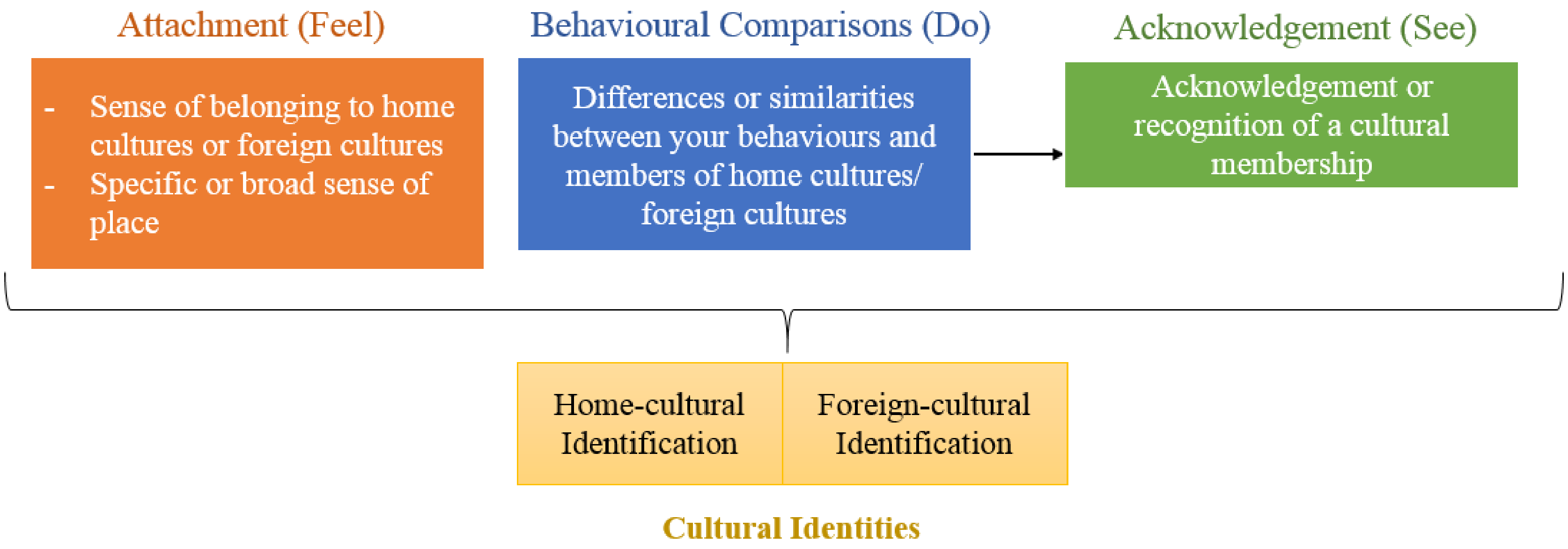
Attachment (Feel)
- Sense of belonging to home cultures or foreign cultures
- Specific or broad sense of place
Behavioural Comparisons (Do)
Differences or similarities between your behaviours and members of home cultures/ foreign cultures
Acknowledgement (See)
Acknowledgement or recognition of a cultural membership
Home-cultural Identification
Foreign-cultural Identification
Cultural Identities

Figure 26: Key Components in the Construction Cultural Identities of Student Sojourners

First, sense of attachment referred to students' feelings towards their home cultures and 'foreign' cultures, and their affiliation attachment towards particular places. The former is theoretically defined as sense of belonging of the individual to cultural groups (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005), whilst the latter denotes sense of place, or attachment to a particular place where they have lived or grew up (i.e., place of origin) (Kudryavtsev *et al.*, 2012), be it regions, countries, states or cities.

Strong attachment towards home cultures would mean relatively stronger identification with home cultures, while low attachment would denote lower sense of identification with their home cultures. Sense of belonging was developed and enhanced strongly prior to the sojourn; thus, was less likely to change during the sojourn. Even when it was altered, there was a high tendency that sense of belonging towards home cultures would be deepened after study broad (see also 6.1.2).

As Liu (2015) explains, strong sense of belonging is established by physical appearances and shared values, thus, is difficult or even impossible to change. In her research about identity negotiation of Chinese immigrants in Australia, Liu (2015) confirms that even though the second and 1.5 generations of immigrants can fully integrate into the Australian society, many of them feel emotionally attached to their home cultures, as they explain *"the Chineseness resides in the blood".*

Regarding place attachment, after nearly nine months living in an 'international' environment, international students in this study often developed broader sense of place, which was no longer bounded to specific places. The lower the attachment to a particular place (i.e., either home or host country), the 'broader' the sense of place, the higher the identification with 'foreign' cultures.

Second, behavioural comparisons occurred when students reflected and compared their behaviours with those of members of particular cultural groups, such as home cultures and/ or other foreign cultures they met in the sojourn. As explained 5.2.1, in this study, since the students usually used cultures and nations interchangeably and believed that cultures could shape behaviours, when having contact with co-nationals, non-co-national internationals and host nationals, they tended to generalise some behaviours as typical or common for people from a particular cultural/ national group; and then performed some behavioural comparisons.

For example, if more similarities among them and members of their home cultures (i.e., co-nationals) were identified, awareness of membership of home cultures was enhanced, which strengthened home cultural identification. More differences, on the other hand, could draw boundaries, setting them apart from their co-nationals, which might weaken their identification with home cultures.

The same applied to behavioural comparisons of theirs and people from perceived 'different' cultural groups (i.e., internationals and host nationals). If they perceived themselves as 'doing' behaviours similar to those of 'foreign' cultures, they were more likely to regard themselves as members of 'foreign' cultures, leading to higher foreign cultural identification. In contrast, differences in behaviours would result in weaker identification with foreign cultures.

Finally, reflection on behaviours may lead to acknowledgment of cultural membership. Students are more likely to *'see'* themselves as members of their home cultures or 'foreign' cultures if they recognise that they have behaved similarly to other members from those cultural groups. Note that differences in behaviours are less likely to ignite recognition of cultural membership.

In particular, student sojourners rarely *'saw'* themselves as members of foreign cultures if they discovered divergence in their behaviours and those of members from their home cultures. The acknowledgement of membership of 'foreign' cultures only occurred when the students recognised behavioural similarities between them and those of the perceived 'different' cultures. In other words, the students tended to regard themselves as members of foreign cultural groups because they thought they behaved similarly to members of those cultures, not because they did things differently from people from home cultures.

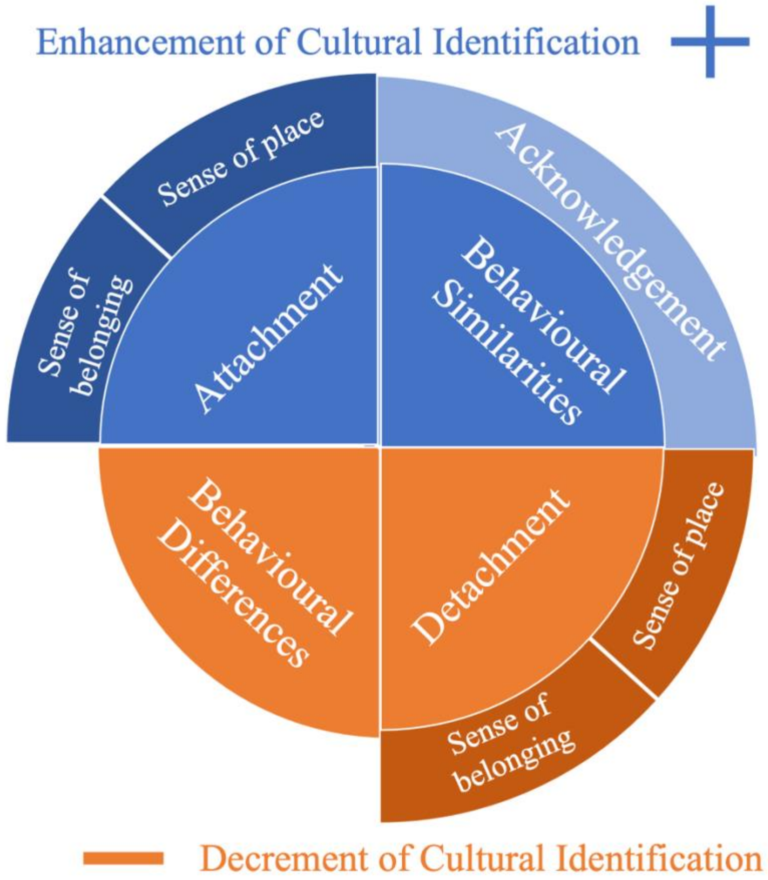
Enhancement of Cultural Identification
+
Sense of place
Sense of belonging
Attachment
Acknowledgement
Behavioural Similarities
Behavioural Differences
Detachment
Sense of place
Sense of belonging
−
Decrement of Cultural Identification

Figure 27: Model of Construction of Cultural Identities of Student Sojourners

Figure 27 shows the model of the construction of the cultural identities of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition. Particularly, if individuals experience strong attachment towards home cultures (or foreign cultures) and places in home countries (or to other places around the world); and identify more similarities in their behaviours and those of members of home cultures (or foreign cultures), they will be more likely to develop strong home (or foreign cultural) identification. Behavioural similarities also lead to increased awareness of cultural membership. This enhancement of cultural identification is illustrated by the first half of the model (i.e., the blue part).

On the contrary, if sense of belonging and sense of 'place' is lowered and more behavioural differences between them and people of home cultures (or foreign cultures) are identified, home (or foreign) cultural identification tends to be weakened. This is called decrement of cultural identification, illustrated by the second half of the model (i.e., the orange part). Note that behavioural differences may not lead to the acknowledgement of cultural membership.

In addition, it was observable across the interviews that reflection of the sense of attachment and behavioural comparisons could sometimes conflict. For instance, students might feel strongly attached to their home cultures, yet could not identify with some behaviours of people from home cultures.

This finding was much in line with previous studies which confirm that feeling connected to specific cultural groups does not always ensure that the individual can perform similarly to members in those cultures (Ang, 2001; Belanger and Verkuyten, 2010; Liu, 2015). In the research about acculturation of Chinese immigrants in Canada and Australia, Belanger and Verkuyten (2010) find that despite *"feeling Chinese"* (belonging to the culture), the second-generation of Chinese growing up in Canada claim that they are *"not fully able to function"* like a Chinese or *"doing Chinese"*.

Conflicts within and across dimensions of cultural identities are illustrated in Figure 28. Particularly, student sojourners might feel belonging to their home cultures on one hand and identify divergence in their behaviours and those from the same cultures on the other hand (referred to as Route 1 – Conflicts within the cultural identification dimension in Figure 28). Having conflicts within cultural identification dimension would lead to the confusion in cultural identities.

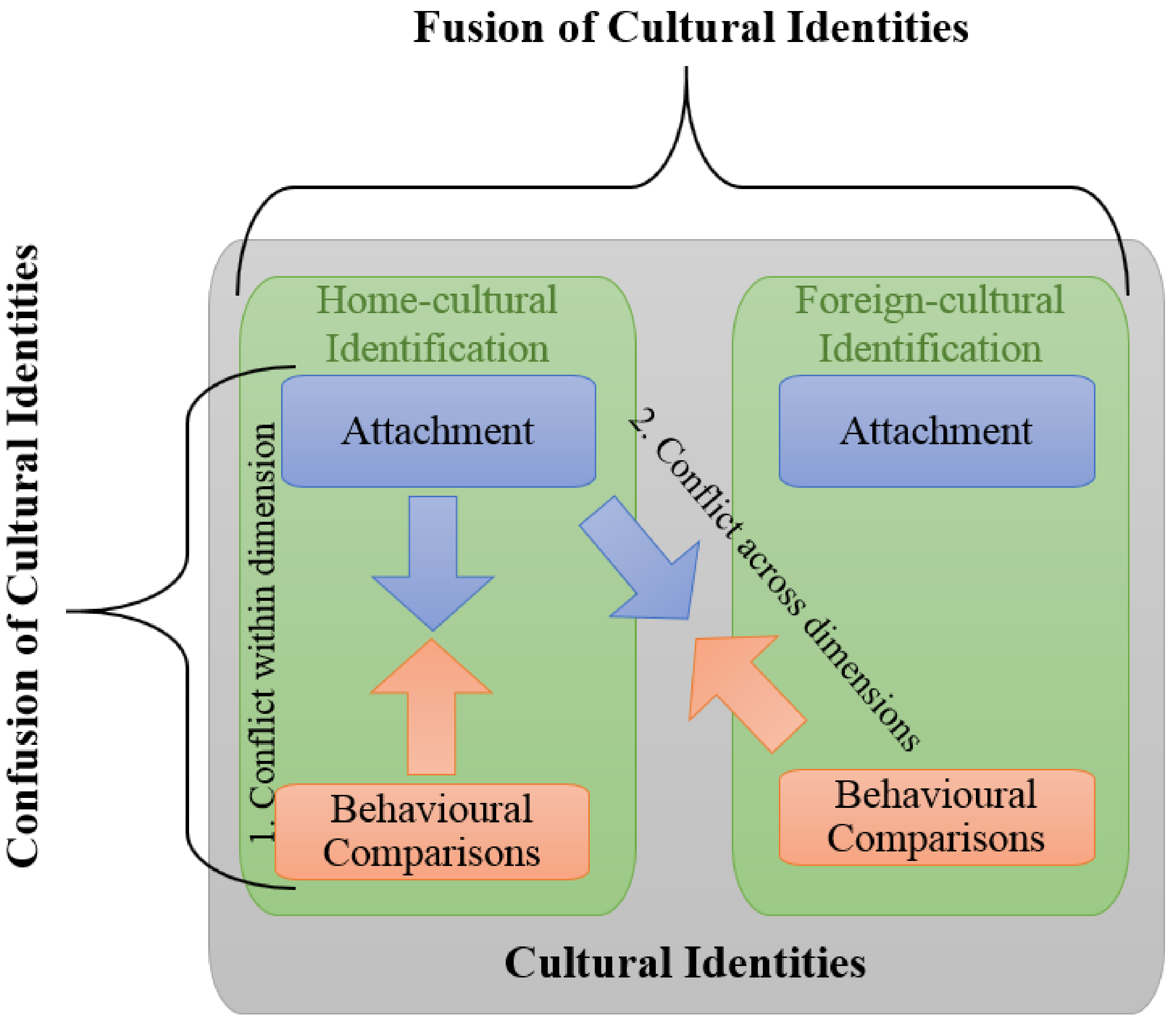
Fusion of Cultural Identities
Confusion of Cultural Identities
Home-cultural Identification
Foreign-cultural Identification
Attachment
Attachment
1. Conflict within dimension
2. Conflict across dimensions
Behavioural Comparisons
Behavioural Comparisons
Cultural Identities

Figure 28: Conflicts Within and Across Dimensions of Cultural Identities of Student Sojourners

Nevertheless, after the academic sojourn, despite feeling strongly attached to their home cultures (indicating strong home cultural identification), a few students adopted some behaviours from their non-co-national international or host national friends. This adjustment resulted in more similarities in behaviours, which would eventually strengthen foreign cultural identification. Therefore, at the end of the sojourn, many student sojourners had developed strong cultural identification in both dimensions, illustrated as Route 2 – Conflicts across dimension, in Figure 28.

It can be concluded that while the conflict within dimensions can induce the confusion in cultural identities (feeling unidentified with any cultures), the conflict across dimensions may lead to ‘mixed’ cultural identities, or also called as *“fusion of identities”* (Kramer, 2000).

The next part further details the role of cultural identities in social contact patterns, specifically social grouping of student sojourners in the HE contexts.

5.3.3 Multi-layers of cultural identities and their influences on social grouping on campus

The present study found that cultural identities of student sojourners were multi-layered and sometimes even overlapped. For instance, in this study, student sojourners usually formed a sub-culture of young international students where most of the members were international students and the language used were the host language (i.e., English). Within this sub-culture, there were other multiple smaller groupings, for instance clusters of students from same nationalities, regions or schools/ programmes of study. Once they had been formed, the groupings were maintained until the end of the sojourn. When being asked, research participants seemed to be reluctant to break these 'untold' yet firm grouping patterns (refer to 4.3.5).

As Zhu (2017) suggests, intercultural interactions always involve the construction of identities. At an individual level, student sojourners can become agents constructing their own intercultural norms which inform their intercultural practices on campus (Evanoff, 2006). In particular, they can form cultural norms within their own community, 'other' different cultures, and regulate their own behaviours within their newly formed community (Evanoff, 2006). These self-oriented cultural norms and regulations of behaviours within these small communities could be considered as *"small cultures"* (Holliday, 1999). One student can belong to various cultural groups. Hence, many students in this study had multiple cultural identities which were often contextualised in specific situations such as group work, classroom setting and personal living settings (i.e., shared university accommodation). This concept of multi-layered cultural identities has been recently documented in the literature in the field (Zhang, 2018).

In this study, it is very common for student sojourners to perceive their cultural identities in terms of nationalities, regions, schools of study and institutionally defined categories (i.e., home students, and international students), but the most common types were regional and national groupings.

The rationale for national groupings could be found in 4.2.1. Regarding regional groupings, although not explicitly discussed by many students, the perception about *East vs West* was one of the influential factors.

In particular, student sojourners appeared to generalise behaviours of people from so-called *"Asian"* (or *"Eastern"*) and *"Europe"* (or *"Western")* groups to be representative for the whole cultural groups. The students appeared to have relatively negative perceptions about the ‘other’ cultural groups. For instance, students from ‘Asia’ usually perceived themselves as *“more affectionate”* than ‘European’ peers, while the latter regarded the former as *“too shy”* (see 4.2.3 and 4.2.4). Cultural differences (e.g., different interests) between the ‘*East’* (or *‘Asia’*) and *the ‘West’* (or *‘Europe’*) were perceived to be so significant that the attempt to communicate with people from ‘other’ regional groups was anticipated to result in awkwardness and misunderstanding.

Although English was used as lingua franca in communication among international students, different ways of using and speaking English were also seen as distinctive features of these two cultural groups. For instance, many students tended to assume that European students had a better level of English than students from Asia, due to the similarity between their ‘native’ languages.

This process of essentialising home cultures while ‘othering’ different cultural groups usually occurred simultaneously. Home cultural identification, “*Asian cultures”* in this case, was constructed against the juxtaposition of ‘other’ cultures, *“European/ Western cultures”* specifically, and vice versa. Many students felt strongly attached (i.e., ‘feel’ belonging) to their cultural groups, in so far that staying with people from home cultures were expected to give them more comfort and safety, which reduced challenges when adapting to ‘other’ cultures.

These perceptions prevented students from breaking out of their bonded regional groupings and limited their contact with people from the perceived ‘other’ region. Therefore, students often maintained frequent contact with other non-co-national internationals perceived as belonging to the ‘same’ regional cultures, while rarely reaching out to internationals perceived as the ‘other’ (see 4.3.5).

It is often echoed in the IC literature that ‘Asian cultures’ are culturally distant from ‘Western cultures’ (Gudykunst and Kim, 1984; Biggs, 1996). Student sojourners from the former group are usually subjected to a higher chance of adaptation stress when studying in a ‘Western’ country due to the large perceived cultural distance (Sussman, 2000). Many scholars, however, have now questioned the concept of ‘Asian culture’ and ‘Western culture’ and have wondered about the existence of such cultures (Mori, 2003; Higgins, 2007; Bhawuk, 2008; Holliday, 2010; Hua, 2015) (see 2.1.3).

Nevertheless, it seemed that student sojourners were so strongly influenced by this essentialist view on cultures that they were reluctant to mitigate contact with students from ‘other’ groups. Less attempt was put on overcoming these cross-cultural communication barriers. It is important to note that, despite their strong influences on the construction of cultural identities and patterns of social contact of international students, membership of these cultural groups was rarely recognised by the students. In other words, whenever being asked about their cultural identities, the students tended to discuss cultures in terms of nationalities and seldom explicitly acknowledge (or 'see') themselves as *"Asian"* or *"Western/ European"*. (see 5.2.3). It may be useful if more studies are conducted on exploring this interesting issue of cultural identities.

5.3.4 Cultural identities and their influences on social contact and adaptation outcomes

Both quantitative and qualitative data confirm the role of cultural identities in adjustment and adaptation of student sojourners. Interviewees with high foreign cultural identification (such as Interviewee 3 and 14) expressed a few difficulties in socio-cultural adjustment, especially in performing daily life activities (e.g., going out for a drink and eating out with friends) and forming close friendships with host nationals and non-co-national internationals.

Students with high foreign cultural identification often reported better academic adjustment and academic results. This could be because host nationals and internationals could provide academic support for the students (see 4.3.4), thus, helped them perform better in their study. However, it is also important to note that English proficiency may be a mediator to the ease in socio-cultural and academic adaptation. Particularly, students who identified strongly with 'foreign' cultures were usually the ones with high English proficiency since being able to speak English fluently (*"like native speakers"*) emerged across interviews as one of the few 'behaviours' that reinforced foreign cultural identification.

In addition, as co-nationals were often considered as sources of psychological support, students with strong home cultural identification tended to have more contact with co-nationals, which could possibly help improve their psychological adaptation (see 4.2.1). The quantitative results of this study, however, showed that the correlations between cultural identities and psychological adaptation were not statistically significant. This could be explained by the fact that the majority of international students, despite having weak or strong home cultural identification, still maintained contact with their co-nationals, or at least their families back home, who served as their psychological buffer during the sojourn (refer to 4.3.1). Note that these explanations were drawn from the observation from the qualitative research. The quantitative data, however, showed that cultural identities might not influence psychological adaptation outcomes, even when the patterns of co-national contact were controlled (see 5.1.4).

More research could be conducted to explore the complex relationships between cultural identities, contact and psychological adaptation.

Similar to these findings, cultural identities have been identified in many studies as key variables that can influence adaptation outcomes. In particular, strong identification with home cultures is positively related to the psychological well-being of immigrants; while identification with the host culture is strongly associated with socio-cultural adaptation outcomes (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000). In their research of sojourners in New Zealand, Ward and Kennedy (1994) found that sojourners with strong home culture identification usually experience less depression and those with strong host culture identification experience less socio-cultural difficulties, better socio-cultural adaptation since host culture identification facilitates the social competence of the sojourner in a new culture.

Similarly, the research of Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000) shows that strong identification with home cultures can reduce the feeling of loneliness and decrement in the mood disturbance of immigrants, resulting in the greater psychological satisfaction in life. However, further research is still needed to explore the relationship between ‘foreign’ cultural identification and psychological adaptation of student sojourners.

5.4 Summary of findings

Overall, there are five key findings presented in this chapter.

First, early in the sojourn, most of the student sojourners generally conflated cultural identities with national identities. There were some students who were uncertain about their identities. However, at the end of the sojourn, cultural identities became pertinent to all of the interviewees. Both qualitative and quantitative findings also showed that it was possible for student sojourners to feel weakly attached to or weakly identified with their home cultures early in the sojourn.

Second, findings from this research showed that the dichotomous conceptualisation of the ‘home’ and ‘host’ culture (Van de Vijver *et al.*, 2015) as ‘mainstream’ cultures of home and host countries, and the bi-dimensional model of cultural identities (i.e. identification with the home and host culture) (Berry, 2005), were over-simplistic and failed to embrace the diversity and flexibility of ‘cultures’. The model was, thus, modified which was more applicable to student sojourners.

The revised bi-dimension model consisted of identification with home cultures and with ‘foreign’ cultures. Plural forms of these terms are applied to reflect the superdiversity and instability of cultures. ‘Home cultures’ referred to any cultures that student sojourners were born in, grew up with or regard as familiar cultures, whilst ‘foreign cultures’ indicated cultures that were perceived as different or unfamiliar to student sojourners. This implied that the conception of ‘foreign’ cultures was relational and closely related to ‘home’ cultures. These dimensions of cultural identities could exist simultaneously and harmoniously.

Third, student sojourners constructed their cultural identities based on the reflection of sense of emotional and place attachment (*‘feel’*), the reflection of behaviours *(‘do’*) and the acknowledgement of cultural membership (‘*see’*) (see Figure 26 in 5.3.2). Strong emotional attachment towards home cultures (or ‘foreign’ cultures) and places in home countries (or to other places around the world) tended to strengthen identification with home (or ‘foreign’) cultures. More similarities in their behaviours and those of members of home cultures (or foreign cultures) could also enhance home (or foreign cultural) identification. Behavioural similarities also resulted in more awareness of cultural membership.

On the contrary, once sense of belonging and sense of ‘place’ was weak and more behavioural differences were identified, home (or foreign) cultural identification would be more likely to be deteriorated. Note that behavioural differences might not lead to the acknowledgement of cultural membership. For instance, the students often ‘saw’ themselves as members of ‘foreign’ cultures if they perceived themselves as behaving differently from people of their home cultures (see Figure 27).

However, reflection of sense of attachment and behavioural comparisons could sometimes conflict. The conflict within dimension might result in confusion of cultural identities (see Figure 28). For instance, students might feel strongly attached to their home cultures, yet perceived that they behaved differently from people of home cultures; thus, tended to feel confused about their cultural identities. Meanwhile, the conflict across dimension could lead to ‘mixed’ (or ‘fusion’ of cultural identities). In particular, some students shared that they had a *“mixed”* sense of cultural identities after the sojourn as they thought they behaved similarly to people from ‘foreign’ cultures yet felt strongly attached to their home cultures.

Forth, cultural identities were found to be multi-layered. The students appeared to play an active role in creating *“small cultures”* on campus (Holliday, 1999). Particularly, student sojourners usually formed a sub-culture of young international students where most of the members were international students and the language used was English. Within this sub-culture, there were other multiple smaller groupings, for instance, clusters of students from the same nationality, region or school/ programme of study. One student can belong to various cultural groups. Hence, many students in this study had multiple cultural identities, for instance 'seeing' themselves as international students and 'Asian' students, depending on the context, such as classroom setting and personal living settings (i.e., shared university accommodation).

Finally, the present study confirmed the role of cultural identities in the adjustment and adaptation of student sojourners. Students with strong home cultural identification tended to struggle to adapt socially and culturally whilst the ones with strong 'foreign' cultural identification might experience few difficulties in socio-cultural adjustment and academic adjustment (see 6.1.2). However, English proficiency might be the mediator contributing to the 'smooth' adjustment (see 4.3.4). Particularly, students who identified strongly with 'foreign' cultures were also the ones with high English proficiency which might ease their adjustment to the new socio-cultural and academic environment. Host nationals and internationals were also found to be useful sources of academic support (see 4.2). Having more contact with these said groups possibly helped students with their study.

In addition, students with strong home cultural identification often reported little psychological turmoil throughout the sojourn. This might be because these students tended to have more contact with co-nationals, which could serve as psychological buffers (see 4.2.1). The quantitative results of this study, however, showed that correlations between cultural identities and psychological adaptation were not statistically significant.

The next chapter (Chapter 6) will provide further details on the qualitative analysis of how student sojourners reflected on changes in their cultural identities during and after the sojourn, and when they returned to their home countries (6.1). Then, the chapter will discuss research findings in relation to those of previous studies (6.2).

Chapter 6: Cultural Identification Process and Re-entry Phase of Student Sojourners

This chapter addresses the final three research questions below. These questions are grouped together because they deal with different yet relevant aspects of the same research topic (i.e., the cultural identification process of student sojourners), and the lack of any will impair our understanding of the topic.

RQ4 – Exploratory question: Do student sojourners experience changes in their cultural identities after their sojourn abroad?

RQ5: If so, what are the patterns of cultural identity shifts among student sojourners?

RQ6: What is the identification process of student sojourners?

Interview data is reported to provide a thorough exploration of the changing patterns of cultural identities of the students and the role of social contact and adjustment in the cultural identification process (see 6.1). Importantly, this chapter also explores the re-entry phase when international students return and re-integrate to their home culture after the sojourn. Although the re-entry phase has recently been considered by many scholars as an extended process of cross-cultural adjustment (Martin, 1986; Walling *et al.*, 2006; and Pitts, 2016), the number of studies that investigate this phase is relatively scarce, compared to the large proportion of research looking into the sojourn experience in the host country.

In fact, many sojourners express this re-entry phase as more stressful compared to the adjustment process during the sojourn (Martin, 1986; Walling *et al.*, 2006), due to cultural value changes (Uehara, 1986) and changes in cultural identities (Martin, 1986; Walling *et al.*, 2006) (refer to Chapter 1 for more information). More importantly, as Sussman (2000) explains, cultural identity differs from other layers of identity in terms of their hidden existence which can only become salient once the individual is surrounded by an unfamiliar cultural environment. Similarly, any changes to cultural identities during the sojourn may be too latent to be realised, especially when sojourners have already adapted to the socio-cultural environment of the host country. Yet, changes can become observable during the repatriation, especially if sojourners experience difficulties adapting to their home cultures (see 2.2.2).

Therefore, in this study, the entry (or repatriation) phase was included to fully examine changes in cultural identities of sojourners. Particularly, analyses of cultural identities, social contact and the re-adjustment to home cultures of 13 students who agreed to do the third interview after returning to their home countries (N = 13) are presented and discussed in this chapter.

The chapter is finally concluded by the discussion of the qualitative findings (see 6.2), followed by a brief summary of key findings (6.3).

6.1 Qualitative analysis

This section presents the analysis of the interview data of 13 students (N = 13) participating in all three interviews: at the beginning (P1), near the end of the sojourn (P2), and during the re-entry in their home countries (P3).

In general, in the early stage of the sojourn, only one student said she strongly identified with her home cultures and weakly identified with ‘foreign’ cultures, while five said the opposite. There were four students reported of their ‘mixed’ cultural identities (high identification with home and ‘foreign’ cultures). The rest three students, in contrast, seemed to be utterly puzzled and unsure of their cultural identities since they had mixed feelings about their cultures or could not identify with some behaviours of members of their cultural groups.

After the sojourn, there were some changes in cultural identities across the sample, but in general, by the end of the sojourn, none of the students appeared to be uncertain of their identities. In particular, the number of students feeling weakly identified with their home cultures and strongly identified with ‘foreign’ cultures dropped to one, whereas the number of people with strong identification with home cultures and weak foreign cultural identification increased to two. The rest of the students (10 out of 13) shared they had ‘mixed’ sense of cultural identities.

However, the students, individually, often commented that they experienced neither significant nor large changes in their cultural identities. This suggested that cross-cultural transition might influence cultural identities of international students although this influence was sometimes too subtle for them to realise.

However, these changes in cultural identities became more prominent for the students once they returned home. In particular, during the re-entry stage, there were two students saying they had strong home cultural identification and low foreign cultural identification, and one with low identification with home cultures and strong identification with ‘foreign’ cultures. The number of students who felt a ‘mixed’ sense of cultural identities was 10 out of 13.

Overall, based on their discussions about cultural identities in P1, the students were categorised into four groups: students with strong home cultural identification and weak foreign cultural identification (6.1.1); strong home cultural identification and weak foreign cultural identification (6.1.2); strong home cultural identification and foreign cultural identification (6.1.3); and weak home cultural identification and foreign cultural identification (6.1.4). I, then, would examine their reflections on cultural identities in P2 and P3 to identify any changes in how they perceived their identities.

Details of cultural identity shifts of the students across three phases of the sojourn are presented and analysed below.

6.1.1 Students with strong home cultural identification and weak 'foreign' cultural identification early in the sojourn, and their cultural identity shifts during and after the sojourn

In the early stage of the sojourn, among 13 students, there was only one (i.e., Interviewee 15, from China) who emphasised that she strongly identified with her home cultures. Her home cultural identification score was high (HID = 6.18). Note that the mean score of home cultural identification in P1 of 13 interviewees was around 4.93.

She acknowledged her cultural membership and often used affectionate words or phrases, such as *"love"* and *"like"*, to display her strong attachment towards her home cultures.

> *"I am a typical Chinese. […] I love my Chinese cultures. I think they are very good."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

She felt comfortable living in her home cultures; thus, when surrounded in an unfamiliar socio-cultural and academic environment, she appeared to experience some (though not major) difficulties in adaptation.

> *"…sometimes if I disagree something, it's really hard for me to find something to support my ideas, because I'm used to the teaching style that […] if you agree, teachers will give you something. If you disagree, teachers will give you something."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

She often highlighted that she was still open and were interested in learning other cultures. However, as home cultures (or countries) were deemed a significant part in defining who she was, she appeared to experience relatively stronger connection and bonding towards her co-nationals who were often considered as important *psychological support* during the sojourn.

> *"You are in an exchange experience, you may want someone close to you, someone from the same cultural background. Yes, from the same background. For me I think I have more things to talk with them."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

Interestingly, although Interviewee 15 was aware of the *academic benefits* of host nationals, she said she still preferred to contact her co-nationals, who she deemed as rather satisfying 'substitutes' for host national students (see 4.2.2). Also, note her superficial relationships with host national students, indicated by the way she addressed them as *"native speakers"* and *"local people"*.

> *"It's better for me to talk with native speakers and ohm I also like to do this, but ohm now if I only talk with students from my same country, that's enough. [...] I live to talk with students from my country because actually although you from the same country, you can use English in the seminar work or in the lecture. It's ok, the problem is whether you want to use English or not, but not with local people..."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P1)

For her, co-nationals were deemed a relatively more favourable source of contact. Therefore, she often maintained a large amount and a high frequency of contact with co-nationals; yet a low amount and frequency of contact with non-co-national internationals and host nationals in P1. She appeared to preserve this contact pattern until the end of the sojourn.

As a result, after nearly nine months of disengagement with host nationals and non-co-national internationals, the bonding with her co-nationals was usually strengthened, and her identification with home cultures were reported to be sustained (see Table 47). The quantitative data supported this as her HID mean score remained unchanged in the early and late stage of the sojourn.

	Phase 1	**Phase 2**
Interviewee 15 Mean score of home cultural	*"Now my 3 best friends are from China, and 2 of them live with me in the same building, and another one is in the same group, so actually*	*"[Her co-nationals] quite close friends, I think. [...] just because we are familiar with each other, so*

identification in P1 and P2: 6.18	*more than 70% of my day, I have to spend with them."*	*if I want to go shopping, I can just ask them."*
	"Interviewer: Ok but do you often talk to other international students? *Respondent: not often* *Interviewer: why?* *Respondent: I'd like to, but you always want to talk with the classmates from the same country."*	*"…but all the [international] contact are about the study. If we have to do the group work, we will contact each other. If I want to go out to study, I will find my close friends here. I don't think I need to keep the contact with international students here."*

Table 47: Changes in Home Cultural Identification and Patterns of Social Contact of Interviewee 15 throughout the Sojourn

In the second interview, Interviewee 15 reflected that academic adaptation influenced her behaviours (i.e., improvement in critical thinking skills), although not to a great extent, leading to a small discrepancy between her behaviours and other people of home cultures.

> *"It makes me think a bit different about things. […] Back in these days when I read some Chinese articles from Chinese media, I think it's a bit extreme, but I don't know why. I think like 'Well how can he write something like that'."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P2)

However, these behavioural changes were often deemed as too insignificant to impact foreign cultural identification dimension in her cultural identities.

> *"I think the time here is very short, only 1 year, less than 1 year. Maybe if I had more time, I would change a lot but now… just the same."* (Interviewee 15, from China, P2)

As mentioned in 5.3.2, behavioural differences were less likely to lead to the acknowledgement of cultural membership. In the case of Interviewee 15, this might be the reason why despite being aware of differences in her behaviours and those of her compatriots, she rarely identified herself as a member of 'foreign' cultures.

In brief, it appeared that the student with strong home cultural identification and low foreign cultural identification prior to the sojourn would be more likely to maintain contact with her co-nationals, resulting in the enhance of home cultural identification. Thus, when coming back to her home country, in spite of some struggles in the first few weeks to adapt to life at home, she still found this re-adjustment process enjoyable and comfortable.

> *"…specific Chinese cultures that we just have very busy life, yes busier life here […] Although I said it's busier now, but I think it's what I want. […] It's actually the life that I want. It's hard but it's also enjoyable."* (Interviewee 15, P3)

The re-adjustment at home happened fairly quickly and smoothly, with minor difficulties. Interviewee 15 shared that when arriving at home, she was torn by mixed feelings: missing the UK and her time living there, and enjoyment when being reunited with her former bonded network of co-nationals, such as families and close friends.

> *"…when I first came back, at that time, I missed my time in the UK. I think it's half-half, half happy and half sad, because you know life in the UK, I feel it's very enjoyable…"* (Interviewee 15, P3)

As she explained above, co-nationals remained her sole source of contact throughout the sojourn; thus, she felt closely connected to them. Even when returning home, she emphasised that she tried to maintain the frequency of contact with the said group, using online social media.

> *"I think I mainly contact with Chinese classmates I met in the UK, using Wechat, only about job hunting, about finding jobs, about our life in China, just Chinese classmates […] for some of them, it's several times during the week, because during these first three months, it's busy time for job hunting and we have so many things to talk with each other."* (Interviewee 15, P3)

As a result, her home cultural identification was enhanced after the sojourn, as she insisted that she felt more attached to her home cultures. The strengthening of home cultural identification dimension and the persistence of cultural identities of Interviewee 15 could be observed in Table 48 below.

"I'm a typical Chinese. […] I love my Chinese cultures; I think they are very good." Interviewee 15, P1	→	*"…the time here is very short, only 1 year, less than 1 year. Maybe if I had more time, I would change a lot but now… just the same."* Interviewee 15, P2	→	*"…specific Chinese cultures that we just have very busy life […] It's actually the life that I want. It's hard but it's also enjoyable."* Interviewee 15, P3

Table 48: Cultural Identity Shift of Interviewee 15 during and after the Sojourn

In short, for students with strong home cultural identification early in the sojourn, it is more likely that they would maintain the high amount and frequency of contact with their compatriots during the sojourn and felt bonded with this said group. Their home cultural identification dimension remained unaffected. Cultural identities, thus, remained unchanged. Membership of the home cultural group and emotional attachment towards home cultures may also become more explicit to these students at the re-entry phase. They, therefore, tended to experience few difficulties when re-adjusting to their home cultures.

6.1.2 Students with strong foreign cultural identification and weak home cultural identification early in the sojourn, and their cultural identity shifts during and after the sojourn

There were five students who highlighted that they felt unattached to their home cultures very early in the sojourn (i.e., Interviewee 2, 3, 8, 13 and 14). When being asked whether they felt belonging to their home cultures, these students instantly refused. Phrases such as *"I'm not traditional/ typical X person"*, *"I'm different from…"* and *"I have no attachment to…"* were often used to describe their identification with home cultures. Some reported differences between their behaviours and people from their home cultures as the main reason for this unattachment. They usually shared that they had strong interests in 'other' cultures. Therefore, in the early stage, they often felt reluctant in maintaining co-national contact and doing some behaviours perceived to be *"typical"* of their home cultures, such as eating *"traditional"* food of their countries.

In particular, Interviewee 2, 3 and 8, with average HID score in P1 ranging from 4 to 4.8[12], shared that they had always felt *"disconnected"* to and could not identify with their home culture long before the sojourn.

> *"I'm not always a typically Texan. Uhm if there's a picture in a dictionary of how a Texan is like, it would not be me. Like there's just... like I don't fit the mould."* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P1)

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[12] Note that the mean home cultural identification score of interviewees in Phase 1 was around 4.93 and increased to 4.98 in Phase 2.

> *"For the British or for the international people I've met here, they will describe me as not a typical Hongkongnese or Chinese person they have imagined. […] I think I look like a Chinese, but inside I'm like… maybe a foreigner."* (Interviewee 3, from HK, P1)

For Interviewee 2 (from the USA, and Texas in particular), large differences in personalities and behaviours set her apart from people from her home cultures and led to the feeling of *"not fit the mould"* or *"not so typical"*.

> *"I've read that almost 70% of the USA is like the very opposite personality type that I am, so I think it counts as 1 reason why I feel like I'm different from the average Texan because it's just who I am innately. I'm pretty quiet, kinda shy. I don't feel like I have Texan twang, even the southern twang. I don't… I'm kinda scared of horses, to be honest," she laughed. "I don't like wearing cowboy's boots, I don't like wearing hats. It's just… I don't really watch American football, you know, the types of things that make me Texan…"* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P1)

Interviewee 3, on the other hand, explained that due to the prolonged exposure to *"foreign"* cultures prior to the sojourn, her thoughts and behaviours differed from those of her home cultures, resulting in her reluctance to contact her co-nationals and to maintain her home cultures (her case will be detailed in the next section).

> *"I seldom hang out with Chinese in here, which makes them surprised so… yeah. […] what's the point of you coming here, if you just keep hanging out with the Chinese and eat Chinese food every day, you listen to Chinese music, why don't you stay in China?"* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P1)

Due to close-knit relationships with co-nationals at home countries (i.e., close friends and families), the students insisted on preserving the frequency of contact with the said group, using online social media. However, because of the relatively lower identification with home cultures, their bonding to co-nationals met in the sojourn appeared to be weaker than that of other students; thus, these students were less likely to maintain the large quantity and high quality of contact with the co-national colleagues.

Due to high identification with 'foreign' cultures, contact with non-co-national internationals and host nationals were deemed more preferable. This pattern of contact appeared to be sustained until the end of the sojourn. Although the amount of contact in P2 might be smaller than that in P1, bonding with non-co-national internationals and host nationals was, in general, often strengthened (see Table 49).

	Phase 1	**Phase 2**
Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong Mean score of home cultural identification in P1: 4.18 in P2: 5	*"It's weird to say but I don't like… hanging out with Chinese in here […] for Hong Kong friends, maybe we meet 2-3 times a month because it's like 2 of my Hong Kong friends."*	*"[…] I don't have many Hong Kong friends here. Uhm 1 of my friends, she just moved to the Lake district so we can't hang out."*
Interviewee 14, from the USA Mean score of home cultural identification in P1: 4.64 in P2: 4.91	*"I can have an American friend, but I'm not interested in having an American friend, I'm trying to get away from… I'm trying to have international friend base."*	*"…I'm actually close to 1-2 really good friends from the USA, and 1-2 friends outside the USA. […] the Americans I do hang out with are still very international and they themselves are still similarly rejecting of the typical American."*

Table 49: Changes in Home Cultural Identification and Patterns of Social Contact of Interviewee 3 and 14 throughout the Sojourn

After having close relationships with non-co-national internationals and host nationals during the sojourn, the student shared that they started to adopt some behaviours of people from the host culture or 'foreign' cultures, which increased identification with 'foreign' cultures by the end of the sojourn.

> *"I can't do... British humour to save my life […] but vocabularies like incorporating British words, terms and phrases, yeah I have so much more familiarity with that and also just using the British brand names instead of the American brand names."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

Interestingly, although not a recurrent theme, some students mentioned that a year abroad could also slightly influence their communication skills in their first languages, which were quickly recognised by their co-nationals.

> *"There were couple of points where I was converted to do British accent around British people and then American people pointed this out. And I was like upset when they pointed this out."* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2)

> *"Sometimes I texted to my mother, and she told me 'Your language structure of Japanese, your Japanese language structure, is not right, not good, or not beautiful'."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

Among these five students, there were three patterns of changes in cultural identities after the sojourn. The students would either (1) develop 'mixed' cultural identities (i.e., stronger identification with home and 'foreign' cultures) (i.e., Interviewee 2, 8 and 14), or (2) maintain their cultural identities and continued to feel strongly identified with 'foreign' cultures and weakly identified with home cultures (i.e., Interviewee 13). Finally, there was one case, Interviewee 3, who felt strongly identified with her home cultures and weakly with 'foreign' cultures after the sojourn. Their stories will be unpacked below.

a. Development of 'mixed' cultural identities, or strengthening of both cultural identification dimensions

Despite having adopted some behaviours from their host national and international friends, some students explained the more time spent with these said groups, the more identified they felt with their home cultures.

In particular, Interviewee 14, from the USA, even emphasised that although in the early stage of the sojourn, she strongly rejected being identified with her home cultures, she quickly realised that people met in the sojourn often *"pigeon-holed"* her; and these stereotypes had been perpetuated until the end of the sojourn. After nearly nine months, she started to accept them and slowly felt identified with some behaviours of people from her cultures (see Table 50 below).

Phase 1		**Phase 2**
"When I'm in the USA, I'm like 'Oh I'm not American, I'd love to be something else', you know [...] the moment I leave the USA, honestly I'm automatically labelled [...] and then I'm like halfway feel like I need to defend the USA. Uhm even though I love talking badly about it, but uhm I feel the need to defend the USA and also, I just realise how American I am. Because they say 'Oh you look American. You act American. You dress American. You talk	→	*"I mean I feel like when you are still within your own country, you wanna feel different, but when you leave your country, people automatically pigeon-hole you and put you in your nationality. [...] I would love to have people kind of look at myself and say, 'Oh you are so European'. That would be such a compliment. I would still get like the contrast like 'Oh you are so American, you sound American'. I dress American, I would still*

American. You do all these things American.’ […] Because when I’m in the USA, I see myself as other, but automatically when I go abroad, they just put me back in that… so I’m like ‘Oh really, no, that’s crap!’…”	*perhaps make up more like American style and so…”*

Table 50: Changes in Home Cultural Identification of Interviewee 14 in an Academic Sojourn

This change in perceptions and behaviours is also illustrated in the pronoun she used when recounting her story. At the early phase when the rejection of being identified with her home cultures (i.e., ‘American cultures’) was strong, she often used phrases such as “*They say… you look American. You act American. You dress American. You talk American…*” to refer to the stereotypes people made about her and her compatriots. However, at the end of the sojourn, when she started to recognise more behavioural similarities between hers and those of people from home cultures, her home cultural identification was strengthened, leading to her acceptance:

> *“I still represent the USA, yes, or what American is. Hopefully I represent it in a much better way than the stereotypical style.”* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

Interviewee 2, from the USA, also shared similar experiences and she further explained that in the ‘international’ academic context (i.e., classroom setting), people tended to pin her to her home cultures. The question about cultural identities was becoming more necessary.

“[…] people always ask ‘Where are you from? Why are you here?’” (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2).

Cultural identities, then, became an apparently important way to differentiate herself from others, or in her words *“It makes me feel like I don’t know…different, unique…”*.

> *“I guess since being here it has been important for me to… establish myself as an American, but I also want to establish myself as a Texan […] still I don’t… portray Texan typically, still I would like to say I’m from Texas you know, so yeah it’s something I guess that may be interesting for some people. It makes me feel like I don’t know…different, unique…”* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2)

Yet, their strong desires to be identified with ‘other’ cultures and strong resistance against home cultures still persisted.

> *"[...] I feel so resistant against it. I had never ever liked being Texan, but now it becomes some important facet to explain who I am."* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2)

> *"I still prefer to have quality of EU because I do value the European cultures. What more, I do think that they think better than the American too... and I do still kind of look down on the American identity."* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

In general, students who identified themselves relatively strongly with 'foreign' cultures early in the sojourn seemed to prefer non-co-national international and host national contact over co-national contact. During the sojourn, since their relationships with international and host national friends were strengthened, they also adopted some behaviours from their friends, which increased similarities in their behaviours and those of the said groups, and consequently, heightened identification with 'foreign' cultures.

Meanwhile, within the 'international' academic context (i.e., classrooms), there appeared to be more cultural essentialising and stereotyping, leading to a higher pressure to self-identify with home cultures. These students, then, started to slowly acknowledge similarities between their behaviours and those of their compatriots, which then resulted in stronger identification with home cultures.

Therefore, at the end of the sojourn, international students were more likely to employ the word *"mixed"* to refer to their own cultural identities (discussed further in 6.1.3). As in this study, there were three students who experienced changes in cultural identities, in so far that they felt strongly identified with home and 'foreign' cultures after the sojourn, as compared to strongly identified with 'foreign' cultures at the start of the sojourn.

> "*It's like a mixture of things, because like a small portion of me would be being Texan and American and the other portion of me would be like ethnicity, kind of coming from the different languages that I know, and then different cultures that I'm interested in. So, it's very multicultural very multilingual aspect as well, that's the other percentage."* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2)

> *"…more citizen of the world. I mean just in terms of my accent that is always American, but hopefully my ideas and my speaking... and hopefully other things are more international…"* (Interviewee 14, from the USA, P2)

When returned home, they shared that they did not feel very positively about the re-entry and felt “unprepared to be back”. Interviewee 2 (from the USA), for instance, who were working part-time in a college at her hometown for a few months, recalled her feelings on the first day arriving home.

> *“I got nervous. I wasn’t ready to come home. […] When I came back to Texas, I was just so… I mean I hate to say this, but I wasn’t particularly happy to be back. […] The minute I stepped off the plane to the airport, it was extremely hot and humid, and it was just training, like a lot. It felt like a monsoon, it’s terrible.”*

She also felt pressured, not because of the reverse cultural shock, but the expectation from her family members.

> *“... I was kind of nervous about just coming back home, to my hometown, to meet my families, to meet people, you know, like knowing me for my whole life and kind of explain to them what I’m doing and what I plan to do. It’s like having to have something to tell them while in reality I wasn’t sure about what I really wanted to do.”*

This emotion had gone quickly after a few months, once she learnt how to balance her feelings and slowly adapted back to life at home.

> *“I haven’t had those feelings very often, and I guess it’s because of the working and stuff. I decided that I would like to try to get back to the journaling. I’ve been journaling a lot more. […] I also wanted to go through my photos when I was there, in England, and trying to process my feelings about being here and how I would feel right now, being back in Texas…”*

Contact with other international flatmates were maintained, using online social networking sites (e.g., Whatsapp and Facebook). The contact with other international students were seen as a useful source of psychological support for them during the re-entry adjustment.

> *“I’m usually in contact with my flatmates. We have a Whatsapp group. And I stay in contact with a couple of friends from university, on Facebook. I also keep in contact with my best friend who’s teaching abroad in Spain now. I’ve contacted her since I came back. […] that’s mainly who I keep in contact with. And some friends in Europe, and some friends studying linguistics as well. […] We talk about everything and keep updating about our stuff. So, you know… it makes me feel happy to hear from them and like… yeah, it just makes my day.”* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P3)

When being asked to reflect on their sojourn experiences, the students usually acknowledged some changes in their ways of thinking and behaving, which was a result of the adoption of behaviours of their international and host national friends and the adjustment to ‘foreign’ cultures. Some of these changes had already been formed during the sojourn, for instance, the adoption of the local accent and eating or drinking habits.

> *“I guess now it’s like I’m trying to replace… or incorporate my British experience in Texas. I bought few hundred bags of Yorkshire tea yesterday and like making food that I made in England. I don’t know, just trying to do typical English things that I would do in England.”* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P3)

Yet, they acknowledged strong emotional attachment and behavioural similarities with people at home.

> *“I’m aware that… especially when I talked to my nephew, he’s 6 years old, I know that when I talk to him, my voice is… very Texan. I have a very Texan accent. So basically, when I’m around my family, I feel very Texan, more than when I’m in other places.”* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P3)

Thus, in the re-entry phase, it became clearer to these students that two dimensions of their cultural identities were heightened simultaneously, and ‘mixed’ cultural identities were strengthened.

> *“Now since I’ve been in Texas again, my identity has been shifted to where I’m trying to incorporate who I was in the UK with who my family and my friends and people that know me. It’s kind of like mess up the identity.”* (Interviewee 2, from the USA, P3)

Table 51 below shows the change in cultural identities of Interviewee 2 during the sojourn and at the re-entry phase.

Early in the Sojourn		**Late in the Sojourn**		**Re-entry**
"I'm not always a typically Texan. Uhm if there's a picture in a dictionary of how a Texan is like, it would not be me. Like there's just… like I don't fit the mould." Interviewee 2, from the USA, P1	→	*"I guess since being here it has been important for me to… establish myself as an American, but I also want to establish myself as a Texan […] still I don't… portray Texan typically, but still I would like to say I'm from Texas you know…"* Interviewee 2, from the USA, P2	→	*"…I know that when I talk to him [her nephew], my voice is like… very Texan. I have a very Texan accent. Uhm and so basically when I'm around my family I feel very Texan, more than when I'm in other places basically […] Now since I've been in Texas again, my identity has been shifted to where I'm trying to incorporate who I was in the UK with who my family and my friends and people that know me."* Interviewee 2, from the USA, P3

Table 51: Changes in Cultural Identities of Interviewee 2 during and after the Sojourn

b. Strengthening of 'foreign' cultural identification and weakening of home cultural identification

In contrast, according to Interviewee 13, from Japan, who said that he did not identify strongly with his home cultures prior to the sojourn, he seemed to grow unattached to his home cultures even more after nearly nine months in the UK. Negative words, such as *"disconnected"*, *"distant"*, *"hate"* and *"dislike"*, were usually used to describe his feelings.

> *"I think I'm more kind of disconnected with the Japanese culture, I think more distant with the Japanese culture."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

The more time he spent away from his home cultures, the less frequently he maintained his 'home' cultural practices, and the more distant he became to the cultures, as shown below.

> *"…the more often I stay here, I don't have the chance to use Japanese language or to read Japanese stuff so maybe I'm not connected to the Japanese culture."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

Similar to the experience of Interviewee 2 and 14, it was observable that there was a tension between the external pressure to be identified with his home cultures in the 'international' academic environment and his internal desires to be distant from them.

> *"Sometimes, I can use my Japanese background to communicate. I think many people in this group [in his discipline] has vast interest into Japanese cultures […] they see me as a Japanese or maybe they have something, expectations, that I have knowledge of Japanese stuff. In that case, I have to use my Japanese background."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

However, since he felt strongly unattached to his home cultures, there seemed to be a strong resistance against this urge of home cultural identification.

> *"They have experience in studying Japan, people in here, my classmates, but I hate it, Japanese cultures and stuff. If I'm asked something about Japanese stuff, I use… I follow, the Japanese, my Japanese background, but when I'm alone, or when I'm in my room or something, I think I forget about my Japanese background."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P2)

By the end of the sojourn, despite the external pressure to be identified with home cultures, Interviewee 13 emphasised that he still felt belonging to 'foreign' cultures more. It was, thus, important to investigate his re-adjustment to his home cultures and his cultural identities during the re-entry phase to confirm whether the cultural identity shift happened.

In particular, Interviewee 13 seemed to find it hard to convey his initial feelings when returning home and often employed words such as *"different"* to refer to his mildly uncomfortable experiences at home.

> *"I think it's different from what I experience outside of Japan."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P3)

Interviewee 13 frequently emphasised that instead of identifying with the host culture (i.e., 'British' culture), he felt identified with 'foreign' cultures, or *"non-Japanese"* as in his words.

> *"I don't think I belong to the Japanese type but yeah I can't say I'm pure British or something […] I'm not traditional Japanese, I not very pure 100% traditional Japanese. […] between non-Japanese and between pure Japanese, I'm more like… skewed to non-Japanese."* (Interviewee 13, P3)

In fact, these two dimensions of his cultural identities, home cultural and foreign cultural identification, were constructed throughout the sojourn and consistently enhanced until the repatriation. It is observable from Table 52 that the dimension of home cultural identification in his cultural identities 'plummeted' during the sojourn and continued to be weakened in the repatriation, in so far that it influenced his preference of the contact source.

Early in the Sojourn		**Late in the Sojourn**		**Re-entry**
"I don't think I'm a typical Japanese student because many Japanese… not want to go abroad to study, but I came here, so it's different."	→	*"I think I'm more kind of disconnected with the Japanese culture, I think more distant with the Japanese culture. […] I hate it, Japanese cultures and stuff.*	→	*"I'm not traditional Japanese, I not very pure 100% traditional Japanese. […] between non-Japanese and between pure Japanese, I'm more like… skewed to non-Japanese. I have more similarities with them…"*

Table 52: Changes in Cultural Identities of Interviewee 13 during and after the Sojourn

During the re-entry phase, Interviewee 13 was working for a German company in Japan for nearly a month. In the third interview, he frequently compared behaviours of *"pure Japanese"* and *"non-Japanese"* colleagues, with *"pure Japanese"* referring to Japanese peers who *"speak Japanese, they don't speak English [...] only stay in Japan"*; and *"non-Japanese"* meaning *"combination of Japanese and other"*, *"Japanese with open experiences"* or *"people from Taiwan, Korea…"* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P3).

As he clarified, a year abroad has altered his viewpoint and style of communication, which were relatively different from those of his co-nationals.

> *"I mean when I meet up with Japanese living only in Japan, because I adapt and change my communication, so my way of communication is a bit more direct and straightforward [...] well, I change my way of thinking [...] If I only stay in Japan or if I do master in Japan, I think I might think there is only 1 way of seeing the world. But after going to the UK, I see there are many ways of seeing things, many perspectives to see the world."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P3)

The discrepancy in his behaviours and those of the *"pure Japanese"* was often recognised, thus, 'pushing' him away from his home cultures. Meanwhile, similarities between his behaviours and those of international peers (or in his words, the "*non-Japanese"*) reconfirmed his stronger sense of identification with 'foreign' cultures.

> *"...I'm more like… skewed to non-Japanese. I have more similarities with them. [...] even if the person is Japanese but if he or she has some kind of open experience, I also have some similarities with them."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P3)

Although not explicitly mentioned, it seemed that the re-adjustment process of Interviewee 13 to his home cultures did not happen relatively smoothly, leading to him saying that:

> *"… I mean, sometimes it doesn't make sense the way they* [his co-nationals] *do business [...] I can say I don't like Japanese cultures, especially in business environment."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P3)

Due to his strong foreign cultural identification and low home cultural identification, Interviewee 13 shared that he often preferred contacting with international colleagues, or those co-nationals who had overseas experiences, as in his words: *"I feel more drawn to non-Japanese or Japanese with open experiences,"* whilst feeling emotionally disconnected with his compatriots: *"I don't feel any… connection with them."*

Even when returning home, he often maintained the high frequency of contact with his international friends met during his sojourn.

> *"I still keep in contact with friends I met in X* [the host city]*, 2 ladies from Ecuador and Taiwan. I still keep in touch with them. When we have time, we will chat, but the number of people is not much. I mean I only have 2 or 3 close people in X."* (Interviewee 13, from Japan, P3)

It can be concluded that for students who already had high foreign cultural identification and low home cultural identification prior to the sojourn, once home cultural identification was weakened and foreign cultural identification was nurtured during the sojourn, this change in cultural identities would become more prominent during the re-entry phase.

In particular, after the sojourn, students might experience some changes in behaviours; and communication issues between them and their compatriots could become more prominent in the re-entry stage. This led to reflection on behavioural differences between them and people from home cultures and unattachment to people at home; thus, even lowered home cultural identification.

Due to the higher identification with 'foreign' cultures, these students were also more likely to maintain more contact, and at a higher frequency, with people from 'foreign' cultures (i.e., international friends met during the sojourn) during the re-entry.

c. Strengthening of home cultural identification and weakening of 'foreign' cultural identification

Interviewee 3 was the only one who had a significant change in her cultural identities, in so far that she emphasised she felt strongly identified with home cultures in P3, as opposed to being strongly identified with 'foreign' cultures and weakly with home cultures in P1.

Early in the sojourn, Interviewee 3, a student from Hong Kong, insisted that she felt strongly identified with 'foreign' cultures, or in her words *"Western cultures"*. Although she was born and had lived in Hong Kong prior to the sojourn, she had grown up in an 'international' environment. She went to an international high school, graduated at a British university and then worked at an international organisation. As a result, Interviewee 3 highlighted that due to the prolonged exposure to 'foreign' cultures, she had already felt unattached to her home cultures while felt strongly identified with 'foreign' cultures long even before the sojourn.

> *"Maybe because of my background like I kind of went to a UK university even though it was in Hong Kong. I used to work with foreigners, so I'm not like traditional way of thinking. […] I think I look like a Chinese, but inside I'm like… maybe a foreigner… Yeah, that's why I like it here. I want to stay here for 2 more years."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P1)

Therefore, in the first few months, she seemed to prefer having more contact with non-co-national internationals and host nationals to keeping contact with her compatriots. She said that she encountered no major difficulties in adapting to the socio-cultural environment in the UK.

Yet, late in the sojourn, after having a large quantity of contact and close relationships with the two former groups, conflicts in cross-cultural group work made her realised the discrepancy between their behaviours and hers, which 'pushed' her away from people from 'different' cultures.

> *"I think it's interesting to find out that the longer the time I spend with my [international] friends, the more I know them, the more I find out like I MAY NOT BE [the interviewee stressed it in higher tone] really uhm attached to the lifestyle or the way they get together like partners. Because they... some of them are just too straightforward, some of them are just sometimes too self-centered. Sometimes I feel like it's not the way I want to be."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P2)

According to Interviewee 3, the three months of the re-entry had changed her, making her realise her cultural identities and become more identified with home cultures.

> *"So, I think I have a strong identity as a Hong Kong citizen, but I look forward to having my new life as a Hong Kong citizen in this country,"* she said. *"I still don't like something about Hongkongnese but these 3 months gave me a lot of reflection about myself like I wouldn't be myself, like the today me. […] I wouldn't have such change if I didn't go home for 3 months. Like if I have stayed here, I still feel like "Yeah, I don't think I'm Hongkongnese", I would still rather see myself as a British national overseas for example."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P3)

As Interviewee 3 shared, in the re-entry, she felt as if she was a tourist re-visiting Hong Kong, her homeland. Not until then could she be truly aware of her cultural identities.

> *"Because I was so busy in the past. Even though I was a student, but I was working at the same time, so I didn't have time to really like… have the moment to look at the city, to enjoy it, but these three months, I kind of like a tourist, because lots of things changed. I had to ask them like "where to where", "how I get to there," so I think I learnt Hong Kong in a different way. I think I really like it."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P3)

She was 'flooded' with *"small moments"* and *"many little things"* that were *"full of memories"*, which strengthened her emotional attachment to home cultures.

> *"…there are many small moments, it's like when they grouped together, I see the whole picture and realise it like… Because maybe when I walk to some places that are full of memories, and then I see people who I met before, I worked with them before and it's just like many little things that gave me that feeling."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P3)

Sense of place was also a dominant theme throughout her discussion about cultural identities.

> *"…especially when I went to the landmark called ICC building, it's the tallest building in Hong Kong. So, there is like a viewing deck on the hundredth floor so I can see the whole Victoria Habour, the most significant view of Hong Kong. I looked at that and I felt like "OK, this is really my home!" […] It feels like home because there are so much memory and then it just amazes me how beautiful that place is."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P3)

However, the conflict in the sense of place seemed to persist: feeling strongly belonging to her homeland on one hand, and the desire to start her new life in the host country on the other hand. This desire was, in fact, not fostered by her attachment towards the host country (i.e., the UK), but rather by the benefits that the host country offered (i.e., advancement in career) and the instability of the political state of her homeland.

> "*And at the same time, I know like this will always be my home, but this is not gonna be the place where I gonna stay and have my future. Like I'm gonna be back for sure but it's not gonna be the place where I start my career and have my family. […] because*

> *of the political reason, it's getting more and more complicated and chaotic. […] I don't see it as a place I wanna stay because I don't know what kind of trouble I'll get into in the future, since such ridiculous thing could happen. […] You could really feel the difference, which is work-place balance, which I really care about. Because here [the UK] you can have your own career while enjoying time with your family, having your own time to do what you want to."* (Interviewee 3, from Hong Kong, P3)

Changes in cultural identities of Interviewee 3 could be summarised in Table 53.

Early in the Sojourn		**Late in the Sojourn**		**Re-entry**
"I think I look like a Chinese, but inside I'm like… maybe a foreigner."	→	*"I think I fit the foreign culture more [...] probably 70-30 like 70 percent like Western, British… and 30 percent Hong Kong."*	→	*"I think I still give it 100% Hongkongnese but living in the UK. […] I'm still proud of being Hongkongnese, you know. I'm happy to share about my home country, and what's about my culture with them."*

Table 53: Changes in Cultural Identities of Interviewee 3 during and after the Sojourn

It is logical to conclude that if the dimension of home cultural identification was constructed and strengthened during the sojourn, cultural identities would have the tendency to change with home cultural identification becoming more dominant. In other words, students who experienced higher home cultural identification during the sojourn would be more likely to continue to identify more with their home cultures after the sojourn. During the re-entry, the sense of belonging and the sense of place may become more explicit to the student, and awareness of a member of home cultures were enhanced.

6.1.3 Students with strong identification with home and 'foreign' cultures early in the sojourn, and their cultural identity shifts during and after the sojourn

Around a third of the interviewees (four out of 13) claimed that they had 'mixed' cultural identities (i.e., strong home and foreign cultural identification) early in the sojourn. These students reflected that they often identified strongly with multiple cultures; thus, it was impossible for them to specify one cultural group they felt particularly belonging to.

Some students insisted that in addition to the strong sense of belonging to their home cultures, they also expressed strong interest in host and/ or 'foreign' cultures and recognised some behavioural similarities with people from those groups. As they explained, the pre-sojourn exposure to different cultural backgrounds and contexts (e.g., study in international institutions and exposure to products of the host and/ or 'foreign' cultures on media) influenced their thoughts and behaviours; therefore, created some divergences in behaviours between them and people from home cultures.

> *"I like the things that are similar to my friends from China… I also like reaching to other different countries, because I'm studying English. I have to uhm learn about English cultures or something. I also like English TV series, English movies or something, so I guess that's a little bit different."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P1)

The main difference between these students and those of the former two groups (i.e., high home cultural and low foreign cultural identification; and low home cultural and high foreign cultural identification) was that they rarely perceived cultural identities as a zero-sum concept where home cultures and 'foreign' cultures were contradictory, but rather, these cultures were often viewed as addictive to each other. As Interviewee 9 emphasised:

> *"I don't want to use this word… abandon your culture or something, because I think that where you are from makes who you are. So, I don't think if you try to join another culture, you have to… like… turn into a different person… like you have to adjust to what they do or something. […] It's not just like leave all the things you have, it's just like combine the old thing and the new thing."* (Interviewee 9, P1)

In the early stage of the sojourn, due to their interests in multiple cultures, these students did not seem to have a preferable source of contact and, overall, were open to all sources, including co-nationals, non-co-national internationals and host nationals. During the sojourn, the students tended to modify their networks of socialising and were more likely to maintain a high frequency of contact with people who had relatively closer relationships with them. Nationalities were rarely deemed an issue of consideration.

> *"I don't expect to whom I should hang out with, everyone is the same. I don't really set an expectation, but it happens naturally…"* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P1)

Among the interviewees, there was one special case. As a second-generation of the Indian immigrant in Grenada, Interviewee 12 shared that he had always lived and grown up with multiple cultures. He always felt identified, though not entirely, with people from these cultures, including Indian and Grenadian cultures (or *"black cultures"* as in his words) (refer to 5.2.1). He often applied the word *"hybrid"* to refer to his cultural identities.

> *"...so as far as identity, it's hard to say well, I'm this and that, I'm definitely some sort of hybrid."* (Interviewee 12, from Grenada, P2)

Near the end of the sojourn, these students shared that their cultural identities, in general, were enhanced. As they clarified, during the sojourn, since they lived in the 'international' contexts (e.g., classroom setting, shared accommodation) and had close relationships with many international and some host national friends, they adopted many behaviours from people of the two groups, which increased their foreign cultural identification. However, as mentioned earlier, these students rarely perceived cultural identities as a zero-sum concept where home cultures and 'foreign' cultures were contradictory. Adopting new behaviours from people of other cultural groups was not perceived as diminishing their home cultural identification, but rather as an enrichment to both dimensions of cultural identities. Words such as *"mixed"* or *"mixture"*, and *"hybrid"* were frequently used to describe their cultural identities. As Interviewee 9 explained:

> *"It's not like I'm not Chinese, but it's like mixture, like I took IELTS exams. I've got to know English. All the things about like study, these things make me like cultural... like cross-cultural. I think I believe I am Chinese, but I also adapt to here, another culture, and I get more understandings about other things, but it doesn't make me less Chinese."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P2)

During the re-entry, the re-adjustment process to home cultures happened relatively smoothly. They generally felt positive feelings when returning home. Positive words such as *"special"*, *"relaxing"* and *"fresh"*, were frequently repeated.

> *"At first, I feel a bit uhm different, just something special but I can't really describe but after 1 or 2 months, I just feel like I'm back to my homeland."* (Interviewee 9, from China, P3)

When returning to home countries, behavioural changes became prominent, as some students asserted that they had changed their living habits after study in the UK, which created some differences in their behaviours and those of their co-nationals, and more similarities between their behaviours and their international or host national friends.

> *"I honestly think that if you ask me to work in a Vietnamese company, I can't, because I have learnt many things during my stay in the UK, not only about knowledge, but also learning style, living style, point of view, working style [...] It's not because we are in the UK, so we are more modern, but it's because we are exposed to different cultures so we see things more objective, so we are more modern and internationalised."* (Interviewee 1, from Vietnam, P3)

On the other hand, the re-entry phase could re-enforce their emotional attachment (or *"sense of belonging"*) to their homelands and home cultures (similar to findings in 6.1.2). Thus, during the re-entry, two dimensions of cultural identities became apparent to the students and 'mixed' cultural identities were reinforced.

> *"I still can understand and appreciate some cultures of my country of course but I think that I'm more… interested other countries, cultures as well…"* (Interviewee 9, from China, P3)

In brief, it appears that cultural identities of students who identified strongly with home and foreign cultures prior to the sojourn would remain the same throughout the sojourn. In fact, this sense of 'mixed' cultural identities would become deepened. Adoption of behaviours of non-co-national international and/ or host national friends results in more behavioural similarities, leading to stronger identification with 'foreign' cultures. Meanwhile, emotional attachment towards home cultures tends to become prominent at the re-entry phase, thus, home cultural identification was strengthened.

6.1.4 Students with weak identification with home and 'foreign' cultures early in the sojourn, and their cultural identity shifts during and after the sojourn

Early in the sojourn, when asked about cultural identities, three out of 13 students were confused and uncertain of their identities. The incongruence in sense of attachment and reflection of behaviours (for instance, feeling attached to home cultures yet could not identify with some behaviours of people of home cultures) would result in weak identification with home and 'foreign' cultures; thus, confusion and uncertainty in their cultural identities (see 5.3.2).

Although these students were still open to all three sources of contact, they appeared to prefer contacting non-co-national internationals and host nationals as they usually perceived study abroad as a chance to earn new experiences and get to know different people. The main difference between these students and the students with high identification with 'foreign' cultures (see 6.1.2) was that their preference of contact mainly came from their association of the sojourn with difference, newness and a chance of refreshing experiences, rather than the sense of connection with host nationals and internationals.

> *"…when you're back to your country, you will have friends from your country… you know… from the same culture. So, this is the opportunity for you to have friends from other countries and from other cultures."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P1)

Interestingly, after the sojourn, two of the students, Interviewee 18 and 23, developed 'mixed' cultural identities (high identification with home cultures and 'foreign' cultures), whereas Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, became strongly identified with her home cultures while weakly identified with 'foreign' cultures.

According to Interviewee 18 from Italy and Interviewee 23 from Indonesia, during the sojourn, they slowly adopted some behaviours from people of 'different' cultures, which led to higher foreign cultural identification.

> *"I don't know, maybe it was the influence from my English teacher, like he opened my mind to see things in a different way, more relaxed but also more critical of what's happening. […] just more accepting of differences, more open to challenges, I want to try to do different stuff, be more adventurous, I wasn't before."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P2)

> *"You know, I don't say that even though they [international students] are different, you don't learn something from them, because you do learn things from them."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P2)

Relationships with other international students per se also broadened the sense of place of the students, making them feel as *"being global ... and cosmopolitan"*, as Interviewee 23 shared:

> *"I feel more like Indonesian when you are outside of Indonesia, but you know when you are here, away from home and you have some sort of relationship with international people and you are international as well here. So, you are kind of being in global area, and you are cosmopolitan in a way."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P2)

At the same time, behavioural similarities between them and their compatriots were more likely to become apparent for these students, which bonded them with their co-nationals. As a result, over a year, their home cultural identification was also strengthened. Interviewee 18 from Italy, for instance, in the second interview, explained that after having prolonged contact with other internationals and host national friends, similarities between her and her co-nationals became more latent. She realised that she did *"a lot of things that Italians did"*. These behavioural similarities were also recognised and pointed out by many of her international friends.

> *"I still search my kind of food and well I'm kind of slightly open to things, to try new things as well, but we Italians, have like really good food [...] It's also the way we behave, like we study, the way we speak, our speech, that's all us… People usually make fun of us because of that but uhm I know that I do it a lot, like to move my hand but yeah I think it's the whole package, not just food or anything."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P2)

This sense of 'mixed' cultural identities tended to be maintained until they returned to their home countries. During the re-entry, when being asked to reflect on their sojourn experiences, these students usually acknowledged some changes in their ways of thinking and behaving, for instance, open-mindedness and new perspectives in thinking. These changes were, in fact, a result of adaptation and adjustment to the 'international' HE contexts (e.g., *"being in an international course"*, as Interviewee 18 shared) or to other 'foreign' cultures (e.g., learning from their international friends), rather than to the specific socio-cultural environment of the host culture.

> *"…being an international course, they make us think more on the whole kind of way, more open to what's happening in the world, not just only in your small town. [...] when you start going out of the country and be in contact with other cultures, you start thinking differently, be open minded, and you start seeing your country staying behind."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P3)

> *"I still have the values that I've learnt from my international friends, so I feel more like global citizen…"* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P3)

In contrast, Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, who used to be uncertain of her cultural identities in the first interview, reported a stronger sense of home cultural identification in the second interview, as in her words, *"I have a very strong belonging to Taiwan, 98% and 2%, I don't know, maybe of other cultures…"* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2).

As she explained, social pressure to be identified with home cultures in order to have distinctive identities from other students was intensified in the 'international' environment, which *'pushed'* her towards her home cultures (see 6.1.2).

> *"…because everybody will ask you 'Where are you from? What do you have in Taiwan?' And I realise that I didn't know much about Taiwan. […] Ecuador, America, EU, French, Germany, they have… All of them have very strong identity, but in Taiwan, it's very vague. The only thing you know is milk tea and what else? Another food, what kind of food, I don't know. So, I want to know more about Taiwan."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2)

According to Interviewee 16, study abroad and being in contact with 'other' cultures gave her a chance to reflect on her own cultural identities, a question which she had never stumbled upon when living in Taiwan.

> "*Most of Taiwanese students when they go study abroad, they start to reflect on who am I? What am I? Am I the one the government told me, or teacher told me? Am I that kind person? Am I from that background? So, yes, I think that's the most like biggest reflection of myself during this year."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2)

Yet, similar to Interviewee 18 and 23, the repatriation helped her to realise the changes in her behaviours after the academic sojourn, such as being open and accepting to cultural differences and diversity. This resulted in a slight increase in foreign cultural identification.

> *"I feel myself that I'm ready or more willing to accept or know more from different cultures or get to know more different people from different backgrounds, even like with people that we have different or opposite opinions, that I would love to get to know them more. So, I think I became more open to others."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P3)

However, the sojourn did not alter her affection and emotional attachment to her home cultures, but rather it gave her the opportunity to reflect on her identities. Both dimensions of cultural identities were strengthened, and a sense of 'mixed' cultural identities was developed and became apparent during the re-entry. Therefore, despite awareness of several behavioural changes and differences in her behaviours and those of her co-nationals, in the third interview, Interviewee 16 repeatedly mentioned: *"I felt a really strong feeling and belonging to my cultures."* The change in home cultural identification of Interviewee 16 can be observed in Table 54 below.

Early in the Sojourn		**Late in the Sojourn**		**Re-entry**
"Interviewee: Do you feel a strong sense of belonging to your… Respondent: my country? Not really, because I don't feel strongly belonging to anyone in a relationship so it's a bit… it doesn't matter from your background."	→	*"I have a very strong belonging to Taiwan, 98% and 2%, I don't know, maybe of other cultures."*	→	*"I felt really strong feeling and belonging to my cultures more. […] I feel myself that I'm ready or more willing to accept or know more from different cultures, or get to know more different people from different backgrounds…"*

Table 54: Changes in Cultural identities of Interviewee 16 during and after the Sojourn

Interestingly, these students initially experienced relatively negative experiences when returning home. Negative words, such as *"messy"* and *"noisy"* were often used to describe the socio-cultural environment at home, however, they adapted to the environment fairly quickly.

> *"…so, when I first arrived, the weather was very humid here, it's very hot […] it was really different from X [the host city]. […] I feel better now after 3 months."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P3)

> *"…in the UK, it's quite cold but in Indonesia it's hot so my body quite like experience a shock […] it's like a bit tidy in the UK, but in Indonesia it's a bit messy."* (Interviewee 23, from Taiwan, P3)

During the repatriation, these students usually kept frequent contact with international peers met in the sojourn who were either their classmates or people living in shared accommodation. Online media was the dominant communication vehicle, with group texting and chatting as the most common type of talks. Messenger applications such as Whatsapp, as well as social media networking sites, were regularly mentioned as a few of the key communication tools.

> *"We always talked to each other once a month and then we have our small group on Whatsapp and we chat to each other like every day. […] Every time that I have*

> *something interesting in Taiwan, I want to share with them, and they want to share something from their countries."* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P3)

> *"We kept texting on Whatsapp. Yeah, we've got 6 or 7 people and we've got our Whatsapp group. We keep messaging and we are planning a reunion in April actually. We would like to meet up, you know, see who finds the time."* (Interviewee 23, from Indonesia, P3)

It is worth noting that since the students often used cultures and nations interchangeably, they also often commented that the political crisis was one of the influential factors that could strengthen (i.e., Interviewee 16) or lower (i.e., Interviewee 18) their sense of belonging to their home cultures during the sojourn.

> *"Because in these days, we have some pressure from the Chinese government, they tend to force… I don't know if you watch the news, but they tend to force like, every airline to change the nationality from Taiwanese to China. Well, I know that is a very complex question but I'm now having a very strong identity of myself of being a Taiwanese. And I realise my mother tongue is not Mandarin but Taiwanese, because my mom, my dad and my grandparents, they all speak Taiwanese. Mandarin is what I learn in school, after I went to elementary school…"* (Interviewee 16, from Taiwan, P2)

> *"Well, there has been a change of the government, as usual, it's not going that well and the people seem like more and more stupid, so you don't feel like you are not really sure about your government. […] They are getting kind of racist so they are closing the border on the south, they don't want refugees to come in […] You can't be proud of the country that is like that, it's kind of like mad moments that you don't know what to do."* (Interviewee 18, from Italy, P2)

Overall, students who were confused about their cultural identities tended to become aware of their identities after the sojourn. The adoption of new behaviours from people of other cultures could lead to stronger foreign cultural identification. On the other hand, due to some political issues, social pressure in the 'international' HE contexts to be identified with home cultures, and sense of emotional and place attachment, these students tended to establish stronger home cultural identification after study abroad. As a result, a sense of 'mixed' cultural identities was developed and usually sustained even after they returned to their home countries.

In brief, all students participated in this study became aware of their cultural identities after the sojourn and the majority developed a more complicated view on their identities (i.e., a sense of ‘mixed’ of cultural identities). During the re-entry, changes in behaviours were recognised, leading to awareness of more behavioural similarities between the students and their ‘foreign’ friends; yet emotional and place attachment to home cultures also became apparent. These resulted in development of ‘mixed’ cultural identities of student sojourners. Despite some minor issues, the students appeared to adapt fairly quickly to home cultures within the first few weeks. Contact with friends met in the sojourn, no matter if they were co-national, international and host national, were often maintained during the repatriation. Online media was the dominant communication vehicle, with group texting and chatting as the most common type of talks.

The section below provides the integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings and discusses them in relation to the current literature in the cross-cultural transition study. The section also explores relationships between cultural identities, social contact patterns and adaptation outcomes.

6.2 Discussion

6.2.1 Changes in cultural identities during and after the sojourn

Although the results of the statistical tests were not statistically significant (see 5.1.5), the interview data showed that student sojourners did experience changes in their cultural identities during and after the sojourn, though the changing pattern varied and depended on many factors.

In particular, early in the sojourn, four groups of students with different patterns of cultural identities were identified: 1) strong home cultural and weak foreign cultural identification, 2) weak home cultural and strong foreign cultural identification, 3) strong in both dimensions (which resulted in 'mixed' cultural identities) and 4) weak in both dimensions (hence, confusion in cultural identities).

However, near the end of the sojourn, cultural identities became more prominent to the students, and none of them expressed uncertainty in their identities. There was only one student strongly identified with 'foreign' cultures and weakly with home cultures. Most students felt identified strongly with home and 'foreign' cultures. The students often used the word 'mixed' to refer to their cultural identities. This changing pattern was maintained until the students returned home. During the re-entry, these changes in cultural identities were more likely to be enhanced and became significant to the students.

In general, at the end of the sojourn, most of the students in the study appeared to develop a sense of 'mixed' cultural identities with strong identification with home cultures and 'foreign' cultures, which is also called as *"fusion of identities"* (Kramer, 2000). It is worth noting that the sense of 'mixed' cultural identities in this study are very much similar to the concept of *"intercultural identity"*, *"meta-identity"*, *"transcultural identity"* or *"cosmopolitan identity"* (Kim, 2008, p. 364) (see 2.2.2).

Interestingly, Kim (2008) mentions in her theory that the process of cultural learning and unlearning happened simultaneously in cross-cultural transition. Individuals will learn new social behaviours required in the host culture and, at the same time, unlearn 'old' behaviours from their home cultures. In this study, although the cultural unlearning process was observed in some interviews, this phenomenon was, generally, not common and tended to occur only with student sojourners who had felt strongly unattached and weakly identified with their home cultures prior to the sojourn (e.g., Interviewee 13 from Japan). These students were more likely to avoid and minimise interactions with their compatriots throughout the sojourn. Only then cultural unlearning happened, ‘pushing’ the students further away from their home cultures and lowering their home cultural identification.

For the majority, since they still maintained frequent contact with their compatriots, it was less likely that they might unlearn ‘old’ cultural behaviours. However, more research is needed to discover this ‘unlearning’ process in cross-cultural transition of student sojourners.

6.2.2 Cultural identification process and the complex relationship of cultural identities and social contact

The quantitative and qualitative data indicated that cultural identities could be influenced by social contact (5.1.3 and 6.1); however, the data revealed that cultural identities were also influential to the preference of the contact sources during the sojourn.

It was observable across interviews that student sojourners with high home cultural identification usually preferred having more contact with their co-national peers, and often felt more bonded with this said group, whereas students identifying strongly with ‘foreign’ cultures were more open to host national and non-co-national international contact (see 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). Statistical tests showed similar results, with significant correlations between home, host cultural identification levels and the degree of contact. Moreover, home cultural identification positively predicted the quantity and quality of co-national contact, and negatively predicted the quantity of contact with internationals. Meanwhile, host cultural identification significantly and positively predicted the quantity and quality of host national and international contact (see 5.1.3).

In this study, generally, home cultural identification would rarely be weakened, if not strengthened, during and after the sojourn. Most of the students with strong home cultural identification usually spent more time with co-nationals as they felt more comfortable with their compatriots. They tended to feel bonded with the said group after study abroad. Therefore, it was likely that they might adopt some of their friends’ behaviours. More behavioural similarities between them and their co-national friends could be recognised, leading to the reinforcement of this dimension of cultural identities.

The ‘international’ HE contexts also heightened their sense of belonging to their home cultures. The pressure to be identified with home cultures to differentiate themselves from other non-co-national international classmates and flatmates ‘pushed’ international students towards their home cultures (see 6.1.2).

Supporting these findings, many studies have emphasised that co-national contact could strengthen home cultural identification (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1993), while the failure to maintain such contact could weaken this cultural identification (Ethier and Deaux, 1994).

However, there is still limited evidence in the literature exploring the influence of cultural identities on the choice or preference of sources of social contact (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood, 2013) and social pressure in the 'international' environment to be identified with home cultures. This is one of the few studies that shed light on the complicated relationship of these two variables and emphasises the important role of cultural identities in predicting the pattern of social contact during the sojourn.

In addition, findings from this research showed that the process of foreign cultural identification varied vastly, depending on the quality of contact with non-co-national internationals and host nationals. For instance, students with strong foreign cultural identification were strongly interested in 'foreign' and host cultures, thus, seemed to prefer contacting people from these groups in the early stage of the sojourn. If relationships were strengthened, with student sojourners becoming closer friends with people of the two groups, the students were more likely to adopt some behaviours of their close friends. Over time, the students might recognise more behavioural similarities, thus, felt more identified with 'foreign' cultures.

Many student sojourners frequently reported that after the sojourn, they were familiar with various different types of 'foreign' food; developed transferable academic skills such as critical thinking and independent learning. Non-co-national international friends helped them learn different perspectives in thinking and be open-minded to cultural differences. The quality of contact per se (for instance, friendships with people all around the world) made them feel like 'citizens of the world'. Therefore, foreign cultural identification was more likely to be strengthened after the sojourn.

However, once experiences were unpleasant (such as conflicts in communication styles in group work), international students tended to feel distant to said groups, less inclined to preserve the relationships and less likely to adopt the behaviours. More behavioural differences were identified, which lowered foreign cultural identification.

Similarly, the quality of the contact and its role in the cultural identification process has been well-documented in the literature. Contact with host nationals can negatively influence host cultural identification especially when perceived discrimination occurs (Lalonde *et al.*, 1992; Leong and Ward, 2000). Perceived discrimination can double the adjustment barrier and strengthen the feeling of *"exclusion from the culture"* (Pedersen *et al.*, 2011, p. 883), which make sojourners feel less identified with the host culture. Therefore, student sojourners who feel weakly identified with the host culture usually express the feeling of being a tourist living in a foreign country instead of seeing themselves a temporary member of that country (Citron, 1996).

The model in Figure 29 illustrates the relationship of cultural identities and social contact.

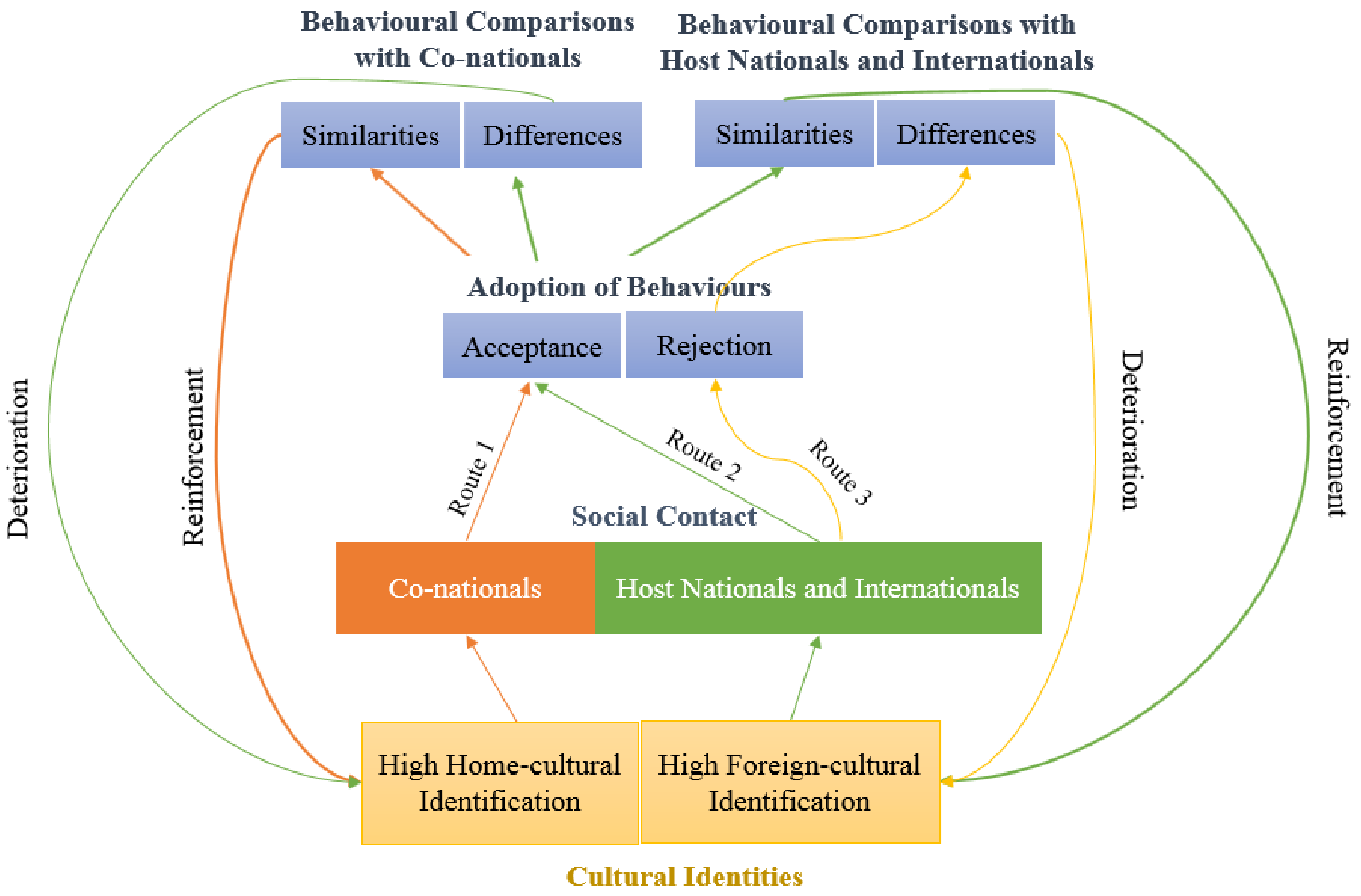
Behavioural Comparisons with Co-nationals
Behavioural Comparisons with Host Nationals and Internationals
Similarities
Differences
Similarities
Differences
Adoption of Behaviours
Acceptance
Rejection
Route 1
Route 2
Route 3
Social Contact
Co-nationals
Host Nationals and Internationals
High Home-cultural Identification
High Foreign-cultural Identification
Cultural Identities
Deterioration
Reinforcement
Deterioration
Reinforcement

Figure 29: The Relationship of Social Contact and Cultural Identities of Student Sojourners

In particular, students with strong home cultural identification and low foreign cultural identification (shown as Route 1 – the orange line – in Figure 29) tended to be more inclined in maintaining contact with their compatriots. This can then lead to adoption of behaviours of their co-national friends; resulting in more behavioural similarities and as a result, strengthening of home cultural identification (see 6.1.1).

In contrast, students with strong foreign cultural identification and low home cultural identification (Route 2 – the green line in Figure 29) appeared to prefer contacting their international and host national friends, hence, were more likely to adopt some behaviours of their friends. Consequently, more behavioural similarities between them and their 'foreign' friends were identified, leading to higher foreign cultural identification. When changes in behaviours were recognised, resulting in more behavioural differences among theirs and their compatriots', home cultural identification could be weakened (see 6.1.2).

However, note that if the contact was unpleasant, for instance, conflicts in cross-cultural group work (e.g., misunderstanding in communication), the students might not prefer to adopt behaviours of their international or national friends (presented by Route 3 – the yellow line), leading to more behavioural differences, hence, decrement of foreign cultural identification.

When identification with home and 'foreign' cultures were either too weak or too strong, the impact of cultural identities on contact choice was limited. For instance, students who identified weakly (leading to confusion in cultural identities) or strongly with home and 'foreign' cultures (hence, 'mixed' cultural identities) early in the sojourn usually had no preferences of contact sources. Even if they did, it was often because of other reasons such as *'sensation seeking'* (see 6.1.3 and 6.1.4).

Having discussed the influence of cultural identities on social contact of student sojourners in the host country, the next section focuses on exploring their experiences in the re-entry and examining the influence of cultural identities on their re-adjustment to home cultures.

6.2.3 Re-entry of student sojourners

Qualitative findings revealed that in general, the re-entry played an important role in the process of cultural identification since it facilitated students to acknowledge their cultural membership. In particular, 'old' and former close relationships in home countries, together with memories of familiar places at home, could help strengthen the sense of attachment, namely sense of belonging and sense of place, to home cultures. This could allow for reinforcement of home cultural identification.

On the other hand, changes in behaviours (if any) might become more significant during the re-entry when the students interacted with their 'former' relationships, such as colleagues, friends and families, or when they experienced some difficulties to re-adjust to the socio-cultural environment of the home culture in the first few weeks after returning. Thus, behavioural comparisons were more likely to happen. Similarities between the students and their 'foreign' friends, as well as differences between them and their compatriots, were more likely to be recognised, and consequently, enhanced identification with foreign cultures. Despite some behavioural changes, *"cultural unlearning"* was rarely mentioned by the students. Further research is suggested to investigate this complicated phenomenon.

In general, despite a few minor difficulties in the first three weeks, such as getting used to the weather and the traffic, this re-adjustment process happened fairly quickly. Psychological feelings of the students were divided, ranging from negative to positive feelings. Many students experienced mixed feelings: feeling positively when returning home, but at the same time, missing the time in the UK. However, no severe psychological turmoil, such as stress and depression, was reported during this phase.

Compared to the large number of studies examining the sojourn experience of international students in the host country, the amount of research on the re-entry phase of student sojourners is proportionately small. Overall, the pattern of this re-adjustment process is unclear.

Many researchers suggest that sojourners may experience some "reverse cultural shock" upon returning to their home countries, which is conceptualised as part of the W-curve model (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963) (see 2.2.1). The repatriation is often portrayed as stressful and full of anxiety and grief (Martin, 1986; Walling *et al.*, 2006), due to cultural value changes (Uehara, 1986); changes in viewpoints and perspectives, dealing with social stigma (Matic and Russell, 2019), loss of social network and relationship (Rose, 2016); identity crisis and lack of social support (Butcher, 2002; Butcher, 2004).

Quantitative research by Gaw (2000) shows that international students experience a significant level of stress (or *"reverse cultural shock"* as in his paper) when returning to their home countries (p.84). Recent studies by Francees (2012) and Soon (2012) also document a reverse cultural shock in the early period of the re-entry of student sojourners. Some returnees struggle with the dissonance of their new cultural identities nurtured during their sojourns and the ‘original’ ones (Martin, 1986; Walling *et al.*, 2006), or deal with mental health issues (Kostohryz *et al.*, 2014).

Qualitative findings of this study showed that the sojourn experience, or specifically behavioural and cultural identity changes during the sojourn, could impact the re-adjustment process of student sojourners. Students with strong foreign cultural identification and weak home cultural identification, such as Interviewee 13 from Japan, were more likely to struggle to adapt to home cultures since they had felt strongly unattached to home cultures. Changes in their behaviours (e.g., communication styles) could cause some conflicts when they interacted with co-nationals at home.

However, incongruent with previous studies portraying the re-entry as having mainly negative influences on the sojourner, findings from this research confirmed that the re-entry, in fact, granted student sojourners a valuable opportunity to reflect on their intercultural experiences and contemplate on their own home cultural values. This self-reflection helped them to be more accepting of cultural differences and diversity and broadened their viewpoints.

For instance, many interviewees emphasised that after study abroad, they became more open and respectful to different cultures and broaden their international connections, but when returning home, they also felt more attached to and appreciated their home cultures. The sense of place was also broadened and even transcended the national border. Many students regarded themselves as *“citizen of the world”*. Hence, some perceived this sojourn experience, including the re-entry, as an enrichment to their personal development.

Many studies also support these findings. Hadis (2005) and Mesquita *et al.* (2017) explain that since shifts in behaviours and values are usually recognised once student sojourners return to home countries, the re-entry is often associated with personal growth, self-awareness and development, and open-mindedness for differences. Arthur (2003) emphasises that the re-entry period is vital for consolidation of intercultural learning of student sojourners. The re-entry is also found to be a period when students can process their multi-cultural experiences, which may enhance their identity in the intercultural world (Selby, 2008), and enrich their bicultural (or multicultural) knowledge (i.e., the home and host culture) (Matic and Russell, 2019).

Duration of overseas stay is also suggested as a significant predictor influencing the experience of the re-entry, with a longer sojourn resulting in more difficulties in the re-entry adjustment (Francees, 2012; Soon, 2012). This might be the case for the one-year taught PG students in this study as their study was relatively short compared to other PG students (i.e., doctorate students). Interestingly, a recent study by Andrianto *et al.* (2018) argue that the time at the host country does not influence the re-entry as the correlation between the length of the sojourn and the re-adjustment struggle is not significant.

In addition, it was common across the interviews that student sojourners still maintained frequent contact with 'old' sojourner friends. The pattern of contact created during the sojourn was preserved and was influenced strongly by cultural identities. For instance, students with strong home cultural and weak foreign cultural identification who used to frequently contact co-nationals during the sojourn tended to keep the contact even after returning to their countries. Meanwhile, students with strong foreign cultural and weak home cultural identification who usually had frequent interactions with other international peers would also prefer to contact international colleagues over co-national ones during the repatriation. Finally, students with 'mixed' cultural identities were more open to all contact, but when returning home, they still maintained frequent and a large amount of contact with international friends met during the sojourn. Online social networking sites were the main vehicle of communication.

It is logical to suggest that there might be a relationship between the maintenance of the network of sojourners and psychological re-adjustment of student sojourners. Particularly, most students in this research experienced no major psychological issues even during the early stage of the re-entry. It could be possible that this network of sojourners helped alleviate the re-entry stress since it made the students feel connected to other friends who shared the same experience.

There are many studies investigating communication between sojourners and their 'former' social relationships, such as families, relatives and friends in home countries (Sussman, 2000; Kartoshkina, 2015; Matic and Russell, 2019). Researchers usually suggest that due to some changes in behaviours and cultural values, miscommunication are often reported, creating the sense of isolation, separating the sojourners and their 'former' social networks (Kartoshkina, 2015). Some research exploring the relationship between the host national contact that sojourners have in the host country and the success of the re-adjustment, with more frequent contact and engagement with host nationals resulting in less satisfaction with life at home (Rohrlich and

Martin, 1991). There is, nevertheless, little evidence from the literature about maintenance of contact with other sojourners and how this may influence the re-adjustment process of student sojourners. Further research is therefore recommended to investigate this interesting yet under-researched issue, which may help provide some knowledge in supporting the re-adjustment process of student sojourners.

6.3 Summary of findings

There are, overall, three key findings presented and discussed in this chapter.

First, cultural identities were significant predictors of social contact patterns that student sojourners might have in the sojourn and were also influenced by social contact. Particularly, international students with high home cultural identification usually preferred having more contact and felt more bonded with their co-national peers. Therefore, they might adopt some behaviours of their co-national friends. More behavioural similarities between them and their friends were, thus, more likely to be recognised, leading to the reinforcement of this cultural identities' dimension (see 6.1.1). The pressure from the 'international' HE contexts, as discussed in 6.1.2, also 'pushed' international students towards their home cultures.

In addition, students identifying strongly with 'foreign' cultures were more open to host national and non-co-national international contact, thus, often maintained frequent contact with these two groups. Relationships with host nationals and non-co-nationals could indirectly 'shape' their cultural identities. The closer the relationship, the more likely they would adopt some behaviours of their friends. This could result in more similarities in behaviours; thus, stronger foreign cultural identification. If there were conflicts (e.g., cross-cultural communication issues in group work), international students tended to feel less inclined to adopt the behaviours; and concentrated more on behavioural differences, which lowered foreign cultural identification (see 6.1.2).

However, when identification with home and 'foreign' cultures were either too weak or too strong, the impact of cultural identities on contact choice was limited. For instance, students who identified weakly or strongly with home and foreign cultures usually had no preferences of contact sources (see 6.1.3 and 6.1.4).

Second, at the end of the sojourn, most of the students in the study appeared to develop a sense of ‘mixed’ cultural identities with strong identification with home and ‘foreign’ cultures. In other words, after the sojourn, most student sojourners shared that they felt attached to multiple cultures, had adopted behaviours of their host national and international friends, yet still maintained some behaviours similar to those of their co-nationals. The students also shared that they became more respectful to different perspectives and be open-minded to cultural differences and diversity. Some students, therefore, referred to their cultural identities as *“mixed”* or *“mixture of various things”* or *“citizen of the world”*. This concept of ‘mixed’ cultural identities is similar to the concept of *“intercultural identity”* or *“cosmopolitan identity”* (Kim, 2008, p. 364) (see 2.2.2).

However, cultural unlearning suggested in Kim’s (2008) work was rarely mentioned by the students since the majority still maintained frequent contact with their compatriots, it was less likely that they might unlearn ‘old’ cultural behaviours. However, researchers are highly recommended to explore factors that advocate or mitigate cultural learning and to confirm whether this ‘unlearning’ process is a crucial part of the adjustment of student sojourners to the new environment.

Finally, the re-entry was found to be crucial for the cultural identification process since it facilitated students to acknowledge their cultural membership. When returning to home countries, students emphasised that they were overwhelmed with memories of familiar places and affection for people at home (i.e., close friends and families). This could help strengthen sense of attachment (i.e., sense of belonging and sense of place) to home cultures, which reinforced home cultural identification. On the other hand, changes in behaviours (if any) might become significant during this period, thus, could set them apart from their compatriots and bond them with their ‘foreign’ friends. As a result, identification with ‘foreign’ cultures could be strengthened (see 6.1.3).

In general, previous studies often report many adjustment issues in the re-entry phase, for instance, anxiety and grief (Chamove and Soeterik, 2006), social stigma (Matic and Russell, 2019), loss of social network and relationship (Rose, 2016), identity crisis and lack of social support (Butcher, 2002; Butcher, 2004). This study, however, found that despite a few minor difficulties early in the re-entry, the students could re-adjust fairly quickly to their home cultures. No psychological turmoil, such as stress and depression, was reported during this phase.

The present study confirmed the positive influence of the re-entry and the academic sojourn on self-development of the students. The re-entry allowed student sojourners a chance to self-reflect on their intercultural experiences during the sojourn, thus, helped them become more open to cultural diversity and respectful to cultural differences; at the same time, felt more attached to and appreciated their home cultures. After the sojourn, many students regarded themselves as *"citizen of the world"*.

The sojourn also enhanced international connections and networks of student sojourners, since most of the students in this research had developed close relationships with various non-co-national internationals and host nationals. Most of them still maintained contact with these groups after the sojourn. This network of sojourners might help alleviate re-entry stress since it made the students feel connected to other friends who understood their sojourn experiences.

Having discussed all key research findings, the following chapter (Chapter 7) will summarise the research design and aims (7.1), address all research questions (7.2) and discuss theoretical, methodological and pedagogical contributions (7.3). The chapter will then analyse the limitations of the research and propose suggestions for future studies (7.4), and end with concluding remarks (7.5).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The final chapter provides the summary of the present research (7.1) and revisits the research questions and key findings (7.2), and proposes theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications (7.3). Limitations of the research and recommendations for future research are then suggested (7.4). Finally, concluding remarks of the research are presented (7.5).

7.1 Summary of the study

This research aimed to explore cultural identity changes of postgraduate student sojourners at a British higher education (HE) institution and to present the cultural identification process and its relationships with social contact and adaptation. The ITCCA of Kim (2001) served as the main guiding literature for the design of the qualitative strand, while quantitative surveys were developed based on the Acculturation model of Berry (2005).

This is, in fact, one of the few longitudinal mixed methods studies that have been conducted, in this case, over a period of approximately 16 months and encompassed the re-entry when students returned home. Participants were one-year taught master's students in Humanities and Social Sciences at a British university. I conducted 18 one-to-one interviews and collected 84 self-reported surveys, from October 2017 to June 2018, when the students lived in the UK. From December 2018 to March 2019, I conducted online interviews with 13 students after they returned to their home countries for at least a month. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was employed for the analysis of quantitative data. Several statistical tests, such as paired sample t-tests, correlations and regression analyses, were run to examine relationships between the researched variables. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse qualitative data (Clarke and Braun, 2014) (see Chapter 3).

I, first, examined patterns of social contact over time and adaptation outcomes of the students, and explored their relationships (Chapter 4). Findings about the construction of cultural identities of the students and the cultural identification process in cross-cultural transition were then presented (Chapter 5 and 6). Based on these, a theoretical framework integrating cultural identities, social contact and cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation was proposed. Before discussing the theoretical framework, it is important to revisit research questions and review key research findings, which are summarised in the following section.

7.2 Research findings

Key findings are summarised in three sub-sections.

First, research questions 1 and 2 examine social contact and adaptation of student sojourners (7.2.1). Here, the aim was to identify types of contact (i.e., host nationals, co-nationals and non-co-national internationals), as well as their perceived benefits, which student sojourners usually had and to gauge the impact of the contact on socio-cultural, psychological and academic adaptation. Changes in contact patterns during the sojourn were monitored. Social grouping on campus and rationales behind the grouping pattern were also explored.

The second sub-section (7.2.2) provides the answers to the research questions 3, 7 and 8, which followed an exploratory, confirmatory and monitoring aim. Here, the main interest was to examine how student sojourners perceived complicated concepts such as cultures, identities and key factors that the students considered when constructing their cultural identities. Changes in their perceptions throughout the sojourn were also monitored. The quantitative data examined the relationships between cultural identities, social contact and adaptation, and monitored the changes in cultural identities over time. These findings offered some prerequisite knowledge for understanding the cultural identification process which is investigated in the next sub-section.

The third sub-section (7.3.3) addresses the rest of the research questions (from 4 to 6) (i.e., the pattern of changes in cultural identities and the cultural identification process of student sojourners) and the final one (7.3.4) discusses the re-entry experience of the students in their home countries.

7.2.1 Patterns of social contact, adaptation and their relationships

This section provides answers to the first two research questions (see Chapter 4). Note that in the quantitative strand, the patterns of social contact were reported by the students (see 3.4.2), while GPAs, one of the indicators of academic adaption outcomes, were the expected results of the students (see 3.4.5)

RQ1: What are sources and patterns of social contact that student sojourners usually have?

RQ2: What is the relationship between social contact and adaptation outcomes?

First, research findings showed that co-nationals were the most preferable and popular source of contact that student sojourners had in the host country (i.e., the UK). After nearly nine months, the quality and quantity of co-national contact increased significantly, indicating that student sojourners tended to feel more connected with and often maintained more frequent contact with this said group after the sojourn. Many studies also find similar results (c.f. Harrison and Peacock, 2009; Forsey, Broomhall and Davis, 2012).

However, the students' attitude towards co-national contact was, in general, divided. Many students emphasised the important role of co-national contact in psychological support, for instance, alleviating stress and homesickness. The lack thereof could possibly 'damage' their adjustment psychologically. Some students, meanwhile, associated co-national contact with decrement in English proficiency. They believed that more time spent with this said group might intervene with their interactions with host nationals, and consequently, fewer chances of practising the host language.

Benefits of co-national contact in psychological adjustment, such as stress buffer, has been documented in many studies of student sojourners (Bochner *et al.*, 1977; Ye, 2006a; Woolf, 2007; Rui and Wang, 2015) (c.f. Rui and Wang, 2015, Ye, 2006b, Bochner et al., 1977, Woolf, 2007). Host national and non-co-national internationals are generally associated with more opportunities for English speaking practices (Yu and Moskal, 2019), however, little empirical evidence has been found on the relationship between the degree of co-national contact and (decreased) proficiency in the host language.

Second, this study found that student sojourners appeared to maintain superficial relationships and infrequent contact with host nationals at the start of the sojourn. There was even a decrease in the quantity of host national contact at the end of the sojourn. Most interactions were framed within the academic environment and rarely exceed beyond that 'bubble'. Some reasons for this pattern were the small number of host national students in the programme, perceived unwillingness of local students to communicate with international students and the student sojourners' lack of confidence in English proficiency. Due to the superficial relationships and limited contact, host nationals were rarely considered as sources of academic support and were mainly linked with utilitarian support related to socio-cultural adjustment.

These are also concurrent themes found in the literature (Harrison and Peacock, 2009; Yu and

Shen, 2012; Dunne, 2013; Yu and Moskal, 2019). Many studies show that host national contact is usually limited, and it may not always be a panacea for the successful adjustment of student sojourners (Young *et al.*, 2013; Pho and Schartner, 2019)

Third, this study confirmed the increasing importance of non-co-national international contact in the adaptation of student sojourners across three domains (Kashima and Loh, 2006; Young *et al.*, 2013; Schartner, 2015; Pho and Schartner, 2019). Many students emphasised that non-co-national international friends provided them with instrumental support for academic adaptation and socio-cultural adjustment. This contact could also offer emotional support due to perceived similarity in the English level and shared 'foreignness' of the British culture. Therefore, in general, there was an increase in the quantity and quality of this contact by the end of the sojourn. Interactions with non-co-national internationals were associated with improvement in English communication skills.

Importantly, the study found that proficiency and confidence in the host language may have moderated how international students actually utilised the contact. Students with relatively lower proficiency in English and lower confidence in English communication skills usually avoided contacting host nationals and internationals. They tended to rely heavily on co-nationals for support in adjustment in all three domains. This may have a cyclical effect in so far that the pleasant experience with their compatriots may reduce their motivations to interact with the other two contact sources, as a result, a further reduction in contact with the said groups, and so on (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011). However, these findings derived from the qualitative research and there was a lack of statistical evidence from the quantitative strand to support them.

Fourth, the study found that social grouping in HE was complex and multi-layered. Three levels of grouping seemed to exist in the university environment, which were based on: (1) institutionalised student status (e.g., home vs international students); (2) geographical region (e.g., East Asia, Middle East and Europe) and (3) nationality (e.g., America and China) (see Figure 21 in 4.3.5). Students could be members of multiple groups, depending on different contexts (e.g., classroom setting, 'international' accommodation and the university campus). Grouping was formed relatively early in the sojourn, and once formed, was difficult to change.

Finally, findings revealed that cultural identities did exert influence on the choice of contact and could partially impact social grouping on campus. Student sojourners usually perceived that there existed two cultures: *East (or Asia) and West*. Cultural differences (e.g., different interests) between these two were perceived to be so significant that attempt to communicate with people from 'other' regional groups was anticipated to result in awkwardness and misunderstanding. Hence, although student sojourners frequently mingle with their non-co-national international peers, they were more likely to group with international students perceived to be from the 'similar' regional group (e.g., *'Asia'* or *'Europe'*), and minimise contact with those who were seen as from the 'different' group.

Difficulties in communication with students from perceived 'different' regions were generally common among student sojourners, regardless of their origins. For instance, students from Europe also struggled to initiate conversations with students from perceived 'other' regions, such as East Asia and Southeast Asia. As a result, this raises concern about the presentation of East Asian and Southeast Asian students in the cross-cultural transition study as the only so-called 'disadvantaged' group who usually struggle to maintain contact with internationals and host nationals (Rienties *et al.*, 2013; Glass *et al.*, 2014; Slaten *et al.*, 2016).

7.2.2 Cultural identities in the 'superdiversity' environment and their relationships with social contact and adaptation

This section focuses on addressing the research questions below, by exploring how student sojourners perceived their cultural identities and how they constructed their identities in the 'international' HE contexts, what are the relationships between cultural identities, social contact and adaptation (see Chapter 5).

RQ3: How do student sojourners construct their cultural identities in the international environment?

RQ7: What is the relationship between cultural identities and social contact?

RQ8: What is the role of adaptation and adjustment in the process of cultural identification?

In general, early in the sojourn, student sojourners tended to be either confused about cultural identities or conflated them with national identities. It might be because cultural identities are often more implicit than national identities, and may become salient only when individuals are exposed to other cultures (Sussman, 2000). Moreover, many students in this research appeared to have an essentialist view about cultures and perceived that each nation had a national culture which was distinct to another. Thus, ‘nation’ and ‘culture’ were often equated, and cultural identities were regarded as the same as national identities.

Congruent with previous research, findings from this study confirmed that cultural identities of student sojourners were influenced by emotional attachment (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005) and the acknowledgement of cultural membership (i.e., “Do students ‘*see’* themselves as members of a cultural group?”) (c.f. Sussman, 2000). In addition, findings revealed that place attachment (i.e., “How attached do students *‘feel’* to specific places where they have lived such as hometown and cities?”) and the reflection of behaviours *(*i.e., *“*Do students believe that they *‘do’* something similarly or differently from people of a cultural group?”) were the other two important components that the students frequently considered when constructing their cultural identities.

The study, thus, suggested that student sojourners constructed their cultural identities based on 1) emotional and place attachment (‘feel’), 2) the self-reflection of behaviours (‘do’) and 3) the acknowledgement of cultural membership (‘see’) (see Figure 26 in 5.3.2). While behavioural similarities could lead to the acknowledgement of cultural membership, behavioural differences may not. For example, students did not usually *‘see’* themselves as members of the home culture because they thought they *behaved differently* from host nationals, but rather because they thought they *behaved similarly* to their co-nationals (see Figure 27 in 5.3.2).

Congruent with previous research, this study confirmed that cultural identities were bidimensional (Berry *et al.,* 1987; Berry and Kim, 1988; Ryder *et al.,* 2000); both of which could exist simultaneously. Due to the limited contact with local students, when discussing cultural identities, student sojourners tended to reflect and compare *‘home cultures’* with *‘foreign cultures’* (or the perceived different ‘cultural others’). The term *‘home cultures’* was used here to refer to any cultures that student sojourners were born in, grew up with or regarded as familiar cultures, while the term *‘foreign cultures’* was employed to indicate cultures that were perceived to be different or unfamiliar.

Cultural identities of student sojourners were, thus, suggested to have two dimensions: identification with home cultures and with ‘foreign’ cultures, instead of the British culture, or the ‘supposedly’ *“host culture”* which has been currently proposed in the literature (c.f. Berry, 2005 and Kim, 2001). These two dimensions of cultural identities were closely interrelated to and interdependent upon each other. It was observable across the interviews that what international students defined as 'home cultures' influenced how they defined 'foreign' cultures (see 5.3.2).

Previous research has documented the influence of social contact on the cultural identification process (Ethier and Deaux, 1994). However, there is still limited evidence in the literature about the influence of cultural identities on the choice or preference of sources of social contact. This is one of the few studies that have shed light on the complicated relationship of these two variables. Findings from both the qualitative and quantitative data emphasised the important role of cultural identities in predicting the pattern of social contact during the sojourn (see 5.1.2 and 5.2.3).

Moreover, sojourners are often assumed to have high identification with their home cultures prior to the sojourn (Leong and Ward, 2000; Kim, 2001; Kim, 2008) (see 2.2.2). Findings of this research, however, suggested a different pattern which showed that it was possible for the students to identify strongly with 'foreign' cultures, and weakly with home cultures before the sojourn (see 5.3.1). Cultural identities in the context of the *"superdiversity"* of cultures are, therefore, usually more complex than they were before (Vertovec, 2007; Vertovec, 2010; Zhang, 2018). Exposure to 'other' cultures on media can influence identities of individuals, making them feel identified with the 'other' cultures prior to the sojourn (Ferguson *et al.*, 2012).

Finally, students who identified strongly with 'foreign' cultures usually adapted better to the new 'international' and multicultural environment. Quantitative and qualitative data also showed that cultural identities predicted adaptation outcomes (5.1.4). Students with high 'foreign' cultural identification appeared to experience fewer difficulties adapting to the socio-cultural and academic environment; and could acquire higher academic achievements (i.e., higher GPAs of overall taught courses). The influence of foreign cultural identification on socio-cultural adaptation is, in fact, frequently documented in the literature (Ward and Kennedy, 1992; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000).

It might be that student with high 'foreign' cultural identification usually preferred to have more contact with host nationals and non-co-national. As these said groups could support international students in their study (see 4.2), having more and frequent contact with them possibly helped students to achieve better academic adaptation. English proficiency may also be a contributory factor to 'ease' socio-cultural and academic adaptation since students with strong foreign cultural identification were usually the ones with high levels of English proficiency.

7.2.3 Cultural identification process of student sojourners

This section presents answers to the three research questions below, by examining the cultural identification process of student sojourners during the sojourn and in the re-entry. These questions are grouped together because they deal with different yet relevant aspects of the same research topic (i.e., the cultural identification process of student sojourners), and the lack of any will impair our understanding of the topic.

RQ4 – Exploratory question: Do student sojourners experience changes in their cultural identities after their sojourn abroad?

RQ5: If so, what are the patterns of cultural identity shifts among student sojourners?

RQ6: What is the identification process of student sojourners?

Data show that cultural identities were critical for the sojourn experience of student sojourners. In particular, at the beginning of the sojourn, international students with high home cultural identification usually preferred contacting their co-national peers rather than the other two contact sources, whereas students with high foreign cultural identification were more open to host national and non-co-national international contact (see 6.1). Nevertheless, if identification with home and 'foreign' cultures were either too low or too high at the early stage, the impact of cultural identities on contact choice was restricted (see 6.2.2).

Students in this study, in general, experienced an increase in home cultural identification after cross-cultural transition. External factors, such as the 'international' environment, may positively influence this enhancement of home cultural identification. As discussed in 6.1.2, in the 'international' environment in HE context (e.g., classroom setting), the students were more likely to feel pressured to be identified with home cultures since their colleagues usually stereotyped them. Being identified with home cultures was also deemed one way to differentiate themselves from other peers. Student sojourners, to some extent, were 'pushed' to their home cultures. Thus, they became more aware of their cultural membership, which consequently heightened home cultural identification.

The strengthening of 'foreign' cultural identification, on the other hand, varied vastly, depending on the quality of social contact. For instance, if relationships were strengthened, student sojourners were more likely to adopt some behaviours of their non-co-national international and host national friends, such as getting used to various types of 'foreign' food and drink. Over time, the students might recognise more similarities in behaviours, thus, felt more identified with 'foreign' cultures (see 6.2.2).

However, conflicts in communication styles in group work might 'push' them away from local students and international peers. More focus was, then, put on discrepancy in behaviours, thus, weakened 'foreign' cultural identification. Previous research also supports this finding, with perceived discrimination or conflicts reported as one of the main factors lowering identification with the host culture (Lalonde *et al.*, 1992; Leong and Ward, 2000; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011).

In general, at the end of the sojourn, cultural identities became more significant and prominent to student sojourners. Most of the students appeared to feel strongly identified with home cultures and 'foreign' cultures. Relationships with non-co-national international colleagues might increase open-mindedness of the students. Non-co-national international contact per se also broadened their sense of place, making them feel connected to other places where they had never been to. Hence, student sojourners were more likely to feel like *"citizens of the world"* after the sojourn and usually employed the word *"mixed"* to refer to their cultural identities. This concept of *"mixed cultural identities"* is similar to the concept of *"intercultural identity"*, *"meta-identity"*, *"transcultural identity"* or *"cosmopolitan identity"* (Kim, 2008, p. 364) (discussed in 2.2.2).

The re-entry indeed played an important role in this process. In particular, emotional and place attachment to home cultures became stronger when students returned home after study abroad. At the same time, behavioural changes were recognised, setting them apart from their co-nationals and drawing them closer to international and host national friends. The next section discusses further the re-adjustment of the students to home cultures and the influence of cultural identities on the re-entry experience.

7.2.4 Re-adjustment to home cultures during the re-entry

Although the re-adjustment process was not originally considered as the primary focus of this research, the interview data of the research showed many interesting findings about the re-entry experience of student sojourners and demonstrated the importance of the cultural identity change to their lives.

In general, despite a few minor difficulties re-adjusting to home cultures within the first few weeks, the re-adjustment process happened fairly smoothly. Many students experienced mixed emotions: feeling positive when returning home yet missing life in the UK. However, no psychological turmoil, such as stress and depression, was reported during this phase; which is different from other previous research (Martin, 1986; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Walling *et al.*, 2006).

After returning home, many students shared that they tried to maintain frequent contact with friends met during the sojourn, using online media. The contact source varied, depending on their cultural identities. For instance, students with strong home cultural identification were more likely to keep contact with co-national friends met in the UK. Meanwhile, students with strong 'foreign' cultural identification preferred to contact international colleagues. Finally, students with 'mixed' cultural identities were more open to all contact sources. This maintenance of a network of student sojourners could possibly help alleviate the students' re-entry stress (see 6.2.3).

Interview data showed that behavioural and cultural identity changes happened in the sojourn might impact the re-entry experience, in so far that they could raise the barrier of re-adjustment. Students with 'mixed' cultural identities (also known as strong identification with home and 'foreign' cultures) appeared to experience fewer difficulties in re-adjustment than students with strong foreign cultural identification and low home cultural identification.

Previous studies often portray the re-entry as having mainly negative influences on the sojourner (Butcher, 2002; Butcher, 2004; Rose, 2016; Matic and Russell, 2019). However, findings from this research confirmed that despite some initial difficulties when re-adapting to home cultures, the sojourn experience, including the re-entry, was important to the development and self-growth of the individual. Many students in the study shared that the re-entry allowed them to recognise their changes, helping them become more aware of and respectful to cultural differences and cultural diversity (see 6.2.3). The re-entry is, thus, vital for the consolidation of intercultural learning, awareness of cultural identities and development of 'mixed' cultural identities of student sojourners (c.f. Arthur, 2003; Selby, 2008; Matic and Russell, 2019).

7.3 Contributions and implications

Having discussed key research findings above, this section focuses on presenting the theoretical and methodological contributions of this research to the study of cross-cultural transition and the pedagogical implications of research findings for educators.

7.3.1 Theoretical contributions and implications

Located in the cross-cultural transition and intercultural communication (IC) fields, this study has drawn on many theories of adjustment and adaptation, identities and communication, using an intercultural approach with a postmodernist perspective. In this research, cultural identity was conceptualised as changing, disconnected and fragmented; hence, were studied as the identification process. Fewer attempts were made to examine the cultural identities of student sojourners, but more attention was put on exploring the extent of changes and how student sojourners constructed their cultural identities in cross-cultural transition. Given the lack of theories specific to the cultural identities of sojourners, this research contributes to contemporary theories in the fields and enhances understanding about the sojourn experience of international students.

Based on the ITCCA of Kim (2001) and the Acculturation Model of Berry (2005), I developed a framework of the cultural identification process of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition. The framework integrates three conceptual domains, namely cultural identity, social contact and cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation (see Figure 30 below). The framework provides foundation for researchers to study cultural identity changes of student sojourners and emphasises the significance of cultural identities in the cross-cultural experience of the students.

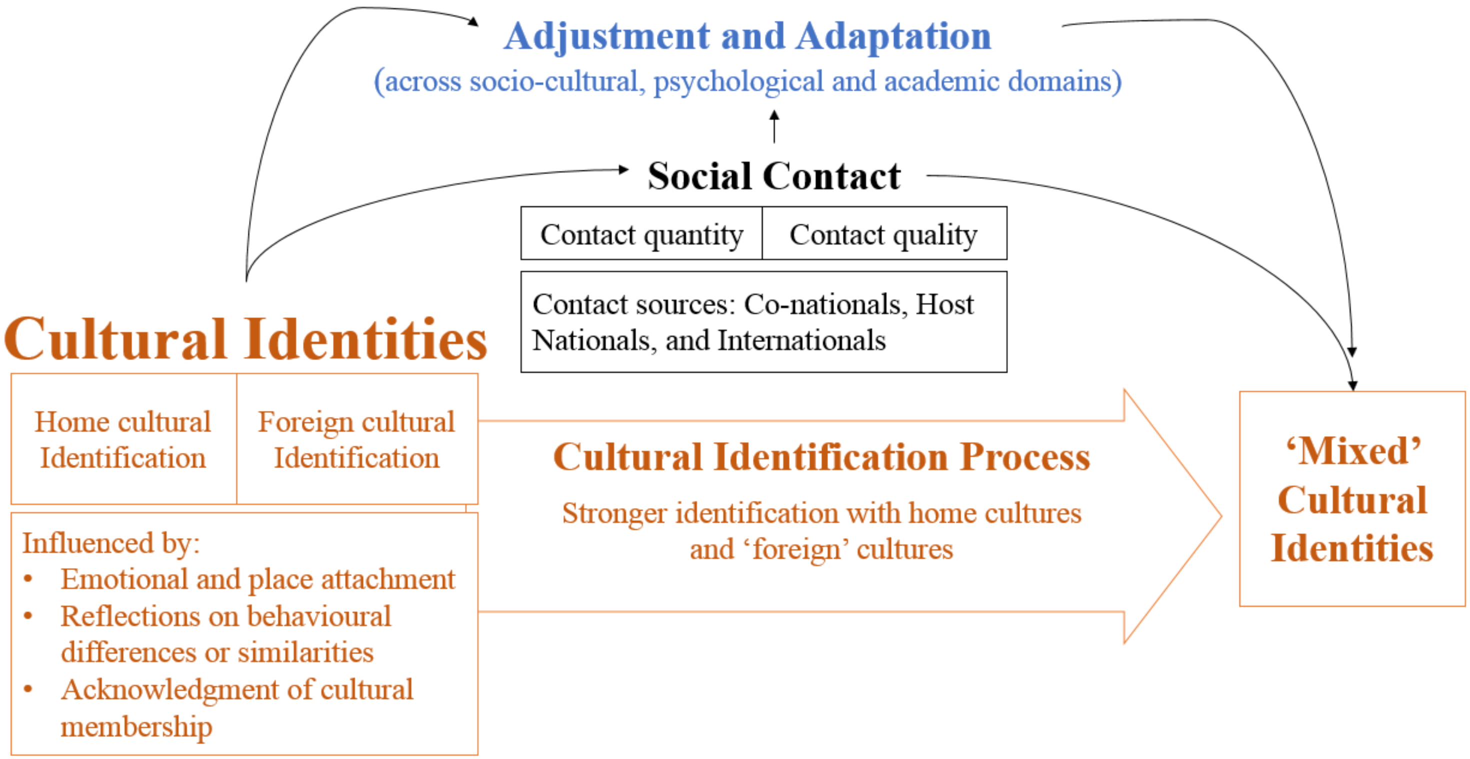
Adjustment and Adaptation
(across socio-cultural, psychological and academic domains)
Social Contact
Contact quantity
Contact quality
Contact sources: Co-nationals, Host Nationals, and Internationals
Cultural Identities
Home cultural Identification
Foreign cultural Identification
Influenced by:
Emotional and place attachment
Reflections on behavioural differences or similarities
Acknowledgment of cultural membership
Cultural Identification Process
Stronger identification with home cultures and 'foreign' cultures
'Mixed' Cultural Identities

Figure 30: Theoretical Framework of the Cultural Identification Process during Adjustment and Adaptation of Student Sojourners

Before presenting the framework, here I will provide a more substantial discussion of each domain (i.e., cultural identities, social contact and adaptation) and how these have been unpacked in this research.

a. Cultural identities

This study has drawn on a number of theories in the cross-cultural transition and IC fields which have usually suggested two components in the construction of cultural identities: *emotional attachment* to a cultural group (i.e., often known as *"sense of belonging"*) (Lustig and Koester, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005); and *the acknowledgement of cultural membership* (Sussman, 2000). However, findings from this research showed that this conceptualisation of cultural identities in the contemporary literature was not sufficient to the case of student sojourners. Many interviewees in this study frequently mentioned attachment to particular places where they had lived in their countries (e.g., cities, hometowns or islands), and the self-reflection of behavioural differences and similarities as the other two components that they usually considered when thinking about cultural identities (see 5.2.2 and 5.3).

Thus, I drew on the work of Ang (2001); Lee (2003); Louie (2004); Kudryavtsev *et al.* (2012); Mendoza and Morén-Alegret (2013); and Belanger and Verkuyten (2010) to propose that in addition to *"sense of belonging"* and the acknowledgement of cultural membership, place attachment, also called *"sense of place"* (Agyekum and Newbold, 2019), and the reflection of behaviours were other important components that student sojourners relied on when constructing cultural identities.

For instance, *"sense of place"* was frequently mentioned during the re-entry when the students returned home and were so overwhelmed with this feeling that they felt a stronger sense of attachment to their home cultures. Reflection on some changes in their behaviours, on the other hand, could 'distance' the students from people of home cultures, thus, weakened their home cultural identification (see 5.3).

In brief, cultural identities of student sojourners were influenced by three components 1) emotional and place attachment ('feel'), 2) the self-reflection of behaviours ('do') and 3) the acknowledgment of membership ('see'). A revised model of the construction of cultural identities of student sojourners is illustrated in Figure 27 in 5.3.2.

In addition, although the study applied the Acculturation Model of Berry (2005), which argues that cultural identities are bi-dimensional (i.e., home and host cultural identification dimensions) (see 2.2.2), research findings suggested that the model, which was originally developed based on the case of immigrants, had relatively low applicability to the cohort of student sojourners.

In particular, when being asked about their cultural identities, the students rarely discussed their home cultures in relation to the host culture, as suggested in the IC literature such as Kim (2001) and Berry (2005). Student sojourners tended to juxtapose their home cultures with ‘other’ cultures which were perceived to be different or *“foreign”* (as in their words) (see 5.2.2 and 5.3.1). The reason for this was due to the nature of their socio-cultural and academic environment and the patterns of social contact, which will be discussed in the next section.

I, therefore, made a slight modification to the Acculturation Model (Berry, 2005) to enhance its relevance to the study of student sojourners. Host cultural identification was replaced by ‘foreign’ cultural identification. Cultural identities were then proposed to have two dimensions: *home cultural identification* and *‘foreign’ cultural identification*. Based on this, I proposed a revised definition of cultural identities:

> *Cultural identities are how individuals define themselves in relation to some cultural groups which can be their home cultures or ‘other’ cultures that are perceived to be ‘foreign’. The individuals constructs their cultural identities by: 1) reflecting on sense of emotional and place attachment towards the groups; 2) performing comparisons between their behaviours and those of people of the groups; and 3) acknowledging their memberships of the groups.*

Through this revision of contemporary theories in the cross-cultural transition and IC fields, I aim to contribute findings that can be helpful for researchers to further investigate cultural identities of student sojourners.

b. Social contact, adjustment and adaptation

Based on the studies by Bochner *et al.* (1977); Young *et al.* (2013) and Schartner (2015), I argued that there were three sources of social contact that student sojourners could have during the sojourn (i.e., host nationals, co-nationals and non-co-national internationals) (see 2.3). The quantity of social contact has been the focus of many studies in the IC field (Arends-Toth and van de Vijver, 2006; Kashima and Loh, 2006; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011), but very few studies have concentrated on the contact’s quality. In this research, I investigated both the quantity and quality of the contact and monitored their changes during and after the sojourn.

In addition, I employed the work of Ward and Kennedy (1992; 1994) which propose that adjustment and adaptation could be studied through three domains (i.e., socio-cultural, psychological and academic). However, it was problematic to apply Ward and Kennedy's work to scrutinise adjustment and adaptation of student sojourners.

As discussed in 4.3, the majority of the students had close relationships and frequent contact with co-nationals and non-co-national internationals, which created a sub-culture of international students in the campus-based environment. This, on one hand, limited their contact with host nationals and minimised their exposure to the 'world' outside the campus-based 'bubble'; and on the other hand, 'shielded' them from the acculturation stress of adjustment to the 'wider' host culture (see Figure 22 in 4.3.5).

These findings raised two concerns for the cross-cultural transition study. First, the socio-cultural adjustment of student sojourners was relatively different and complicated. Researchers in the field need to be cautious when examining this since most of the time, when discussing their adjustment, student sojourners often referred to the sub-culture of international students within the academic 'bubble', which was, by no means, the *"host culture"* documented in the Ward and Kennedy's work.

Second, the findings suggested there should be a new approach to further accentuate the role of the individual's agency in adjustment and adaptation. Usually, sojourners are portrayed in the literature in the field as the ones who need to adjust and assimilate to the host culture (c.f. Kim, 2001; Berry, 2005; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Ward and Kennedy, 1992). This study demonstrated the active role of the sojourner in cross-cultural transition who could construct the socio-cultural environment (i.e., creating the international student sub-culture) in which they lived, experienced and socialised to help moderate the adjustment's pressure.

c. The cultural identification process of student sojourners

Having discussed the three theoretical domains of the framework, I now will discuss in detail the cultural identification process of student sojourners. As communication, adjustment and adaptation have been suggested in the literature to be influential to cultural identity changes, in this study, I drew on the ITCCA of Kim (2001) and Acculturation Model of Berry (2005) to explore the relationship of cultural identities and social contact (see 4.3).

The framework shows that cultural identities, social contact, adjustment and adaptation are interrelated, and cultural identities were significantly important to the sojourn experience of international students (see Figure 30).

At the start of the sojourn, cultural identities could predict the preferences and the degree of contact of the students (i.e., whom they wanted to contact and how they wanted to maintain the contact). They also influenced adjustment and adaptation (i.e., how well the students adjusted and adapted socio-culturally, psychologically and academically). For example, students with strong foreign cultural identification were less likely to experience challenges in socio-cultural adjustment and adaptation (see 5.3.4).

During the sojourn, the quality of social contact impacted emotional and place attachment. For instance, close-knit relationships with non-co-national international friends could make the students feel attached to ‘foreign’ cultures and broadened their senses of place (see 5.3.2). In addition, behavioural changes after adjustment and adaptation might evoke students to reflect on behavioural similarities and differences between them and people of home cultures and of the perceived ‘different’ cultural groups. These could, then, accentuate their cultural memberships. Therefore, after the sojourn, cultural identities tended to become relatively more prominent to student sojourners (see 5.3.2).

At the re-entry stage, the students tended to feel overwhelmed by emotional connection with their former co-national relationships (e.g., families) and place attachment to the homeland. These feelings could deepen attachment to home cultures, which strengthened home cultural identification. Foreign cultural identification, on the other hand, was enhanced due to the recognition of behavioural changes after the adjustment process and the broadened sense of place (see 6.2.3).

As a result, after study abroad, most student sojourners tended to develop stronger identification with home and ‘foreign’ cultures. The students often referred to this as *“mixed cultural identities”*. This concept of ‘mixed’ cultural identities is, to some extent, similar to the concept of *“intercultural identity”* described in ITCCA of Kim (2001). In particular, the students who developed ‘mixed’ cultural identities usually become respectful to cultural differences and open to cultural diversity. Their sense of place was no longer bound to any specific places in home countries. Some even mentioned about the feeling of *“citizens of the world”*.

The cultural unlearning process, suggested in ITCCA of Kim (2001), was however generally uncommon and rarely reported by the students in this study since most of them still maintained frequent contact with their compatriots.

7.3.2 Methodological contributions and implications

This study applied a longitudinal mixed methods research design to examine the dynamics of the cultural identity changes of student sojourners in cross-cultural transition (see Figure 10 in 3.2). The number of studies applying this design to study cross-cultural transition, especially cultural identity changes and social contact patterns, is proportionately small, compared to the number of studies with cross-sectional design (Peacock and Harrison, 2009; Pitts, 2009; Li *et al.*, 2010; Glass, 2012; Brown and Brown, 2013; Pitts, 2016). This has made the research methodologically original. A similar design can be applied in the future to study cultural identities and social lives of sojourners.

In this study, mixed methods design also played an important role and helped to enhance the credibility of the research. In particular, self-report questionnaires used in the quantitative strand might be subject to response bias such as social desirability, cross-cultural variations in rating behaviours, and the limited ability of respondents to accurately self-rate behaviours. I, thus, employed the qualitative approach to mitigate these limitations. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore in-depth individual viewpoints on the researched topics, explained and clarified any misunderstanding of the participants. One-to-one interviews also created a more comfortable atmosphere for them to freely express their opinions.

Regarding thematic analysis, I understood that the coding process could be subjective to the interpretation of the researcher (Greg *et al.*, 2011). To increase the credibility of research findings, themes found in the later phases were contrasted with those of the previous one. The themes were re-interpreted and compared with guiding theories. Qualitative findings were, then, triangulated and integrated with quantitative results. Qualitative data were also quantitised, for instance, counting the number of interviewees mentioning a particular theme (see 3.1.2). These techniques could help produce the high-quality inferences. Researchers are, therefore, highly suggested to apply a range of different methods to study cross-cultural adjustment and cultural identity changes.

Finally, this is one of the few longitudinal studies in the IC field that was conducted over a year and consisted of the re-entry phase. There are two points of contributions. First, the duration of the research (i.e., approximately 16 months) allowed for more inclusive observation that spanned the 'complete' sojourn of the student sojourner. Second, the study confirmed that the re-entry phase was, indeed, crucial for consolidation of intercultural learning and should be included as part of the sojourn experience. Without it, the acknowledgement of cultural membership might not be so prominent to student sojourners. Researchers are, therefore, recommended to include this period in research design to study cross-cultural transition and identity changes.

7.3.3 Pedagogical implications and recommendations

In this section, I provide the implications of the findings for HE educators which may help improve the overseas experience of international students.

First, this study showed that there was a strong desire among student sojourners to earn social and cultural experiences outside the academic environment. It is reported in a recent study that there is, indeed, lack of activities provided by universities for international students (or the lack of awareness thereof) (Pookaiyaudom, 2015).

However, the impact of socialising and extracurricular activities is still disputable. For example, Mannan (2007); Zepke and Leach (2005) suggest a negative *"compensatory relationship"* between academic and social activities. More time spent on socialising and extracurricular activities may interfere with academic activities, which can lower academic performances (Trainor *et al.*, 2010). Meanwhile, some studies advocate the indirect benefit of social and extracurricular activities in alleviating stress, both within and outside the context of the academic environment, thus, improving the students' psychological well-being, life satisfaction and mental health (Kuykendall *et al.*, 2015; Zhang and Zheng, 2017). However, types of activities could moderate the impact, in so far that negative experiences during the activities could be harmful to university students' well-being (Kuykendall *et al.*, 2015; Zhang and Zheng, 2017).

It can be concluded that social and extracurricular activities are important for international students since they can serve as stress buffers, as long as the appropriate amount and types of activities are applied. HE institutions can organise more social and extracurricular activities for international students to explore the socio-cultural environment beyond the campus-based ‘bubble’. To create a safe environment for the students, these activities should be closely monitored by educators or university staff who have experienced dealing with intercultural and cross-cultural communication.

Second, this study revealed that the early stage of the sojourn (i.e., the first three weeks) was significantly important for international students. Social contact patterns, especially social grouping, were formed in these first few weeks and once set, were hard to change. Although not conducted on host national students, the research found that this group of students also partially contribute to social grouping in the HE context.

Early in the sojourn, benefits of intercultural communication should be clearly conveyed to both international and host national students. HE institutions are therefore recommended to provide workshops or training activities for both student groups and university staff on intercultural communication in the first few weeks of the sojourn, with the aim of approaching and demystifying the essentialist view on cultures.

Finally, to minimise social grouping on campus, host universities could concentrate on building an ‘international’ university, with more opportunities for intercultural and international communication for students, rather than an ‘international’ sojourn (Jiang, 2008; Wu and Hammond, 2011). HE institutions can create more culturally mixing opportunities for student sojourners and host national students, such as providing social spaces in host universities (Sovic, 2009), in student accommodation (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011), and classroom setting (Kudo and Simkin, 2003). For smaller class (e.g., seminars), it may be useful if educators and teaching staff closely monitor multicultural group work to intervene or offer guidance when needed.

Creating more opportunities for culturally mixing might possibly be helpful, but certainly should not be the sole solution, since this may not always guarantee meaningful interactions. Research findings indicated that language-related issues, specifically proficiency and confidence in the host language, possibly affected the contact choice and indeed played a significant role in moderating how international students interacted with others. More emphasis could, therefore, be put on enhancing the confidence of student sojourners in communication skills and host language’s proficiency. Preparation workshops and materials can be sent to the students prior to the sojourn, and series of workshops can be conducted early and during the sojourn.

7.4 Research limitations and suggestions for future research

In the following section, I will discuss research limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

First, the study was limited to a specific student cohort (i.e., one-year taught masters in a HE institution in the UK). These students were, to some extent, familiar with education systems as they had finished bachelor's degrees and had high proficiency in the host language. The overall age was around 20 to 30, and the duration of the overseas stay was approximately a year. These factors could possibly reduce the generalisability of the research findings. Future research could, therefore, examine different student cohorts (e.g., students from different programmes such as bachelor's, and student sojourners in different host countries) to clarify which of the mentioned factors can impact the cultural identity shifts and social experiences of the students. It is highly recommended that more studies are done to investigate students with different lengths of the sojourn. Although influences of gender and age were not the research focus, it is also interesting if researchers explore these factors and their impacts on identities and adjustment.

Second, the participants were from two disciplines in humanities and social sciences, whose student population may be different from other disciplines and faculties. It could be useful if researchers examine the contact patterns of student sojourners across disciplines and across faculties to ascertain whether and how student population, module design and programme structures could affect the social experience of the students. Moreover, there was around 30% of participants enrolled in a course in cultural studies, which might influence their perspectives and understanding of cultures, identities and adaptation outcomes (Young and Schartner, 2014). However, there is still little empirical evidence of the impact of cross-cultural communication education on adaptation and adjustment of international students. Researchers could conduct comparative studies to examine the influences of cross-cultural communication education on students across disciplines and programmes.

Third, the participants of this study were student sojourners without prior overseas experience, therefore, findings, especially those about the cultural identification process, may not be pertinent to other cohorts of sojourners. Since cultural identity is an under-researched topic in cross-cultural transition (Gu, 2011; Tian and Lowe, 2014), it will be useful if more research attention is put on exploring cultural identities of different sojourner cohorts (e.g. sojourners with previous overseas experience) and other groups such as second-generation of immigrants.

Fourth, the study was conducted on international students, thus, might not ‘capture’ the overall picture of social grouping in ‘international’ HE contexts. More studies on other stakeholders, such as host national students and teaching staff, are needed to explore ways of minimising social grouping and facilitating intercultural interactions among student sojourners and host national students.

Finally, the research did not focus on examining the re-adjustment experience of the students, thus, relied heavily on a small number of qualitative interviews to discover this re-entry experience of student sojourners. Nevertheless, the re-entry has proven to be of significant importance to self-development of student sojourners. Further research in the field is highly suggested to include this phase in its design. Re-adjustment experiences, social contact and identity changes during the re-entry should be further explored.

7.5 Concluding remarks

I hope that this study has gone some ways in improving understanding of cross-cultural transition of student sojourners in the world in general and the UK in particular. The study offers useful insights into the fascinating experience of international students, which may help educators and HE institutions to enhance the overseas stay of the students.

The research also paints a clearer and ‘fairer’ image of international students as a heterogeneous group with diverse cultural identities and experiences. There should never be any groups of students who are approached and treated as *“disadvantaged”* or *“cultural deficit”*. Culture should never be studied as the only element that characterises an individual’s viewpoint of the world, and cultural backgrounds should never be used as the only way of grouping and categorising students, as well as research participants.

Findings from this research have shown that the student sojourner have a more active role in cross-cultural transition. A new approach to research cross-cultural transition and adjustment is, therefore, needed. Student sojourners should be studied as individuals with agency, instead of a marginal homogenous group in the host country which needs to change to ‘fit’ with the host culture.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Profiles of interviewees in the present research

	Age Range	Place of Origin	Gender	Discipline	Participated in P1	Participated in P2	Participated in P3
Interviewee 1	21-30	Vietnam	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 2	21-30	The USA	Female	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 3	18-20	Hongkong	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 4	21-30	China	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	No
Interviewee 5	21-30	Kuwait	Female	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	No
Interviewee 6	21-30	China	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	No
Interviewee 7	21-30	The USA	Female	Linguistics	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 8	21-30	China	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 9	21-30	China	Female	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 10	21-30	China	Female	Business	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 11	21-30	Indonesia	Female	Business	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 12	31-40	Grenada	Male	Business	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 13	21-30	Japan	Male	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 14	21-30	The USA	Female	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 15	21-30	China	Female	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 16	31-40	Taiwan	Female	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 17	21-30	China	Female	Business	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 18	31-40	Italy	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 19	21-30	Germany	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	No
Interviewee 20	21-30	Germany	Female	Business	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 21	21-30	Germany	Male	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 22	31-40	Indonesia	Female	Business	Yes	Yes	No
Interviewee 23	21-30	Indonesia	Female	Linguistics	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix B: Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Cross-cultural experiences of international students in the UK

Background

I am currently a student at Newcastle University, studying for a PhD in the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences. As part of my studies, I am undertaking a dissertation researching the experience of international students in the UK and the role of communication in this process. The findings of this research can be used as guidance for international students to improve their cross-cultural experience in the UK.

What will the research project do and who will be involved?

The research will be conducted over a 16-month period and will involve qualitative interviews and questionnaires. Participants will be students undertaking one-year taught Master’s degree in a British university and come from countries located in East Asia and Pacific.

How will we do it?

The research will be divided into 3 phases as listed below:

- **Phase 1 (Sep – Oct 2017):** Surveys and interviews at the start of the academic year
- **Phase 2 (May – June 2018):** Surveys and interviews at the end of the academic year
- **Phase 3 (Jan – March 2019):** Online interviews after they return to their home countries

How will the research data be used?

Data collected will be treated as confidential. Nobody but the research team will see or hear records of what students have said in the interviews or answered in the questionnaires. Individuals will not be named in written documents or in the titles of records. Any data used in written reports will be fully anonymised. Care will be taken that neither individuals nor the school is identifiable from any quotes and data used in reports or subsequent publications.

Do I have to participate?

Participation in the study is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part in research activities, you do not have to and you can withdraw at any time. Participants will be asked if they want to join any research activities such as interviews and surveys before they take place.

If you want to know more about the project, or have any questions, please contact

Thi My Hanh, Pho: t.m.h.pho2@newcastle.ac.uk or 075 3322 1021

Appendix C: Informed consent form of participants of the quantitative research

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This is an informed consent form of a PhD dissertation in Education, Communication and Language Sciences. The project examines the cross-cultural experience of international students in the UK and the role of communication in this process.

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated ________________.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	☐
4.	I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	☐
6.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
7.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	☐
8.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	☐

Participant:

____________________________	____________________________	____________________
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Researcher:

____________________________	____________________________	____________________
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix D. Informed Consent Form of Participants of the Qualitative Research

INTERVIEW INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Cross-cultural experiences of international students in the UK

Researchers: Thi My Hanh, Pho (t.m.h.pho2@newcastle.ac.uk)

Explanation of research

You are being invited to participate in an interview researching the experience of international students in the UK and the role of communication in this process.

Benefits

You may not personally benefit from participating in the interview, however your answers may provide us with information about how to improve the experience of international students from countries located in East Asia and Pacific during their study abroad in the UK.

Risks

I believe it is unlikely that the interview will be uncomfortable or upsetting, but you are free not to answer any question if you prefer. You are able to withdraw your consent and leave the project at any time.

Participation

Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. Your decision about whether or not to take part will not affect your education at the school which you are studying. If you choose to withdraw from the research, there will be no prejudice against you.

Confidentiality

All information collected during the interview will be kept confidential. The session will be tape recorded and converted into written format. I will replace all names with pseudonyms in the written record. Your participation means that you allow the recorded information to be used for research, but that your name will not be identified in any way in reports.

Payment and expenses

You are not offered payment for participating in the interview.

Questions

You are encouraged to ask any questions that you have and I would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you (please see email address above).

Statement of agreement

I have read this consent form and I understand the information. By signing my name, I voluntarily agree to take part in this study:

Name____________________________Signature__________________________Date_________

Appendix E: Measurement Scale Items of Two Dimensions of Cultural Identities

1. I often participate in cultural traditions of my culture of origin (e.g. participating in traditional festivals such as New Year Festival or wearing traditional costumes)
2. I enjoy social activities with people from the same culture of origin as mine.
3. I feel comfortable working with people from the same culture of origin as mine.
4. I am interested in having friends from my culture of origin.
5. I enjoy entertainment (e.g. music, movies) from my culture of origin.
6. I enjoy jokes and humour of my culture of origin.
7. I often behave in ways that are typical of my culture of origin.
8. I believe in the cultural values of my culture of origin.
9. It is important for me to maintain or develop the practices of my culture of origin.
10. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own culture of origin.
11. I feel proud to be a member of my culture of origin.
12. I often participate in the British cultural traditions (e.g. participating in traditional festivals such as New Year Festival or wearing traditional costumes)
13. I enjoy social activities with people from the UK.
14. I feel comfortable working with people from the UK.
15. I am interested in having local friends from the UK.
16. I enjoy British entertainment (e.g. music, movies).
17. I enjoy typical British jokes and humour.
18. I often behave in ways that are “typically British”.
19. I believe in British cultural values.
20. It is important for me to maintain or develop British practices.
21. I have a strong sense of belonging to the British culture.
22. I have spent time trying to learn more about the UK (e.g. history and customs).

Appendix F: Measurement Scales of the Quantity and the Quality of Social Contact

"Contact" refers to all types of communicative activities you perform with another person (or a group of people), including both online communication and face-to-face communication. Please read each question and choose the number that best describes your present situation.

Amount of contacts	None	Few (1-2 people)	Quite a few (3-4 people)	Some (5-6 people)	Several (7-8 people)	Many (9-10 people)	Very many (> 10 people)
1. During your time in the UK, so far how many people (or students) **from your country** have you known or kept in contact with?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. During your time in the UK, so far how many **British people (or students)** have you known or kept in contact with?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. During your time in the UK, so far how many people (or students) **from other countries (apart from the UK and your home country)** have you known or kept in contact with?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Frequency of contacts	Almost never (annually)	Very occasionally (semi-annually)	Sometimes (3-4 times per year)	Quite often (1-2 times **per** month)	Often (once **every** week)	Very often (2-3 times **every** week)	Almost everyday
4. During your time in the UK, so far how often have you spent time with people **from your country**?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. During your time in the UK, so far how often have you spent time with **British people**?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. During your time in the UK, so far how often have you spent time with people **from other countries (apart from the UK and your home country)**?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Quality of contacts

7. Please choose a number that best describes your contacts with ***people from your country****:*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. In general, I find the contacts…	**very unpleasant**						**very pleasant**
b. In general, I am…to them.	**merely an acquaintance**						**a very close friend**

8. Please choose a number that best describes your contacts with ***local people from the UK****:*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. In general, I find the contacts…	**very unpleasant**						**very pleasant**
b. In general, I am…to them.	**merely an acquaintance**						**a very close friend**

9. Please choose a number that best describes your contacts with ***people from other countries (apart from your country and the UK)****:*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. In general, I find the contacts…	**very unpleasant**						**very pleasant**
b. In general, I am…to them.	**merely an acquaintance**						**a very close friend**

Appendix G: Measurement Scale Items of Socio-cultural Adaptation

1. Talking about yourself with others
2. Going to British social events/ activities/ gatherings
3. Adapting to the local etiquette
4. Understanding local accents/ languages
5. Getting used to local food
6. Getting used to the pace of life in the UK
7. Going shopping
8. Dealing with unsatisfactory services
9. Dealing with the local accommodation
10. Using the transport system
11. Dealing with the climate/ weather
12. Going to coffee shops/ tea shops/ restaurants
13. Finding the location which you need to go to
14. Living independently and away from your family

Appendix H: Measurement Scale Items of Psychological Adaptation

1. I was happy.
2. I enjoyed life.
3. I felt I was just as good as other people.
4. I felt hopeful for the future.
5. I felt sad.
6. I felt depressed.
7. I felt fearful (scared or terrible).
8. I felt lonely.
9. I have trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.
10. I felt like I could not take initiative to work.
11. I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me.
12. I talked less than usual.
13. I cried over nothing at all.
14. My sleep was restless (or uneasy).
15. I felt that people disliked me.
16. People were unfriendly.
17. I felt that I always need to put too much effort to do everything.
18. I thought my life has been a failure.

Appendix I: Measurement Scale Items of Academic Adaptation

1. Coping with academic work/ assignments (e.g. essays and examinations)
2. Expressing your ideas in class
3. Understanding lectures
4. Taking notes of main points of lectures
5. Reading and understanding materials essential for your course (e.g. academic journals and textbooks)
6. Referencing and citation
7. Working in groups

Appendix J: Interview Guide

Questions in IGs	Sources
1. **Expectations and motivations (exclusively for P1)**	
- Why do you choose to study abroad? Your motivations?	Adapted from Schartner (2014)
- Why do you choose the UK?	
- What did you do to prepare for your trip?	
- *What did you expect your life in the UK to be like?*	*Originally developed*
- *What do you think the UK's culture is like? Please explain*	
2. Experience in the UK (exclusively for P1 and P2)	
- *Your experience so far?*	*Originally developed*
- *Is it similar or different to what you expect? In what perspectives?*	
3. Cultures and Identities (all phases)	
- *Describe yourself in 3 words? Please explain*	*Originally developed*
- *What other people say about you?*	
- *What is your cultural identity?*	
- *Do you feel belonging to your home culture or not? Why?*	
- *Do you see yourself as a typical person of your culture? Please explain*	
- Do you see yourself as 100% of your culture? 100% British or mixed? Please explain	Adapted from Starks and Nicholas (2017)

4. Social contact (all phases)	
- Tell me about your social life. Who do you often keep in touch with?	Adapted from Schartner (2014), Pitts (2009); Pitts (2016)
- How do you contact them? Online? Hang-out?	
- What kinds of activities do you often do with them?	
- *Compare the types of contact sources you have. Rank them in terms of:*	*Originally developed*
Number of people you know	
How often you meet people from that country	
- Can you describe the nature of the relationship you have?	
- Your impression with people from (explain for each):	Adapted from Sandel and Liang (2010)
The UK	
Your country	Adapted from Schartner (2014)
Internationals	
- *Do you feel satisfied with your current social life? Please explain*	*Originally developed*
5. Adaptation (exclusively for P2)	
- *Your experience after half a year studying in the UK?*	*Originally developed*
- *Do you find it easy or difficult to adapt to the life in the UK? Please explain*	
- *Most and least difficult things to do here?*	
- How do you adapt to the life here?	
- Anyone helping you with the adaptation?	Adapted from Sandel and Liang (2010)
- *How have you felt recently about your life in the UK?*	
- *How have you felt about your academic results so far?*	*Originally developed*

6. Re-entry experience (exclusively for P3)	
- *Your experience at home?*	*Originally developed*
- *What do you feel/ think when you first arrived home?*	
- *Whom do you often contact with? Why?*	
- *How do you keep in contact with them?*	
- Is it easy or difficult talking with your families, relatives, friends in your home country? Why?	Starks and Nicholas (2017)
- What do you think about British cultures when you return home?	

Appendix K: Frequency Statistics of Patterns of Social Contact

		K-S test	**Skewness**	**Z-score of Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Z-score of Kurtosis**
Phase 1	QUAN Co-nationals	.09	.30	1.15	-.81	-1.56
	QUAN Locals	.12**	1.00	*3.85*	-.01	-.02
	QUAN Intern’ls	.19**	.30	1.15	-1.10	*-2.12*
	QUAL Co-nationals	.16**	-.04	-.15	-1.04	*-2.00*
	QUAL Locals	.11*	.76	*2.92*	-.04	-.08
	QUAL Intern’ls	.11*	.16	.62	-.80	-1.54
Phase 2	QUAN Co-nationals	.11*	.03	.12	-1.17	*-2.25*
	QUAN Locals	.13**	1.52	*5.85*	2.28	*4.38*
	QUAN Intern’ls	.16**	.20	.77	-1.02	*-1.96*
	QUAL Co-nationals	.11*	-1.20	*-4.62*	-.43	-0.83
	QUAL Locals	.13**	.39	1.5	-.26	-.50
	QUAL Intern’ls	.11*	.25	.96	-.71	-1.37

**p<0.05; **p<0.01*

Note: Standard Error of Skewness was 0.26 and of Kurtosis was 0.52. Significant skewness or kurtosis happened when Z-score lied below -1.96 or above 1.96

Z-score was calculate by $Z = \frac{Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}{SE\ of\ Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}$

Appendix L: Frequency Statistics of Differences between Mean Scores of the Quantity and the Quality of Social Contact in P1 and P2

	K-S test	**Skewness**	**Z-score of Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Z-score of Kurtosis**
DIFF QUAN Co-national	.05	-.10	.38	-.04	-.08
DIFF QUAN Host	.14**	.84	*3.19*	2.79	*5.37*
DIFF QUAN Intern'l	.11**	-.19	.72	-.51	.52

*$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$*

Note: Standard Error of Skewness was 0.26 and of Kurtosis was 0.52. Significant skewness or kurtosis happened when Z-score lied below -1.96 or above 1.96

	K-S test	**Skewness**	**Z-score of Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Z-score of Kurtosis**
DIFF QUAL Co-national	.15**	.30	.11	.55	.11
DIFF QUAL Host	.08	.06	.02	.36	.70
DIFF QUAL Intern'l	.13**	.45	.17	.82	.16

*$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$*

Note: Standard Error of Skewness was 0.26 and of Kurtosis was 0.52. Significant skewness or kurtosis happened when Z-score lied below -1.96 or above 1.96

Z-score was calculate by $Z = \frac{Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}{SE\ of\ Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}$

Appendix M: Frequency Statistics of Three Adaptation Domains

	K-S test	**Skewness**	**Z-score of Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Z-score of Kurtosis**
Sociocultural	.09	-.53	*-2.04*	-.39	-.75
Psychological	.14**	-.88	*-3.38*	-.17	-.33
AAE	.10*	-.43	-1.65	-.51	-.98
SSAP	.16**	-.54	*-2.08*	-.43	-.83
GPA	.25**	.08	0.1	-.37	-.71

*$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$

Note: Standard Error of Skewness was 0.26 and of Kurtosis was 0.52. Significant skewness or kurtosis happened when Z-score lied below -1.96 or above 1.96

Adaptation to the Academic Environment (AAE) was measured by a seven-item scale (See Part 2.1). Student satisfaction of academic performances (SSAP) and academic results (GPA) were measured as additional indicators of academic adaptation.

Z-score was calculate by $Z = \frac{Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}{SE\ of\ Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}$

Appendix N: Frequency Statistics of Differences between Two Cultural Identification Dimensions in P1 and P2

	K-S test	**Skewness**	**Z-score of Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Z-score of Kurtosis**
DIFF HID	.10*	-.89	-*3.42*	2.51	.48
DIFF HSID	.07	-.20	-.77	.22	.42

**p<0.05; **p<0.01*

Note: Standard Error of Skewness was 0.26 and of Kurtosis was 0.52. Significant skewness or kurtosis happened when Z-score lied below -1.96 or above 1.96

Z-score was calculate by $Z = \frac{Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}{SE\ of\ Skewness\ or\ Kurtosis}$

Appendix O: The quantity and the quality of social contact of student sojourners and demographic factors

1. Genders

Several independent t-tests were performed and showed that male students had lower quantity of contact with co-national students (M=25.18, SD=17.95) than female students (M=25.69, SD=13.81), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(82)= -0.13, p=0.90. However, they had higher quality of co-national contact (M= 32.24, SD= 12.45) than female students (M= 31.91, SD= 10.77), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= 0.11, p= 0.92.

Similarly, male students had lower quantity of contact with host national colleagues (M =12.94, SD=8.33) than female students (M=14.45, SD=11.86), but experienced higher quality of host national contact (M= 22.06, SD= 11.83) than female friends (M= 19.09, SD= 10.17). None of the results were significant, with t(82)= -0.49, p=0.62 and t(82)= 1.04, p= 0.30, respectively.

However, male students had higher quantity (M=30.35, SD=14.03) and quality of international contact (M= 31.18, SD= 13.51) than female students (M=23.58, SD=13.94; and M= 24.57, SD= 11.59, respectively), but none of the results were statistically significant, with t(82)= 1.79, p=0.80 and t(82)= 2.03, p= 0.60, respectively.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the quality and quantity of contact between female and male students as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

2. Departments of study

The students of the applied linguistic department had lower quantity of contact (M=24.92, SD=15.35) and lower quality of contact (M= 31.34, SD= 11.67) with co-national students than the students of the business department (M=26.56, SD=13.66; and M= 32.91, SD= 10.18, respectively), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(82)= -0.50, p=0.62 and t(82) = -0.64, p= 0.53, respectively.

Similarly, they had lower quantity (M=21.88, SD=14.08) and lower quality (M= 22.96, SD=11.81) of international contact than the students of the business department (M=29.47, SD=13.16; M= 30.24, SD= 11.64, respectively), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(82)= -2.49, p=0.51; and t(82)= -2.80, p=0.07, respectively.

However, students of the applied linguistic department had higher quantity of host national contact (M=14.78, SD=12.94) than the students of the business department (M=13.21, SD=8.09), yet, they experienced lower quality of host national contact (M= 18.98, SD= 10.70) than the students of the business department (M=20.74, SD=10.32). None of the difference were statistically significant, with t(82)= 0.63, p=0.53, and t(82)= -0.75, p=0.45, respectively.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the quality and quantity of contact between applied linguistic and business students as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

3. Accommodation types

The students living in private accommodation had higher quantity of contact with co-national students (M=28.86, SD=13.86) than the students living in university accommodation (M=22.24, SD=14.88), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(81)=2.09, p=0.40. However, they had lower quantity of host national contact (M=13.71, SD=12.80) and international contact (M= 23.59, SD= 13.63) than the students in university accommodation (M=14.63, SD=9.59 for the host national contact and M = 26.59, SD = 14.74 for the international contact), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(81)= -0.37, p=0.71 and t(81)= -0.96, p=0.34 respectively.

Similarly, they also had higher quality of co-national contact (M= 33.83, SD= 10.13) than the students in university accommodation (M= 29.98, SD = 11.84), but the result was not significant, t(81)= 1.60, p=0.11. They had lower quality of host national contact (M= 19.26, SD = 10.50) and international contact (M= 24.90, SD= 11.10) than the students in university accommodation (M= 20.02, SD= 10.76; and M= 27.07, SD= 13.40, respectively), but none of the results were significant, t(81)= -0.33, p= 0.75; and t(81)= -0.80, p=0.42.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the quality and quantity of contact between students living in university and private accommodation as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

Appendix P: Adaptation outcomes of student sojourners and demographic factors

1. Genders

Several independent t-tests were performed and showed male students had higher socio-cultural adaptation outcomes (M=4.088, SD=0.50) than female students (M=4.086, SD=0.60), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(82)= 0.013, p=0.99. However, they had lower psychological adaptation outcomes (M=3.15, SD= 0.52) than female students (M= 3.32, SD= 0.50), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= -1.23, p= 0.22.

The male students also had higher academic adaptation outcomes (M=3.95, SD= 0.69) and satisfaction with academic performances (M=3.59, SD=0.77) than female students (M= 3.81, SD= 0.79 for academic adaptation; M=3.50, SD=0.95 for academic satisfaction), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= 0.68, p= 0.50 and t(82)= 0.32, p=0.75, respectively.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the adaptation outcomes between female and male students as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

2. Departments of study

Applied linguistic students had higher socio-cultural adaptation outcomes (M=4.11, SD=0.56) than business students (M=4.05, SD=0.54), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(82)= 0.55, p=0.58. However, they had lower psychological adaptation outcomes (M=3.25, SD= 0.55) than business students (M= 3.35, SD= 0.43), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= -0.94, p= 0.35.

The applied linguistic students also had higher academic adaptation outcomes (M=3.87, SD= 0.77) but lower satisfaction with academic performances (M=3.37, SD=0.95) than business students (M=3.79, SD=0.77 for academic adaptation; M=3.78, SD=0.79 for academic satisfaction), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)=0.50, p=0.62 and t(82)= -2.24, p=0.82, respectively.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the adaptation outcomes between applied linguistic and business students as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

3. Accommodation types

Students living in private accommodation had lower socio-cultural adaptation outcomes (M=4.06, SD=0.57) than students in university accommodation (M=4.11, SD=0.54), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(81)=0.47, p=0.64. However, they had higher psychological adaptation outcomes (M=3.33, SD= 0.51) than students in university accommodation (M= 3.26, SD= 0.51), but the result was not statistically significant, t(81)= 0.66, p= 0.51.

The students in private accommodation also had lower academic adaptation outcomes (M=3.81, SD= 0.76) and lower satisfaction with academic performances (M=3.44, SD=0.90) than students in university accommodation (M=3.87, SD=0.79 for academic adaptation; M=3.66, SD=0.92 for academic satisfaction), but the result was not statistically significant, t(81)= -0.34, p=0.73 and t(81)= -0.62, p=0.53, respectively.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the adaptation outcomes between students in private and university accommodation as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

Appendix Q: Cultural identification levels of student sojourners and demographic factors

1. Genders

Several independent t-tests were performed and showed that male students had higher home cultural identification scores (M=5.25, SD=1.17) than female students (M=5.15, SD=1.04), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(82)= 0.34, p=0.74. However, they had lower host cultural identification scores (M=4.35, SD= 0.98) than female students (M= 3.48, SD= 0.85), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= -0.57, p= 0.57.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the cultural identification between male and female students as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

2. Departments of study

This study found that applied linguistics students had lower home cultural identification scores (M=5.03, SD=1.12) than business students (M=5.38, SD=0.93), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(82)= -1.51, p=0.14. However, they had higher host cultural identification scores (M=4.51, SD= 0.86) than female students (M= 4.37, SD= 0.89), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= 0.72, p= 0.47.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the cultural identification between students in applied linguistics and business departments as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

3. Accommodation types

Students in private accommodation had higher home cultural identification (M=5.25, SD=1.06) than students in university accommodation (M=5.05, SD=1.05), but the difference was not statistically significant, with t(81)= 0.86, p=0.39. However, they had lower host cultural identification (M=4.37, SD= 0.88) than students in university accommodation (M= 4.51, SD= 0.85), but the result was not statistically significant, t(81)= -0.69, p= 0.49.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the cultural identification between students in private and university accommodation as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

Appendix R: Changes in the quantity and quality of contact and the cultural identification levels of student sojourners and demographic factors

1. Genders

Several independent t-tests were performed and showed that both male and female students experienced an increase in the quantity of co-national contact after nearly 9 months in the UK, with male students experiencing a sharper increase (M= 9.82, SD= 9.82) than female students (M=4.61, SD=12.93), but this difference was not statistically significant, t(82)=1.55, p=0.13. Both groups experienced an increase in the quantity of host national contact, with males experiencing a sharper increase (M= 0.82, SD= 12.33) than female students (M=0.10, SD=11.12), but this difference was not statistically significant, t(82)= 0.23, p=0.82. Similarly, both groups experienced an increase in the quantity of international contact, but male students tended to experience a sharper increase (M= 6.65, SD= 8.37) than female students (M=3.16, SD=13.06). This difference was not statistically significant, t(82)= 1.04, p=0.30.

Regarding the changes in the quality of co-national contact, both groups experienced an increase, but males experienced a smaller increase (M= 2.59, SD= 13.73) than females (M= 3.37, SD = 14.22). The difference was not significant, t(82)= -0.21, p= 0.84. Both groups experienced an increase in the quality of host national contact and males experienced a smaller increase (M= 1.00, SD= 12.29) than females (M= 1.10, SD = 10.81), but the difference was not significant, t(82)= -0.04, p= 0.97. Male students experienced an increase in the quality of international contact (M= 7.53, SD = 10.61) but females experienced a decrease (M= -1.28, SD =13.39). The difference was not significant, t(82)= 2.51, p=0.14.

Regarding the cultural identification changes, both groups experienced an increase in home cultural identification, but male students tended to experience a smaller increase (M=0.01, SD= 1.10) than female students (M=0.10, SD= 0.93), but the difference was not statistically significant, t(82)= -0.31, p=0.76. In contrast, both groups experienced a decrease in host cultural identification, with male students experiencing a sharper decrease (M= -0.22, SD=0.80) than females (M= -0.17, SD=0.93), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= -0.19, p=0.85.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the changes in the quantity and quality of contact, as well as cultural identification, between male and female students after study abroad, as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

2. Departments of study

Students from applied linguistics and business departments experienced an increase in the quantity of co-national contact after nearly 9 months in the UK, with the former group experiencing a smaller increase (M=4.68, SD= 13.01) than the latter (M=7.12, SD=11.73), but this difference was not statistically significant, t(82)= -0.88, p=0.38. Students from the applied linguistics experienced a decrease in the quantity of host national contact (M= -0.68, SD= 13.16), while business students experienced an increase (M= 1.62, SD= 7.77), but this difference was not statistically significant, t(82)= -0.91, p=0.36. Similarly, both groups experienced an increase in the quantity of international contact, with applied linguistic students a smaller increase (M= 2.78, SD= 12.50) than business students (M= 5.47, SD=11.98). This difference was not statistically significant, t(82)= -0.98, p=0.33.

In terms of the contact's quality, both groups experienced an increase in the quality of co-national contact, with applied linguistic students a smaller increase (M= 0.16, SD= 15.06) than business students (M= 7.71, SD = 11.16) but the difference was not significant, t(82)= -2.49, p= 0.15. Applied linguistic students did not experience an increase in the quality of host national contact (M=0, SD=11.89) while business students experienced a small increase (M= 2.68, SD= 9.63), but the difference was not significant, t(82)= -1.10, p= 0.28. The former group also experienced a decrease in the quality of international contact (M= -1.38, SD = 14.67) while business students experienced an increase (M= 3.26, SD =10.61). The difference was not significant, t(82)= -1.59, p=0.12.

Regarding the cultural identification changes, applied linguistic students experienced an increase in home cultural identification (M=0.19, SD=1.09), while business students experienced a decrease (M= -0.47, SD=0.77), but the difference was not statistically significant, t(82)=3.05, p=0.30. In contrast, both groups experienced an increase in host cultural identification, with applied linguistic students a smaller increase (M= 0.13, SD=0.91) than business students (M=0.26, SD=0.89), but the result was not significant, t(82)= -0.62, p=0.54.

These results suggested that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the changes in the quantity and quality of contact, as well as cultural identification, between applied linguistic and business students after study abroad, as the results of the t-tests were not statistically significant.

3. Accommodation types

Students from private and university accommodation experienced an increase in the quantity of co-national contact, with the former group experiencing a sharper increase (M=7.93, SD= 10.93) than the latter (M=3.46, SD=13.81), but this difference was not statistically significant, t(81)=1.64, p=0.11. Students from the private accommodation experienced an increase in the quantity of host national contact (M=1.19, SD= 11.09), while students from university accommodation experienced a decrease (M= -0.76, SD= 11.69), but this difference was not statistically significant, t(81)= 0.78, p=0.44. Similarly, both groups experienced an increase in the quantity of international contact, with students in private accommodation a sharper increase (M= 4.98, SD= 13.39) than students in university accommodation (M= 2.83, SD=11.27). This difference was not statistically significant, t(81)= 0.79, p=0.43.

In terms of the contact's quality, students in private accommodation experienced an increase in the quality of co-national contact (M=6.83, SD=12.93) but students in university accommodation experienced a decrease (M= -0.10, SD=14.37) and this difference was significant, t(81)= 2.31, p= 0.02. The former group also experienced an increase in the quality of host national contact (M=2.50, SD=9.28) and international contact (M=1.69, SD=12.61); while the latter experienced a decrease in the quality of host national contact (M= -0.07, SD= 12.57) and international contact (M= -0.46, SD=14.11), but the difference was not significant, t(81)= 1.06, p= 0.29; and t(81)=0.73, p=0.47, respectively.

Regarding the cultural identification changes, students in private accommodation experienced a decrease in home cultural identification (M= -0.15, SD=1.07), while students in university accommodation experienced an increase (M= 0.01, SD=0.99), but the difference was not statistically significant, t(81)=-0.74, p=0.47. In contrast, both groups experienced an increase in host cultural identification, with students in private accommodation experiencing a sharper increase (M= 0.22, SD=0.92) than students in university accommodation (M=0.18, SD=0.88), but the result was not statistically significant, t(82)= 0.19, p=0.85.

These results suggested that students in private accommodation had a higher tendency to feel more bonded with their compatriots after the academic sojourn than their colleagues in university accommodation. However, there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the changes in the quantity and quality of other contact types, as well as cultural identification, between students living in these two types of accommodation, as the results of the other t-tests were not statistically significant.

Appendix S: Table of demographics and key research data in two phases (early and late in the sojourn)

(Note: AL stands for applied linguistic department and B business department.)

		Demographics						PHASE 1								PHASE 2												
								Identity		Contact Quantity			Contact Quality			Identity		Contact Quantity			Contact Quality			Adaptation				
ID	Inter-view	Nationality	Dept	Sex	Age	Marital status	Stay at	HID1	HSID1	NCO1	NUK1	NIN1	LCO1	LUK1	LIN1	HID2	HSID2	NCO2	NUK2	NIN2	LCO2	LUK2	LIN2	SOC	PSY	AA	SSAP	GPA
1	No	Russian	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.27	4.45	1	25	25	30	28	28	4.27	4.36	4	20	20	25	25	25	4.07	3.94	5	4	60-69
2	No	Singaporean	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.55	4.73	6	24	36	16	42	42	5.27	4.91	42	30	36	3	24	42	3.86	2.33	4.57	4	60-69
3	No	Russian	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.27	6.64	4	42	42	30	16	16	5.09	6.36	4	42	49	30	20	24	3.64	2.61	4.57	5	70-79
4	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	5.55	4.18	25	6	12	7	6	28	1.55	2.45	35	8	24	36	6	30	4.64	3.72	4.71	4	60-69
5	No	Greek	AL	F	21-30	single	private	6.73	4.73	2	6	42	42	16	25	6.09	4.18	4	6	24	49	8	8	4.36	2.67	4	4	60-69
6	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	5.91	4	30	6	12	16	35	36	5.45	4.18	49	4	4	36	42	42	4.71	3.72	4.14	4	60-69
7	No	Afghanistan	AL	F	21-30	single	private	4.64	5.18	7	42	42	20	25	30	4.27	4.45	6	49	30	25	25	30	4.86	3.61	4.43	4	60-69
8	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.55	5.27	15	10	20	42	4	28	2.82	3.91	15	15	35	42	28	28	5	3.61	5	4	60-69
9	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	5.18	4	15	1	8	49	12	42	3.45	4.45	12	4	4	42	4	30	4	3.44	3.29	3	60-69
10	No	Vietnamese	B	F	21-30	single	private	4.82	3.91	12	5	36	36	25	42	4.82	3.91	10	4	42	36	36	12	3.07	3.39	2.43	3	60-69
11	No	American	AL	F	21-30	single	private	6.45	4.45	42	30	18	42	12	15	6.36	3.64	49	42	6	25	12	12	3.79	3.72	1.71	2	50-59
12	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	4	4	9	9	16	49	7	49	5.09	5.18	35	10	20	36	24	24	3.29	2.28	3.43	2.67	50-59
13	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.82	5.45	42	36	30	25	12	12	6.09	4.91	24	6	12	49	16	8	4.07	3.72	3.71	4	60-69
14	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	4.91	4.36	21	6	2	25	25	25	6	4.45	24	8	3	36	4	4	4.57	4	3.57	2.67	60-69
15	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.91	4.36	14	4	4	36	18	24	5.45	5.55	49	4	4	49	1	1	4.57	3.28	4	1	50-59
16	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.82	5	18	15	20	49	36	36	6	2.09	36	1	1	49	12	12	2.64	3.22	3	3	50-59

17	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	6.64	5.36	30	6	12	30	16	16	6.36	4.36	49	6	6	49	16	49	3.14	3.22	3	3.67	50-59
18	No	Chinese	AL	M	21-30	single	private	6.09	5.45	35	15	8	16	16	15	5.18	4.82	49	9	9	49	36	49	3.64	2.17	3.71	2.5	50-59
19	No	Indonesian	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.36	4.55	16	2	10	10	5	24	6.09	5.45	25	2	30	16	8	30	4.43	2.94	4.14	3.33	<50
20	No	Cameroon	AL	F	31-40	single	uni	4.55	4.64	12	4	16	30	36	36	5.18	4.82	21	2	35	30	16	25	3.93	3.22	4	4	70-79
21	No	Malaysian	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	3.73	3.91	20	42	42	42	35	42	5.27	5	2	20	42	49	49	42	3.86	2.94	4	4	70-79
22	No	American	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.82	5.91	25	20	25	49	7	49	4.55	5.09	15	18	14	25	12	8	4.43	3.5	5	5	70-79
23	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.82	5.45	42	36	30	9	12	16	6	4.82	42	2	12	20	9	9	3.93	2.56	2.71	3	50-59
24	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	6	4.36	24	8	8	16	16	16	6.18	4.09	30	15	10	36	20	16	4.07	3.06	3.29	3	60-69
25	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.09	4.36	42	2	1	36	8	16	5.73	4.73	36	15	18	30	12	20	4	3.94	3.86	3	50-59
26	No	Vietnamese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	5.82	4.36	24	2	10	20	12	6	5.91	4.27	35	6	35	20	20	25	4.71	3.5	4.57	4	70-79
27	No	Taiwanese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.36	4.73	18	6	6	25	9	16	2.91	5	25	24	28	25	12	12	4.71	3.72	3	3	50-59
28	No	Taiwanese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	5.45	3.82	15	2	6	35	36	8	5	4	16	9	9	16	9	16	4.43	3.17	3.57	2.33	50-59
29	No	Taiwanese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.73	4.73	18	30	24	35	42	36	5.36	4.36	14	20	28	42	24	24	3.93	1.83	2.14	1	50-59
30	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	7	5.55	24	6	6	49	18	28	6.27	4.45	35	6	4	9	9	9	4.21	3.78	4.57	3	50-59
31	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	6	3	20	15	10	36	36	36	4	4	12	12	12	36	30	16	3	2.78	3	3	60-69
32	No	Indonesian	AL	F	21-30	single	private	4.45	5.36	16	16	16	49	9	28	5.45	6.27	35	49	28	36	15	24	4.5	3.83	3.86	4	60-69
33	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	6.55	3.09	30	4	9	49	10	15	6.18	4.45	14	10	10	36	25	25	4.21	3.56	4.14	3	60-69
34	No	Taiwanese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.18	4.64	18	10	10	30	16	20	6.45	5.64	20	16	12	25	20	16	3.21	3.44	3.43	3	50-59
35	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	private	5.36	5.18	20	20	20	49	49	21	4.64	4.36	28	20	20	25	36	36	4.71	3.44	4.43	2.5	60-69
36	No	Japanese	AL	M	21-30	single	uni	5.27	3.27	2	4	16	30	24	36	3.09	3.18	2	12	35	30	20	42	4.64	2.72	4.29	3	60-69
37	No	Chinese	B	M	21-30	single	uni	5.82	4.64	20	9	30	24	24	30	7	4.91	42	25	49	35	28	49	3.64	2.94	3.86	3	70-79
38	No	German	B	M	21-30	single	uni	4	5	2	20	36	4	10	30	4.55	4.27	16	16	42	35	28	35	4	3.61	4.86	4.67	70-79

39	No	Japanese	B	F	31-40	married	uni	4.73	3.82	4	1	28	6	5	5	5.09	3.64	9	9	35	18	18	18	3.5	3.67	2.43	5	60-69
40	No	St maatern	B	M	21-30	single	private	4.64	3.55	7	2	30	30	30	49	5.18	2.91	28	6	42	42	30	49	4	3.44	4.86	4	60-69
41	No	Croatian	B	M	21-30	single	private	6.18	5.82	2	3	42	36	36	36	6.09	5	16	6	49	49	42	42	3.57	3.5	4.71	4	60-69
42	No	Indonesian	B	F	21-30	single	private	5.64	5.18	30	18	24	16	16	16	6.45	3.09	49	18	42	16	16	16	3.36	3.44	3.29	4	60-69
43	No	Chinese	B	F	21-30	married	private	5.91	4.45	36	9	12	36	30	36	6.73	3.18	21	3	6	36	24	49	3	2	3	2	50-59
44	No	Brazilian	B	M	21-30	single	uni	5.55	5.18	2	25	42	4	5	4	5.91	4.91	6	16	42	36	20	16	4.43	3.89	4.57	3.67	60-69
45	No	Chinese	B	F	21-30	single	private	4.64	5.36	12	18	12	49	16	16	4.55	4.82	30	16	12	49	9	16	4.14	3.61	4	4.5	60-69
46	No	Chinese	B	M	21-30	single	private	6.18	4	42	10	20	36	16	16	6.73	3.27	49	15	20	49	36	36	3.57	3.5	2.57	2.33	50-59
47	No	Dutch	B	F	21-30	single	uni	4.09	5	2	24	42	16	49	49	5.55	4.45	15	20	49	25	36	49	5	3.61	4.71	4.33	70-79
48	No	Czech	B	F	21-30	single	uni	3.91	5.55	1	42	42	16	30	42	4.45	4.82	6	36	49	20	16	16	4.43	3.78	4.86	4.67	70-79
49	No	Indonesian	B	M	21-30	single	private	4.36	3.18	24	2	24	20	16	30	4.91	2.91	36	2	25	25	12	36	4.07	3.28	3.71	3.33	60-69
50	No	Thai	B	F	21-30	single	private	6	5.45	36	1	36	20	16	16	6.18	3.64	42	1	36	30	25	25	3	3.5	3.86	4	60-69
51	No	Greek	B	M	21-30	not say	private	4.18	4.18	15	18	30	30	12	24	5.55	5.73	25	20	25	49	30	35	4.79	3.89	4.57	4	60-69
52	No	Greek	B	M	21-30	single	private	5.91	5.09	30	10	15	42	16	42	5.55	5	49	12	28	42	28	42	4	3.67	4	4	70-79
53	No	Chinese	B	F	21-30	single	private	5.73	5.73	36	4	4	49	35	30	6	4.73	20	8	30	36	24	20	3.64	3.33	3.57	5	>80
54	No	Greek	B	M	21-30	single	not say	5.73	4.64	24	10	15	20	16	12	6.45	5.73	25	12	15	36	16	20	4.29	2.78	3.43	4.67	70-79
55	No	Greek	B	F	21-30	single	private	5.09	4	20	12	9	20	12	6	5.27	3.73	30	9	16	25	20	20	4.14	3.17	2.71	2.67	50-59
56	No	Chinese	B	F	21-30	single	private	2	3.36	42	8	3	25	20	16	4.73	4.91	35	18	30	25	36	20	4.43	3.5	4.14	3	60-69
57	No	Chinese	B	F	21-30	single	private	3.36	3.45	16	9	9	42	18	18	4.91	5.18	24	30	30	36	15	24	3.21	2.39	3.43	3.33	50-59

58	No	German	AL	F	21-30	single	private	4.18	5	18	30	15	18	24	24	4.45	5.82	42	49	49	20	20	25	4.64	3.72	4.71	4.67	70-79
59	No	Ecuadorian	AL	F	21-30	single	private	4.09	3.64	12	1	24	36	4	20	4.55	3.55	24	12	49	25	36	36	3.86	3.28	4.71	4.33	70-79
60	No	Cyprus	AL	M	21-30	single	private	4.18	6	7	42	18	30	8	8	3.36	4	1	2	12	30	3	10	3	2.22	3	3	60-69
61	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.64	3.09	24	4	4	49	35	35	4.73	4.27	42	6	9	49	35	35	4.57	3.89	4.14	2.5	60-69
62	No	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.91	3.82	30	30	25	49	6	5	5.91	4.73	42	12	18	28	6	14	3.64	3.72	3	4	50-59
63	No	Honduran	AL	F	41-50	married	uni	5.73	4.64	12	16	28	42	15	49	4.45	3	8	2	20	35	20	35	4.86	4	5	5	70-79
64	No	Vietnamese	B	F	21-30	single	uni	5.55	3.73	30	8	30	36	12	12	4.73	2.55	28	6	25	36	16	25	4.07	3.67	3.71	3.33	60-69
65	No	Taiwanese	B	F	21-30	single	uni	4.36	4.73	10	2	24	20	16	25	4.73	4.73	36	9	9	35	12	12	4.29	3.22	2.86	4	50-59
66	No	Chinese	B	M	18-20	single	private	5.55	3.45	12	6	3				5.55	3.91	36	6	9				4	3.17	2.86	3.67	50-59
67	In. 1	Vietnamese	B	F	21-30	single	uni	4.09	4.45	20	4	36	16	20	16	3.73	3.91	16	9	30	42	30	30	4.14	2.67	2.86	3.67	60-69
68	In. 2	American	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4	6.73	25	12	42	8	25	24	3.45	5.36	6	24	36	12	30	36	3.57	2.44	2.71	3.33	60-69
69	In. 3	Hongkongnese	B	F	18-20	single	private	4.18	4.64	12	42	42	16	4	8	5	4.45	9	25	25	25	1	20	4.57	2.94	3	4	60-69
70	In. 4	Chinese	B	F	21-30	single	uni	4.45	5	42	1	18	49	8	36	3.91	3.91	30	16	35	25	16	25	4.71	3.39	4.57	3.67	60-69
71	In. 5	Kuwait	AL	F	21-30	single	private	5.45	3.82	2	4	6	24	25	18	6	4	14	3	25	36	24	36	3.93	2.72	3.71	1	60-69
72	In. 6	Chinese	B	F	21-30	single	private	5.64	6.45	42	1	25	25	16	36	5.91	5.73	42	8	15	35	10	28	4.57	3.33	4.14	3.67	50-59
73	In. 8	Chinese	B	F	21-30	single	private	4.82	4.45	20	8	2	4	9	16	6	5.27	20	6	9	20	25	25	4.14	3.83	4	2.33	70-79
74	In. 9	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	5.36	5.18	20	20	20	30	16	20	5.36	5.27	25	16	20	28	15	15	4.07	3.22	3.86	3.33	60-69
75	In. 12	Grenadian	B	M	31-40	single	uni	5	4.64	3	2	8	20	25	24	5.55	4.73	4	14	30	25	16	30	4.64	2.89	4	3	60-69
76	In. 13	Japanese	AL	M	21-30	single	uni	5.27	3.73	10	4	24	35	21	4	3.09	3.18	2	12	35	9	9	9	4.64	2.72	4.29	3	60-69
77	In. 14	American	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	4.64	4.91	36	20	42	49	5	36	4.91	5.09	42	15	49	49	6	30	4.29	3.28	4.57	4	50-59

78	In. 15	Chinese	AL	F	21-30	single	uni	6.18	4.55	36	18	15	6	5	24	6.18	4.45	14	10	10	36	12	25	4.21	3.56	4.14	3	60-69
79	In. 16	Taiwanese	AL	F	31-40	single	private	4.45	4.73	12	30	30	42	4	35	4.91	5	14	9	20	36	12	30	4.79	3.83	5	3	60-69
80	In. 18	Italian	B	F	31-40	single	private	4.36	4.91	12	18	24	6	20	30	2.82	3.82	15	12	49	16	20	42	4	3.5	3.86	4.67	70-79
81	In. 19	German	B	F	21-30	single	private	4.64	5.09	15	30	42	16	1	30	5.91	5.55	49	20	24	25	1	36	4.29	3.44	4.57	4.67	70-79
82	In. 21	German	AL	M	21-30	single	uni	5.09	5.82	24	24	42	12	20	25	5.45	5.45	42	35	49	16	20	25	4.57	3.22	3.86	5	70-79
83	In. 22	Indonesian	B	F	31-40	married	private	5.64	5.27	28	12	21	28	24	42	6.36	5.36	35	16	28	42	30	49	4.86	4	4.71	4.67	70-79
84	In. 23	Indonesian	AL	F	21-30	single	private	4.73	4	42	6	6	30	20	35	5.36	4.09	35	10	24	30	20	20	3.29	3.22	3	3	60-69