

Considering Agency in the Education- Migration Nexus: A Temporal Analysis of Structure-Agency Relations with Student- Migrants



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Timing is everything. Timing gives significance to things that would otherwise be the meaningless convergence of circumstance and incident. The significance may not be apparent right away; sometimes it may not be apparent for years. Often it's only visible to us in retrospect: *if I had been there five minutes earlier, if she hadn't forgotten her keys, if he had decided to take the shortcut instead of the long way round.*

Pat Cadigan

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Abstract

This thesis employs narrative research methods to provide empirical and theoretical insights into the role of individual agency in international students' pre-, during- and post-study trajectories through the education-migration nexus in the UK and Japan. To engage with these issues, I assume a life-course perspective which posits "individuals' ways of constructing their life-course through choices and actions" (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, & Paloniemi, 2013, p. 59) as the locus of their agency. Drawing heavily on the "chordal triad" model of agency, the project places an empirical emphasis on capturing individuals' "temporal-relational contexts" (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998), thereby accounting for the reciprocal influences of temporality and structure on international students' agency throughout their trajectories. From such a perspective, the thesis seeks to answer the following central research question:

How is the agency of student-migrants developed and practised throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?

The study uses a two-phase research design, combining policy trajectory analysis with a longitudinal qualitative phase with individual student-migrants. Both phases of the study were undertaken in national contexts where student migration is quantitatively and qualitatively significant: the UK and Japan. Phase 1 of the study consisted of a comprehensive analysis of the legal regulatory frameworks governing student migration in each country. This stems from the knowledge that migration regulatory frameworks dictate the legalities and illegalities of mobility across national borders and are critical factors to consider in the study of migration processes. I use an established migration policy trajectory analysis methodology to analyse migration policy change in each national case between 2004-2018. The regulatory frameworks for international students were analysed on an ordinal scale according to 7 indicators of receptivity, using the methodology developed by researchers in the European Commission-funded Temper project. In phase 2, I gathered intensive qualitative evidence of individual student-migrants' trajectories through the education-migration nexus, and their agentive orientations throughout. These data were gathered via the biographical-narrative interpretive method. Participants were interviewed twice: once in their final year of study (~8 months prior to graduation in the UK, and ~3 months prior in Japan), and once ~8 months after their graduation in both countries. 26 degree-mobile international students completed the study, 10 in the UK and 16 in Japan, with data being collected over a period of 18 months between October 2017 and April 2019.

The findings indicate that the role of agency is dynamic within the education-migration nexus, reflecting the evolving relationship between individual student-migrants and their temporal-relational contexts, and the simultaneous evolution of the individual's life-course project. The results of phase 1 of the study indicated that, over time, within, and between the case study nations, the migration regulatory frameworks affecting the study participants varied in their receptivity, stability, and transparency. The importance of these factors was evident in phase 2. Participants' narratives revealed that unreceptive regulatory frameworks limited the available trajectories of action, while unstable or opaque regulatory frameworks made the identification of up-to-date and comprehensible information a critical factor in navigating post-study transitions. Interview data also revealed participants' changing agentive orientations in response to changes in their context, with habit, imagination, and judgment each providing tools that individuals could use to navigate the challenging terrain of their student migration trajectories. While all participants were influenced by context and circumstance, they exhibited the capacity to draw on these tools when making choices and taking action in the pursuit of their goals.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

This is a list of acronyms that are used throughout the thesis. The terms listed here are referred to via their acronym because they reflect the language use of participants, are typical in popular use, or are used frequently throughout the thesis.

BNIM	Biographical-Narrative Interpretive Method
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
COE	Certificate of Eligibility
CAS	Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies
COS	Codes of Practice for Skilled Workers
CRQ	Central Research Question
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DEMIG	The Determinants of International Migration (database)
DES	Doctorate Extension Scheme
EEA	European Economic Area
EMI	English Medium of Instruction
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HSFP	Highly Skilled Foreign Professional
HSP(V)	Highly Skilled Professional (visa)
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IGS	International Graduates Scheme
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
IMPALA	Immigration Migration Policy and Law Analysis
IMPIC	Immigration Policies in Comparison
ImPol	European Immigration Policy Index
JASSO	Japan Student Services Organisation
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
JPSS	Japan Student Support
JPY	Japanese Yen
LPC	Legal Practice Course
MAC	Migration Advisory Committee
METI	Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry

MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MIPEX	Migration Integration Policy Index
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHI	National Health Insurance (system)
NHS	National Health Service
NVC	Non-Verbal Communication
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PBS	Points-Based System
PMI	Prime Minister's Initiative
PR	Permanent Residency
PSW(V)	Post-Study Work (visa)
RIB	Regional Immigration Bureau
SEGS	Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme
SME	Small or Medium Enterprise
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
SQUIN	Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative
SRQ	Sub Research Question
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
Temper	Temporary Versus Permanent Migration (Project)
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom
UKBA	UK Border Agency
UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
USA	United States of America
VC	Venture Capital

List of Terms from the Japanese Language

This is a list of selected Japanese language terms that are used repeatedly throughout the thesis. I use the original Japanese terms due to their particular embedded cultural meanings and significance, which are unpacked throughout the thesis. The English translations provided here are approximate translations drawn from the JMdict/EDICT Japanese/English Dictionary database. This database is created and actively maintained by academic researchers at Monash University, and is now widely used in various online dictionaries. In cases where the dictionary definition alone provides an insufficient explanation, I have added further information regarding the cultural significance and common usage of the terms. All Japanese language words are Romanised using the Revised Hepburn system, which remains the *de facto* standard in translations for English speakers. In this system, a macron (e.g., ā) indicates a long vowel sound.

<i>Fuhōnyūkoku</i>	Illegal entry (into a country); illegal immigration
<i>Furītā</i>	“Freeter”; a young person subsisting on part-time work; one whose livelihood is provided by part time work
<i>Gakusei</i>	Student (esp. a university student)
<i>Gisōnanmin</i>	Fake refugee; phony refugee; illegal migrant disguised as a refugee
<i>Ikkatsusaiyō</i>	Batch recruitment system; annual system for hiring university graduates
<i>Imin</i>	Emigration; immigration (Sensitive); emigrant; immigrant
<i>Kanji</i>	Chinese characters
<i>Kokusaika</i>	Internationalisation
<i>Rōnin</i>	Out of work or study; waiting for another chance to enter university or employment after failing annual entrance; from historic phenomena of wandering samurai without a master
<i>Senshūgakkō</i>	(Special) vocational schools

Shakaijin

Working adult; fully-fledged member of society; literally “person of society”; is attributed to people with a full-time job, in contrast to the term *gakusei*

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2011/12 I had the privilege of taking part in a study exchange program that took me to the USA for the second year of my bachelor's degree. I was eager to make my mark and joined a committee of around 20 international students that fundraised, organised, and hosted the annual campus festival, now in its 30th year. The international festival was seen as a distillation of the international community on campus, but the same could be said of the organising committee itself, which comprised students of all ages, nationalities, fields, levels of study, and—as it turned out—future trajectories. Some members of the committee returned to their home countries or moved on to new adventures around the world but, eight years later, the majority still live and work in the USA. Here are just a few examples. A doctoral student from Malaysia never left town, and he now works for the same university and attends the international festival every year. A Japanese student who was pursuing her second undergraduate degree at the time now lives in California with her husband and their children. Another exchange student from India still lives nearby, working for a large software company, and a master's student from El Salvador worked briefly in Ireland before returning to the same institution to pursue his doctoral research.

While I have always been struck by the persistent influence that my exchange year had on my life and the lives of my fellow committee members, these post-study trajectories took on new significance when I began my own doctoral research in October 2016. At that time, I was planning to explore the internationalisation of higher education and student mobility, with a focus on the personal and social impacts of international study experiences. However, delving into the literature, I found that one issue in particular was the subject of ongoing discussion and debate: the relationship between international student mobility and post-study migration (King & Raghuram, 2013; Riaño, Mol, & Raghuram, 2018). In reading seminal works by Shanthi Robertson (2013), Brooks and Waters (2011), and Hannah Soong (2015), among others, the study abroad experiences and post-study migratory decisions of myself and my peers from the international festival came alive on the page, reflecting their importance in our own life-courses, while also revealing the significance of post-study migration in the global landscape of higher education.

Research Context

The relationship between student mobility and post-study migration—commonly termed the “education-migration nexus”—is a timely and important research topic. This relationship is of shared significance to a number of stakeholders, particularly in the context

of higher education (Robertson, 2013). Universities across the developed world share a desire to attract greater numbers of international students to their institutions (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Kabbanji, Jolivet-Guetta, Consterdine, & González-Ferrer, 2016), and it is estimated that more than five million students were in higher education institutions (HEIs) outside of their home countries in 2016 (OECD, 2018). Many governments have historically supported this process—whether directly or indirectly—lured by the fact that, as part of a wider internationalisation agenda, mobile students confer upon their hosts educational, financial, and reputational advantages in the global higher education landscape (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Since the turn of the millennium, the advantages of retaining international graduates post-study have also become increasingly persuasive to policymakers (Ziguras & Law, 2006). International students are now seen as an attractive source of migrants. Due to their residence in the host country they are readily available and are more likely to have developed linguistic and cultural skills to facilitate their incorporation into the workforce. Furthermore, as a young and highly skilled population, they have the potential to contribute to the economy through their labour and tax receipts over a long period of time. Reflecting these advantages, international students have been recognised as “designer migrants” in the eyes of policymakers (Robertson, 2011, p. 2206), and their post-study trajectories have become a distinct policy concern.

However, the education-migration nexus is simultaneously beset by confusion and contradiction (Lomer, 2017a, O'Connor, 2018). For a number of years, the synergies between educational, economic, and labour policies appeared to support the continued attraction and retention of international students, and this was reflected in the expansion of policies designed to support this process (Geddie, 2015). However, the rise in nativist populism and anti-globalist sentiment has been accompanied by growing scepticism towards international mobilities and migration, and this now influences the attraction and retention of international students (Pottie-Sherman, 2018; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017). Though international students are rarely the direct target of this scepticism and, broadly speaking, remain tangential to the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment (British Future & Universities UK, 2014; ComRes, 2018; The Guardian, 2016), the attraction of more students from abroad is no longer politically neutral. Governments more closely aligned with anti-globalist ideals have introduced policies designed to restrict post-study work opportunities (May, 2011b; Pottie-Sherman, 2018), discouraging the growth of student mobility flows, and in tension with international higher education which continues to share the ideal of free movement for students, faculty, data, ideas, and resources.

These shifts appear to signal the end of the short period of policy convergence that student-migrants enjoyed between the late 1990s and early 2000s, and recently the relationship between international students and migration flows has become a topic of increased political and academic discussion. International students now represent a significant proportion of the internationally mobile population (OECD, 2015, 2016b), and both higher education and migration scholars have recognised the growing tensions between student mobility and migration control (King & Raghuram, 2013). In light of these tensions, “student-migrants” have been recognised as embodiments of the “liberal paradox” (Levatino et al., 2018; Robertson, 2011a). As Hollifield describes, “the economic logic of liberalism is one of openness, but the political and legal logic is one of closure,” and the result of this “paradox” is persistent tension between the competing imperatives of international openness and national security (Hollifield, 1992, 2004). In this context, to some, mobile students embody openness and cosmopolitanism. This is the view most often espoused within universities. To others, they represent another threat to national sovereignty and security. These paradoxical concerns are reflected in confused and contradictory policy regimes governing student mobility and migration, evident across the world (Lomer, 2017a).

Research Agenda

In this context, “student-migrants” and the “education-migration nexus” have become urgent topics of study in the social sciences (King & Raghuram, 2013; Riaño, Van Mol, & Raghuram, 2018). Reflecting broader concerns around migration and mobility, research has typically focused on the identification of structural factors and individual determinants that influence flows of student-migrants. For example, studies have investigated the scale and form of these flows (Abbott & Silles, 2016; Haussen & Uebelmesser, 2016; Neubauer, 2012; Weisser, 2015), the emergence of migration pathways in and between specific national contexts (Hawthorne, 2014; Liu-Farrer, 2009; Robertson, 2011; Soong, 2015; Szewczyk, 2014), and the political and institutional frameworks for controlling and managing student migration (Geddie, 2015; Gribble, 2008; Marginson, 2012; Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2011; Mosneaga, 2013; Thomas & Inkpen, 2016). While the existing body of research is far from an exhaustive engagement with student migration, it has revealed that both international and national migration regulatory frameworks and normative instruments remain ill-fitted to understanding the flows and management of student-migrants. The existing body of research provides a valuable but insufficient empirical account of student migration around the world and has not yet provided adequate theoretical tools for analysing and understanding the education-migration nexus across contexts. Student-migration

therefore remains a subject of urgent concern, particularly within the fields of higher education and migration studies.

A research agenda has thus emerged to address these inadequacies. Broadly speaking, while their during-study experiences are well documented, there is little empirical evidence of post-study migration outcomes in the words of individual students. Brooks and Waters identify the lack of “students’ own perspectives [...] on their motivations, objectives and experiences” (2011, p. 2), and echo earlier calls for concerted engagement with “the human face” of migration trajectories (Favell, Feldblum, & Smith, 2007). Others argue that research into student mobility rarely traces students post-study, and we have little evidence of the precise nature of the challenges that await students after graduation, and their strategies and coping mechanisms in response to those challenges (Arthur & Nunes, 2014). Similarly, there is a need to reconsider the notion that the complex identities of international students are adequately captured by the status of “student,” typically their legal status of residence, as they increasingly live and work in non-educational contexts throughout their studies (Eskelä, 2013). In recognition of the importance of their experiences and identities outside the university environment, there is a renewed urgency to “show greater consideration for the complex subjects beyond their life and functions in higher education” (King & Raghuram, 2013). This includes the need to challenge the ongoing conceptual separation of student mobility from other forms of migration, which prevents international students being fully recognised as holders of multiple roles within the host society (Eskelä, 2013).

In response to these issues, many critics call for research giving credence to the full temporal span of experiences within the education-migration nexus, including the pre-, during-, and post-study environment. They emphasise the need for attention to the biographies of individual students (Baláz & Williams, 2004; Kim, 2015; King & Raghuram, 2013), the processual nature of their educational trajectories and post-study transitions (Carlson, 2013; Hazen & Alberts, 2006), and their actual outcomes rather than just intentions (McGill, 2013). The increasing acknowledgement of the temporal nature of international students’ intentions has recently induced a productive body of research, though this remains in its infancy (Carlson, 2013; Findlay, McCollum, Coulter, & Gayle, 2015; Kōu, van Wissen, van Dijk, & Bailey, 2015; Szewczyk, 2013, 2014). Research has begun to investigate the emergence of migration intentions among international students, and identified broad temporal variation (Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Ryan, 2018; Szewczyk, 2013). By extension, researchers have suggested that studies of student-migration need to conceptualise migration as “a process rather than an event,” the focus being placed on “the whole migration process within the contexts that shape the events before, during and after the move” (Kōu et al., 2015,

p. 113). To this end, Findlay and colleagues call for a greater consideration of the life-course, citing Elder et al. (2003) in offering “the lifespan, human agency, time and place, timing, and linked lives” as key points of interest (Findlay et al., 2012; Findlay et al., 2015).

Importantly, critics also call for a fuller investigation into structure-agency relations within the education-migration nexus (Baláz & Williams, 2004; Hazen & Alberts, 2006), with a particular need for research that investigates the precise ways in which agents “navigate a myriad of systemic, cultural, and personal challenges” throughout their trajectories (Arthur & Nunes, 2014, p. 602). In issues of migration these “systemic” challenges may be particularly important. The nation-state maintains control of its borders, and student-migrants must continually engage with the structures established by the state, particularly regulatory frameworks that define their legal status (Baubock, 2006b; Favell et al., 2007; Zlotnik, 1987). However, in their study of postgraduate students in English universities, Mavroudi and Warren (2013) argue that “little academic work exists on how skilled and highly skilled migrants actively negotiate immigration policy,” suggesting that capturing international students’ interactions with structural elements of the education-migration nexus is a research priority (p. 261). Page and Chahboun (2019) summarise this agenda as follows:

What is needed is research that merges these perspectives of students disempowered by the social and administrative systems wherein they find themselves, and the perspectives of empowered agency, accounting both for their freedom and constraint. (Page & Chahboun, 2019, p. 881)

Thus, a clear research agenda is emerging which places great importance on developing a deeper understanding of structure-agency relations that are at play within the education-migration nexus, with a particular emphasis on capturing temporally-sensitive data from student-migrants’ perspectives. There is also a methodological component to this research agenda. Research needs to be designed to harness the complexities of individual identities, be temporally sensitive in engaging with the life-courses of its participants and capture the complex interactions between individual agency and structural factors in the post-study transition. It is this research agenda within which this research is located.

Research Aims, Focus and Scope

In response to this research agenda and informed by theoretical and methodological approaches from both higher education and migration studies, this research project seeks to provide new empirical and theoretical insights into the development and practice of agency

in the education-migration nexus. In this pursuit, the central research question (CRQ) for this study is as follows:

CRQ: How is the agency of student-migrants developed and practised throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?

In answering this research question, the study engages empirically with legal regulatory frameworks governing student migration in the UK and Japan, and the individual perspectives of student-migrants throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus. To capture the “systemic” challenges facing international students (Arthur & Nunes, 2014), the research draws on 14 years of migration policy change in each country, including major acts (primary legislation), secondary legislation, and government circulars and guidance in effect between the years of 2004-2018. These policies are then analysed using an established policy trajectory analysis method developed by members of the Temper project, and in use by leading migration scholars across Europe. In addition, to capture the cultural and personal challenges facing international students (Arthur & Nunes, 2014), the study also draws on narrative data collected through the Biographical-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM), with 26 degree-mobile student-migrants. Each participant was interviewed twice, with an “entry” interview taking place during their studies and an “exit” interview after their graduation. Data collection took place over a period of 18 months between October 2017 and April 2019.

In light of these analyses, the study seeks to provide new empirical insights into the development and practice of agency in the education-migration nexus, while also developing an inclusive theoretical framework that reflects the role of individual agency in student migration trajectories. This framework will draw on the intensive and temporally sensitive data collected in the narrative interviews, and supplement existing understandings of student migration with a framework that is grounded in a more empirically and theoretically nuanced account of migrant agency, within a life-course framework. This life-course perspective permeates throughout the thesis, and I situate students’ migration trajectories as a particular life event within a broader life-course project.

This research was conducted in two national case studies, the UK and Japan, which were chosen as extreme examples of the treatment of international students in national policy at the outset of this research. In 2016, the UK was characterised by majority opposition to immigration. Reducing net migration had been on the legislative agenda for 6 years, and the country had recently voted to withdraw from the European Union. In addition, the preceding years were marked by the introduction of harsher eligibility requirements for both student

and post-study work visas. The UK was in a period of closure at the level of policy, with significant consequences for student mobility and migration. On the other hand, in 2016 Japan was in a period of opening up towards migrant communities, introducing new residence statuses and affording highly skilled residents additional rights and preferential treatment in their applications for permanent residency (PR). Furthermore, international students were being enticed with new incentives to study in Japan, including the provision of easily attainable pathways to post-study work. The British and Japanese governments, therefore, illustrated contrasting approaches to student migration in 2016, identifying them as potentially fruitful contrasting national case studies for this research. This was supported by the fact that they both hosted large numbers of international students in their universities (~430,000 in the UK and ~170,000 in Japan), and were the leading hosts of international students¹ in their regions (UIS, 2020).

Layout of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides an extensive critical review of literature regarding the education-migration nexus. I begin with an overview of literature that seeks to explicate the relationship between higher education and migration, including the cases for enabling and restricting student migration. Subsequently, I critically analyse empirical research that has sought to understand the nature and internal dynamics of the education-migration nexus, including policy implementations, the emergence of an “education-migration industry,” labour market conditions for international graduates, evidence of student-migrants’ insecurity and precarity, the determinants of post-study trajectories, and strategies and tactics employed by individual students in navigating the post-study landscape. I critique the shortcomings of existing literature, including the propensity to reduce post-study decision-making to a “stay/return” binary choice, reductive practices of “status-making,” a lack of evidence from the perspectives of individual student-migrants, and limited attention to the role of individual agency. Chapter 2 ends with a summary of the research agenda that emerges from these weaknesses, and a justification for the present study.

In Chapter 3, I introduce and explain the theoretical and conceptual framework used in the study, which offers some novel components to the study of student mobility and migration. I draw heavily on the field of migration studies, reviewing dominant paradigms

¹ Japan has since been surpassed by China as the leading host of international students in East Asia.

for the study of migration processes and critically analyse their suitability for the study of migrant agency. I present a critique of the “structure-agency impasse” in migration studies, before introducing recent theoretical advances that offer potential in the study of migrant agency. From these advances, I introduce the life-course perspective and the “chordal triad” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) model of agency central to the theoretical framework of this study. I justify their suitability in answering my research questions and, by extension, their potential to advance theoretical debates surrounding the role of agency in the education-migration nexus.

Chapter 4 is a comprehensive overview of my research design and methods. I reintroduce my CRQ and explain the conceptual link between it and four sub-research-questions (SRQs). These SRQs are then linked empirically to the two-phase research design that is explained in the remainder of the chapter. I introduce both the policy trajectory analysis and biographical-narrative interview phases of the research in turn, considering the data collection and analysis strategies used in each, before discussing their limitations and the challenges of their implementation, and subsequent integration across the two. I close this chapter with a discussion of researcher positionality and the challenges of “cross-cultural” research of this nature, and a review of ethical concerns and the steps taken to alleviate them.

Chapter 5 is the first empirical chapter of this study, in which I seek to answer the first SRQ: “What is the regulatory framework for student-migrants throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?” I introduce the findings from phase 1 of the study: policy trajectory analysis of the evolving legal context for student migration in the UK and Japan between 2004-2018. I introduce each national case in turn, providing some additional contextual information regarding the evolution of their migration regulatory systems, and breaking down the formal policy analysis into policy changes that affect the pre-, during- and post-study situation. I find that the two contexts have taken contrasting policy trajectories. The UK was marked by instability and the introduction of greater restrictions on student-migrants, which in 2018 resulted in a system that was relatively closed to student-migrants. Japan was marked by stability and a system that was relatively receptive to student-migrants. In addition to this trajectory analysis, I provide additional detail of the available post-study transitional visas available to my participants at the time of their graduation. The chapter concludes by summarising the evolution of the legal context for student-migrants in each national case study, and how this reflects the range of possibilities available to graduating international students therein.

Chapter 6 seeks to answer the second SRQ of this study: “How is the regulatory framework for student-migrants throughout their trajectories reflected in their narratives?”

In light of the policy trajectory analysis from the previous chapter, I present instances in which participants explicitly discussed the legal and administrative frameworks that were governing their trajectories. Again, I consider each national case study in turn, emphasising explicit reflections on the regulatory framework in that context. The results of this analysis indicate that student-migrants possess a highly variable understanding of the legal frameworks by which they are governed. In addition, the regulatory experience between the participants and their national context differed between the two national cases. In the UK, the regulatory relationship was perceived as hostile, characterised by restriction and lack of support. In Japan, the regulatory relationship was perceived as neutral, characterised by limited contact with immigration authorities, and support from sponsoring organisations.

In Chapter 7, I draw heavily on Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) "chordal triad" model of agency in attempting to answer the third and fourth SRQs of the study: (3) "To what extent and how do the iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative elements of agency feature in student-migrants' narratives of their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?"; and (4) "to what extent and how do the iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative elements of agency inform student-migrants' practice in their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?" The iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative elements of agency refer to three agentive modes—used synonymously with habit, imagination, and judgment respectively—that Emirbayer & Mische (1998) delineate. In this chapter, the "chordal triad" model of agency and these three agentive modes are used to structure the presentation of findings. I consider the three elements of agency in turn, emphasising the aspects of each element that were most prevalent in the participants' narratives, before offering a synthesis at the end of the chapter.

In Chapter 8, I summarise and synthesise the results from the three findings chapters and provide my interpretation of their significance and implications. I consider each SRQ in turn, drawing on all relevant empirical data to summarise key and novel findings and contextualise these results within existing research. I also critically review the extent to which the study provides a satisfactory answer to each SRQ. Subsequently, I provide a synthesis of all findings chapters in an attempt to answer the CRQ of this study, before considering the implications of these findings. I then offer recommendations for policy and practice, before I conclude the thesis by contextualising its findings within the ever-changing contexts of the UK and Japan. I provide an overview of the argument made in the thesis and reflect on the successes and limitations of the project. Following that summary, I end with recommendations for future research.

Following the final chapter of the thesis, I include one-page narrative profiles that summarise the life-course trajectories of each participant in the study. These narratives provide a condensed summary of participants' trajectories to aid in contextualising discussion of their narratives within the findings chapters. I anticipate that the reader may wish to refer to these profiles at the introduction of new participants in the main body of the thesis. I encourage readers to reference these profiles, and to aid this they are printed on a different paper stock. While these narrative profiles are not intended to function as empirical data in and of themselves, they aim to introduce the reader to the participants, scaffold discussion of individual participants in light of their overall life-courses and provide additional narrative detail.

A note on COVID-19

Since the completion of this research and writing of this thesis, the landscape of mobility and migration in higher education has been drastically changed by the coronavirus pandemic. Already, COVID-19 has curtailed international student mobility across the world, preventing the scheduled start of the academic year in Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, and threatening the intake and return of international students to the UK in the Autumn of 2020 (IAU, 2020; Rumbley, 2020; UUK, 2020). At the time of writing, there is little clarity about the near future of student mobility, and the effects of the virus in higher education are likely to play out over a number of years (O'Neill, 2020). History teaches us that universities play an important role in times of social and economic crises (Aoki & Ito, 2014; Hillman, 2020; Rizal, 2017), but the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19—the need for physical distancing and international travel restrictions foremost among them—mean that it is difficult to predict the scale and nature of lasting change in international student mobility and migration. Such a prediction is certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. With that in mind, I wish to state here that COVID-19 and its effects are deliberately *not* considered throughout this thesis. The methodological choices taken, data collected, and findings presented are representative of a pre-coronavirus world, and there is little value in retroactively inserting COVID-19 into this thesis and distracting from its intended contributions to knowledge. However, while I do not tackle the virus at length in the main body of the thesis, I do return to it in the final chapter when discussing the implications of the study going forward.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a critical overview of existing academic literature regarding the education-migration nexus. I begin with literature that has sought to chart the relationship between higher education and migration, and review ways in which this relationship has implications for a variety of actors, including the state, higher education systems and institutions, and individual student-migrants. I focus specifically on the arguments for enabling or restricting student migration, and critically analyse these arguments from the perspective of each group of actors. I characterise these arguments as a manifestation of the “liberal paradox,” the competing agendas of liberal economic regimes and tighter border controls (Hollifield, 1992, 2004). I then critically analyse empirical research that has sought to address the nature and internal dynamics of the education-migration nexus, before reviewing the weaknesses of existing research. In light of these weaknesses, I summarise the research agenda, and emphasise the need for research that engages directly with international student-migrants and seeks to understand the role their agency plays in the education-migration nexus.

This chapter goes beyond the English and Japanese cases and includes research from around the world. Influential research has emerged from a number of national contexts, with a significant impact on shared understandings of student migration in a global perspective. I draw on research from across these contexts to provide a comprehensive overview of our present understanding of student migration. It is notable that much research reviewed in this chapter originates from Australia, the site of a large proportion of empirical research and theoretical advances into student migration. This apparent emphasis should not be seen as tacitly positioning Australia as a “default” or “standard” model of student migration against which other national cases should be compared. Rather, it reflects the quality and quantity of research that has emerged from the Australian case. Indeed, the relative lack of research in contexts outside the English-speaking majority host countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA) is a weakness of the literature that will be discussed later in the chapter.

The Relationship Between Higher Education and Migration

Within the general diversification and growth of migration flows, since the turn of the millennium international student mobility has become one of the largest and most widespread forms of contemporary migration. Worldwide, it is estimated that more than five

million students were in higher education institutions (HEIs) outside of their home countries in 2016 (OECD, 2018), and today international students represent a significant proportion of the internationally mobile population (OECD, 2015, 2016b). The growth of educationally-channelled migration is not a universal phenomenon, being particularly concentrated in certain contexts and only pursued by 2% of higher education students worldwide (UIS, 2020). However, the rate at which international student mobility has grown is the fastest among any category of migrant, and almost four times faster than total worldwide migration (R. King & Raghuram, 2013). International students, therefore, are one of the most significant migrant populations of the 21st century (Findlay, McCollum, & Packwood, 2017a). Today, international education is inseparable from the concerns of international migration. Indeed, as Baas (2019) recently argued, “the two (international education and migration) have increasingly become entangled—even to the point where it appears both have merged” (p. 223).

While the growth of international student mobility and migration was not initially met with sufficient attention from migration scholars (Findlay, 2011; Gribble & Blackmore, 2012), recently there has been a notable increase in academic interest in the relationship between higher education and migration. This so-called “education-migration nexus” (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Robertson, 2013) and the “student-migrants” therein have become a distinct topic of study and the subject of cross-disciplinary interest (Börjesson, 2017). This concentration of attention reflects a shared recognition that international student mobility and migration has significant implications for nation states, higher education systems and institutions, and individual student-migrants. As a result of this recent focus on the education-migration nexus, research has provided insights into some of these implications and the potential opportunities and pitfalls for each group of actors. This research has also revealed the complexities of the relationship between higher education and migration, and arguments have emerged in support of and opposing student-migration. To elucidate these complexities, I will begin this literature review by summarising the conceptual arguments for attracting and retaining more student-migrants, before considering the case for restricting student mobility and migration.

Arguments for Enabling Student-Migration

According to Riaño, Van Mol and Raghuram (2018), “the received wisdom on this topic is that students are solicited for the competitive edge they offer in a global knowledge economy” (p. 283), but this simple explanation obscures the fact that various actors stand to gain from the attraction of international students, and their possible retention post-study.

Bolsmann and Miller (2008) and Chankseliani (2018) have provided detailed overviews of the various rationales for attracting and retaining international students, but in this section I seek to extend upon their analyses by evaluating the multiple perceived benefits from the perspective of three key stakeholders in student mobility and migration: the state, the higher education sector, and individual student migrants.

State Perspective

While universities occupy a liminal position between the nation-state and the international community, from a policy perspective they remain “creatures of national contexts” (Marginson, 2016). While universities’ activities are fundamentally international, governments use a variety of policy levers to ensure that their higher education system serves the needs of the nation. The treatment of international students is an example. Policies have been introduced to enhance and capitalise on international student flows in the “global race for talent,” to fund the higher education system, and to enhance the host-nation’s soft power².

The “Race for Talent”

Riaño et al.’s statement is testament to one of the primary rationales for state actors to support student mobility and migration, as mobile students represent a critical resource in the context of the “second modernity” (Beck, 2000). As the industrial economy is replaced by the “knowledge economy” (Castells, 2000; Friedman, 2005), 21st century skills are seen as a prerequisite for productivity through their creation of “flexible, resilient, reflective and self-incentivising workers” (Blackmore & Rahimi, 2019, p. 437). In this context, working on the normative basis that more “talent” is a good thing (Weisser, 2015), higher education systems are a key component of national strategies to attract those with the “skills to build the nation” (Chatterjee, 2015) and ensure ongoing prosperity (Beck, 2000). However, a challenge of the contemporary moment is the uneven distribution of human capital and the “‘zero-sum’ situation of global competition for talent” (Yu, 2016, p. 56). As such, the attraction of skilled workers is often painted in competitive terms, as the “great brain race” (Wildavsky, 2010) or the “global war for talent” (Brown & Tannock, 2009). Nation-states are conceived as competitors fighting to attract a limited pool of talented and mobile potential workers.

² I focus, here, on the perspective of “receiving countries” seeking to attract student-migrants. For a review of the perspective of sending countries, see Gribble (2008).

In this context, international student-migrants have been identified as a wellspring of highly skilled human resources to help win the “race for talent.” Ziguras and Law (2006) summarise:

1. International students represent a readily available source of skilled workers that are increasingly vital to economic development (Duderstadt, 2002).
2. Accepting skilled workers at the beginning of their working lives is imperative to sustain the working population and combat demographic decline in the native-born population (de Haas, 2010; Hollifield, 2004).
3. International students have had considerable time for cultural and linguistic adjustment, and are more employable than new arrivals (Kim & Sondhi, 2015).
4. The potential to migrate may be a “marketing advantage” for HEIs, supporting recruitment of fee-paying students in future (Arthur & Flynn, 2011).

Points one to three of Ziguras and Law’s list speak to the “state stimulus potential” embodied by international students (Owens, Srivastava, & Feerasta, 2011). Countries at risk of economic stagnation due to the pressures of “low fertility rates, aging populations, and labour/skill shortages” are required to look outside their citizenry for the human resources required to drive their continued economic development (Chiou, 2017, p. 85). International students are a source of such human resources and are now “aggressively recruited by once exclusionary Western nation-states” under the greatest demographic pressure, and who recognise that success in attracting international students increases their chances of relative success in the global “race for talent” (Chatterjee, 2015, p. 544). As a result, would-be host countries are tasked with developing what the British government describe as “an increasingly competitive offer” to international students, encompassing both the quality of education on offer, the surrounding social experience of living in that destination country, and the post-study opportunities available to international graduates (DfE & DfIT, 2019, p. 5).

Reducing Public Funding Burden for Higher Education

As Ziguras and Law (2006) described in point 4 of the list discussed above, hosting international students also represents a “marketing advantage” for recruitment of more international students in future (Arthur & Flynn, 2011, p. 223). International student recruitment forms a positive feedback loop. Past recruitment of international students is *de facto* evidence of a “quality” and “international” educational experience, thereby attracting future applicants. In and of itself, this is an advantage for the host country as a higher number

of international applicants and attendees is likely to bear fruit in the “race for talent” described above, but this can also provide a significant source of funding for higher education that does not draw on the public purse.

Though higher education has historically enjoyed financial support from public funding sources, as enrolments have grown so, too, has the absolute financial burden of providing a quality higher education system. Student tuition and enrolment fees have therefore become more widespread to share or cover the cost of delivery (Johnstone, 2004). While variable degrees of public subsidy persist, in countries with neoliberal funding models student fees ostensibly fund—to a greater or lesser extent—the higher education system (Akanwa, 2015). As such, the ability to attract greater numbers of students from abroad promises to increase the overall operating budget of the institution, particularly given the trend towards differential tuition fees for international students.

Public subsidy for higher education is often justified by the assumption that students will remain and use their acquired skills to contribute to the economy, and pay taxes that, over their lifetime, repay their debt to the public purse. However, international students have not historically been as likely to remain in the host country and pay tax over a long enough time to cover the public costs of their education. Thus, states have a rationale for deregulating or demanding higher fees from international students. The United Kingdom, for example, caps tuition fees for local students, but allows universities to set their price to international students. Tannock (2018) reveals that, as a result, in the 2016-17 academic year international students paid between 43% and 223% more for the same course than their counterparts from the UK/EU, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Home/EU and international student average university tuition fees in the UK, 2016-2017

	Home/EU Fees	International fees	% Difference
Undergraduate			
Classroom based	£8891	£13394	43%
Lab based	£8891	£15034	69%
Clinical	£8891	£24169	172%
Postgraduate			
Classroom based	£6486	£13442	107%
Lab based	£6486	£15638	141%
Clinical	£6486	£20956	223%

Note. Reproduced from Tannock (2018), who originally adapted this table from data produced by THE (2016).

This level of fee differentiation clearly has a significant impact on the relative costs to study in the UK and represents a significant source of funding for British HEIs. As Tannock goes on to explain:

It is this kind of fee differentiation that periodically leads to charges by international students and others that universities in the UK treat these students as “cash cows,” and are more interested in making a profit out of these students than promoting higher education internationalism or safeguarding international student wellbeing (e.g., Espinoza, 2015; Forkert, 2011). (Tannock, 2018a, p. 126)

Putting aside the normative aspects of the “cash cows” claim for the moment, it is clear that international student fees are now a significant portion of the income of British universities. In 2014-15, for example, 23% of teaching income was obtained through non-EU fees, relative to only 18% obtained through direct government grants (Universities UK, 2016). But it is not just the UK that relies on international students to fund its higher education institutions. 19 countries from the OECD charge differential tuition fees (OECD, 2016a), and a growing number of European countries that have chosen not to charge tuition fees to their citizens have recently introduced fees for international students (de Gayardon, 2016; Lundin & Geschwind, 2019; Nikula & Kivistö, 2018). In each context, by attracting international students and charging them differential fees that are above the price of delivery, governments are able to reduce the level of direct state investment required in higher education, effectively subsidising the system from external sources. Such is the level of economic benefits available, Chankseliani (2018) argues that among all rationales for international student recruitment, the economic rationale is the “most decisive” in influencing government policy.

Chankseliani’s work primarily concerns the UK as a host nation, a context in which the weight of evidence supports the assertion that economic rationales may drive student recruitment (2018). However, in other contexts, the economic case for attracting and hosting international students is not as strong. Japan is a powerful example, with international education being heavily subsidised (Sato, 2010). In the Japanese context, tuition fees do play an important role in both the public and private sector. In national and local public universities, tuition fees merely supplement the direct grant from the national government. The level of fees is dictated by MEXT and is significantly below the cost of provision, keeping costs relatively low for both local and international students and preventing

international student recruitment being a source of income for the host university. In the private sector, however, tuition fees are a significant part of the university budget, providing the vast majority of income outside of competitive grants and private investments. In these institutions, there is, therefore, an incentive to attract greater numbers of international students for the purposes of income generation, but it is important to note that these universities are unable to charge differential tuition fees to international students (Sato, 2010).

In addition to the limited potential for income generation through charging fees to international students, the financial advantages to inbound student mobility are also offset by the enormous financial investments that have supported Japan's quest to internationalise its universities. Billions of yen have been spent on developing Centres of Excellence to attract international talent, International Headquarters to raise the profile of universities in potential source countries, and international support staff to make Japanese campuses attractive to international students, even before factoring in the cost of marketing in a highly competitive global space (Yonezawa & Shimmi, 2015). In light of these costs, it is estimated that the enormous increase in inbound student mobility over the past decade has not yet brought any financial return for the Japanese higher education sector. However, this has not blunted the drive to increase inbound student mobility, with non-economic rationales being sufficient motivation to swallow the financial costs.

Public Diplomacy and Soft Power

The attraction and retention of international students serves the host nation as a public diplomacy mechanism, in which destination countries are able to exert greater cultural and political influence on the global stage through developing their soft power (Chankseliani, 2018b; Raghuram, 2013). Sylvie Lomer explains the soft power rationale using the example of the UK:

In the soft power rationale, attracting significant proportions of international students is argued to increase the UK's influence in global diplomacy, as international graduates of British education are considered to be more knowledgeable and appreciative of "British values"... For example, in Blair's first PMI speech (1999), he argued that "people who are educated here have a lasting tie to our country. They promote Britain around the world, helping our trade and our diplomacy". This suggests that international students can increase

the UK's influence overseas, because they sympathise with UK interests. (Lomer, 2017b, p. 583)

The UK's soft power needs are more acute than ever given the political tumult brought about by the "Brexit" vote of 2016 (Richard, Loew, & Hanks, 2017), but it is not the only nation that has invested in student mobility and migration in an effort to increase its soft power. Educational investments and mobility programmes in Southeast Asia were crucial to the rebuilding of Japan's national image and soft power base following World War Two, with the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) rationale dominating Japan's international education strategy through much of the 20th century (Yonezawa, 2008). China's educational investments in the African continent and generous approach to international student recruitment and scholarship provision is seen as a joint image enhancement and soft power exercise (H. Wu, 2018; R. Yang, 2010). Portugal has attempted to leverage its higher education system to re-establish connections with the Lusophone world (França, Alves, & Padilla, 2018). Canada uses international education to increase its influence on a global scale through the formation of "student ambassadors" (Trilokekar, 2009), who may also become "leaders in shifting thinking from one of global competition to one of global cooperation" (A. H. Kim & Sondhi, 2015, p. 23).

Higher Education Perspective

In addition to the nation-states that house them, universities share a desire to attract greater numbers of international students to their institutions, sometimes seeking to capitalise on the migration objectives of potential students in their recruitment efforts (Kabbanji, Jolivet-Guetta, Consterdine, & González-Ferrer, 2016). Some of the perceived advantages of attracting international students are shared with nation-states, particularly the economic interests described above (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Chankseliani, 2018a), and I will not repeat those in this section. However, other rationales are more specific to the interests of individual higher education institutions which increasingly seek to differentiate themselves in the global higher education landscape.

Commodified Internationalisation

International student mobility is perhaps the most influential feature of internationalisation, being both symbolic and a driver of internationalisation. Internationalisation is both a hegemonic discourse and practical reality of the contemporary higher education landscape, and few aspects have been left untouched by its influence. In

her influential discussions on the subject, Knight (2003) defined internationalisation as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education,” characterising it as a normative process of reform, tending towards a more globally engaged, cosmopolitan, and inclusive higher education landscape. From this definition alone, one could be forgiven for thinking internationalisation is universally beneficial, bringing together nations, institutions, academics, and students that were previously divided by national borders. However, as Marginson (2019) argues, the heterogeneity of higher education systems and institutions (R. Yang, 2014), the persistent post-colonial asymmetries of the global higher education landscape, and the ambiguity of the definition itself have allowed internationalisation to be co-opted by the very commercial and competitive forces to which it is normatively opposed. Though Knight herself warned against such commercialisation, today internationalisation is increasingly commodified as both a practical driver and theoretical symbol of “prestige and status,” ostensible proof that an institution or nation is “a global player in higher education” (Kell & Vogl, 2012, p. 6). As prestige and status are drivers of income in marketised higher education systems, even beyond the impact of international student fees, internationalisation is now an income source in and of itself, leading the attraction of student-migrants with the promise of post-study opportunities to be a strategic choice for higher education institutions (Baas, 2019).

Differentiation in Reputation, Rankings, and Recruitment

Indeed, internationalisation broadly, and international student recruitment specifically, drive revenue by differentiating leading institutions and nations both reputationally and in global university rankings. Both institutions and national systems invest heavily in ensuring that their “brand” is sufficiently international, projecting prestige in the global higher education marketplace to protect and increase their market share. For potential students, institutional branding is particularly important in elite institutions, helping to distinguish between the Harvards and Oxbridges of this world, whereas national branding appears a more critical differentiator below those upper-echelons of the global higher education marketplace (Marginson, 2006). Indeed, national governments play a critical supportive role in the recruitment efforts of individual institutions. The “Education UK” and “Education USA” branding exercises have been nurtured for more than two decades (Sidhu, 2006), and increasingly sophisticated branding efforts have expanded to a growing number of countries, including Sweden, France, and Japan (Cabinet Office, 2014; France, 2018; Lundin & Geschwind, 2019). These brands serve to legitimise study destinations, thereby increasing

flows of students in the short term, improving both institutional and national ranking performance and prestige (HM Government, 2019), and providing further distinction to drive long term flows (A. M. Findlay et al., 2017). Internationalisation, thus, has demonstrable impacts on the sustainability and financing of higher education (Haussen & Uebelmesser, 2016).

The Student-Migrant's Perspective

Sometimes forgotten in discussions around the benefits of attracting and retaining international students is concern for the benefits that may be accrued by the students themselves. Indeed, while literature focusing on student mobility trajectories frequently covers the perspective of individual students, as I will argue later in this chapter, this rarely extends beyond their graduation dates. However, there are many potential benefits to remaining post-study.

Social and life-course differentiation

A fundamental function of international mobility is its ability to function as a social differentiator, with students anticipating that their international educational experience will help distinguish them from their peers. Brooks and Waters' (2011) book has been a seminal contributor to this line of argument, arguing that student mobility is associated with the pursuit of social and cultural capital. The authors describe international education as a symbol of "embodying various cosmopolitan traits" (Brooks & Waters, 2011, p. 59) that afford membership of the new transnational migrant class, and in which international social and cultural capital may be readily transferable to economic capital (Beech, 2018). Min and Falvey (2018) build on Brooks and Waters' foundations, describing international education as a means for students to acquire "international human capital" that is transferrable across national borders, and which confers a particular advantage in the country of study by virtue of their familiarity with "host institutions, customs, culture, business practices and labour markets" attained while studying (p. 872). Such practices have been identified in a number of contexts. In East Asia, a degree from one of the leading English speaking higher education systems has historically afforded significant symbolic capital (Waters, 2006; Yu, 2016). Elsewhere, Liu-Farrer (2009, 2014) revealed that Chinese youth used educational experience in Japanese higher education as an opportunity to accrue the human and cultural capital required for success in post-study employment in Japan. Though the specific experiences and advantages afforded by mobility trajectories vary in different contexts, mobile youth share the desire to differentiate and better themselves through international travel,

“engag[ing] in an iterative back-and-forth process of positioning and reordering themselves within the international traveller hierarchy” (Prazeres, 2018, p. 6).

However, international mobility is not simply a means to differentiate oneself from peers who lack international experience. As Prazeres (2018) goes on to argue with reference to King (2011), it is not just social distinction—between oneself and one’s peers—that drives international student mobility, but also “life-course distinction, whereby a past self is compared to a present and future self” (p. 3). Interpersonal comparisons matter, particularly in the post-study transition to the labour market, but this misses the more personal journey of growth and “self-discovery” that attends to international study (Prazeres, 2017). For some, studying abroad is less an attempt to improve one’s status in society, but rather an opportunity to test and/or discover oneself in unfamiliar surroundings (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Marginson (2014) provides theoretical grounding for this process, arguing that higher education in general, and international mobility in particular, is a process of “self-formation”:

International education as self-formation takes in a larger set of behaviours of self-cultivation and self-improvement. It includes learning to speak in new conversational idioms. It includes the acquisition of knowledge and personal sensibilities via liberal education as cultural capital. It incorporates social capital, whereby higher education fosters functional relationships and social networks. It accounts for the fact that students may acquire new values and beliefs in the country of education, and perhaps greater tolerance and more cosmopolitan relations (Montgomery, 2010). Here the growth of individual capabilities and the growth of sociability are interdependent. (Marginson, 2014, p. 12).

While the ability to differentiate oneself from competitors in the labour market and increase the likelihood of economic returns on education is an important factor in the decision to study overseas, the intrinsic motivation to grow as an individual should not be underestimated.

Migration for Education or Education for Migration?

Another critical point of interest for researchers concerned with the relationship between education and migration is the attempt to understand how educational objectives may drive migration flows, and vice versa (N. L. Li, Findlay, Jowett, & Skeldon, 1996). Beginning with the former, in which education is the “ultimate goal” in service to which

individuals and families migrate, researchers have identified patterns of “migration for education” (Ha, 2019)³. One such pattern is described as the “astronaut family,” in which a portion of the family relocates to “immigrant gateway cities” while the breadwinner returns to the home country to continue their career as the “resettlement process goes on in their absence” (Waters, 2002, p. 118). The advantage for those able to pursue such a strategy is that the family are able to maintain transnational ties in both the origin and destination countries, thereby taking advantage of the educational, social, and economic opportunities in each (Ley, 2010; Ong, 1999; Pe-Pua, Mitchell, Iredale, & Castles, 1996; Skeldon, 1997; Waters, 2008). For instance, in the South Korean context, *kirogi* (wild geese) families split across national borders “primarily [due to] desires for children to become fluent English speakers” (Lee, 2010; Robertson, 2013). A related phenomenon are the “parachute” or “satellite” children, whose parents both return to the home country, leaving the child to complete their education with the support of their educational institution, diaspora communities, or other relations (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007; Waters, 2003; Zhou, 1998). In their review of these phenomena, Brooks and Waters (2011) cite patterns of migration for education as evidence that the educational endeavours of children are increasingly part of a “family project” (p. 52), served by a variety of transnational and migratory practices. Even in higher education, student mobility is far from an individual endeavour, and is rather embedded in complex familial and social networks (Brooks & Waters, 2010).

On the other hand, a linked body of research has identified how migratory objectives can be served through the pursuit of educational experiences and qualifications that confer advantages in the migration system. Such practices are referred to as “education for migration.” With reference to the Australian case, site of much of the leading existing research on this topic, Robertson (2013) describes this process:

[Some] young and usually single students arriv[e] alone in Australia to undertake education with permanent residency as their major motivation. The education itself is frequently a means to an end, and the migration outcome is often more significant to the migrant than the qualification or the career outcomes. (Robertson, 2013, p. 22)

The pattern that Robertson describes is one in which international education forms one part of a deliberate immigration strategy, where it is assumed that studying may help secure

³ In some cases, the alternative terms “migrating to learn” and “learning to migrate” are used (e.g., Chira, 2016).

work experience, a work visa, and possibly settlement in the host country. For example, in his work with Indian students in Australia, Baas (2006) found that some students choose their course of study and the universities to which they apply according to the degree to which it would aid their future application for PR (Bryła, 2019). Often, these students choose to pursue multiple diplomas to aid their chances of success post-study (Baas, 2019; Ha, 2019). In doing so, these student-migrants often put themselves in dire financial situations (Baas, 2010), and at the receiving end of discrimination and violence associated with growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the country (Baas, 2014).

As this situation has developed in recent years, the community of student-migrants (alternately called “student switchers” and “students-migrants-workers”) has thus been accused by some of being “back-door” migrants, maliciously seeking to manipulate the system and avoid strict scrutiny of whether they are “legitimate” students (Tan & Hugo, 2017). While it is increasingly clear that international education can form part of a strategy to migrate to the destination country, and that the provision of post-study work rights is a major draw for international students (Civinini, 2018b; Gribble & Blackmore, 2012), these “back-doors” to the labour market are the predictable result of nation-states’ and universities’ policies. As described above, nation-states “warring” for talent or short-term unskilled labour explicitly grant during- and post-study work rights to international students. Simultaneously, universities fight to attract and enrol international students, changing their course offerings according to labour shortages, and marketing these courses directly to international applicants. Criticism of international students who pursue the opportunities that are marketed to them is misplaced. In the contemporary migration system of nation-states, these “side-doors” are a feature, not a bug. However, this has not stopped the rise of concern regarding the abuse of student-migrant pathways and widespread assertions that student-migration should be restricted.

Arguments for Restricting Student-Migration

For a number of years, the shared incentives described above appeared to support the attraction and retention of international students, and this was reflected in the expansion of policies⁴ designed to support this process (Geddie, 2015). However, the rise of nativist populism and anti-globalist sentiment, and growing scepticism towards international mobilities and migration of all kinds has come to bear on student-migrants (Pottie-Sherman,

⁴ These policies are reviewed in more detail below.

2018; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017). Indeed, governments more closely aligned with these anti-globalist ideals have introduced policies designed to restrict post-study work opportunities (May, 2011b; Pottie-Sherman, 2018), affecting student mobility flows. This is in tension with the ideals of higher education which continue to favour the free movement of students, faculty, data, and resources. Both higher education and migration scholars have recognised the growing tensions between student mobility and migration control (R. King & Raghuram, 2013).

9/11 and 7/7: The Securitisation of International Students

Historically, migrants have always been subject to suspicion as a threat to national security. As Ewers and Lewis (2008) describe, the focus of this suspicion tends to move between different categories of immigrants, according to the highest perceived threat at that particular time. Using the example of the USA, the authors illustrate how the target of concern has evolved over the past 50 years:

In the 1970s, immigration was targeted in the context of fertility and fears of developing world population increases impacting the United States (cf. Raspail, 1975). In the 1980s, the security-migration concern shifted to the relationship between migration and the international drug trade. By the 1990s, immigration policy focus transformed to a function of free trade, fears of open borders, and economic migrants (Connolly & Kennedy, 1994). It is this constant re-imagining of policy that has recently subsumed international students—themselves, classified as nonimmigrants along with tourists, business travellers, and diplomats—into the realm of immigration policy, to the end of securing the state. (Ewers & Lewis, 2008, p. 473)

The securitisation of international students that had emerged in the 1990s intensified considerably in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the USA in 2001, and the subsequent 7/7 bombings in London in 2005. Prior to the attacks, profiling of potential threats had focused predominantly on undocumented or illegal immigrants. However, the 9/11 attackers had all been legally admitted to the USA through its visa and immigration system, some on student visas, thereby putting the immigration system at large, and student visas specifically, under intense scrutiny (Zolberg, 2002):

In public and policy perceptions, the threat of terrorism predicated on permeable borders was suddenly connected to foreign student migration and

prompted calls for the implementation of exceptional measures. This represents the moment that foreign students became securitised. (Ewers & Lewis, 2008, p. 475)

Since the 9/11 attacks, security arrangements in response to flows of international students have intensified. The Patriot Act and SEVIS surveillance system in the USA and both Prevent and the increasingly stringent compliance systems in the UK purportedly reduce the threat of extremism among the international student body (Marginson, 2012; Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018). In addition, they respond to public pressure to reduce the risk of other abuses of the immigration system by foreign students.

“Times of Closure”: “Bogus” Students and the Affirmation of National Borders

Indeed, the rise of anti-globalist sentiment among the general public has come to bear on student-migrants (Pottie-Sherman, 2018; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017). Though international students themselves maintain broad public support (British Future & Universities UK, 2014; ComRes, 2018; The Guardian, 2016), we live in “times of closure” in immigration policy more broadly, and this has had a knock-on effect on international students (Riaño, Lombard, & Piguet, 2018). As illustrated by recent policy trends in the UK, pressure to curb international migration in general is sometimes interpreted by migration authorities as a reason to problematise international students (Moskal, 2018). Sylvie Lomer (2017a) describes the situation as follows:

Wider migration policy discourses have negatively impacted international students present in the UK, creating a counter-rationale for their recruitment... [I]t is argued that as migrants they contribute to public concern, social pressures, and abuse of the system. International students are categorised as migrants, caught in the same negative discourse. (Lomer, 2017a, p. 199)

Thus, just as visa regimes are becoming more stringent for all migrants, international students face increasingly stringent visa and compliance regulations, proving a barrier to obtaining a student visa in the first instance and restricting their post-study work options (Murphy-Lejeune, 2008). While justifications for this intensification of regulation differ for different categories of migrant, particularly important in the case against student-migrants is the rhetoric of “bogus” or “phony” students, who are characterised as abusing the student visa system in an attempt to gain access to the destination country, without meaningfully engaging in their course of education (Ha, 2019). This concern is not without justification,

as “bogus” for-profit institutions have been identified in a number of contexts, capitalising on individuals’ desire to study, live, and possibly work in popular destination countries by offering educational courses of little to no academic worth. In the UK alone, more than 800 institutions lost their sponsorship licence in a tightening of regulations designed to combat these “bogus” colleges. But, as the London Metropolitan University case⁵ illustrates, these changes also had an impact on legitimate higher education institutions that were seen as inadequately stringent in ensuring the compliance of their international students (Geddie, 2015; Kabbanji et al., 2016; TMO, 2018). Thus, while a degree of concern around “bogus” students and colleges is warranted, international students are increasingly problematised at a population level, under pressure to prove their legitimacy and “value”⁶ without impinging on public concerns around unsustainable or undesirable flows of migrants (Baas, 2019).

Student-Migration and the “Liberal Paradox”

Clearly, though the shared advantages of international student recruitment and retention are evident, in these “times of closure” it is not politically neutral to advocate for more open borders and post-study opportunities for international students. Sassen (1999) roots these tensions in a broader social phenomenon: the “refusal to recognise the incompatibility between the new economic regime aimed at neutralising borders and immigration policies aimed at total control” (p. xvi-xvii). The global economy is increasingly reliant on cross-national networks and relations, which benefit from liberal migration regimes and unrestricted flows of people, goods, and services. Successful nation-states, institutions, and individuals are often cosmopolitan, transnational actors who make confident assertions of a post-national identity (Healy, Mizukami, & Arunachalam, 2016). However, we are witnessing the simultaneous rise of social and political movements that support the re-affirmation of national borders and identities, evident in the elections of Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, and Boris Johnson. The result of this trend towards securitisation and control is that—in some contexts—the “liberal tendency” towards open borders has been thoroughly usurped by restrictive migration and integration policies (Kraler, 2006, p. 42). James Hollifield calls this situation, the ongoing tension between economic cosmopolitanism and securitisation of borders, the “liberal paradox” (Hollifield, 1992, 2004).

⁵ London Metropolitan University lost its sponsorship license in August 2012, following the UKBA’s charge that it had “serious systemic failures” in its systems for monitoring immigration compliance within its international student body.

⁶ Attracting the “best and brightest” being the common refrain in the UK.

Seemingly these competing agendas exist in direct opposition, and much remains to be done to understand and mediate between them at all levels of society, and particularly in the context of the education-migration nexus (Riaño, Mol, et al., 2018).

International students embody the “liberal paradox,” being simultaneously desired as “designer migrants” who can confer advantages in both the global knowledge economy and the global higher education landscape, while being tarred by a general distrust of all migrants as threats to national security, a coherent national identity, and social cohesion (R. King & Raghuram, 2013). They are desired, yet distrusted (Baas, 2019). National policies towards international students illustrate this paradox, frequently beset by contradictions of intent. In the UK, international education policies are uncertain and contradictory (Beauvallet, 2014; Lomer, 2014, 2018), while policies in Japan grapple with the contradictory goals of opening up to the international community while asserting and maintaining Japanese uniqueness and tradition (Burgess, Gibson, Klaphake, & Selzer, 2010). In the midst of these contradictory forces, student-migrants are increasingly vulnerable. Their trajectories are negotiated around the “continuous intersection of personal and the political” (Robertson, 2013, p. 88). The state maintains ultimate monopoly over its sovereignty (Ong, 1999), and students must negotiate the endless redrawing of the fluid boundary that determines their legitimacy in the host country (Calhoun, 2002). Thus, while some argue that international students are the cosmopolitan elite, the “frictionless” migrants of Zygmund Baumann’s (2000) typology, recent developments in the securitisation of migrant flows show that international students, like other categories of migrants, are increasingly at the mercy of unpredictable assertions of state sovereignty dependent on the next swing of the “political pendulum” (OBHE, 2011).

Empirical Research into the Education-Migration Nexus

Clearly, the large body of research discussed above is testament to the significance of the relationship between higher education and migration for a variety of stakeholders, and the paradoxical and contradictory treatment they often suffer. Reflecting the significance of this relationship, a desire to improve policymaking and harness the benefits of student migration, and the need to better understand the internal dynamics of student-migrant trajectories, a rapidly growing body of empirical research has emerged. This body of research is enhanced by its interdisciplinary quality. Migration scholars and geographers are interested in international students as a migrant population, including the theoretical challenge of categorising various mobility patterns (credit and programme mobility, short-term programs, summer schools) of students in various levels and programmes of study, within existing migration frameworks (R. King & Raghuram, 2013; Riaño, Mol, et al., 2018).

Sociologists have tried to understand student mobility as a symptom or function of globalisation, and its consequences for both quality and equality within and between higher education systems (Madge, Raghuram, & Noxolo, 2009). Similarly, scholars have placed student mobilities within an economic framework, positing mobile students as consumers of education as an “export,” and a potential resource for the labour force and economy of the destination country (Gilmartin, Rojas Coppari, & Phelan, 2016). Some have focused on the pedagogical and integrative challenges of hosting large numbers of foreign students and the implications for the educational process (e.g., Madge et al., 2009), and there exists a small body of literature that makes assertions about the regulatory frameworks and social processes which structure the education-migration nexus. To date this research has been primarily concerned with mapping global flows of student-migrants, including the emergence and the impacts of policy initiatives aimed at managing student migration, and with an empirical focus on macro-level data concerning the emergence and perpetuation of flows of student migrants. In this section, I review this research in detail and evaluate theoretical and empirical contributions to date, before discussing their shortcomings.

Policies for the Attraction and Retention of International Students

As Geddie (2015) argues, the past two decades have been marked by the widespread introduction of national policies designed to steer international student mobility and migration:

In particular, there [has been] a dramatic growth of policy initiatives in two areas: overseas educational branding and marketing campaigns... and (im)migration regulation affecting international students during the pre- and post-study phases, such as creating immigration quotas for foreign graduates... or in making regulatory changes to ease the transition from study to work permit status. (Geddie, 2015, p. 235)

In this context, a growing body of research seeks to understand the reasons behind the emergence of policies designed to influence flows of student migrants, particularly in relation to student-specific migration pathways and broader drives for skilled migration and, alternatively, policy restrictions on “student-switching.” In addition, researchers have tried to evaluate the impact of these policy changes on flows of international students and their trajectories post-study.

Beginning with policies designed to drive student-migration, research has focused on the promotion of “two-step” education-migration pathways in which students “switch” their

immigration status from a study visa to a working visa after their graduation, while remaining onshore (Hawthorne, 2006, 2010b, 2014). The implication of this visa transition is that the “student-switcher” (McLaughlan & Salt, 2002) has made a transition from an explicitly temporary to a possibly permanent form of residence in the host country (Chiou, 2017; Ha, 2019; Hawthorne, 2008), allowing them a longer period of residence and fuller economic rights, though it is usually not the case that they immediately receive PR (Robertson, 2013).

The quintessential example of a “two-step” system is Australia, the country in which much seminal work on student-migration policy has taken place. Australia is notable as a country with a history of immigration, in which the attraction of a large foreign-born population was fundamental to its nation-building strategy (Hawthorne, 2006; A. H. Kim & Sondhi, 2015). It was also among the first countries to commit in earnest to creating a dedicated migration pathway for international students. Preferential treatment of international students began in the late 1990s and early 2000s due to the so-called “picking winners” strategy (Hawthorne, 2005). Student-specific “two-step” pathways were opened in response to longitudinal data suggesting that “immigrants with Australian qualifications were more readily integrated” (Ziguras, 2012, p. 39) and fared “significantly better than those who were educated abroad” (Birrell & Hawthorne, 1999). Following the recognition of their relative value in the labour market, policies changed as follows:

Policy mechanisms that had been put in place to bar international students from applying for permanent residence after study were removed. International students became immediately eligible for permanent migration after successfully completing their education in Australia. They were not required to leave the country and could submit their applications onshore. Moreover, students with Australian qualifications could receive higher recognition and bonus points under the skilled migration program. Meanwhile, former international students were not asked to meet the required IELTS [International English Language Testing System] score and/or to satisfy the two years’ work experience [requirement] if they applied within six months of graduation. (Chiou, 2017, p. 88)

The promotion of these student-specific pathways was very effective at attracting potential migrants, and by 2002 up to 50% of skilled migration applicants were internal international students (Hawthorne, 2005). Before long, “the propensity of overseas students to seek permanent residence (PR) [was] very high” (Baas, 2006, p. 9).

As alluded to above, this rising propensity for international students to remain in Australia was an intended consequence of the “picking winners” strategy, but it was not unproblematic. An increase in popular awareness of these pathways was accompanied by a rise in rhetoric around “bogus students” and “migration hunters” (Tran & Vu, 2016). Criticism emerged regarding the insufficient regulation of student-migration pathways and the spread of predatory for-profit private colleges offering accelerated migration programs to a student population that was becoming increasingly vulnerable. Public opinion soured, with significant unforeseen consequences for individual migrants’ security (Baas, 2006; Marginson et al., 2010), and the reputation of the higher education sector as a whole (Ziguras, 2012). Indeed, these problems compounded an unemployment spike following the 2008 financial crisis, and resulted in tightening of the migrant pathway with significant consequences for students within the system (Ziguras, 2012). In 2008, the system changed to favour those with advanced English language skills and a sponsoring employer, though these advantages were reduced somewhat in 2010 (Chiou, 2017). With confidence eroding in the economic benefits of retention, the education export imperative took over and policies sought to market Australia as an attractive study abroad destination—though without the promise of a route to post-study employment or PR—to secure enrolments (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012). In 2013, the government implemented its *de facto* post-study work visa (subclass 485) to allow two to four years of work experience, depending on the applicant’s level of qualification (Robertson, 2014; Tran, Rahimi, & Tan, 2019). As of June 2019, more than 90,000 graduates held this “temporary graduate visa,” implying that international students in Australia have ample opportunities to remain post-study (though the provision of a 485 visa is not guaranteed), but their residence status is explicitly temporary, continuing the trend that PR is less accessible to international graduates (Tran et al., 2019).

Despite the challenges and harsh lessons learned over the past two decades, Australia appears to have benefited from being among the first to commit in earnest to developing student-migration pathways, securing a relatively large portion of the international student market. Simultaneously, it has become a model case for other states seeking to develop their education export market and/or attract a skilled labour force (Tremblay, 2005; Ziguras, 2012). New Zealand’s student migration policy has converged with Australia’s, including the provision of attractive study options and post-study work visas (Chiou, 2017). In the Canadian context, student-specific pathways such as the Canadian Experience Class program and other provincial level programmes are now commonplace, and even students not engaged in explicit education-migration pathways benefit from “a high degree of openness to the entry of international students and a low degree of control over their

settlement, which includes opportunities to work” (Kim & Sondhi, 2015, p. 13). Furthermore, She and Wotherspoon (2013) suggest that Canada has benefitted from increasingly restrictive border policies in the USA, which have made Canada an increasingly attractive alternative for study and potential settlement in a competitive global environment (Weisser, 2015). Even the UK, a more reluctant labour importer, offered a post-study work visa until 2012, and pressure to reintroduce such a pathway has persisted since its removal (Grice, 2017; Hillman, 2019; O’Malley, 2019; TMO, 2018; UUK, 2011).

However, a degree of convergence towards a general model of international student attraction and retention belies the fact that both within and between national contexts there are persistent contradictions in the treatment of student-migrants. Government departments with different policy appetites squabble over their competing interests, and as such, student-migrants often fall between multiple stools (Lomer, 2017a). In the context of the removal of the post-study work visa in the UK, Beauvallet (2014) described this situation as follows:

Two departments, the Home Office and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), are part and parcel of this approach and they sometimes seem at odds with each other. In March 2011, Universities Minister David Willetts told the Commons Home Affairs Committee that differences remained between the two departments in particular over the ability of spouses of overseas students to work in the UK and the limited ability of overseas students to work after graduation (Travis 3 March 2011). Some in the industry like Ed Smith, pro-chancellor and chair of council at the University of Birmingham, have publicly commented on this issue: “He [Smith] said that whereas David Willetts, the universities and science minister, seemed to understand the sector’s concerns, he did not think that ‘the rest of the Cabinet gets it’” (quoted by Baker 17 November 2011). (Beauvallet, 2014, p. 6)

Disagreements between departments and attendant contradictions in policy are widely reported in the literature (França et al., 2018; Lomer, 2018; O’Connor, 2017, 2018; Riaño, Lombard, & Piguet, 2018). However, despite the evidence of such intragovernmental disagreements and contradictions, “the actual processes of policy making and the context and contradictions of the different policies influencing ISM surprisingly remain a black-box” (Riaño, Mol, et al., 2018, p. 283).

Modelling the Determinants of Stay/Return

In light of the opening of student specific migration pathways, perhaps the largest body of research on student migration has focused on modelling student-migrants' propensity to stay in the host country or return to the country of their birth. These "stay/return" models have been successful in identifying some key determinants of decision-making patterns. Early studies by Bratsberg (1995) and Huang (1987, 1988) focused on home country factors, suggesting that economic and political conditions dictated return decisions. A number of studies have approached this topic from a human capital perspective. They suggest that presumed human capital returns are the catalyst for student mobility in the first instance, and therefore explain why the majority of international students decide to return after graduation, where returns on their investment in human capital are typically greater than in the destination country (Bijwaard & Wang, 2016; Soon, 2010). Other similar models have attempted to factor in returns on investment and familial budgetary constraints (Meango, 2014). Recent work has focused on—largely overlooked—gender dynamics (Moskal, 2018), revealing that women face various social pressures that may influence their propensity to return to their country of origin. These pressures appear to vary widely depending on the cultural context of the home country. For example, women from China are more likely to return to their home country than their male counterparts, while Japanese women are more likely than their male counterparts to extend their stay abroad, reportedly to avoid gender discrimination at home (Kelly, Bennett, Giridharan, & Rosenwax, 2018; Lu, Zong, & Schissel, 2009). By extension, Kim (2015) stresses the importance of marital status in influencing return intentions.

Alberts and Hazen's (2005) study of international students complicates such models by dividing the determinants into three distinct strands, suggesting that while professional factors encourage migration transitions within the destination country, societal and personal factors "were more likely to draw them back to their home countries" (p. 131). A nuancing of this three-factor model was presented by Baruch, Budhwar and Khatri (2007) who identify "ethnic differences in labour markets, their adjustment process to the host country, and their family ties in host and home countries" as primary factors (p. 99). Some have introduced a temporal component, reflecting that stay-rates for doctoral students in the US appear to have increased over the past 30 years (D. Kim, Bankart, & Isdell, 2011). Bahna (2018) identified the importance of the interrelation of different embodied capitals, concluding that "although a high level of cultural capital increases the odds of *nonreturn*, a high level of economic capital increases the chance of postgraduation *return*" (emphasis added). In the Japanese case, research suggests that affinity with the unique cultural milieu may encourage people

to stay, while language issues are the largest factor inhibiting retention (L. Yang, 2016). Others identified the retention policies of governments in the destination country as the single most important factor influencing return intentions (Felbermayr & Reczkowski, 2014). Although a number of factors have been identified as playing a role in student recruitment and retention, there remains little consensus on the significance of individual factors, or the interactions between them.

In trying to understand the direct relationship between international student numbers and retention post-study, two competing narratives have been offered. Some research has investigated international student populations as a predictor of subsequent migration, finding that the larger the body of international students, the greater the proportion of it which will subsequently remain in the host country post-study, seeming to indicate that large numbers of mobile students may contribute to retention (Dreher & Poutvaara, 2011). However, Thomas and Inkpen (2016) take an alternative perspective, suggesting that the possibility of remaining in the host country post-study may be driving the initial flows of international students in the first place, as they note that the increasing prevalence of post-study work pathways in the late 90s and 2000s corresponded to the most rapid period of growth of international students worldwide.

The Education-Migration Industry

In the context of the increasing entanglement of flows of international students and the movement of skilled migrants, a new “industry” has emerged in which the selection, attraction, and screening of potential student-migrants is carried out by a growing “ensemble” of actors who broker student migration trajectories (Cranston, Schapendonk, & Spaan, 2018). These actors and the migration industries that they constitute are a fundamental part of contemporary international migration, supporting both legal and illicit flows of migrants across contexts. They are ubiquitous. Spaan and Hillmann argue (2013) that wherever there is a demand for migrants, or a supply of those seeking to move, a migration industry will emerge in support of this process. This typically includes a combination of profit-oriented “agents”—both legal and illicit—and other “supposedly altruistic intermediaries” that seek to support individuals in their desired mobility trajectories for no financial gain (Collins, 2012, p. 142).

In the context of student-migration “an emerging ‘industry’ facilitates study abroad trajectories and acts as a broker for two-step migration pathways” (Baas, 2019, p. 222). Beech (2018) cites “international recruitment teams, international education agents and other institutions selling an education overseas” as key actors within this industry (p. 610). The

influence of education agents is powerful, particularly in the recruitment of international students. Education agents act as intermediaries between students seeking to understand their opportunities to study abroad, and universities seeking to increase their enrolment (Beech, 2018). Such agents have facilitated international student flows for decades, but recently a concerted “agent model” of international student recruitment has become widespread:

Agents themselves are free to prospective students and are paid on a commission basis by the universities which they recruit to. For universities they therefore offer a ‘one stop shop’ for student recruitment in exchange for a fee, and this can often reap considerable reward as agents also tend to understand better the specific cultural context of where the international students are coming from – something which is often not the case for university recruitment officers. (Beech, 2018, p. 613)

The growth of this “agent model” of recruitment is particularly evident in contexts where universities have come to rely on agents based in major source countries to supplement the efforts of their in-house recruitment teams. The Observatory for Borderless Higher Education revealed how important this practice has become, with 38-53% of international student commencements in surveyed nations being linked to an overseas agent (OBHE, 2014), and as many as 80% of applications supported by agents in certain Australian universities (Nikula & Kivistö, 2018).

In addition to institutional recruitment teams and education agents, Beech (2018) argues that governments’ immigration services themselves should be seen as part of the education-migration industry, due to the increasing commercialisation of immigration services and evidence in some contexts—notably the UK—that the fees charged for immigration services are well above the cost of provision (Harvey, Groutsis, & van den Broek, 2018). Furthermore, recent evidence suggests student migration flows are heavily influenced by peer interactions and community leaders (Beech, 2015; S. Kim, 2015), reflecting a large body of literature which argues for the importance of social networks in migration flows of all kinds (de Haas, 2010; Harvey et al., 2018; Massey et al., 1993). Evidence from Japan also indicates that agents have recently sought to capitalise on the importance of these social networks, seeking to hire recent graduates to gain access to their social networks and the recruitment possibilities therein (Liu-Farrer & Tran, 2019).

This “ensemble” of actors and the “migration industry” that they form are now a fundamental piece of the global higher education landscape. They are a critical factor in “shaping mobility patterns and mobile identities through the services that they offer”

(Cranston et al., 2018, p. 543), with the potential to make-or-break the recruitment strategies of higher education institutions and national governments, and individual students' desired education-migration trajectories. The industry therefore lies at the heart of the supply and demand dynamics of the education-migration nexus (Findlay, McCollum & Packwood, 2017). On the supply side, as explained above, higher education is now a key export industry in a number of contexts (Healey, 2017). However, as competition for mobile students increases, the need to maintain the flow of students has led the education-migration industry to occupy a vital role in the funding and provision of higher education, and in the success or failure of attracting skilled student-migrants (Beech, 2018). On the other hand, there is clearly a demand for both international education and post-study work, and the pursuit of these opportunities is partially supported through the advice and services offered by the "education-migration" industry. Universities themselves are an—often ignored—broker in student migration flows, becoming *de facto* "selection actors" within international students' migration projects (Brunner, 2017).

Labour Market Conditions for Student-Migrants

International students are economic actors, working both during their studies and potentially remaining as full-time employees after their graduation. Accordingly, researchers have sought to understand the nature of their job search and the conditions under which they work. While this is valuable, it is important to note at the outset of this section that we lack adequate data on international students' transitions to the labour market (Z. Li & Lowe, 2016), and many of the studies discussed below are partial representations of the full picture of post-study employability and conditions. However, the existing body of research does give an indication of challenges faced by international students.

Research suggests that, relative to their native-born counterparts, international students face certain disadvantages in their job search. Firstly, by virtue of their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, navigating the labour market of the destination country is challenged by both tangible and perceived deficits attributed to international students. For instance, researchers have found that international students tend to be less knowledgeable about the local labour market than their native-born peers (Gribble & Blackmore, 2012; Yu, 2016). Tholen (2015) suggests that international students are not "socialised" to the requirements of the labour market to the same extent, and therefore do not have "the same feel for the game" (p. 778). Similarly, they have less access to the industry contacts that can help in securing employment post-study (Desai-Trilokekar, Thomson, & Masri, 2016). However, perhaps more significant are the intangible deficits that employers perceive among

the international student community. Research has found that employers assume that international student applicants will come with linguistic and cultural deficits, and that the perceived lack of these “soft skills” prevents them from getting a “foot in the door” to prove their worth in the workplace (Desai-Trilokekar et al., 2016; Roberts, 2019). The perception of “deficits” among international students may stem from a limited desire to change established recruitment practices which “remain stubbornly local, privileging candidates who conform to the criterion of ‘people like us’ [and] a ‘good fit’” (Blackmore & Rahimi, 2019, p. 436). Indeed, while diversity is purportedly valued in the workplace, Breaden (2014) and others (Desai-Trilokekar et al., 2016) have found that the supposed advantages of international experience and foreign language skills—disproportionately held by foreign graduates—are outweighed by an implicit preference among employers for workers who readily conform to the established socio-cultural norms of the recruitment and employment system, leading to a “reproduction” effect.

On the other hand, it is not simply individual factors that form barriers between international students and post-study employment, and significant systematic barriers to their recruitment remain. Despite evidence of their disadvantages in the job-hunting process, international students lack targeted support from careers services at universities (Desai-Trilokekar et al., 2016), and are not typically encouraged to work on their employability until too late in the course (Tran & Vu, 2018). Furthermore, employers continue to be dissuaded from hiring international graduates by the risky and burdensome intricacies of immigration procedures, including the possibility of delayed or refused working visas, sponsorship costs, sudden rule changes, and the initial challenge of understanding overly complicated immigration eligibility requirements (Bowcott, 2019; A. Green & Hogarth, 2017):

These frustrations may be divided into three broad categories: first, the erosion of flexibility in recruitment; secondly, an additional administrative burden and associated financial costs; and thirdly, business implications of delays and/or costs that they attributed to migration rule changes. (A. Green & Hogarth, 2017, p. 9)

In particular, residence categories may provide employers with reasons not to employ recent graduates. For example, in Australia, graduates on the 485 temporary graduate visa are less attractive to employers relative to their counterparts who have already received PR (Baas, 2010; Roberts, 2019; Tran et al., 2019).

In summary, research suggests that a combination of tangible and perceived deficits in local socio-cultural and linguistic familiarity, networks and understanding of job-seeking procedures, support mechanisms, and the very nature of the necessary legal procedures themselves, appear to make international graduates more susceptible to unemployment post-study (Z. Li, 2017). Indeed, recent research in Australia revealed that international graduates with comparable qualifications were more than twice as likely to be unemployed than their native-born counterparts (Tan, Cebulla, Ziersch, & Taylor, 2019). However, Zhen Li (2017) continues to argue that the challenges of the labour market are not limited to the risk of unemployment but, owing to the fact that international graduates are dependent on their employers to maintain their legal status, they are at heightened risk of underemployment and exploitation. A growing body of literature has identified the tendency for international graduates to take up “survival” jobs that are far below their skillset and serve only to enable continued residence while they aspire to bridge towards something better (Fotovatian, 2015; Z. Li, 2017). Such jobs may only pay “reservation wages” (Constant, Krause, Rinne, & Zimmerman, 2010; Kogan, Kalter, Liebau, & Cohen, 2011) and confer little in the way of valuable experience that they can use in the pursuit of a job in their field (Fotovatian, 2015). Such experiences are widespread. A report by Tan, Cebulla, Ziersch and Taylor (2019) found that 53% of international graduates felt they were underutilised at work, while international students attracted to Japan under the banner of “global human resources” more often find themselves in sales jobs and the service industry (Yamaguchi, 2016). In addition, a worrying and growing body of research shows that international students are both underpaid and at risk of workplace exploitation (Clibborn, 2018; Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Sawir, 2005; Gilmartin et al., 2016; Marginson et al., 2010; Nyland et al., 2009)

Insecurity and Precarity

Indeed, the increased risk of workplace exploitation is one of a number of factors that render student-migrants a vulnerable group. This vulnerability is related to their embodiment of the “liberal paradox,” described above (Favell, Feldblum, & Smith, 2007; Marginson et al., 2011), but is rarely openly acknowledged (Brooks & Waters, 2011). In general, mobile populations are “relatively under-supported by the human rights regime” (Marginson, 2012, p. 499). In leaving their home country, mobile populations relinquish the social and legal welfare structures of their home government, while also becoming distanced from their support networks and families. But, even among mobile populations, the rights and protections that international students may expect, and who is tasked with guaranteeing those rights and protections, are particularly ill-defined:

Major gaps exist in the administration of cross-border students' rights, with a notable lack of coordination between the various host country rights-enforcement agencies and among institutions at the global, regional and national levels. (Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Sawir, 2005, p. 330).

In many cases, responsibility for the protection of individual students is delegated to individual educational providers, tasked not only with the social integration and education of these students, but the quasi-governmental role of tracking and administrating international student populations on behalf of immigration authorities (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2011). International students are limited by their constructed status as “consumers rather than individuals with a variety of social and economic rights” (Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Sawir, 2005, p. 330). While some authors and advocacy groups have sought to argue for their rights (Tannock, 2018; UKCISA, 2016), given ongoing scepticism towards all migrant populations, and the persistent narrative of international students as “backdoor migrants” or “bogus students,” they do not benefit from a groundswell of support for fuller legal protections. As long as international students’ relationship to the host nation remains loosely-defined and mediated through a university host, “social, industrial, civil and political rights, ultimately claims on governments... are off the agenda” (Marginson et al., 2011, p. 68).

In this context, international students’ rights and post-study transitions are “almost wholly subject to the power of the state and their decision to include or exclude” (Robertson, 2013, p. 87), and they find themselves at the mercy of unpredictable assertions of state sovereignty dependent on the next swing of the “political pendulum” (OBHE, 2011). Policies may be favourable to student-migrants at the point of their application, but an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment can cause rapid changes with powerful consequences for international students during their course of study (Mares, 2018). Referring to the experiences of one of her participants, Roberts (2019) describes this situation as follows:

The ability of the government to revise immigration policy every few months meant that even though his university program in Australia lasted two years, the conditions that provided him with the best chance of staying beyond his student visa, as a graduate temporary worker, were changing at a much faster rate. (Roberts, 2019, p. 9)

As described above, the tightening of PR rules and skilled migration intakes in Australia followed shortly after liberal reforms that had attracted unprecedented numbers of

new student-migrants. This change of circumstance therefore occurred in the middle of their studies. Previously desired pathways were suddenly closed, leaving “many thousands of young people living in limbo on study visas and temporary bridging visas” (Ziguras, 2012, p. 50). The removal of the post-study work visa caused similar issues in the UK. In such changes, the state emerges as “an elusive, uneven, manipulative entity” in the lives of individual student-migrants, the source of a perpetual state of precarity (Mountz, Wright, Miyares, & Bailey, 2002, p. 338; Robertson, 2013).

Strategies and Tactics in Student-Migrant Trajectories

While research into student’s initial mobility has come to consider the perspectives of individual students (e.g., Montgomery, 2010), this is not the case for research into their post-study transition, or research which conceptualises student mobility as a single component of a broader migration pathway. It is notable that the weight of research into the education-migration nexus had focused on the wider context in which international students negotiate their post-study transition, rather than how these students actively negotiate this transition. However, researchers have recently begun to focus on the overall strategies and “micro-tactics” employed by student-migrants as they negotiate the education-migration nexus (Roberts, 2019).

First, researchers have sought to understand the extent to which post-study work forms part of the overall strategy of international student-migrants, and when the intent to remain post-study enters into their strategic thinking. Research does indicate that post-study work opportunities increase flows of international students (Civinini, 2018b; Geddie, 2015), and many interpret that to mean that international students often move with the intention to remain post-study as part of a conscious “two-step” strategy. It is this assumption that lies at the heart of criticisms of international students as “migration hunters,” and which is implicit in much research on student migration. There does appear to be some truth to this assumption. In her work with student-migrants in Australia, Roberts (2019) revealed that temporary visas such as the student visa or 485 graduate temporary worker visa did form part of her participants’ longer-term strategy to “create future migration possibilities and security for themselves in contexts where migration outcomes can be unpredictable” (p. 1). Indeed, a strategic approach is also associated with the pursuit of “lifetime mobility aspirations,” where initial mobility as a student enables a transition to other visas that correspond to broader aspirations (Mavroudi & Warren, 2013; Tan & Hugo, 2017, p. 8). However, not all international students who seek to remain in the host-country post-study do so with the intent to live there permanently. Many recent graduates seek to capitalise on

economic opportunities in the host country to quickly pay back some of the financial investments made in their education abroad, while others see a short period of professional experience as a further differentiator in the labour market on their return home (Mavroudi & Warren, 2013).

In this vein, others have presented evidence that counteracts the assumption that international students move with the intent to work or settle in the destination country, arguing that this belies the complexities of their strategies and decision-making processes (Baas, 2016; Pásztor, 2015). Pásztor argues that overall strategies are more often shaped by the availability and nature of funding opportunities for mobile students, and that their ongoing deliberations of whether to persist or change strategy during their studies has more to do with the confluence of environmental and personal factors than their original plan. Indeed, whatever the intentions of students on their arrival in the destination country, research has revealed that post-study intentions and outcomes change during their education. Ryan (2018) illustrates how students' post-study intentions change drastically during their first year of study, with the desire to remain decreasing significantly in the case of her participants, before stabilising throughout the rest of their course. Mosneaga and Winther (2013), too, show how experiences during study can have a powerful impact on post-study intentions and trajectories.

Whatever the overall strategy of students, it is clear that the uncertainty, insecurity, and precarity inherent in the education-migration nexus require student-migrants to implement a variety of "micro-tactics" to increase their chances of success in pursuing a desirable trajectory (Roberts, 2019). Based on a large-scale study, Tran et al. (2019, p. 7) provide the following list of "micro-tactics" described by their participants in Australia:

1. Explicitly and proactively explaining their work rights to prospective employers.
2. Being persistent and demonstrating to employers their willingness to work and their interest in the job.
3. Targeting small businesses and their own universities.
4. Using diversified and alternative job search channels such as *Gumtree*, *Indeed* or *Glassdoor* instead of *seek.com.au* or *career.com.au*
5. Vigorously applying for jobs and being willing to accept entry level jobs/lower pay.
6. Reskilling.
7. Being resilient by taking smaller steps and constantly striving to develop employability capabilities.
8. Self-sourcing or seeking internships through undertaking Professional Year.

9. Networking and strategically using networks.
10. Developing local connections and increasing local cultural and social understandings.
11. Creating jobs for themselves and their international peers.

This list of tactics illustrates both the variability of international students' experiences and the need to adapt to the various contingencies encountered, reflecting the lived reality of navigating the education-migration nexus. The need to be proactive and persistent in negotiations with potential employers, including the explanation of work rights and eligibility requirements, reflects the fact that employers may be ill-versed and reluctant to engage in hiring international graduates (Bowcott, 2019; A. Green & Hogarth, 2017). Diversifying the job search, including moving outside one's area of study to "survival" jobs and taking "reservation wages" is not just an unfortunate reality of the post-study environment, but an explicit tactical decision on the part of student-migrants (Constant et al., 2010; Fotovatian, 2015). The assumption of a "smooth" or "direct" transitions to the workforce (Baas, 2010; Hawthorne, 2010a) is recognised by individuals in Australia as an ideal that is not necessarily attainable, with more "roundabout," "stepwise," or contested trajectories among the myriad tactics that may be employed for a successful transition to security in the destination country (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Ha, 2019). Critically, social networks in both the native and migrant communities represent an important resource, aiding in social, emotional and economic integration to the destination country (Baas, 2017; Bilecen & Faist, 2015). Most of all, this diversity of tactics draws attention to the importance of the creativity and adaptability of individual student-migrants, who must recognise and choose the correct tactics to navigate the specific challenges of their changing context (Moskal, 2018).

What is Missing?

The research above attests to the growing interest in the education-migration nexus, and previous assertions that student-migrants are "a blind-spot on the research map of social sciences" are no longer appropriate (King, Findlay, & Ahrens, 2010, p. 46). However, this is not to say that ongoing calls for greater attention to be given to the education-migration nexus are misplaced, as there are significant gaps in the literature and persistent theoretical lacunae (Arthur & Nunes, 2014; Lu et al., 2009; Riaño, Mol, et al., 2018). To conclude this chapter, I will critically analyse the existing body of research and present the emerging research agenda.

Moving Beyond the Stay-Return Binary

A particular focus of criticism has been a perceived over-emphasis on stay/return techniques in attempts to model flows of student-migrants and their post-study decision-making. Yu (2016) suggests that a focus on the stay-return binary is evident across the literature on the education-migration nexus and highly skilled migration more broadly:

On one hand, research on student migrants mainly focuses on their plans and intentions to return before they have the chance to become familiar with the job markets in both sending and receiving countries (Hazen & Alberts, 2006; N. L. Li et al., 1996). On the other hand, literature on highly skilled return migrations overwhelmingly looks at return plans among skilled migrant workers in receiving countries or the return behaviours among skilled returnees without considering them as part of a strategic return migration decision-making process. (Yu, 2016, p. 17)

Though critiques of this stay-return bias have been evident for more than 20 years, research into international student mobility and migration is still “anchored in the stay-return paradigm” (Tan & Hugo, 2017, p. 3). Wu and Wilkes (2017) illustrate in Table 2 the extent of this anchoring by providing a list of articles whose stay/return focus is explicit in the title.

The problem with such a focus on stay/return modelling is that it encourages methodological choices that do not reflect the sheer complexity of factors that affect post-study decision-making, nor the presence of third country mobility trajectories. In essence, the “external assumptions” that student-migrants are primarily concerned with the choice of whether or not to stay in the host country specifically fails to recognise the “internal realities” of post-study trajectories (Wu & Wilkes, 2017, p. 125).

In light of these criticisms, there are growing calls for research to identify the complexities of the post-study transition, moving beyond a stay/return focus. Tan and Hugo (2017) argue that this can be achieved through “focusing on the links between places in ISM and emphasising the role of migrant agency, [thereby] allowing for the inclusion of two, three or even more places that feature in ISM beyond the ‘stay-return’ paradigm.” In addition, using a life-course framework that conceives the post-study trajectory as a process rather than individual event (Carlson, 2013) will allow researchers to better “consider the lifetime mobility aspirations of international students and their mobility,” without being blinded by immediate post-study concerns (Tan & Hugo, 2017).

Table 2*A selection of “binary titles” of post-graduate migration literature on international students*

Author(s) and year of publication	Title
(Bratsberg, 1995)	The incidence of non-return among foreign students in the United States
(Zweig, 1997)	To return or not to return? Politics vs. economics in China’s brain drain
(Alberts & Hazen, 2005)	“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries
(Hazen & Alberts, 2006)	Visitors or immigrants? International students in the United States
(Baruch et al., 2007)	Brain drain: Inclination to stay abroad after studies
(Harvey, 2009)	British and Indian scientists in Boston considering returning to their home countries
(J. J. Soon, 2010)	The determinants of students’ return intentions
(de Haas & Fokkema, 2011)	The effects of integration and transnational ties on international return migration intentions
(Sage, Evandrou, & Falkingham, 2013)	Onwards or homewards? Complex Graduate Migration Pathways, Well-being, and the ‘Parental Safety Net’
(J. J. Soon, 2014)	Educated in New Zealand and staying on?
(Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014)	Should I stay or should I go?
(Arthur & Nunes, 2014)	Should I stay or should I go home? Career guidance with international students
(Wang, Tang, & Li, 2015)	Return migration of the highly skilled in higher education institutions
(Tai & Truex, 2015)	Public opinion towards return migration
(S. Kim, 2015)	The influence of social relationships on international students’ intentions to remain abroad
(Bijwaard & Wang, 2016)	Should I stay or should I go?

Note. Adapted from Wu and Wilkes (2017).

Reductive “Status-Making” of Student-Migrants

A further weakness shared by much research into the education-migration nexus is the reductive way in which student-migrants’ status is conceptualised during their trajectory. The attribution of “status” is typical in the management of migrant populations, representing a legal distinction “used to classify differing modes of entry, and the subsequent rights, entitlements and vulnerabilities of migrant subjects” (Robertson, 2019, p. 220). However,

while such a practice is justified in the delineation of a migrant's *legal* status in a particular country, such statuses are typically singular and static, not reflecting how a migrant's *social* status in the host society is dynamic, relational, and intersectional (Robertson, 2019). Depending on both the context and the actors engaged in the act of definition, student-migrants are variably defined as "students," "workers," "migrants," "tourists," "travellers," "skilled," "unskilled," "temporary," "permanent," "desired" or "feared." For instance, at any one time a particular student-migrant may be seen as a "student" in the eyes of their university, an "unskilled worker" in the eyes of their part-time employer, a "migrant" in the eyes of the government, "temporary" in all eyes but their own, and simultaneously "desired" as a fee-paying future worker and "feared" as a security risk and burden on the public purse. Student-migrants are inadequately defined by any of these categories, each of which reduces their complex and overlapping subjectivities and belies the complexity of their social roles in the host society (Roberts, 2019; Robertson, 2011, 2013).

Such reductive status-making has recently been challenged (Roberts, 2019). Eskelä (2013) criticises the implicit divide between the statuses of "student" and "worker" in particular, foregrounding the diversity of experiences within the international student body. The author highlights how student-migrants may work in various capacities to support their studies, may transition to full-time work post-study, and may then continue to study part-time after starting work (Eskelä, 2013), revealing how the study/labour/migration delineation can blur throughout international students' trajectories (Clibborn, 2018). Indeed, formal work experience may be a component of the course of study itself (Tran & Soejatminah, 2017).

Other research has shown how international students dispute certain "statuses" that are sometimes applied to them. Prazeres (2017) found that students dislike being characterised as "travellers" or "tourists" due to an implicit "outsider" identity that prevents them from "cultivating a sense of local belonging" (p. 918). Calvo (2018) summarises these complexities, arguing that "it is necessary to recognise that international students become involved in broader urban processes such as the tourism industry, marginal gentrification or entrepreneurial creativity, thus becoming a new class of transnational urban consumers" (p. 2142). Indeed, it is no longer satisfactory to assert an impermeable boundary between the statuses of student, worker, migrant etc., and in light of increasing political and social tensions surrounding international students, the nature of such boundaries requires scrutiny.

However, we lack adequate sociological theorisations of the permeability of these various statuses. Even at the most fundamental legal level, debate still rages as to whether international students should be defined as a sub-group of labour migrants, an entirely

separate migrant category, or whether they should even be legally defined as migrants during their studies at all (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Civinini, 2018a; The Migration Observatory, 2017). At a more granular level, we understand little of how various social statuses are “produced, contested and contestable across fluid legal, political, social and cultural lines” (Robertson, 2019, p. 229). However, Ha (2019) argues that “the fluid nature of the international student status provides an important opportunity to recognize and remedy the rigid understanding of immigrant categories as discrete and separate” (p. 8). In studying international student-migrants’ lived experiences, we can begin to make a deliberate move beyond “rigid categorisations... the historical obsession with the social, economic, and political dimensions of migration” towards a more nuanced and permeable understanding of the dynamic, relational, and intersectional nature of student-migrants’ subjectivities (Ha, 2019, p. 8; Robertson, 2019).

Student-Migrants’ Perspectives and a Focus on Agency

As is evident from this chapter, a large portion of research into student migration has focused on the systemic drivers of flows of student-migrants, and the implications of such flows for nation-states, higher education systems and institutions. These studies have typically used macro-level data and statistical analyses to model student flows, with an emphasis on informing policy (Montgomery, 2010). Such research is valuable, and our understanding of the significance of student migration has advanced as a result of the publication of many such studies since the turn of the century. However, research at the micro-level that seeks to understand the internal processes of student migration has not kept pace (Baláž & Williams, 2004; S. Kim, 2015).

It is important to note that, by the end of the 2010s, micro-level research concerning the international student experience *during-study* had developed significantly and seen some exemplary studies. Montgomery’s (2010) book, for example, used a combination of semi-structured interviews and participant shadowing to give new insights into the “international student experience.” Montgomery’s rich data revealed a clear picture of the complex subjectivities of individual students, while also unveiling the international student community as a distinct social network bound together by their shared experiences of moving abroad to a new social context. However, Montgomery’s work did not seek to give significant insight into *post-study* subjectivities, which is the focus of this thesis. A large study undertaken in Australia (Marginson et al., 2010; Nyland et al., 2009) was successful in partially bridging the during- and post-study experiences of international students from the perspective of individuals, matching Montgomery’s commitment to rich narratives of

individual students' experiences, but paying greater attention to students' relationship to immigration authorities and employers outside the university setting.

Despite these studies and a small number of other notable counterexamples, in 2011 Brooks and Waters argued that research on international students' post-study activities suffered from a dearth of "students' own perspectives—on their motivations, objectives and experiences" (p. 2). They went on to suggest that this reflects a general trend in migration research, the site of sustained calls for a more stringent engagement with "the human face" of mobility and migration (Favell et al., 2007). In the decade since this statement, the foundations laid by the important work of Marginson and others have given rise to some progress towards this goal. In a recent review of student mobility and migration research, Page and Chahboun (2019) echoed Brooks and Waters in calling for further "de-muting the subjects of the research themselves," but argued that "there is some indication that this may be happening... we observe [what] seems to be a sharpening of focus from a systemic level to an individual" (p. 881). The authors note that the field was opening up to more qualitative methods and intensive research with individual student-migrants, and that such research served to "demute" these participants, moving beyond reductive assumptions of "deficit" and "frictionless" movement, and instead revealing the heterogeneity of both experience and purpose within the student body. This renewed focus on students' desires is described as "among the most exciting and promising within the field of international student migration," using "an actor-driven perspective that allows for agency and illustrates the complex interplay of factors that inform the migrant experience" (Page & Chahboun, 2019, p. 880). Most importantly, the authors note that, by virtue of a methodological shift towards qualitative methods conducted with individual student-migrants, the field has begun to grapple with one of its lasting challenges: the role of individual agency.

Indeed, one of the fundamental weaknesses of research to date on the education-migration nexus is the relative neglect of student-migrants' individual agency. This neglect has been a noted weakness for a number of years, and critics began to call for a fuller investigation into structure-agency relations within the education-migration nexus as early as 2004 (Baláz & Williams, 2004; Hazen & Alberts, 2006). Such calls have become a persistent rallying cry over the past two decades. In their study of postgraduate student-migrants in English universities, Mavroudi and Warren (2013) argued that "little academic work exists on how skilled and highly skilled migrants actively negotiate immigration policy," suggesting that concerted efforts to understand international students' interactions with structural elements of the education-migration nexus should be a research priority (p. 261). Arthur and Nunes (2014) called for research that investigates the precise ways in which

agents “navigate a myriad of systemic, cultural, and personal challenges” throughout their trajectories (p. 602). Tan and Hugo (2017) reiterated that agency is “seldom explored” and, in their excellent piece on “agency in mobility,” Tran and Vu (2018) recently argued that “the notion of agency within the context of student mobility has not been the explicit focus of theoretical and empirical investigation” (p. 167).

Summary

The existing body of research reviewed in this chapter provides valuable empirical accounts of student migration in a number of contexts around the world. However, this account is insufficient. The persistent emphasis on majority host nations means that the heterogeneity of student migration across contexts is not yet reflected. Furthermore, research to date has not provided adequate theoretical tools for analysing and understanding the education-migration nexus across contexts. A research agenda has emerged that may address these inadequacies, with the potential to build on the evidence that has been reviewed in this chapter and address the shortcomings identified therein.

To summarise this research agenda briefly, critics have called for further research that gives more credence to the temporal span of experiences within the education-migration nexus, including pre-, during-, and post-study. These calls emphasise attention to the biographies of individual students (Baláž & Williams, 2004; Kim, 2015; King & Raghuram, 2013), the processual nature of their educational trajectories and post-study transitions (Carlson, 2013; Hazen & Alberts, 2006), and their actual outcomes rather than just intentions (McGill, 2013). By extension, researchers have suggested that studies of student-migration need to conceptualise migration as “a process rather than an event,” the focus being placed on “the whole migration process within the contexts that shape the events before, during and after the move” (Kōu et al., 2015, p. 113). To this end, Findlay and colleagues call for a greater consideration of the life-course, citing Elder et al. (2003) in offering “the lifespan, human agency, time and place, timing, and linked lives” as key points of interest (Findlay et al., 2012; Findlay et al., 2015). Critically, authors also call for a fuller investigation into structure-agency relations within the education-migration nexus (Baláž & Williams, 2004; Hazen & Alberts, 2006), particularly “research that merges [the] perspectives of students disempowered by the social and administrative systems wherein they find themselves, and the perspectives of empowered agency, accounting both for their freedom and constraint” (Page & Chahboun, 2019, p. 881).

Thus, a clear research agenda is emerging which places great empirical emphasis on the experiences of individual student-migrants to reveal the complexities and contingencies

of the structure-agency relations that are at play within the education-migration nexus. There is also a methodological component to this research agenda. New research into these factors needs to be designed to: (1) harness the complexities of individual identities, (2) be temporally sensitive in situating student-migration within the life-course of participants, and (3) capture the dynamic interaction of individual agency with structural forces throughout student-migrants' trajectories. It is this research agenda within which this study is located.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

In previous chapters I introduced the evolving global and national contexts in which student migration is situated, and critically analysed academic research into the education-migration nexus. I argued that, while academic interest has grown significantly in recent years, research into student migration has not adequately engaged with individual student-migrants' agency and its role in the education-migration nexus (Page & Chahboun, 2019). Indeed, as Tran and Vu (2018) argue, agency "has not been the explicit focus of theoretical and empirical investigation" (p. 167). Thus, the aim of this study is to address this issue by offering a direct empirical engagement with the development and practice of agency in student-migrants' trajectories through the education-migration nexus. However, as illustrated by persistent theoretical divides within the field of migration studies, engaging with migrant agency is not a simple theoretical endeavour. Indeed, the "structure-agency impasse" is a fundamental challenge facing the field (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1689). In recent years a growing community of researchers has joined in an attempt to negotiate this impasse, and their theoretical advances are influential in the design of this study. In this chapter, I introduce these recent advances and develop a theoretical and conceptual framework that reflects contemporary practice in the study of migrant agency, by adopting a life-course perspective to the study of migration. This framework serves both the empirical requirements of this study in isolation and contributes to further development of our theoretical and empirical understanding of migrant agency in general.

I begin the chapter with a brief overview of theoretical developments in the field of migration studies. I review recent attempts to map the field, outlining the functionalist and historical-structuralist paradigms that have dominated, and the way in which each paradigm conceptualises migrant agency. To illustrate the differences between these paradigms, I draw on examples from canonical texts by, among others, Beck, Bourdieu, and Giddens, and describe how each offers powerful theoretical tools in certain contexts, but remains inadequate for creating conceptual or empirical models of migrant processes that appropriately account for structure-agency interactions over time. In light of these criticisms, I introduce recent theoretical developments that provide an alternative perspective with the potential to provide a fuller account of structure-agency dynamics in migration processes. Using Bakewell's "search for a middle ground" as a launchpad (Bakewell, 2010), I outline the "life-course" perspective to the study of migration (Elder, 1994; Hitlin & Elder, 2007) and the "chordal triad" model of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), which are particularly

well suited to understanding the role of agency in student-migration processes and form the theoretical and conceptual foundation of this study. I describe the life-course perspective and the “chordal triad” in detail and justify their selection for this research by drawing on a few existing studies that use a similar framework, while also addressing some common criticism.

Dominant Paradigms in Migration Studies

To begin this chapter, I chart the emergence of two dominant paradigms in migration studies and argue that it is their conflicting ontological assumptions regarding migrant agency that have prevented consensus within the field. In the post-World War Two years, migration studies emerged organically as an interdisciplinary field that drew on diverse theoretical and empirical sources (Favell, 2007). This diversity had many advantages, but eventually resulted in a lack of shared understanding of the primary goals of the field and a theoretical cohesion among migration scholars (Massey et al., 1993). A desire to provide a holistic overview of the evolution of migration studies emerged in the 1990s, when it was recognised that the post-war increase in international migration had not been met with a “single coherent theory” adequate to understand the “complex, multifaceted nature” of migration processes (Massey et al., 1993, p. 432). To “bring some order to the theoretical space” of migration studies (Bakewell, 2010a, p. 1692), Massey and colleagues provided an influential overview of the field in 1993, suggesting that theories of migration were primarily concerned with understanding *either* the initial causes of migration flows, *or* the forces that would perpetuate these flows over time.

Building on Massey et al.’s work in their seminal text *The Age of Migration* (2014), authors Castles, de Haas and Miller provided their own comprehensive overview of the theoretical evolution of migration studies. In contrast to Massey’s earlier work, *The Age of Migration* cuts across the “artificial” divides between disciplinary perspectives (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014, p. 26). They delineate between “functionalist” and “historical-structural” approaches as distinct paradigms within the field of migration studies. Each paradigm contains a number of implicit ontological assumptions about the nature of individual agency and the role that this plays in guiding and influencing migration flows. It is these conflicting positions on the agency issue that have led the two paradigms to become theoretically and methodologically polarised and held back the search for a general theory of migration that considers migrant agency at its core. Here, I review these paradigms, their treatment of migrant agency, and their polarised positions on the individualist-structuralist spectrum.

Functionalist Approaches

Since the 1960s, many researchers of migration processes were heavily influenced by the functionalist paradigm of the social sciences, sometimes called the “classical” approach to the study of migration (Pryor, 1981). This broad paradigm is predicated upon an image of a social system described as “a complex ‘organic’ bounded whole, made up of differentiated parts, but held together by abstract values and dominant mainstream norms of behaviour” (Favell, 2014, p. 63; Parsons, 1951). Within the bounded social whole, actors of various types are “interdependent parts” which may act individually, but are bound by both the rules of the system that stem from these norms of behaviour, and the persistent relationship between any particular part and the whole of the social system (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014, p. 27). The result of these rules and their stabilising influence on relationships within the bounded social system is a tendency towards “homeostasis” or equilibrium (Bakewell, de Haas, & Kubal, 2012; Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014; Pareto, 1935). Drawing on this image of society and applying the laws of neoclassical economics and human capital theory, functionalist thinkers developed a number of models of migration processes that remain influential today.

Neoclassical economic theory was the basis of some of the earliest macro-level theories which have been influential in shaping public understanding of migration. Building on the assumption that social systems tend towards equilibrium, neoclassical economics presented the idea that migration is a natural process by which “geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labour” would be addressed, as labour would become optimally redistributed (Massey et al., 1993, p. 433). Early proponents of this theory applied it to internal migrations, illustrating how surplus labour in rural areas would, over time, tend to migrate towards urban areas to serve an increasingly concentrated industrial sector (Lewis, 1954). Later, Borjas applied similar ideas to international migration, arguing that cost/benefit analyses on the part of individuals may lead them to migrate across national borders “because it is in their benefit (either in terms of psychic satisfaction or income) to do so” (Borjas, 1989, p. 457; 2000). When such decision-making patterns were analysed at scale, internal migration dynamics observed by Lewis (1954) and later by Todaro (1969), appeared to hold true internationally. Scholars argued that an “international immigration market” served to redistribute labour to serve the needs of the global economy.

In addition, an alternative theory within the functionalist paradigm emerged in the form of human capital theory. Sjaastad, an early proponent of the use of human capital theory in migration studies, saw the decision to migrate as a conscious calculation of the (non)monetary costs and returns of a proposed migration journey (1962). The assumption

was that migration was a form of “investment in the human agent,” allowing them to accrue knowledge and skills, or apply them in a more conducive environment, to accrue benefits over the course of a lifetime (Sjaastad, 1962, p. 87).

While different in their focus, these theories each fall under the umbrella of “push-pull” models of migration, seeking to identify and quantify the influence of “push” factors in the home country that would motivate one to be mobile, and the “pull” factors in the destination that cause migrants to gravitate in that direction. Such models are attractive as they are attentive to the conditions in sending and receiving contexts, and offer the scope to “incorporate all major factors affecting migration decision-making” (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014, p. 28). However, Castles et al. (2014) go on to explain that these models are limited by the fact they are purely descriptive, unable to guarantee that all factors are included in the analysis, unable to accurately identify the relative influence of individual factors in the decision, or account for interactions between multiple factors. In addition, as Lomer (2018) explains in the context of student-migration, such models “cannot account for the discursive effects of policy on students or how these discourses may be internalised” (p. 309).

Furthermore, and most importantly within the context of this study, these modelling techniques are also hamstrung by a reliance on three ontological assumptions that do not give adequate attention to the role of migrant agency. To briefly summarise, these assumptions are: (1) the idea that humans exhibit “rational choice” in an endeavour to maximise their returns on investment, (Simon, 1955; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014); (2) the idea that migrants possess (more-or-less) perfect information⁷ of conditions in both the home and destination countries, and the investments required to make the move successful; and (3) the assumption that markets are equally accessible to those with limited economic capital (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014, p. 29).

The Individualisation Thesis and the Functionalist Tradition

To understand this approach to migrant agency, it is important to introduce rational choice theory and the “individualist” approach to structure-agency relations in more detail. Some have argued that the conditions of globalisation have engendered people with an increased capacity for cross-national mobility (Urry, 2000) through the weakening or removal of prior structural constraints on agency (Beck, 1992). Beck argues in his

⁷ Within the rational choice or rational actor paradigm there are certain approaches that acknowledge imperfect information transfer, which I return to below.

“individualisation” thesis that, as traditional social structures have been broken down under the changing circumstances of globalisation, individuals have a renewed ability to be the masters of their own destiny (Beck, 1992). As Beck understands it, individuals in the second modernity are increasingly removed from the constraints of tradition, prescribed roles and, in the context of migration, restrictions on international movement. As such, he believes that individuals are now imbued with the sole responsibility to “take control of their lives” and pursue their own vision of success (Evans, 2002, p. 264). Implicit in Beck’s thesis is a shift in responsibility for success away from the state, family, or civil society. Indeed, under the conditions of modernity, Beck argues that success is a “reflexive process” (Archer, 2007) and “a task for the modern individual,” and that individuals’ agency is not only more free than ever before, it is also “even more necessary” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, P. 133).

The individualisation thesis has enjoyed enduring appeal among those in the functionalist tradition because it is theoretically compatible with the push-pull and neoclassical modelling techniques that dominate the paradigm. The idea that individuals are largely removed from structural constraint and are free to pursue trajectories that optimally serve their own self-interest slots nicely into the rational choice tradition (Baker, 2018). Rational choice theory contains an assumption of individualism, positing individuals as active agents who are goal-oriented and whose behaviour can be conceived of as the active pursuit of these goals (Lindenberg, 2006). Human capital theory, introduced above, is a clear example of this. It posits that individuals invest in education or training due to the expectation of returns which, by implication, will help them to achieve their goals (Sjaastad, 1962). Rational choice models are imbued with this perspective, assuming that individuals are conscious of and evaluate the maximum potential return on investment of a particular course of action in light of the balance of push and pull factors, typically dominated by monetary costs and benefits (de Jong, 1999). In each case, the pursuit of these goals is generally considered to be restricted by scarcity of opportunities or resources, and the degree and quality of information available. Opportunities and the resources to pursue these opportunities are seen as finite, and “rationality” in contexts of scarcity is the targeted pursuit of goals despite the limited opportunity (Goldthorpe, 1998; Lindenberg, 2006). In summary, the central assumption of rational actor theory is that individual actors make rational choices in the pursuit of optimal outcomes as the result of an “abstract objective analysis of means and ends” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 987).

However, as I introduced briefly above, the individualisation thesis and the functionalist approach to modelling migration are inadequate in understanding and theorising migration flows. While rational choice theories have had some success modelling

macro-level flows of migrants, there are a number of weaknesses of these analyses. First, as discussed in Chapter 2, these models have typically viewed the outcomes of migration as binary, split between the decision to migrate or not, “to stay or go,” an assumption that has been problematised by the recognition of patterns of repeat and onward migration (DaVanzo, 1983; Yu, 2016). The more spurious assumption is that such a decision is made on the basis of individuals’ reflexive analysis of where one’s qualifications and skills are of most value, on the basis of an objective analysis of all necessary information (de Haas, 2010). Such assumptions have been the subject of sustained challenge, with Stigler arguing as early as 1961 that the pursuit of information itself has a cost that may outweigh its utility (Stigler, 1961). In addition, research suggests that migratory decisions are typically made with imperfect information (Banerjee, 1984; Morawska, 2007; Nelson, 1959), and the extent and quality of information transfer both within and between migrant communities can have a powerful influence on subsequent migration (Granovetter, 1973). Stiglitz (2000) has argued that the very pursuit of information is influenced by agentive factors, as the information pursued and the manner in which actors screen information depends on the particular priorities of that actor, rather than the information of highest abstract utility. Indeed, even in hypothetical contexts of perfect information transfer, the uptake and evaluation of that information by migrant communities is influenced heavily by individual predispositions, familial priorities, and cultural practices (de Haas, 2010; Portes & Böröcz, 1989).

Summarising opposition to the assumptions of rational choice theory, scholars have posited that individuals typically employ only “bounded rationality,” that may exhibit rational features, but cannot approach the fulfilment of the assumptions inherent in rational choice models (Simon, 1955). Thus, though purporting to give insight into decision-making practices of individuals as the basis for modelling macro level flows, the simplicity inherent in their decision-modelling techniques renders such models unable to grant significant insight into the role and influence of agentive factors in influencing patterns of migration over time. The individualisation thesis and the functionalist approach to understanding migration have yet to incorporate a satisfactory account of migrant agency, perhaps explaining “why real-life migration patterns often deviate enormously from neoclassical predictions” (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014, p. 41). Indeed, contrary to the predictions of on neoclassical economic modelling, evidence indicates that large populations are migrating to locations with a low average income and high levels of unemployment (Knapp & Gravest, 1989).

In summary, despite the strengths of the functionalist paradigm, as early as the 1950s it came under heavy criticism for “the striking absence of agency and power” (Bakewell, de

Haas, & Kubal, 2012, p. 420). While such models remain popular in migration research, emerging understandings of the importance of individual agency have led to direct criticisms of these models for research into student migration (Baláž, Williams, & Fifeková, 2016; Wu & Wilkes, 2017). As Sidhu (2006) describes, this persistent emphasis on push-pull modelling and rational choice theory contributes to the perception of students as consumers, to the detriment of an extended consideration of socio-cultural and political influences on student mobility and migration.

Historical-Structural Approaches

In contrast to the functionalist paradigm, those taking a historical-structural approach to the study of migration processes tend to emphasise the influence of social structures over the agency of individuals who make up migration flows. Proponents of the historical-structural or “conflict” paradigm often take a neo-Marxist perspective and focus on the unequal power relations that are often manifest in international migration (Pryor, 1981). In comparison to the functionalists, they place a greater emphasis on forced migrations and the influence of various structural forces in directing migration flows. Historical-structuralists oppose the “individualisation” thesis and the functionalist assumption of free and rational choices as the driver of migration and suggest that migration processes have a propensity to reproduce social inequalities by serving the interests of those in power. Multiple influential theories have been proposed, but historical-structural approaches share the perspective that “economic, cultural and political structures constrain and direct the behaviour” of migrants in ways that “reinforce” social disequilibria (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014, p. 27-8). As an example, scholars often cite migrants as a source of cheap and easily exploitable labour which secures power in the hands of the capitalist class, and various models provided by historical-structuralists indicate the ways in which structural inequalities within and between sending and receiving contexts can become more entrenched through migration flows (Massey et al., 1998).

In the 1960s, the historical-structuralist perspective within migration studies emerged in dependency theory, which saw migration as both a symptom and a cause of the continued exploitation of less-developed countries. Frank (1966) argued that the exploitation of labour that had begun in the colonial period was being perpetuated by the view that migrants are a source of low-paid and powerless workers, contributing to the “development of underdevelopment” under global capitalism. Building on this foundation of thought, Wallerstein (1974) and Amin (1974) argued that these less-developed countries were the “peripheral” players in a “world system” that was controlled by the wealthier and more

powerful countries at its “core.” Those who subscribed to this theory of a world system saw migration flows as a feature of the post-modern capitalist economy that served to entrench uneven power relationships between the former colonial powers and peripheral nations in the global south.

In the same tradition as dependency and world systems theories, migration flows were later recognised as a fundamental component in the proliferation of international movement of capital, trade, knowledge, culture, media, and people that characterises globalisation (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014). Globalisation theories of migration propose that growing cross-border interconnectedness has triggered migration flows through its uneven effects and patterns of inclusion in, and exclusion from, global markets (Castells, 1996). Conversely, some argue that increasing flows of other kinds have reduced the demand for migrant labour and the long-term movement of people, with short-term mobilities becoming more embedded in the modern economy (de Haas, 2009). In this context, border regimes have been tightened and the right to mobility has become “the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor” in globalised society, as both the right to migrate and the migrants themselves have become commodified (Bauman, 1998, p. 9).

The historical-structuralist theories described above share the central conceit that migration flows are influenced by modern states’ desire to manage the supply of labour. This is captured by Piore (1979), who argues that a reliance on the import of immigrant labour is now “structurally embedded in modern capitalist economies” (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014, p. 35), but that this does not solely take the form of the attraction of the most qualified, or the exploitation of low-skilled labour from countries on the global periphery. Piore suggests that changing labour demands in developed countries persist across the spectrum of skills, resulting in a de-facto “segmented” labour market for migrants that may prioritise the attraction of highly skilled or low skilled workers at different times, in different regions, and in different sectors of the economy. Summarising these dynamics, Piore suggests that the labour market is typically divided into two: (1) the “primary” workers in the core economy, and (2) “secondary” workers whose labour serves the needs of the “primary” (Piore, 1979). Conditions vary between these two “segments” of the labour market, with legal rights, compensation, and opportunity heavily in the hands of the primary workers.

These historical-structural approaches to the study of migration have been invaluable in drawing attention to the uneven distribution of power and wealth, and how this can facilitate—or necessitate—specific patterns of migration that entrench global inequalities. In comparison to the functionalists, this vision of global market forces and the enforced movement of people requires a fundamentally different conception of migrant agency. While

functionalists assume the primacy of rational choice in individual migrants and downplay the role of broader socio-political forces, the historical-structural approach places a greater emphasis on structural factors and how they “constrain and direct the behaviour of individuals in ways that generally do not lead to greater equilibrium, but rather reinforce such disequilibria” (Castles et al., 2014, p. 27-8). Under this paradigm, researchers tend to all but overlook the importance of migrant agency “by depicting migrants as victims of global capitalism who have no choice but to migrate in order to survive” (Castles, et al., 2014, p. 36).

The Structuralist Approach in the Historical-Structural Tradition

The structuralist approach to the study of migrant agency offers a convincing alternative to that offered in the functionalist tradition, through an acknowledgement of the role and importance of structural factors as a constraining or enabling influence on individual agency. While the historical-structural approach has its roots in neo-Marxist critique, since the 1970s practice theory has become the primary tool applied to the study of international migration. Within the historical-structuralist tradition, the notion of *habitus* as adapted by Pierre Bourdieu, in particular, is a powerful contribution that goes some way to capturing the interplay of structure and individual agency, particularly highlighting the importance of individuals’ resources, and their ability to mobilise them, in navigating the rules of society to their own advantage (Bourdieu, 1977; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Bourdieu understands *habitus* as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions” that develop in individuals as a result of interactions with existing social structures (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). The *habitus* “generates an infinite but bounded number of possible actions, thoughts and perceptions” that are infused with the value systems of the *habitus*, but also serve to reinforce the *habitus* itself (Ahearn, 2001, p. 118). This vision of individual agency is powerful in enlightening social reproduction as a function of individuals’ actions, showing how agency and structure exist in a recursive relationship: *habitus* reflects individuals’ dispositions, which causes them to act in ways that reinforce the value systems inherent in the *habitus*. This vision of structure-agency relations is a significant step beyond the functionalist approach, recognising that individuals’ dispositions and actions can be socially determined (Hitlin & Elder, 2007).

Furthermore, Giddens offers a particularly influential perspective on structure-agency relations in his theory of “structuration” (Giddens, 1979, 1984). Like Bourdieu, he too understands structure and agency to exist in a recursive loop, in which “people’s actions are shaped (in both constraining and enabling ways) by the very social structures that those

actions then serve to reinforce” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 117). Giddens goes further than Bourdieu, however, in stating that agency and structure are mutually-constitutive, and therefore inseparable, with social structure playing the dual roles of the “medium and the outcome of the social practices they recursively organise” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). This theory of “central conflation” is powerful from an explanatory standpoint, providing a model of how structure and agency interact through everyday practice. However, as Archer has argued, the conflation of structure and agency also removes the possibility of identifying “the properties and powers” of each (Archer, 2007, p. 34). This presents a challenge to those hoping to use Giddens’ theory in empirical research, as it does not provide the tools to address the relative influence of social context and active agents.

However, while the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens are among the most influential within the fields of migration and education studies, their conceptions of structure-agency have been criticised for being overly deterministic (King, 2004), and conceiving agency as “so tightly bound to structure that one loses sight of the different ways in which agency actually shapes social action” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963). Sewell (1992) has argued that, as a result of their deterministic nature, Bourdieu and Giddens’ accounts are finely attuned to processes of social reproduction, but are less applicable to the study of social change. Structuralism, therefore, also offers an unsatisfactory account of migrant agency, as it “reifies the power of the state to ‘secure’ borders and control migration” and is not attuned to evidence that “even on the edges of states and societies, faced with formidable levels of marginalisation, people continue to resist, find room for negotiation, and exploit these narrow margins” (Mainwaring, 2016, p. 3-4).

The Structure-Agency Impasse: Migration Studies’ Search for a Middle Ground

As illustrated, neither the functionalist nor historical-structuralist approaches to the study of migration provide an adequate account of migrant agency and, given their status as the dominant paradigms within migration studies, the field as a whole has reached a “structure-agency impasse” (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1689). While significant advances have been made in modelling and theorising international migration flows, Bakewell argues that it is the—as yet unresolved—structure-agency impasse that is the fundamental barrier preventing the creation of a “coherent and robust body of migration theory” (p. 1689). The canonical approaches have “tended to skirt around the problem of structure and agency,” and the search for a “middle ground” is necessary to take the field forward (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1690).

Since the 1980s, migration studies has witnessed a number of attempts to develop theories of structure-agency interactions that emphasise “putting migrants first,” seeking to move beyond the “structure-agency impasse” (Castles, de Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 37). Thus, in an attempt to split the difference between functionalist and historical-structuralist approaches, a third mode of migration studies has emerged, variously dubbed the “subjectivist” (Ratcliffe, 2007) or “integrative” approach (Goss & Lindquist, 1995). This new perspective can be characterised by its engagement with the broader sociological debate surrounding structure-agency relations. Advocates of the subjectivist mode place great emphasis on developing theories that take a fuller account of migrant agency while remaining alert to the importance of structural factors that restrict or enable agency throughout migration processes (Conway, 2007; Morawska, 2001). Implicit here is the importance of temporal factors, the variable importance of, and interactions between, structural and agentive forces over time as migrants negotiate their trajectories. Such approaches emerged not only as a critique of dominant paradigms, but also from a desire to understand how migrants’ agency can influence their individual trajectories and exert a reciprocal influence on the social structures in which they are present.

In the late 1970s, Stark (1978) introduced the household approach to migration studies, illustrating how the decision to migrate is not only shared among members of the immediate family, but has implications for the family, too. Stark understands migration as: (1) a risk-sharing behaviour, allowing the family to diversify its income sources to provide greater flexibility in the face of social or environmental insecurities in a particular location; (2) an opportunity to access more beneficial capital arrangements; and (3) an attempt to find relative prosperity (Stark & Levhari, 1982).

Network, transnational, and systems theories emphasised various ties between sending and receiving contexts, and the role that migrants may play in strengthening or weakening these social links over time. Migration network theory concerns the way in which individuals continue to connect with their communities, whether it be their interactions with other migrants in the destination context, or their continued contact with relatives who stayed behind. Network theorists argue that these persistent social ties not only influence potential migrants’ choice of destination but have a demonstrable impact on the relative success of particular moves and the propensity for others to follow in their footsteps. Research suggests that “pioneer” migrants who are among the first to follow a particular migration trajectory form a “bridgehead” in the destination country that may encourage and support future migrants in pursuing a similar move (Böcker, 1994; Portes & Bach, 1985).

Transnational theories of migration draw on the growth of information and communication technologies to argue that communities are no longer bound by nation-states but can be built across borders through mediated intimacy. Authors such as Vertovec have argued that transnational communities have emerged in light of the ability to communicate at a distance, influencing the development of migrant identities (Vertovec, 1999). Glick-Schiller (1999) describes migrants who actively participate in these communities and whose existence can no longer be understood as contained within a particular nation state as “transmigrants.” However, caution is urged in the use of transnational theories, which are still beset by ambiguity in the distinction between “transmigrants” and diasporic communities. Furthermore, it appears that the idea of a “transmigrant” only applies to a small proportion of the global migrant community, and is not readily applicable to temporary labour migrants or permanent migrants who do not maintain strong links with the country of their birth (Castles, de Haas, Miller, 2014).

For a number of years migration systems theory gained momentum as an alternative theory that accounted for both structural and individual agentive factors. Systems theorists emphasise how flows of migration take place in the context of related and relatively stable systems of exchange of other elements (e.g., capital, culture, and language) between the sending and receiving contexts. Akin L. Mabogunje (1970), the earliest proponent of the systems approach, suggested that migration systems are defined by the dynamic relationship between these interacting elements, primarily influenced by feedback mechanisms and the evolving external environment (Bakewell, 2014, p. 13; Mabogunje, 1970). Mabogunje argues that it is the presence and nature of a wider migration system that strengthens the links between people in specific geographical locations, “encourag[ing] migration along certain spatial pathways” (Castles, de Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 43) and resulting in “relatively stable exchanges; yielding an identifiable geographical structure that persists across space and time” (Mabogunje, 1970, p. 12). It wasn’t until 1992 that Kritz et al. applied this theory to international migration, but migration systems theory soon became a staple tool in the field of migration studies (Kritz, Lim, & Zlotnik, 1992).

However, as a number of scholars have described, traditional migration systems theory has a number of weaknesses. Firstly, it assumes that the system is already in place, and cannot explain how a migration system may emerge (Bakewell, 2010). Secondly, it provides little insight into the influence that migration flows may exert on sending and receiving contexts, and therefore does not capture changes in “the initial conditions under which migration takes place” (Bakewell, 2010, p. 17). Thirdly, there is little understanding of the internal dynamics of migration systems, and particularly the negative feedback mechanisms

that may cause migration flows to change over time (de Haas, 2010). Further, while individual agency and systemic/structural factors are considered in isolation, their interactions are not adequately theorised. Thus, while offering a step forward from the functionalist and historical-structuralist approaches, and featuring in attempts to “re-launch” systems theory in recent years (Bakewell, 2012), migration systems theory has not yet provided sufficient theoretical advances to bypass the “structure-agency impasse.”

The Life-Course Perspective

In addition to those mentioned above, the life-course perspective has gained traction over recent decades, today offering a “promising conceptual starting point for overcoming the crucial micro-macro problem in social research by analysing the dynamic interrelation of structure and agency” (Wingens, Windzio, de Valk, & Aybek, 2011, p. 1). From a life-course perspective, agency is “the ability to exert control over and give direction to one’s life” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135), or the capacity for a person to “construct their life courses through choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance” (Elder et al., 2003, cited in Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, & Paloniemi, 2013, p. 60). These definitions of agency within a life-course framework are instructive, as they illustrate how conscious intent is not necessarily required for choices and actions, and how agency operates over the long temporal span and under the influence of structural forces that are analytically distinct from the actors themselves.

Within this framework, the “opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance” are separate contextual entities that function as “social and historical resources as well as constraints” in the lives of individual agents (Eteläpelto et al., 2013, p. 60). Such resources and constraints are understood to be the result of complex interactions between “cultural norms, institutional expectations, and the history of encounters either with that person or people in similar social or cultural contexts” (Hopwood, 2010, p. 113). These contextual factors are recognised in multiple theories of agency, and have been described by different researchers as the “political opportunity structure” (Baubock, 2006b), the “ecological conditions and circumstances” of agency (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015, p. 626; Biesta & Tedder, 2007), the “situational logic of opportunity” (Archer, 2007), the “space of possibles” (Marginson, 2014), and the “situational contexts of action” (Emirbayer

& Mische, 1998)⁸. While each of these descriptions emerges from subtly different theorisations of structure-agency relations, they each hold to the idea that context exists in a dynamic relationship with the agency of individual actors, exerting an enabling or constraining force that influences particular courses of action and their overall life-course journey. Evans describes this as follows:

Young people are social actors in a social landscape. How they perceive the horizons depends on where they stand in the landscape and where their journey takes them. Where they go depends on the pathways they perceive, choose, stumble across or clear for themselves, the terrain and the elements they encounter. Their progress depends on how well they are equipped, the help they can call on when they need it, whether they go alone or together and who their fellow travellers are. (Evans, 2002, p. 265)

Building on Evans' metaphor, the "landscape" of a life-course represents the "situational contexts of action," the myriad structural and social forces that are the medium in which individual life-courses develop. These contexts have an implicit form, with particular pathways being well-travelled and accessible while others appear impassable. In addition, new routes are pioneered as actors discover and pursue novel courses of action, and in-so-doing carve new pathways into the existing landscape. This image of a life-course as both constrained and enabled by the landscape—or context—in which it is present, while simultaneously having the potential to act upon that landscape, illustrates one of the key features of the life-course approach. Structure can enable certain acts, particularly those that have a precedent, to be recognised and subsequently "institutionalised" as legitimate courses of action (Wingens et al., 2011). Structure can also restrict, with particular courses of action being opposed by powerful institutions or actors, or incidentally made more challenging by the lack of recognition of and support for a particular course of action. However, actors also possess the ability to influence structure through their actions. The structure-agency relationship is seen as reciprocal and, as a result, researchers taking a life-course approach necessarily make methodological choices that ensure an empirical sensitivity to this reciprocity, using a variety of methods to engage with both agentic and structural forces and their interplay.

⁸ Due to the authors' prevalence in the thesis as a whole, I will continue to use Emirbayer and Mische's term, "the situational contexts of action," in this section.

In addition to this balance of structural and agentic sensitivity, a distinct advantage of the life-course perspective in the study of migration is its sensitivity to temporality. Migration is increasingly seen as “a process rather than an event” (Carlson, 2013; Kōu et al., 2015, p. 113). Migration trajectories take time. The decision to migrate itself is likely influenced by family, and thus may have its roots in a different generation (Kōu, Mulder, & Bailey, 2017). The contexts in which migrations take place, too, have a temporal component (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Similarly, the influence of action in changing the contexts of migration is rarely instantaneous, but instead plays out over the *longue durée* (Wingens et al., 2011). As a result, “the interplay of structure and agency needs to be analysed not only with regard to interdependencies of different life domains but also taking into account the dimension of time” (Wingens et al., 2011, p. 10). Like the life-course, therefore, migration trajectories⁹, the structure-agency interactions therein, and their outcomes are inherently both enacted practically and evident empirically over an extended temporal span.

The life-course perspective, then, offers a promising theoretical foundation on which to base a study of structure-agency relations in migration processes. It not only reflects the temporally dynamic nature of structure-agency relations, it also provides an empirical focus. Proponents of the life-course approach argue that by examining the relationship between “individuals’ life-courses in their timing, pacing and sequencing of life events (micro-level) [and] the dynamics of social structures and institutions (macro-/meso-level),” researchers can not only provide insights into structure-agency relations and the patterns of thought and action that emerge therein, they can also situate these insights in the experiences of individual migrants (Wingens et al., 2011, p. 6). As Wingens et al. go on to summarise with reference to Back (1980), the life-course perspective supports explanation of “systemic regularities in events of unique meaning” (p. 6).

The “Chordal Triad” Model of Agency

Studies utilising a life-course perspective require a nuanced theoretical understanding of agency that not only provides a framework to understand agency through its interactions

⁹ I distinguish between the life-course and migration trajectories as follows: migration trajectories are understood to be participants’ specific pathways through the education-migration nexus, that being from their decision to travel abroad for university, to their post-study transition. The life-course, on the other hand, is a broader journey that plays out over a broader temporal span, and is ostensibly the product of many overlapping trajectories. It is important to note that migration trajectories and the broader life-course are, to a degree, mutually constitutive. Participants’ migration trajectories are heavily influenced by the broader life-course, but those trajectories also become a constituent part of participants’ life-courses in the longer term.

with structure, but which also allows us to reflect on how these structure-agency interactions are temporally moderated. This is particularly important when seeking to reflect on migration as processual, as in the case of student-migration (Carlson, 2013), and as a feature within a life-course journey. Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998) offer an effective model of agency that is complementary with the life-course perspective (Tran & Vu, 2018), which they call the “chordal triad” model of agency¹⁰. Written in response to the “flat and impoverished” conceptions of agency that dominated social theory, explicitly referencing “the abstract voluntarism of rational choice theory” and the “habitual, repetitive, and taken for granted” perspective of the structuralists (p. 963), the authors offer an alternative model of agency that allows us to interrogate the internal dynamics of structure-agency relations through a renewed focus on temporality:

Theoretically, our central contribution is to begin to reconceptualize human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963)

To help in delineating agency’s temporal nature the chordal triad distinguishes between three distinct but overlapping elements of agency—iterational, practical-evaluative, and projective—oriented towards the past, present, and future respectively¹¹. The model highlights how actors call on past experiences and memories, the contingencies of the present, or imagined futures when interacting with their temporal-relational context and constructing their life-course. Each element is explained in more detail later in this section, but the model as a whole is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

¹⁰ This “chordal” model and the musical metaphor at its heart are described in more detail below.

¹¹ For clarity please note that Emirbayer and Mische frequently use these terms in synonymous pairs with other terms in common usage: the iterational element being referred to as “habit,” the practical-evaluative element as “judgment,” and the projective element as “imagination.”

Figure 1

The chordal triad of agency (adapted from Emirbayer and Mische [1998])

The iterational element	The practical-evaluative element	The projective element
The selective reactivation by actors of <i>past</i> patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes, and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time.	The capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of the <i>present</i> .	The imaginative generation by actors of possible <i>future</i> trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future.

Figure 1 illustrates how agency can be delineated into three constituent elements, but it is important to recognise that these are analytical distinctions that should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive. As the authors describe, “all three of these constitute dimensions of human agency that are to be found, in varying degrees, within any concrete empirical instance of action” (p. 971). Indeed, at any time, all of these three elements exist “chordally,” drawing on a metaphor from music theory. In music, a chord is the simultaneous use of a number of notes that combine together in a way that is (usually) harmonious. For example, a G chord is the combination of the notes G, B and D, and a C chord is a combination of the notes C, E and G. Despite the limited number of notes, their various combinations can give rise to many chords with distinct characteristics. Similarly, within the chordal triad model of agency, the different elements of agency may combine in various ways, with varying levels of each element. As Emirbayer & Mische go on to explain, in any given “instance of action” one element may emerge as a dominant “tone,” reflecting an individual’s general agentic orientation at that specific time. This allows the identification of dominant orientations within the “chordal” exhibition of the three elements in interview data. However, the presence of a dominant “tone” or agentic orientation does not preclude the simultaneous presence of the other elements. Unlike Hitlin & Elder’s (2007) similar model, the chordal triad also aids us in “specifying the internal structure of the three main forms of agency” both theoretically and empirically (Kristiansen, 2014). Each element of agency contains within it a number of smaller analytical categories described as “subtones,” and, regardless of any dominant agentic orientation, Emirbayer and Mische argue that it is always possible to detect “subtones” from other elements.

The chordal triad model represents a significant development over prior models of structure-agency relations by recognising that the “situational contexts of action” themselves, as well as the relationship between the contexts of action and individual social actors, are

temporally moderated. In light of their focus on temporality, as well as the relational nature of structure-agency dynamics, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) define agency as follows:

The temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. (p. 970)

This definition illustrates some key underlying ontological assumptions of the chordal triad that are critical to its ability to extend on existing theories. It illustrates how agency is a “historically variable phenomenon” (p. 972-3), recognising that actors’ changing relationship to their contexts is not located only in the present moment. Actors possess an evolving understanding of their relationship with their contexts, which can change retrospectively with the benefit of hindsight, and proactively in anticipation of imagined futures. Importantly, the variability of this relationship “makes a difference to their actions,” as “changing conceptions of agentic possibility in relation to structural contexts profoundly influence how actors in different periods and places see their worlds as more or less responsive to human imagination, purpose, and effort” (p. 973). Recognising the importance of temporality, Emirbayer and Mische refer predominantly to the “temporal-relational contexts of action,” rather than “situational contexts of action” throughout their article. I follow this approach throughout this thesis.

It is the “temporal-relational contexts of action” that represent the influence of structure under the “chordal triad” framework. For greater clarity of how this may influence agentic orientations, Emirbayer and Mische offer the following disaggregated definition:

As we conceive of it, the cultural context encompasses those symbolic patterns, structures, and formations (e.g., cultural discourses, narratives, and idioms) that constrain and enable action by structuring actors’ normative commitments and their understandings of their world and their possibilities within it. The social-structural context encompasses those network patterns of social ties (see Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994) that comprise interpersonal, interorganizational, or transnational settings of action. Finally, the social-psychological context encompasses those psychical structures that constrain and enable action by channelling actors’ flows and investments of emotional energy, including long-

lasting durable structures of attachment and emotional solidarity.” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970)

The chordal triad contains the assertion that changes in agents’ temporal orientations also imply changes in the degree to which the agents may reflect upon and be inventive within their temporal-relational contexts. However, they do not suggest that lower levels of reflection and invention imply a relative lack of agency. Implicit here is the understanding that agency is not necessarily a deliberative form of social action, countering the structuralists’ assertion that habitual action is non-agentic, but rather that habit is one element of agency alongside imagination and judgment. The definition asserts that agency can both “reproduce and transform” the situational contexts of action, drawing on the authors’ understanding of agency as “intrinsically social and relational” (Emirbayer, 1997) and illustrating how actors are simultaneously influenced by their contexts, while also a constituent part of them. Indeed, the authors highlight agency as a “dialogical process” in which actors’ interactions and communications are both a product and productive of the “collectively organized contexts of action” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 974). The authors also make explicit their understanding that the “self” is itself a relational entity. Rather than emerging organically from a metaphysical sense of determinism or “free will,” the authors understand that the goals and limits that agents recognise are created in dialogue with their contexts.

Having introduced the “chordal triad” as a whole, I now describe each element in detail, and briefly introduce a number of key “subtones” that feature strongly in the findings chapters. It is important to note here that all sub-tones proposed in the authors’ original piece were included in the analysis phase, but there is insufficient space to introduce all in full. Thus, I only introduce in this chapter the subtones that emerged as the most significant at the conclusion of the analysis phase of this research.

Iterational

The iterational element of agency is the realm of “habitual” action, in which an actor projects temporally backwards in time and draws on past experiences or models of action to guide their decisions and actions in the present. In furthering this concept, Emirbayer and Mische draw on the work of George Herbert Mead (1932, 1934) who argued that present experience is constantly “permeated by the conditioning quality of the past” (p. 975). Past experiences are the source of an actors’ understanding of available patterns of the action, the

“routines, dispositions, preconceptions, competences, schemas, patterns, typifications, and traditions” that typify appropriate actions in any particular social milieu (p. 975).

To some, behaviour that relies to this extent on the recognition and repetition of existing patterns of action would appear to make it distinctly un-agentive, straying dangerously close to the prescription of action most often associated with the influence of structure, rather than agency. However, Emirbayer and Mische refute this claim with reference to classical and pragmatic philosophy. First, they draw on the Aristotelian concept of *hexis*. Aristotle describes the manner in which a “settled disposition or state” can lead to action, arguing that such action is not “mechanical” but reflects the agent’s desires and virtues (Aristotle, 1985, p. 44). Second, they refer to Dewey, who drew particular attention to habit as “standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts” (Dewey, 1922, p. 40-41).

Thus, habit or iteration are not an unreflective and un-agentive “matter of mere stimulus and response,” but include an implicit degree of intent on behalf of actors. Emirbayer and Mische specifically identify iterational agency in the way in which people “selectively recognise, locate, and implement” patterns of thought and action in response to both the temporal-relational contexts in which they are located, and in light of their own predilections and preferences. In any “empirical instance of action,” the actors involved are making a choice of which patterns of action they deem most appropriate in that situation, and the way in which they make this choice is highly agentive. However, while still agentive through “selective reactivation” of patterns of action, this is the element of agency that tends towards maintenance of the status quo, perpetuating structural relations, and may be associated with social reproduction. Practically, the iterational element of agency is related to maintenance of existing systems, processes, and relationships, and it is this dimension of the chordal triad of agency that draws on and is most compatible with the structuralists. Drawing on Dewey, Bourdieu recognised that habit is “an active and creative relation to the world” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 122)¹², by which actors unconsciously recognise and subsequently deploy patterns of action that appear natural given the “contingencies of particular empirical situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 978). Giddens, too, saw

¹² Bourdieu, in an interview with Wacquant, used these words to describe *habit*, and not the related but distinct concept of *habitus*. Full quotation: “the theory of practical sense presents many similarities with theories, such as Dewey’s, that grant a central role to the notion of habit, understood as an active and creative relation to the world.”

habitual action as emerging from a well of “tacitly employed mutual knowledge” that acts as the foundation of more conscious deployment of agency (Giddens, 1979, p. 58).

Having described their understanding of habitual action, Emirbayer and Mische attempt to break down the iterational element of agency into a number of subtones that help to unlock its internal structure. They identify elements such as: selective attention, which describes the way in which actors identify situations that require a response from those that they can reasonably ignore; categorical location, the manner in which actors typify particular courses of action according to specific normative categories; and expectation maintenance, which details actors’ sense that patterns of action and their results are stable and predictable. While these subtones are important, as will become clear later in the thesis, two others were particularly critical in the final analysis of this study and warrant extended discussion at this stage.

The first critical subtone is “recognition of types,” which describes actors’ ability to identify “typical patterns of experience and predict their recurrence in future” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 979). Significant here is the assumption that actors recognise their situation as analogous with another they have experienced or witnessed, or that features within their “social memory” (Alexander, 1988). In this recognition, actors implicitly place themselves within known boundaries of social action, in which a particular situation has a typical response or set of responses from which they must select. In the context of this study, such a recognition is important as it defined the trajectories that were seen as default or typical, which in turn legitimised particular pathways of action and, by extension, trajectories through the education-migration nexus. In this sense, participants’ recognition that their own situation was analogous with those of other student-migrants was a foundation of the realisation that particular trajectories of action were appropriate in that context, illustrative of the way in which the iterational form of agency can influence action.

The second critical subtone is “manoeuvre among repertoires,” which reflects the fact that, within the confines of iterational agency, there still exists a multitude of legitimate trajectories of action from which individuals must select. While actors’ repertoires are always—to a greater or lesser extent—“limited by individual and collective histories,” they nevertheless have the ability to express their judgment in choosing a specific course of action (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 980). This process of selection may be subconscious or conscious, but nevertheless reveals a degree of intent, as certain trajectories of action are discarded in favour of others that are preferable given the particular contingencies at hand. It is important to highlight participants’ manoeuvring in the context of this study, as their trajectories through the education-migration nexus are characterised by changing temporal-

relational contexts. This is particularly relevant for student-migrants, as their legal rights, social responsibilities, and personal goals and priorities evolve throughout their trajectories. Throughout, the contingencies of their present change, and thus the ability for participants to evaluate and draw on different courses of action was an important mechanism by which the iterational element of agency could influence their trajectory.

Practical-evaluative

The practical-evaluative element of agency is that which is directly involved with the present. It refers to the ability of individuals to make responsive “practical and normative judgments” of the temporal-relational contexts in which they are engaged (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 994). Exertion of practical-evaluative agency implies a judgment of the present conditions that not only aids an actor’s ability to exercise their agency in a way that is to their own benefit, but also implies an actor’s acknowledgement of their potential to change the temporal-relational contexts through their own action. As a result, the practical-evaluative element of agency is seen as the element with the greatest capacity to “challenge and transform the situational contexts of action themselves” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 994). In developing their concept of the practical-evaluative element of agency, Emirbayer and Mische describe it as a condensation of the related qualities of “practical wisdom, prudence, art, tact, discretion, application, improvisation, and intelligence” (p. 994), each united by the shared implication that an actor in possession of such a quality can effectively judge and appropriately respond to a given situation.

Drawing again on Aristotelian ethics, the authors describe how social action is inevitably beset by ambiguity and cannot be boiled down to a set of “clear and explicit rules of conduct” that will maintain their effectiveness if repeated *ad infinitum*. As Kristiansen (2014) explains, “these are the situations in which a habitual response is not possible” (p. 8). Practical wisdom or judgment is, therefore, the ability to recognise the ambiguous and changeable nature of temporal-relational contexts, to identify the decisive contingencies of the present, and to respond with appropriate decisions and choices. However, this is not to imply that practical-evaluative agency is enacted solely at the level of an individual who possesses rare judgment. The pragmatists extend on Aristotle and argue that practical wisdom emerges relationally. It “entails a deep involvement and participation in an ongoing community of discourse” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 995). Dewey (1978) and Arendt (1984) suggest that judgment is a political act that is only validated in its relation to the common interest. Practical-evaluation, therefore, is more than the ability to make the right decision for one’s own purposes and encompasses the ability to contextualise one’s own

social experience as reflective of a shared social reality. In effect, those with a strong practical-evaluative orientation are not only making judgments for their own purposes, but also recognise that they are embedded within a web of social relations upon which they have the potential to exert a mediating influence.

As with the iterational element of agency, Emirbayer and Mische offer a number of subtones within the practical-evaluative element that aid in understanding its internal structure. I will explain the critical subtones for the purposes of this study below but, for reference, the authors also introduce: deliberation, in which actors weigh possible trajectories of action in light of their broader aspirations, thereby bridging between intellectual discussion and “deliberate desire”; decision, which follows deliberation, in which an actor becomes resolved to “act here and now in a particular way”; and execution, which entails the ability of an actor to pursue their prior decisions.

While the above subtones are important, within the confines of this study the first critical subtone of the practical-evaluative element of agency is “problematization.” Problematization is the necessary pre-condition for the emergence of a practical-evaluative agentive orientation, as it describes the moment in which an actor recognises that the “particular situation at hand is somehow ambiguous, unsettled, or unresolved” and that their action is required in its resolution (p. 998). In this recognition, actors inevitably must grapple with the fact that the success of ongoing projects and trajectories of action is not to be taken-for-granted. If the project is to be pursued to its conclusion, “something must be done—some practical judgment arrived at—that will render the given situation unproblematic, settled, and resolved” (p. 998).

“Characterisation,” the second critical subtone of the practical-evaluative element of agency, follows on from problematization. It denotes the way in which the recognition that something is problematic must then be framed in terms that the actor can understand. Typically, this takes the form of being characterised in terms of “principles, schemas, or typifications from past experience,” thereby also implicating the iterational element of agency. Not all problems can be neatly characterised according to schemas with which actors are already familiar, but even in completely novel situations the use of analogy and metaphor can be a sorting device to aid in the identification of potential solutions.

Lastly, the final critical subtone within the practical-evaluative element of agency is “resistance, subversion and contention.” In some cases, temporal-relational contexts are recognised by actors to be a restricting or marshalling force on their agency, directing them towards particular trajectories of action. However, Emirbayer and Mische assert that practical-evaluative judgment of these contexts can result in actions “by which actors resist

and subvert the logics and practices of the established order” (p. 1001), thereby navigating or potentially changing the rules of the game. To illustrate such actions, the authors refer to the work of de Certeau (1984), who identified the improvisational ability to “place blows” and seize opportunities “on the wing” as indicative of the enactment of a subversive judgment on the social milieu (p. 18, *xix-xx*).

Projective

The projective element of agency is its imaginative aspect, wherein actors seek to comprehend future possibilities by projecting temporally forwards in time and “construct[ing] changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present” (1998, p. 984). It is the process by which actors recognise the uncertainty of the future and choose to become creative in the pursuit of an ideal outcome. Projectivity thus represents actors’ capacity for imagination, influenced, but not bound, by past experience. It is the ability to act as the “inventor of new possibilities for thought and action,” moving beyond past experiences to “reconstruct and innovate upon traditions in accordance with evolving desires and purposes” (*ibid.*, p. 984). In this sense, this element of agency is wrapped up in the creation of identity and narrative, in that actors “take the first step towards reflectivity,” thinking ahead to a desired future self, while retaining a link to the past self in the “identification of typical trajectories” that they may pursue (*ibid.*, p. 989). Indeed, in implicating both the past self and the ideal imagined future self, projectivity thus mediates between the iterational and practical-evaluative elements of agency.

Emirbayer and Mische develop the concept of projectivity with reference to classical and enlightenment thinkers, recognising that projectivity has been variously conceived as either an amoral or irrational threat to the social order or an invaluable way for actors to “transcend the bounds of sensible experience” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 986). Early conceptions of projection are recorded in biblical narratives, in which visions of the future were characterised by the pursuit of the promised land and the ideals of behaviour that could lead to redemption. Plato, conversely, saw imagination as “a source of illusion, irrationality and immorality,” warning that projection stood in opposition to the purity of rationality in the present (*ibid.*, p. 986). Aristotle later provided a more neutral view of projectivity, conceiving it as the practical link between the present and the future, in “allowing social actors to transcend the bounds of sensible experience,” thereby imagining goals and means to achieve them (*ibid.*, p. 986). For Aristotle, projectivity was the very foundation of means-ends rationality, providing the psychological framework that gave rise to the *telos* of action,

which remains influential in contemporary sociology. Indeed, echoes of these ancient perspectives persist in more modern interpretations of the imagination and its role in personal projects and social life. Though their normative positions on projectivity differ, these various accounts recognise the power of visions of the future in shaping contemporary practice, a recognition that has persisted through centuries of debate in moral philosophy and political discourse.

Today, a variety of approaches to social research provide a distinct conception of projectivity. Schutz (1951, 1967) stressed that individual “projects,” *telos* in Aristotle’s terms, give meaning and direction to contemporary action. In essence, he argued that actions today are significant in that they are—to a greater or lesser extent—in service of a particular project. For example, my current “project” is to complete this thesis, and the choice to spend my days reading, interviewing, and writing rather than playing with my nephew or watching Netflix, is made in service of that greater goal. While this is an oversimplification that does not reflect the constant fluidity of “means and ends” and the inherent indeterminacy of the process of projection¹³, it captures Schutz’s conception of individual action as inherently forward-looking (Schutz, 1967).

Dewey (1981) and Mead (1932) provide insights into the role of projectivity in collective action. Both of these pragmatic thinkers understand projection into the unknown as a fundamental part of individual human action and intelligence, but they go on to consider how individual projection can constitute social action. The pragmatists share Schutz’s assertion that the ability of actors to project enables them to carry out an “inventive manipulation of the social world” that influences its development, but they also stress that projectivity is inherently intersubjective (Dewey, 1981). Desired futures are influenced by, and negotiated with, other social actors. Movement of any one actor through established social roles, or the collective effort to change these roles, is contingent on the cooperation of the collective (Mead, 1932). Projection, therefore, is not a solitary endeavour in an uncertain world, but possibly a source of “social coordination, joint problem solving, and collective projects of social reform” (ibid., p. 988).

Again, Emirbayer and Mische break down the projective element of agency into its constitutive subtones. Before explaining the critical subtones for this study in detail, the full list of subtones includes: anticipatory identification, which describes the ability of actors to give shape to the space of possibles in which they are acting “through retrospective

¹³ In these final days of proof-reading, I find myself drastically reconfiguring my goals in light of COVID-19.

engagement with one's prior 'stock of knowledge' as stored in typifications, repertoires, and social narratives" (p. 989); narrative construction, which highlights participants' propensity to understand their future possibilities as the result of "more or less causal and temporal sequences"; and symbolic recomposition, in which actors "playfully insert themselves into a variety of possible trajectories" and imagine their likely results.

The first critical subtone of the projective element of agency is "hypothetical resolution," the process of "proposing hypothetical resolutions that will adequately respond to the moral, practical, and emotional concerns arising from lived conflict" (p. 990). The assumption here is that projections are in service of a desired goal or goals. Hypothetical resolutions are seen as in service to these goals, with the best resolutions being those that can simultaneously resolve multiple related concerns. In practice, the ability to propose hypothetical resolutions to lived conflicts is the central locus of agency within the projective element, moving beyond the abstract imagination of possible futures, to a more grounded projection of particular actions according to their compatibility with the broader life-course. It is here that the projective and practical-evaluative elements of agency begin to overlap¹⁴.

The second critical subtone of the projective element of agency is "experimental enactment," in which actors test a particular projection "in tentative or exploratory social interactions" (p. 990). This is a step beyond the hypothesisation of experience, as it entails action to test a particular hypothesis in practical terms. However, it remains experimental as the action deliberately takes place in a way that is low risk, "without committing [...] to the full responsibilities involved" (p. 990). Experiential enactment is the point at which projectivity crosses a border into action, thereby linking with the present and the practical-evaluative elements of agency.

Critique of the "Chordal Triad"

As has been argued by Bakewell (2010, 2014), in providing us with a firm theoretical foundation from which to engage with both the relational *and* temporal characteristics of migrant agency, the chordal triad provides us with new theoretical tools with the potential to break through the structure-agency impasse in migration studies. It represents a significant

¹⁴ It is important to note that this differs from the type of judgement proposed within the rational choice paradigm. While the projective element of agency does involve a degree of abstraction on the part of the actor, as they seek to pursue the course of action that best serves their interests, it is far from the "abstract objective analysis of means and ends" that lies at the heart of RCT (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 987). Projection does not presume boundless objectivity on the part of actors, and asserts that imagination and subsequent evaluation are heavily influenced by prejudices, biases, and access to information.

step forward from the theories of practice that have been so dominant within migration studies, by illustrating how human agency can be exercised outside its iterational dimension. Further, the “chordal triad” provides a theory of agency that is readily applicable to the entire life-course of individuals, illustrating how their priorities and strategies change with their circumstances. Importantly for empirical research, the chordal triad also provides analytical tools in the form of empirically identifiable subtones of each element of agency, that are now frequently employed by researchers employing a life-course approach to the study of migration¹⁵.

However, some authors have been critical of the chordal triad as a comprehensive model of agency. Biesta and Tedder (2006, 2007) provide a considered critique of the model, recognising the value that it has in reframing agency as something to be “achieved in and through engagement with particular temporal-relational contexts-for-action... in other words, [it] is not something people have; it is something people *do*” (p. 136, emphasis original). However, they argue that a weakness of the chordal triad is its implicit devaluation of the potential influence of structure on individual agents, instead focusing on “different ways in which individual actors can engage with ‘temporal-relational context,’ thereby placing too much emphasis on the influence of agency and actors’ implicit choice of whether to exert their agency or not (Biesta & Tedder, 2006, p. 19). To address this issue, Biesta and Tedder offer an “ecological perspective” of structure-agency that is complementary to the chordal triad (Cabot, 2014). They emphasise that temporal-relational contexts are not an abstract structuring force with which actors can engage at will, but are better understood when agency is something that takes place “by-means-of-an-environment rather than simply *in an environment*” (p. 18, emphasis original). The authors guard against the conclusion that agency is an individual capacity that can be possessed and activated in interactions with context, but rather argue that agency achieved through transactions with temporal-relational contexts. This ecological understanding of agency resolves Biesta and Tedder’s criticism of the chordal triad as originally proposed, by framing agency (which can be subdivided into the chordal triad) as the mediating force in a particular transaction between an agent and a temporal-relation context (a purely analytical rather than ontological distinction), through which both the actor and environment can be affected.

¹⁵ To name a few: (Dahinden, 2010; Ecclestone, 2007; Evans, 2002, 2007; Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Huisman, 2011; Kristiansen, 2014; Mainwaring, 2016; Morawska, 2007, 2011; Tran & Vu, 2018; Wall, Tran, & Soejatminah, 2017)

It has also been argued that the chordal triad does not pay adequate attention to the identity of individual migrants, and how this affects their positioning within the temporal-relational contexts (Desmond, 2004). Desmond brings up the examples of class, identity, gender, and race, which the body of sociological theory would suggest can affect agentive orientations but are not explicitly referenced within Emirbayer & Mische's theory. Continuing this line of thought, Desmond highlights Bourdieu's assertion that a habitual outlook may be more common among the working class, while projection is the reserve of those with greater accumulated cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). However, I argue that the chordal triad does not overlook these individual level factors and provides the tools for a researcher seeking to implement the chordal triad analytically to take account of these factors in their analysis. For example, Emirbayer and Mische draw on Bourdieu to introduce the notion of "cultural competences" as a fundamental feature of their iterational agency. They argue that "classificatory schemas developed within particular class, race, and national settings influence the boundary work of social actors in articulating tastes and aspirations, as well as in distinguishing themselves from other social groups" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 981). This quotation reveals that the chordal triad is alert to the ways in which membership of particular social groups may influence the repertoire of trajectories of action that individual actors consider and is the fundamental way in which agency can be complicit in social reproduction.

Further, it has been argued that the chordal triad begins to offer solutions to the empirical challenge of identifying changes in agentive orientations and their effects, but it does not, in isolation, offer a comprehensive analytical framework sufficient for this task (Desmond, 2004). This criticism certainly has some value, and related methodological concerns that emerged in the process of this thesis are addressed in Chapter 4. However, I would argue that Emirbayer and Mische are not only aware of this criticism but attempt to address it in their original article. Throughout, they offer advice on how each element of agency has possibilities for use in empirical research. Practically, their provision of subtones within each element of agency is useful as an analytical heuristic that can be applied to sociological datasets to aid the identification of dominant agentive orientations and their role in particular empirical situations.

Summary

In light of these theoretical contributions, and supported by the success of empirical implementations demonstrated by Evans (2002), Biesta & Tedder (2007), and Tran & Vu (2018), among others, I employ a life-course perspective that is particularly appropriate for

the study of the role of agency in student migration. This perspective also serves to respond directly to the requirements of the research agenda for student migration as outlined in Chapter 2, and to my research questions. To briefly recap, the fundamental concern is to develop a more nuanced understanding of the role of student-migrants' agency in the education-migration nexus, and a number of related issues can aid in this process. Calls for an emphasis on the processual nature of student-migration, with data including the perspectives of students and with attention paid to student-migrants' past biographies, future intentions, and outcomes, are all compatible with the life-course approach. In addition, as I have argued, the life-course approach is well-suited to the study of agency, allowing researchers to give sufficient attention to both structural and agentive forces as they act and interact in the life-courses of individuals. However, the life-course perspective is not—in isolation—a framework for analysis of structure-agency relations. This is why I have chosen to introduce a dedicated structure-agency framework in the “chordal-triad.” This framework, in particular, responds to the requirements of the research agenda and is compatible with the life-course perspective and my chosen research questions. Furthermore, it provides some methodological guidance for the planning and implementation of the study. These research questions and methodological considerations are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

Introduction

This chapter describes the overall research design and methodological reasoning behind choices made throughout the research project. I briefly return to the central research question (CRQ) and explain how it emerged from the contextual, academic, and theoretical literature that was reviewed in Chapters 1-3. Then, I introduce sub-research questions (SRQs) that emerged conceptually from the CRQ in light of my theoretical framework, before illustrating how they are linked empirically to the research design. I present how my research design was informed by these questions and provide an overview of my two-phase research design that combines policy trajectory analysis with narrative methods. I outline phase 1 of the study, a form of policy trajectory analysis first developed by the team of researchers in the Temper project. Their methodology is introduced in detail, before I discuss its strengths in relation to the empirical aims of this study, and the small changes made to mitigate its weaknesses. Then, I discuss the strengths of narrative methods, and justify the selection of the biographical-narrative interpretive method (BNIM) for the qualitative second phase of the study. I also consider the limitations of narrative research designs in general, and the BNIM specifically. Throughout the discussion of both phases, I describe the research process in detail, including the selection of and access to research sites, participant recruitment and selection, and the collection, management, analysis, and presentation of empirical data. I also consider the steps taken to mitigate the limitations of my research design, and to capitalise on its strengths. I close the chapter by discussing pertinent ethical concerns.

Research Questions and Design

The CRQ for this project is: “how is the agency of student-migrants developed and practised throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?” To clarify the empirical requirements of answering this CRQ, sub-questions were developed in light of the theoretical and conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3, before being linked empirically to specific research methods. Furthermore, the research design is guided strongly by my conceptualisation of individual agency. As described in Chapter 3, in this thesis I take agency to be a dynamic quality that is situated in, and contingent upon, an individual’s specific temporal-relational contexts (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Simply put, one’s agentive capacities cannot be understood if considered in isolation from one’s specific time and place, without adequate attention to the web of social relations in which agents are

present, and the evolution of these relations through the life-course. It follows, therefore, that in seeking to identify the role of student-migrants' agency in their trajectories through the education-migration nexus, the research design must seek to capture evidence of the temporal-relational contexts in which these trajectories took place. As discussed above, these temporal-relational contexts include cultural context, social-structural context, and social-psychological contexts, and all are important to capture empirically in this study. However, in the context of migration processes, the social-structural context is particularly definitive (Baubock, 2006b; Favell, 2007). Migrant populations' opportunities are dictated to a large extent by the form and transparency of legal frameworks "that allocate different statuses and rights to various groups of migrants and formally constrain or enable their activities" (Baubock, 2006b, p. 10). However, because these frameworks have not been the subject of extensive analysis in the context of the education-migration nexus, the first sub-question of this study was specifically designed to capture these regulatory frameworks in the UK and Japan:

SRQ1: What is the regulatory framework for student-migrants throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus in the UK and Japan?

This SRQ required the creation of a comprehensive database of the formal regulatory frameworks for international students' migration transitions. At the outset of this research there was yet to be a formal documentary analysis of regulatory frameworks in both the UK and Japan. Thus, the research design required a rigorous analysis of these legal frameworks covering the entire temporal span of participants' engagement with their host countries. This not only included the temporal span of participants' course of study, but also the pre-, during-, and post-study regulations during this period would be captured within the database. Phase one of the study, described in detail below, was designed to meet this requirement. The findings from SRQ1 are presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

The database created in answer to SRQ1 provides a record of the regulatory framework by which participants were governed, spanning the changing environment and regulations pre-, during-, and post-study. However, as was argued in Chapter 3, to understand the influence that this has in enabling or constraining participants' agentic capacities, it is also important to capture participants' perceptions of this regulatory framework. Individuals do not typically possess perfect information regarding the regulatory frameworks by which they are governed and are thus unable to grasp in their entirety the temporal-relational contexts in which they are embedded. Therefore, when seeking to understand agency, in addition to the database of regulatory frameworks, I also required data regarding the extent of

participants' understandings of these frameworks. These understandings offer a counterpoint to the database described above, as they represent the perceived temporal-relational contexts in which participants exercised their agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Furthermore, these perspectives may also provide insights into the social realities of these administrative structures that are not yet reflected in legal frameworks, or academic and political discussion. Reflecting this, the following sub-question was devised:

SRQ2: How is the regulatory framework for student-migrants throughout their trajectories reflected in their narratives?

This SRQ required intensive empirical evidence that captured the various ways in which these regulatory frameworks may arise in participants' accounts of their trajectories through the education-migration nexus. Participants' reflections on these frameworks are revealing of the extent to which they possessed knowledge of these regulatory frameworks and, in a more practical sense, the key points of tension between regulatory frameworks and individual agency. In short, answering SRQ2 required evidence of the participants' perceptions of their regulatory frameworks, and examples of how these frameworks were serving to constrain or support certain trajectories. In doing so, the combination of the policy trajectory analysis and individual data would provide empirical evidence of the structuring influence of temporal-relational contexts as written in law, and as lived by participants of the study. This is an important empirical contribution to the literature in its own right, but capturing the significance of critical structuring factors in participants' migration trajectories also serves to support the analysis of SRQs 3 and 4. Capturing sufficient qualitative evidence to allow such reflections required an intensive approach that was temporally sensitive to their trajectories. For reasons that will be described in depth below, the BNIM was chosen for this purpose, as it uses biographical-narrative interviews as its primary data source and includes both "entry" and "exit" interviews to give greater temporal coverage. The results of this are presented in Chapter 6 of the thesis.

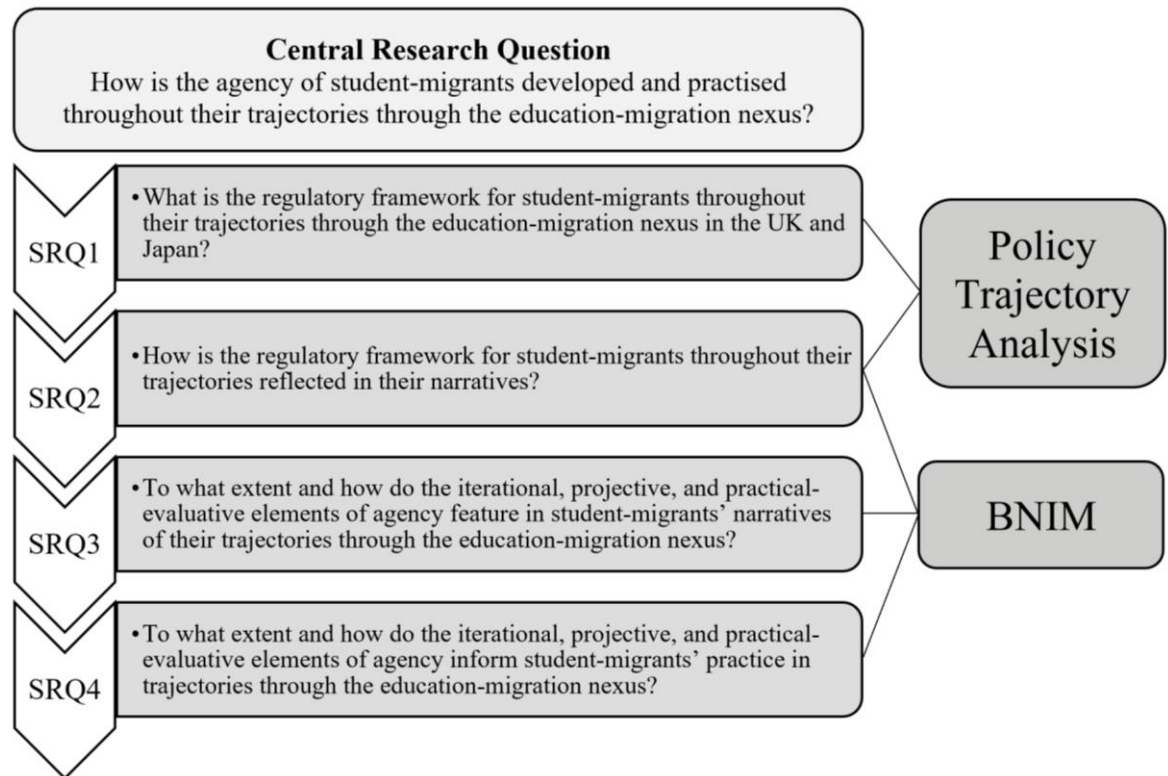
The BNIM was also chosen due to its applicability to the third and fourth SRQs, both of which are concerned directly with identifying empirical evidence of the ways in which different elements of agency feature within participants' narratives, and the manner in which these elements informed participants' practice throughout their trajectories. SRQs 3 and 4 are shown below, and the analysis and conclusions of these lines of inquiry are discussed in Chapter 7 of the thesis:

SRQ3: To what extent and how do the iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative elements of agency feature in student-migrants' narratives of their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?

SRQ4: To what extent and how do the iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative elements of agency inform student-migrants' practice in their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?

These SRQs build upon the evidence of participants' temporal-relational contexts identified in response to SRQs 1 and 2, by focusing directly on evidence of the role of participants' individual agency in light of their temporal-relational contexts. This required a choice of research design that could capture qualitative evidence of participants' engagement with their contexts and pursuit of their perceived opportunities. Thus, the research design required data to be collected longitudinally throughout their trajectory, and in narrative form. As I discuss below, the BNIM served these purposes.

The overall research design is illustrated in Figure 2. This figure highlights the way in which the SRQs are conceptually linked to the CRQ, using important concepts and theoretical insights outlined in the previous chapter. The figure also illustrates how the SRQs are linked empirically with the two phases of the data collection and analysis. The policy trajectory analysis provides data that will be used to answer SRQs 1 and 2, which together provide novel empirical evidence of the temporal-relational contexts in which my participants negotiated their trajectories. The BNIM provides data in answer to SRQs 2, 3, and 4. Analysis of this data provides the empirical evidence of the role that student-migrants' agency has played in their trajectories. Thus, in answering the 4 SRQs, the study provides new evidence of previously overlooked aspects of student-migrants' temporal-relational contexts and the development and practice of individual agency, thus enabling me to answer the CRQ.

Figure 2*The research design***Phase 1: Policy Trajectory Analysis**

The first phase of this study aims to develop a comprehensive overview of a heretofore neglected aspect of student-migrants' temporal-relational contexts—the “political opportunity structure” for international student-migrants in each national case study—drawing empirically on the legal regulatory frameworks governing student-migration trajectories (Baubock, 2006, p. 10). This initial phase is imperative in the study's attempt to understand how international student-migrants develop and practice agency in their trajectories. It provides new insights into student-migrants' social-structural contexts in the form of the first comprehensive overview of the regulatory relationship between the state and student-migrants pre-, during-, and post-study. This is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, a significant body of literature from migration studies argues that legal regulatory frameworks are the principal structuring element in regular migratory contexts, such as student migration. The structuring influence of the state is critical because “the freedom of migrants stops where the State's prerogatives start” (Zlotnik, 1987, p. 942). At any point within their trajectory, migrants' legitimacy in the country of residence, and the opportunities available to them, are fundamentally controlled by the legal frameworks in which they are present (Baubock, 2006a), making these frameworks a particularly critical feature of migrants' contexts (Favell et al., 2007). Student-migrants, such as the participants

of this study, are an example of this relationship between regular migrants and the state. Their trajectories are subject to ongoing negotiations with the legal regulatory frameworks in their country of study, which define their legitimacy as students, their economic and social rights during-study, and the pathways available to them as they seek to transition from being a “student” to another residence status. Because of their structuring influence on student-migrants’ trajectories, these frameworks must be considered if participants’ agentic capacities are to be captured empirically. A comprehensive account of these frameworks was not available in either of the case-study nations, so to better understand the nature of the regulatory frameworks in the UK and Japan it was necessary to conduct a rigorous policy analysis.

In the context of this study, the policy analysis was complicated by its longitudinal nature. Even beyond the temporal span of the research project itself, some of the participants had been present in their host country over an extended period of time that was marked by important shifts in policy. To capture these changes in the regulatory frameworks, I chose to implement a policy *trajectory* analysis, spanning from the earliest point in time a participant was resident in the host country as a student, to their point of transition and the conclusion of the study. Such policy trajectory analyses are common in the field of migration studies, with multiple databases in existence that emphasise different aspects of regulatory frameworks.¹⁶ However, given its relevance to the topic and ready applicability to the study of policy pertaining to student-migrants, I implemented an adapted form of policy trajectory analysis that was developed within the EU funded collaborative “Temporary versus Permanent Migration” (Temper) project. Researchers in the Temper project have updated the European Immigration Policy Index (ImPol) database of immigration policies and developed a form of policy trajectory analysis that captures changes in the regulatory framework for various migration flows. While the original project team only developed the database in relation to a limited number of EU nations (Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2013), they argue that the method was deliberately constructed to “be meaningful to other OECD states,” such as the UK and Japan (Consterdine & Hampshire, 2016, p. 15).

¹⁶ A number of immigration policy databases have been developed in recent years including, but not limited to, Immigration Policies in Comparison (IMPIC)(Bjerre et al., 2015), the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX, 2015), Immigration Migration Policy and Law Analysis (IMPALA)(Beine et al., 2016), The Determinants of International Migration (DEMIG)(Czaika & De Haas, 2013), and an influential database developed by Ruhs (2011). A helpful summary of these databases is available in Helbling (2018), and a fuller discussion of their strengths and weaknesses for various research projects, can be found here: (Bjerre et al., 2015; Gest et al., 2014).

Beyond the database itself, Mezger and Gonzalez-Ferrer (2013) also describe a method to codify the information in these legal documents in a quantitative form, aiding comparative analysis across indicators that capture the degree of restrictiveness of various aspects of these policies, for various types of migrant. Following an extensive review of migration policies across the European Union, and extended consultation between members of the Temper project, each indicator is associated with 3 ordinal categories which indicate whether the policies are more restrictive (-1), neutral (0), or less restrictive (1). For example, an indicator that captures the restrictiveness of language requirements for international students, and its ordinal categories, is shown below in Table 3 below. This ordinal method of analysis allows the database to be used to evaluate the restrictiveness of particular aspects of legal frameworks for particular types of migrants at particular times. Equally, it can be used to create composite values that provide a holistic overview of the general openness or restrictiveness of the legal frameworks in a specific country. Even more importantly, the results of this analysis are also readily comparable across contexts, which is valuable in this study that considers two contrasting national regulatory frameworks.

Table 3

Example of the Temper project's ordinal methodology for migration policy analysis

Indicator 1. Language test.

To be eligible for a student visa, does the person need to pass a language test?

-1	0	1
Yes	N/A	No
More restrictive	Neutral	Less restrictive

It is important to note here, that the ImPol database for the UK has already been created up until the year 2015, following the work of Consterdine and Hampshire (2016). Therefore, it was only strictly necessary to extend the database to 2018. However, I decided to collect and analyse all relevant documents in relation to international students between the years 2004-2018, meeting the needs of this study and providing an opportunity to corroborate findings with the researchers in the Temper team. As Japan is not yet included in the official database, it was necessary to construct this database from scratch. To ensure that I did so to the same depth as the original Temper project, I reviewed methodological documents and presentations given by the Temper team and stored on their website. I then followed their methodology and made direct contact with researchers where necessary to confirm my

approach in areas of ambiguity. Such areas and their solutions are noted where appropriate in the text below.

The Temper project and its methods are particularly relevant to my study as they explicitly consider international students as a distinct group of migrants subject to distinct policy interventions (Consterdine, Hampshire, Ferrer, Jolivet-Gueta, & Molinero Gerbeau, 2015). As further evidence of its applicability to this project, the ImPol database and the Temper project's policy trajectory analysis method have already been implemented empirically in comparative studies of policies governing international students' rights and their post-study opportunities in a number of European countries (e.g., Levatino et al. 2018).

Below, the precise methodology of the Temper project is discussed in detail, including the protocol for document selection and inclusion, data selection and analysis, and the limitations of this approach. In light of these limitations, I provide details and justifications for the alterations and additions made for the purposes of this research.

Document Selection and Inclusion Criteria

The ImPol database includes legislative texts that, in combination, "reflect the general legal conditions" of the host countries (Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2013, p. 4). These texts include major acts (primary legislation), secondary legislation, and government circulars and guidance (Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2012). The texts included in the database were predominantly collected online, though older texts were consulted in libraries and legal archives or requested directly from relevant civil servants if they were not available online for the entire time period of the database. The result is a comprehensive collection of legal texts that have governed the legal framework for migrant populations (Consterdine & Hampshire, 2016).

However, for the purposes of this research, it was only necessary to collect and include policy documents from the year 2004, as these would be representative of the situation when the earliest participants to study abroad first applied to their host nations. Documents from before 2004 were considered surplus to requirements in this study. Furthermore, the database had to be extended to the end of 2018, the year in which my participants graduated, and the "exit" interviews took place. By focusing on the years 2004-2018, I capture the relevant policy changes that defined the legal rights and restrictions for international students throughout the time that my participants had been in the host country.

Relevant documents from 2004-2018 were collected according to the inclusion criteria developed by the Temper team in updating the ImPol database. This required that major acts (primary legislation), secondary legislation, and government circulars and guidance were

included (Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2012). While immigration acts and accompanying secondary legislation effectively define the legal environment, Mezger and Gonzalez-Ferrer (2013) argue that government circulars and guidance affecting the implementation of the legislation must be included to account for the practicalities of these legal changes and the potential for concessions. Relevant documents were identified in online government databases, and initially screened for relevance to international students before being included in the final analysis or removed from the database.

To aid in identifying a full list of policy documents that fit the criteria of the ImPol database, I first consulted the ImPol, MIPEX and IMPALA databases, which contain a list of all significant immigration policy changes in the UK and Japan, from which I identified those that changed the regulatory framework for international students. Then, I went through online databases from each national government, collecting all legal reforms to major immigration acts or rules. In the UK, these were all available on the gov.uk website, including a complete archive of *Immigration Acts*, *Changes to Immigration Rules*, and *Implementation Guidance*. In Japan, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) maintains a similar database, including all amendments to the *Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act*, and *Ordinance for Enforcement of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act*. This information was also supplemented and corroborated with reference to a large number of official white papers and commissioned reports in each country. An overview of documents that were collected and included in the final analysis is available in Appendix 2. To be clear, reforms that were announced but not implemented at the time of the “exit” interviews were not included in the final analysis and findings of this study, but their implications are considered in the concluding chapter.

Data Analysis

After the database of documents had been constructed, they were then analysed in terms of their significance in changing the legal framework on seven relevant indicators of restrictiveness from the ImPol database¹⁷. These seven indicators were chosen as they represent the portion of the legal frameworks captured by the ImPol database that are particularly relevant to international students (Levatino et al., 2018). These seven indicators are shown in Table 4 below:

¹⁷ The database includes many more indicators, but I only conducted the analysis on those relevant to international students to reduce the research burden, and in line with precedent from previously published texts.

Table 4*Temper indicators relevant to international students (reproduced from Levatino et al., 2018)*

Admission and Eligibility: Pre-study		
<i>Indicator 1. Language test.</i>		
To be eligible for a student visa, does the person need to pass a language test?		
-1	0	1
Yes	N/A	No
<i>Indicator 1a. Language level:</i>		
In cases where a student must meet a language requirement, at what level of the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) must the student be proficient?		
-1	0	1
B2: Independent user/Vantage or upper intermediate	B1: Independent user/Threshold or intermediate	A: Basic user/A1 (beginner) or A2 (elementary) or no language requirement
<i>Indicator 2. Economic resources:</i>		
Does the applicant have to demonstrate maintenance (available money) to be granted a student permit/visa?		
-1	0	1
Yes, amount clearly defined and needs to be proven.	Yes, but there is no defined amount	No
<i>Indicator 3. Health Insurance:</i>		
Does the applicant need to demonstrate that they have full health insurance coverage before being granted a student visa?		
-1	0	1
Yes, or applicant must pay a health insurance surcharge	N/A	No
In-country Rights: During-study		
<i>Indicator 4. Possibility of working:</i>		
Once a student visa/permit is granted, can the student work during their studies?		
-1	0	1
No	Less than part-time, some time and salary limits or labour market test or quota	Yes, part time or more than part time and/or full-time during vacations
<i>Indicator 5. Possibility of bringing family:</i>		
Can the applicant (student) bring dependents (spouse and children) on a student visa?		
-1	0	1
No	Some scope for discretion, or only on specific degree programmes. Possible but not granted after rather than on initial admission.	Yes
Possibility of Transitioning from a Student Visa to a Work Permit: Post-study		
<i>Indicator 6. Transition to a work visa:</i>		
When their studies are complete, is there a mechanism or a separate visa/permit that allows international students to stay in the destination country to work?		
-1	0	1
No	With conditions: e.g., more than one year of residence, good grades, subjects.	Specific route facilitating students' entrance into the labour market.

The seven indicators in Table 4 (indicators 1-6 + 1a), represent different parts of the regulatory legal framework that govern international students throughout their trajectory through the education-migration nexus. Indicators 1-3 (including 1a) represent aspects of the legal framework that affects them pre-study. Indicators 4 and 5 represent during-study factors. Indicator 6 represents the aspect of the legal framework that affects them immediately post-study. Given the longitudinal nature of the study, I decided to include all of these indicators in my analysis.

All of the documents were collected in a database in NVivo version 12. I analysed the documents chronologically, noting any relevant changes on any of the seven indicators of interest as annotations within the text of the documents. These changes were then recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. The seven indicators were represented on individual rows within the spreadsheet, with the years 2004-2018 as columns. At their intersection, the ordinal value associated with a specific indicator in a specific year was listed. In years where a policy had been implemented to the effect that the ordinal value of a particular indicator was changed, the relevant document and its date of implementation were recorded as a “note” within the spreadsheet. I also included references to other relevant documents that may have influenced policy or led to changes on an indicator. For additional depth, I also recorded in “notes” any other contextual information of interest even if it did not result in a change on the ordinal framework. An image giving an indication of the form of this spreadsheet is included in Appendix 3.

Data Presentation

From the Excel spreadsheet, it was possible to identify the nature of the regulatory framework in any particular year between 2004-2018. In addition, it was also easy to create simple plots of changes in the regulatory framework over time. These plots could include a single indicator, or composites of several indicators. An example of such a trajectory plot is shown below in Figure 4 on page 138.

Limitations of the Temper Project’s Methodology

Despite being well-suited to the needs of this project, this method of policy trajectory analysis has a number of limitations that are noted by the researchers within the Temper project. It should be noted that there are inherent methodological difficulties in creating a quantitative index that accurately defines and disaggregates relevant policies in different countries, and is based on valid criteria that are comparable between contexts. As Consterdine and Hampshire (2016) state, there is an “inherent trade-off involved in any

database construction effort between historical and geographical coverage on the one hand, and the variety and comprehensiveness of policies that can be examined on the other hand” (p. 6). However, while recognising these methodological challenges, policy indexes are an increasingly common feature of research into migration and integration (Bjerre, Helbling, Romer, & Zobel, 2015). They offer potential for systematic analysis of immigration policies and comparative insights into key issues in migration studies on a “sound analytical footing,” in a way that is comparable internationally and historically (Consterdine & Hampshire, 2016, p. 12).

Having said this, there are challenges specific to the Temper project’s methodology, the first of which is the identification of all relevant documents. The project researchers discuss the issue of missing documents, particularly those that include low-level instructions to practitioners. Recently, it has become common practice for governments to maintain full databases of such documents, but they are more difficult to identify and track down in earlier years where records are not complete. This was less of an issue in this project, where the earliest year of interest was 2004. A further measurement issue arises with Indicator 1a, which is only attributed a value if Indicator 1 = -1. If the value for Indicator 1 is either rated as 1 or 0, then indicator 1a is valued as N/A. In such cases, according to the established methodology used in the Temper project, the value is counted in composite ratings as 0, which has an effect on the overall trend. This is an imperfect solution, as some indicators only have an N/A “neutral” value, while others can be rated as 0. Different indicators are, therefore, not comparably substantive. Other issues arise around the link between legal frameworks on paper and their function in reality. Despite including implementation guidelines, the analysis also does not necessarily capture the extent to which discretion was and is used by various administrators. Furthermore, certain requirements may not be enshrined in legal documents, but may be policed and enforced—or unenforced—by other organisations.

The largest problem with this analysis in the context of this study, is that the post-study component of the trajectory analysis is not sufficiently detailed. Between the “entry” and “exit” interviews used in the study, participants were evaluating a number of possible trajectories that are not captured by the seven indicators used in the policy trajectory analysis. Thus, to complement the trajectory analysis, I conducted additional analysis on the policy documents I had collected and created a summary of the possible post-study transitions for international students that were legal at the point of my participants’ graduations. This analysis utilised the same database as the trajectory analysis but focused firmly on the contemporary legal framework at the point of graduation, in 2018. Based on this analysis, I

identified the visa transitions available within the broader immigration policy framework in each participant country for which graduating international students would be an eligible candidate. Having identified pathways for which participants would be eligible, I also created a database of the specific eligibility requirements and restrictions that governed each pathway. These could then be compared with participants' descriptions of their opportunities and restrictions, providing a more exhaustive understanding of both the possible transitions available to participants, and their perspectives on these possibilities as they sought to understand their temporal-relational contexts. These are described in Chapter 5.

It should also be noted that the focus that this study places on the legal and regulatory frameworks governing student migration does not intend to downplay the influence of other social and cultural factors that were certainly at play. As Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe, agents' temporal-relational contexts consist of the complex interaction of countless cultural, social-structural, and social-psychological factors, which together exert a significant structuring influence on the development and practice of agency. I recognise that the legal regulatory frameworks that governed my participants are just one of these factors, and certainly do not represent an all-inclusive account of significant structuring factors. However, I chose to analyse these frameworks in this level of detail as a reflection of their importance in governing student migration trajectories, and the lack of such an analysis in the literature to date. The first phase of the study serves, therefore, as a minor contribution to the literature on student migration in its own right. In addition, it also functions to ground the analysis of narratives in phase 2 of the study in an account of participants' temporal-relational contexts that is inclusive of regulatory frameworks, a fundamental structuring element that is rarely considered in this level of detail. I also wish to assert that, while I do not give equal attention to other social and cultural factors in the first empirical phase of the study, this is not because they are absent from this account. The social and cultural factors that influence student mobility and migration have been the subject of a more substantial body of academic work, as reflected in Chapter 2, and there was little benefit to repeating this work in the first phase of this study. In addition, the nature of the narrative data collected in phase 2 of the study was revelatory of the situated social and cultural contexts of individual participants, and sufficient in enabling the analysis and conclusions of this study to be drawn in light of the influence of these factors. In summary, the choice to give this degree of attention to the legal regulatory frameworks governing student migration in the two national case studies was taken as this was a valuable original contribution to the literature on student-migration, and necessary context for the project's central aim: new insights into the development and practice of agency in the education-migration nexus.

Phase 2: The Biographical-Narrative Interpretive Method

When evaluating research designs, my primary concern in the second phase of the study was to identify a method that would provide data to support the deepest possible engagement with participants' perspectives on their entire life-course, thereby allowing in-depth insights into the role of agency in their migration trajectories. When seeking such empirical and contextual depth it is typical to use a qualitative method (Creswell, 1994). In a broad sense, qualitative researchers "study things in their natural settings... to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), and prioritise the understanding of social phenomena rather than the ability to predict or control them (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In such studies, the strengths of qualitative research techniques are suited to the desire to contribute to the development of new theories of social processes, or test and improve the conceptual frameworks that are currently in circulation (Wengraf, 2001).

From the long list of qualitative methods, I chose to implement a biographical-narrative methodology due to its suitability for three primary concerns of the shared research agenda of both higher education and migration studies, outlined in Chapter 2, and its suitability for the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3. To briefly reiterate, the research agenda required that this study: (1) engaged explicitly with the agency of individual participants; (2) used student-migrants' individual perspectives as its primary empirical data; and (3) included a temporal element, to allow a degree of reflection on the processual nature of a trajectory through the education-migration nexus, including the short-term outcomes of participants. Thus, this study required a method that provided temporally sensitive data of the temporal-relational contexts of participants, and which also provided evidence of their ability and desire to act. Narrative methods are effective in this regard because narrative data "incorporate temporality, a social context, complicating events, and an evaluative conclusion," (McAlpine, 2016, p. 33) and are particularly powerful in preserving the way in which participants' experiences and actions are situated in a specific temporal-relational context (Polkinghorne, 1995). These qualities of narrative data make them particularly powerful in understanding participants' agential capacity in light of their temporal-relational context.

A further empirical concern was the desire to ground the analysis of these agential and temporal-relational processes in the perspectives of individual student-migrants. Many qualitative methods are able to capture participants' perspectives, but narrative methods are particularly powerful in this regard. Firstly, narrative methods provide depth, as they create conditions designed to provide participants with the time and encouragement to relay an

extended and detailed story, containing their perspectives on their experiences and social context (McAlpine, 2016). Secondly, as Wengraf (2001) and Cortazzi (1993) argue, narrative methods are potent in preserving individual perspectives, by limiting the influence of the researcher's presence and assumptions (Dwyer, Davis, & Emerald, 2017). This is particularly important in the case of this study, which sought to engage with a group of participants whose stories may not yet have been heard in detail, or who were offering "counter-narratives" to the mainstream discussions around the trajectories of international student-migrants (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Montgomery, 2010).

Furthermore, narrative methods provide researchers with a particularly powerful window into understanding the dynamism of social relations over time. While all qualitative methods allow the researcher to collect thick description of social relationships, by collecting narratives the researcher has more data to aid in the understanding of the significance of these relationships in the participants' overall trajectories. Narrative methods provide such data as they are sensitive to both temporality and the context of participants' actions, due to the diachronic nature of the data collected which "contain temporal information about the sequential relationship of events... [and] include reference as to when and why actions were taken and the intended results of the actions" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). While many qualitative methods are adept at providing data that capture the temporal-relational contexts of action, narrative data provide a greater degree of temporal acuity upon which the relational nature of participants' actions can be interpreted. Somers and Gibson (1993) suggest that narratives provide a record of "constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by causal emplotment," and it is this temporal emplotment, that allows us to understand the significance and configuration of social relationships, that was valuable to this project (p. 27). This is critical to this study, which understands participants' trajectories to be processual in nature, and the result of evolving temporal-relational contexts that may be temporally distant but are still highly significant. For these reasons, extended narratives not only are a particularly rich source of data in social research, but they also correspond to the empirical requirements of the present study.

From the large diversity of narrative methods, I chose to employ the Biographical-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM). This method was originally developed by Tom Wengraf who has continued to iterate upon it in a series of methodological guides and workshops (e.g., Wengraf, 2001, 2006, 2013). The BNIM is notable for the level of depth it offers with individual participants, its high degree of temporal flexibility, and its suitability to the study of events or transitions. These features of the BNIM are important to my research questions and guided the decision to implement this specific method in this study.

The empirical data collection of the BNIM is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of the study. Data are typically collected through two methodologically distinct interviews, which I will henceforth refer to as the “entry” and “exit” interviews, respectively. The “entry” interview is a free-associative interview structured around a single question aimed at inducing narrative (SQUIN), thereby prioritising the fullest recording of participants’ narratives in their own words. The “exit” interview is optional within the BNIM framework but is employed when the central line of the overall enquiry is concerned with participants’ responses to, and reflections on, the outcomes of a particular event, process, or transition. In this case the development and practice of agency throughout participants’ trajectories is the central line of enquiry, so I chose to incorporate an “exit” interview into the overall framework. To avoid redundancy and to respect participants’ time, “exit” interviews are not necessarily strictly narrative. Narrative interviews are time-intensive, and I felt that asking participants to undergo two interviews of this type, despite the high likelihood of repetition, would place an undue burden on the participant. Thus, for this study, I chose to retain narrative elements, but employ an approach that was more structured and targeted towards specific outcomes. The general form of phase 2 of this study is illustrated in Table 5 below:

Table 5

Overview of the phase 2 data collection

Biographical-narrative “entry” interview		Semi-structured “exit” interview	
Subsession 1	Subsession 2	Subsession 3	Subsession 4
Focused narrative via SQUIN	Detail confirmation and narrative follow-up	Focused interim narrative via SQUIN	Semi-structured discussion for mutual reflection on pathways, trajectories, and their meaning

This adapted form of the BNIM is theoretically and methodologically appropriate to answering my CRQ, as it is well-suited to gathering evidence of participants’ agency through the relative depth of the “entry” interview, and is particularly powerful temporally due to the inclusion of an “exit” interview. Furthermore, it provided empirical evidence that can be applied directly to sub-questions 2, 3, and 4. Below, I describe how this research design was implemented in practice.

Site Selection and Access

Selecting field sites for this study was guided by its explorative nature, which sought to understand the role that agency played within the education-migration nexus, but particularly within the contexts of two national case studies. I briefly considered trying to identify research sites based on the degree to which they were representative or typical of universities in that context. However, I decided against this approach because the UK and Japan are both systems with a high degree of internal variation due to the different historical origins of institutions, and the consequential differences in their student bodies and institutional missions. Sensitivity to these sub-national variations was important in guiding case selection. Therefore, I chose to employ a sampling framework that was developed collaboratively with researchers at the Centre for Global Higher Education, and was used to guide site selection on the broader projects within the Programme One research pathway of that research centre (meetings took place on January 6th and February 3rd, 2017). This sampling strategy sought to account for internal variation in national higher education systems as well as geographical variations. The sampling of institutions took place on a stratified basis, with universities divided into three groups identified as follows:

1. World-class university located in a global city.
2. Nationally regarded university located outside of global cities.
3. A mid-lower regarded university in regional town.

World-class/Nationally regarded/Mid-lower regarded university was operationalised using a composite value taken from Global Ranking, Research, and International Outlook ratings from the Times Higher Education rankings database. Global city/Outside global city/Regional town was operationalised differently in each national case study. The “global city” bracket was restricted to universities in London and Tokyo/Osaka, respectively. Universities “located outside of global cities” were those located outside greater London in the UK, and outside the greater Kanto or Kansai regions which surround Tokyo and Osaka. Regional towns were those outside the largest ten by population in each country (in practice <455k in the UK, and <1.9m in Japan). To select institutions, universities in each case were first filtered according to these criteria and placed into the appropriate strata within an Excel database. I then used a random number table to dictate the order in which institutions from each group were contacted to request access. The goal was to gain access to one university from each stratum in each national case study, for a total of three research sites in each country, and six research sites in total. However, the number of research sites grew as

participant recruitment proved difficult, even at universities which had granted access. In total, 14 universities were approached in the UK, of which 6 granted access. In Japan, 6 universities were approached, of which 5 granted access.

Due to the different administrative structures of UK and Japanese universities, access was requested via different means. In the UK, I approached via email members of the university executive board who were deemed most suitable, which in practice was often a Pro-Vice-Chancellor or Vice-President, International. Sending the approach email was sometimes preceded by tentative contact with academic staff within the sampled universities to help ascertain the correct point of contact. In Japan, as dictated by the more prevalent seniority dynamics, sampled universities were approached on my behalf via a senior colleague who was well-established in the field.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

Having gained access to the research sites, individual participant recruitment in the UK was achieved via several means, depending on the recruitment mechanisms permitted by the institution. Where possible, recruitment emails were sent to all international students in their final year of study via the international office's *mailto* databases. Where this was not permitted, recruitment notices were posted on students' union and society social media pages, included in student newsletters, or regular email circulars. In the Japanese case, I had less access to such generic points of contact, and participants were usually identified by the gatekeepers within the universities that had granted access. This method is more susceptible to sampling bias and is a significant limitation but was the only available method of participant recruitment.

Those students who responded to the advertisements or approaches by institutional contacts were briefly screened to ensure that they were indeed a member of the target population, defined as follows: degree-mobile international students in their final year of study who were considering remaining in the host country after graduation. Their degree-mobile status and year of study were easy to confirm, but the consideration to remain was more difficult. I recognised that potential participants exhibited variation in the strength of their determination to stay in the host country, but that this was impossible to gauge accurately as a researcher. Therefore, I decided that this final inclusion criterium could only be put into practice if it was self-selective. Thus, I made explicit within the recruitment advertisements that I was seeking students who were considering staying in the host country post-study, allowing potential participants to include or exclude themselves from this group.

Given the longitudinal nature of the study, significant levels of participant attrition were expected. Based on methodological literature, I anticipated that attrition over the duration of the research study would be around 50%. In light of this figure, to define my recruitment targets, I worked backwards from my desired final cohort of participants that would complete both the “entry” and “exit” interviews, which was ≥ 10 participants in each national case study. Assuming attrition rates of up to 50% I decided to recruit 20 participants for “entry” interviews in each national case study. This intended minimal sample of 10 participants in each country is a small number relative to some other qualitative studies, but given the highly intensive nature of the data that each participant provided and the logistical difficulties of interviewing across a span of 18 months and two countries, this was considered a sufficient sample for the purposes of this study. Participants who did not respond to requests to participate in an “exit” interview are not included in the final sample, and their data were not included in the final analysis. An overview of the eventual participants by their chosen pseudonyms, along with some key demographic data collected from participants during the entry interviews, is shown in Table 6 below.

In the first stage of data collection 37 participants were recruited and interviewed (18 in the UK and 19 in Japan), of which 26 responded to requests to participate in the second stage (10 in the UK and 16 in Japan). The intended minimal final sample was therefore met in the UK and exceeded in Japan. No demographic patterns could be identified among those who dropped out, though attrition was higher in the UK. This is likely attributable to the longer interim period between interviews in the UK case, as described below.

Table 6

List of participants

Case	Pseudonym	Gender	Nationality	Level of study	Subject of Study	Institution Tier	Remained post-study?
UK	Arya	Female	India	Doctoral	Marketing	3	N/A*
	Chelsea	Female	China	Doctoral	Education	1	No
	Elena	Female	China	Master's	Business	2	Yes
	Emily	Female	Indonesia	Bachelor's	Business	2	Yes
	Jazz	Female	Spain/UK	Bachelor's	Archaeology	2	Yes
	Karen	Female	Hong Kong SAR	Bachelor's	Law	3	Yes
	Kirsty	Female	Norway	Bachelor's	Psychology	2	Yes
	Laboo	Female	Iran	Bachelor's	Education	2	No
	Misty	Female	Pakistan/US	Master's	Media and Cultural Studies	1	Yes
	Pochacco	Male	Hong Kong SAR	Bachelor's	Engineering	2	Yes
	Ariana	Female	Mongolia	Master's	Urban Planning	2	No
	Charles	Male	Laos	Master's	Engineering	2	No
	Dolly	Female	China	Master's	Medicine	3	Yes
Japan	Golden	Female	China	Master's	Education	2	No
	Harry	Male	Indonesia	Master's	Engineering	3	Yes
	Jan	Female	China	Doctoral	Medicine	3	No
	Karl	Male	US/Taiwan	Master's	International Relations	1	Yes
	Lili	Female	China	Bachelor's	Sociology	1	Yes
	Mo	Male	India	Doctoral	Biomedical Sciences	3	Yes
	Pedro	Male	Argentina	Master's	Economics and Management	1	Yes
	Sal	Male	Philippines	Master's	Architecture	2	No
	Shaun	Male	Rep. of Korea	Doctoral	Sociology	1	Yes
	Steven	Male	China	Doctoral	Economics	1	Yes
	Tanya	Female	Vietnam	Master's	Engineering	3	Yes
	World	Male	Myanmar	Master's	Urban Planning	2	No
	Yes	Male	China	Master's	Education	2	Yes

*Arya unexpectedly extended her course of study and was still completing her doctoral thesis at the time of the "exit" interview.

Characteristics and Limitations of the Sample

As a result of the challenges of recruiting participants for the longitudinal qualitative portion of the study, and the inevitability of attrition in each case, the final sample does not perfectly reflect the population of international students in each national case study. Table 6 above illustrates some imbalances.

For example, in the UK sample there is a heavy bias towards female participants, which is not representative of the population of international students in the UK. While the western world is marked by higher rates of participation in international education among women (Prazeres, 2018), the extent of these differences does not approach that evident in my final sample. As a result, the lack of male voices is certainly a weakness of the data gathered in the UK case. Furthermore, while there is variation on each factor of differentiation within the sample drawn from each national case, there are also some between-sample differences between the national samples, which emerged due to the different participant selection processes. The UK sample is more biased towards bachelor's students and was also a younger group in general. Participants in Japan were almost entirely in postgraduate programmes (though some had previously been undergraduate students in Japan), and were generally older than the bachelor's students in the UK. By extension, participants in the UK and Japan were perhaps at different life stages, stages of their careers, with different levels of maturity, and different family circumstances. In addition, graduates from different levels of higher education—whether undergraduate, postgraduate, or doctoral—may be treated differently in migration regulatory frameworks and the labour market. Clearly, these differences in the sample may influence participants' temporal-relational contexts and, as a result, influence the findings and conclusions of the study.

As a result of these characteristics of the final sample of participants in the study, there are limitations on the conclusions that can be made and the level of comparison that is possible between the national cases. It was necessary to consider these factors when attempting to reflect on the data gathered from my sample and make conclusions at the level of each national case study. In essence, it was important to be reflexive about my final dataset and continually ask the question: is this broadly indicative of experiences in this national context or an artefact of imbalances in my sample? Reflecting this consideration, throughout the findings chapters I discuss the extent to which limitations in the final sample may have influenced the findings, and the necessary caution taken in drawing conclusions from those findings.

Data Collection Timeline

Data collection took place over the course of 18 months between October 2017 and April 2019. Given the practical restrictions on available resources, and particularly the difficulties of securing financial and supervisory support for the Japanese portion of fieldwork, compromises were made with the data collection schedule. A major compromise was the adoption of an asymmetrical schedule that resulted in a different length of time between the “entry” and “exit” interviews in the UK and Japan. This decision was dictated by the temporal restrictions placed on the funding I secured to support the Japanese portion of fieldwork: a JSPS pre-doctoral fellowship, which provided financial and institutional support within a host university for an uninterrupted period of one year. This was a major factor enabling the research to take place, and the chosen research design would not have been possible without this support. However, by stipulating that the period of fieldwork must be uninterrupted, the fellowship prevented a return to the UK between the Japanese “entry” and “exit” interviews. Therefore, it was necessary to complete the “entry” interviews in the UK and condense the Japanese data collection into a period of one year, before returning to the UK to complete the “exit” interviews. This practical issue meant that the data collection for the national case studies was asymmetrical. While imperfect, this was an unavoidable limitation which I accepted to take advantage of the unrivalled support provided by the JSPS fellowship, which allowed me to be hosted at the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University throughout the year in Japan. The chance to reside in a nationally leading centre for research into higher education was instrumental in supporting the fieldwork process in Japan, which finished on schedule. The data collection timeline for the project is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7*Narrative data collection timeline*

Date	UK Data Collection	Japan Data Collection
Aug 2017 Sept 2017 Oct 2017 Nov 2017 Dec 2017	Participant recruitment	
Jan 2018 Feb 2018 Mar 2018 Apr 2018 May 2018 Jun 2018 Jul 2018 Aug 2018 Sept 2018 Oct 2018 Nov 2018 Dec 2018	“Entry” interviews	Participant recruitment
Jan 2019 Feb 2019 Mar 2019 Apr 2019 May 2019 Jun 2019	Transcription and analysis	“Entry” interviews
		Transcription and analysis
		“Exit” Interviews
	“Exit” Interviews	
	Transcription and analysis	Transcription and analysis

Raw data from interviews took the form of audio recordings and fieldnotes. Within the BNIM, both forms of data are considered necessary to provide the fullest possible record of participants’ narratives (Wengraf, 2001). Audio recordings are important because they provide a verbatim record of the participants’ narratives, including pauses and false-starts, and provide a record of their tone of voice and the general atmosphere of the interview. An example is shown below:

Jazz: So, yeah, I guess they kind of do. I was like lucky enough -- I think I was the lucky age, like, because my brothers really struggled to moving around, I think. Because when we moved to Spain they struggled like to learn the language, but I was like 10, 11 so I could like -- I spoke English all right, and I could like -- I had, like, the sense to I think to like differentiate between languages and I pick it up easy and quickly as well. But the boys really struggled with that, so yeah.

Interviews took place in either English or Japanese according to the participant's preference, and were carried out without the use of an interpreter. All research materials were provided to participants in their language of choice. To preserve the fidelity of these audio recordings, they were transcribed full-verbatim in the original language. Analysis, too, took place in the original language, and only quotations that were to be included in the final thesis were eventually translated into English using a back-translation method and the support of a Japanese native speakers with experience conducting educational research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013).

Biographical-Narrative “Entry” Interviews

While there are many means to collect narrative data for use in the social sciences, biographical-narrative interviews often form the basis of narrative enquiry, and have been specifically advocated by a number of scholars guiding the research agenda for student-migration (e.g., Carlson, 2013; Halfacree & Boyle, 1993; King & Raghuram, 2013; Kōu & Bailey, 2014; Rosenthal, 2004; Schittenhelm, 2011). These interviews are designed to give individual participants the opportunity and encouragement to explore their biography in narrative form, and present their life-course in their own words and with their own emphases. Analytically, while such narratives are a record of the “objective life events” that underpin individuals’ retrospective understandings of their own life experience, through their implicit “moral evaluations” of these events the narratives also function as the basis for “grounded description and theorisation about a *different* object of study,” in this case the role of agency in the education-migration nexus (Wengraf, 2006, p. 1, emphasis in original).

The “entry” interviews consisted of two subsessions, the first of which was centred around an open-ended SQUIN. A broad question was asked to begin the interview and prompt participants to offer the story of their life to that point, after which I employed minimal supportive probing, and avoided giving substantive guidance to participants. The question was adapted from the BNIM guide for the specific purposes of this study and was worded as follows:

SQUIN 1: For the first part of the interview can you please tell me about your life story, and the experiences and events which were important for you? Start wherever you like, and please take all the time you need. I’ll listen first, and I won’t interrupt. Don’t worry if I start writing things down, I’m just taking some notes for after you’ve finished telling me about it all. So, can you please tell me

about the experiences and the events which were important for you, personally, up to now?

The SQUIN was subtly adapted in real-time for each individual interviewee based on the flow of conversation that had taken place prior to the recording beginning, and the degree of rapport that had been established. Sometimes participants exhibited difficulties in beginning their narrative, so I used the technique of narrowing the focus to one particular event that felt particularly important to them, before probing a broader description of surrounding events, eventually developing into a complete biographical-narrative. Participants were supported in giving an account of a length that felt natural to them, and as a result there was a wide disparity in narrative length. Some participants were very happy to give extended narratives that lasted more than an hour with little further encouragement (e.g., Arya and Karl), whereas others spoke only for a few sentences, and required more supportive probing to extend their narrative (e.g., Misty and Harry).

It was usually readily apparent when the participants' narratives were complete, often indicated by a verbal "coda" (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) that signalled the end of the extended narrative (e.g., "that's how I ended up here" – Karl), or non-verbal implication in the form of a long pause or considered nod that similarly signalled that the extended narrative was complete. At this point, the second subsession consisting of a narrative follow-up began, wherein I returned to events or actions to which the participant had referred in their initial narrative, but which warranted further exploration.

Wengraf advocates that a break should be scheduled within the interview to demarcate the transition from the first to the second subsession, and aid the participant in their transition to a different form of communication. However, I found that, given the chance that participants would sometimes only speak for a short time before signalling the end of their narration, a scheduled break was more counter-productive than helpful. After only a few interviews I found that taking a break interrupted the flow of the interview more than it eased the transition. In practice, I managed the transition to the second subsession of the interview like this:

Arya: Yeah. And that is where I am right now. [Coda]

Tom: And that is where you got to. My word, that is such a rollercoaster.

Arya: Yes, I know. Sorry, I went on for a bit too long but, you know, it was just-

--

Tom: No, tha-that was- that was fantastic. It is really interesting. Now what I would like to do is kind of go back through that with you, based on the notes that I had taken from what you said and there will be certain things that I will ask you to sort of like elaborate on if that's okay with you. Also, I have realised this might get quite long, so if you want to at any time, you can like stop for a break and go and get some water or something.

Arya: Yes, thank you very much.

Tom: So, interrupt me anytime, and make sure you are nice and comfortable [long pause as I check notes]... You spoke a little bit about why you chose the UK and you said that “English medium of instruction was important” to you, and the thing that “set it apart from the other [English speaking] countries” was “cultural.” I wonder if you could sort of go a little bit more into more depth about that.

The aim here was to develop a more comprehensive version of each participant's narrative, while employing methodological steps to mitigate the degree of substantive co-construction. These methodological concerns are summarised by Wengraf (2004) as follows:

1. Ask only narrative-pointed questions.
2. Only ask about topics raised by the interviewee.
3. Probe these topics where possible in the words used, and in the order raised by the interviewee.

By adhering to these methodological restrictions, the second subsession of the interview was designed to preserve, to a large degree, the overall narrative structure and “plot” that was provided by the participant, but ensured that each action or event was individually narrated to its full extent. In doing so, this method achieved a balance between the need to record extended narratives, which may require a degree of prompting with certain participants who exhibited less comfort in the unstructured narration of their biography, while preserving their precise language and narrative structure.

The mean length of the “entry” interview differed between the two national case studies, typically being longer in the UK. In the UK, the shortest “entry” interview was 75 minutes, the longest 152 minutes, and the mean was 109 minutes. In Japan, the shortest

“entry” interview was 62 minutes, the longest 134 minutes, and the average was 86 minutes. A sample “entry” interview protocol is available in Appendix 7.

Semi-Structured “Exit” Interviews

“Exit” interviews are often optional within the BNIM framework. The benefit of including a second interview is evidence of the “before-and-after,” critical when seeking to engage in “grounded description and theorisation about a *different* object of study” (Wengraf, 2006, p. 1 emphasis in original). If an object of study is situated within a change, process, or transition, such as the trajectory through education-migration nexus, this “before-and-after” perspective is particularly valuable. As argued in Chapter 3, such a temporal element is critical if the aims of this study are to be attained. As a result, I chose to include this in my research design.

The role of the second interview was to build upon the established biographical-narrative of the individual participant with further narrative of recent events, and to engage in joint reflection on what had occurred between the two interviews. In this interview, extended narration of actions and events was still desired, to aid in the identification of important events and their meaning to the individual. As such, the opening question again followed the SQUIN approach, though more confined to inducing narration of events and occurrences that had taken place since the “entry” interview was conducted. The SQUIN for the second interview was adapted according to the individual interviewee, but based on the following question:

SQUIN 2: Much like last time I’d like to start the interview with a broad question, and you can talk for as long as you like. Just to help me catch up with you please take a few minutes to tell me about what you have been doing and the important things that happened since we last spoke.

Unlike the “entry” interview, the second subsession of the “exit” interview was semi-structured, wherein a pre-prepared interview protocol was used to guide topics in a way that was not permitted during the “entry” interview. Following the opening SQUIN and supported narration, a personalised interview protocol was used to support the fullest elaboration of participants’ experiences through their post-study transition, and the manner in which their actions and attitudes had changed. Participants were asked personalised questions that built upon their narrative from the first interview, often using quotations from their original narratives as the basis for probing questions on whether and to what extent their perspective had evolved. The protocol was also designed to gather participants’

perspectives on certain thematic findings that had emerged during preliminary analysis of the “entry” interviews. While this was not the central empirical aim of the “exit” interview, it did aid in providing additional evidence that could contextualise the narrative data that were at the heart of the study. Furthermore, it aided in later theory-building, as preliminary analysis of the “entry” interviews could be further tested in light of participants’ perspectives.

The mean length of the “exit” interviews was also around 20 minutes longer in the UK than in Japan. In the UK, the shortest “exit” interview was 54 minutes, the longest 120 minutes, and the mean was 90 minutes. In Japan, the shortest “exit” interview was 42 minutes, the longest 115 minutes, and the average was 68 minutes. A sample “exit” interview protocol is available in Appendix 8.

Data Management

While the audio recordings and full verbatim transcripts in the original language were the primary form of data used in the study, my handwritten fieldnotes were also of critical importance. These notes were crucial within the interviews themselves, acting as an aide-memoire to help me return to specific pieces of narrative that required further elaboration, and I was able to note down participants’ specific wording to preserve their language when probing for more information. In addition, Wengraf states that “interviews are not merely speech-events, they are NVC [non-verbal communication] and whole-body/whole-context events.” I was diligent in noting down paralinguistic and non-verbal features of the interview (in brackets) that would not necessarily be captured by the audio recording, and as a result these field notes also contributed to the analysis process. As Riessman (2005) argues, analysis of narrative transcripts is “strengthened when paralinguistic features of interaction are included” as they provide a record of “speech in all its complexity, not simply as a vehicle for content” (p. 4-5). An annotated example of these notes is shown below in Figure 3, including notation of changes in topics which were marked with an arrow, points for elaboration which were marked with a large star, key quotations in inverted quotation marks, and paralinguistic features and NVC placed in brackets. Even in the interviews that were conducted in Japanese language the majority of field notes were recorded in English due to the speed and fluency with which I was able to write while concentrating on the participants’ narratives. I only used Japanese in field notes when trying to record verbatim quotations.

At the time of interview audio recordings were made on both a passcode-protected IC recorder and my passcode/fingerprint recognition protected mobile phone, to ensure a backup if one were to fail. Fieldnotes were taken by hand in small notebooks. Following interviews, both versions of the audio recording were uploaded to my (different) password-

protected laptop computer at the earliest opportunity and saved with filenames that corresponded to the participant's chosen pseudonym. Recordings were also backed up on a cloud service that required a third password to log in. I also made a note in the filename of the recording that was higher audio quality, which varied according to the conditions in which the interview took place.

Fieldnotes were originally scanned using a .PDF scanner that used my mobile phone's camera, to preserve the precise form in which they were originally written. I also transcribed these notes to .DOCX format to make them searchable and aid the analysis process. Both the .PDF scans and .DOCX files were saved on my laptop computer and backed up in the same secure cloud storage.

Narrative Data Analysis

Having been transcribed and cleaned, all data were originally placed into an *NVivo 11* database (upgraded to version 12 during the progress of the study) before being coded and analysed. The data analysis framework for this study was heavily influenced by the BNIM framework, but I also made some additions according to the specific empirical and theoretical requirements of the study which are explained in detail below. The analytical framework consisted of two mutually informing analytical frameworks, the first of which was narrative in nature and concerned emerging themes and the structure of the narratives themselves, while the second was influenced by the chordal triad model of agency.

Figure 3

An example of handwritten fieldnotes

4/12/2017

3 yrs old - Small village. No money
 @ ENY (long pause) (China "everybody is suffering")
 ↳ Story - "little story" (laughs)
 "bigger sister" actually family friend.
 Lied about 2nd mother in America
 "If she comes for you, come with her. I said
 yes" (laughs again) "I don't know why I
 said yes" 3 yrs *
 "special in my village" - Wandolot "far as I can"
 ↳ Primary - Middle school } "something outside"
 ↳ Study overworked ⇒ better high school
 Pressure of test (pause) ↳ (laughs)
 ↳ top 3 in class only top 10 in test
 ↳ Couldn't go to top HS
 "Always" ↳ Dad's friend ⇒ "independent"

Note. Name redacted in top left of picture

Thematic and Structural Coding Framework

Narrative interviews require a type of data analysis that focuses on reconstructing the important "life events" that form the basis of the plot of each narrative, and also the participants' subjective "experiencing" of these events, giving scope to interpret their subjectivities and agency (Wengraf, 2004a). To help structure this analysis, Wengraf

simplifies Bruner's (1986) distinction between: (1) a life as lived, (2) a life as experienced, and (3) a life as told. Wengraf argues that the focus of the interviewer must be guarded against taking the narrative as an objective record of life events, and instead to look for the "the dated situated subjectivity's telling of the told story, not the story in itself" (2001, p. 143). To support this process, he advocates for an analytical framework that considers: 1) the living of the lived life, and 2) the telling of the told story. These analytical strands correspond to thematic and structural forms of analysis, respectively, that are common in narrative research. These are explained in more detail below, but, in short, thematic analysis places an emphasis on content, and aids in theorisation across cases when trying to develop theory. Structural analysis, on the other hand, emphasises how content is put across and is particularly useful when using more in-depth narrative techniques, such as the BNIM. I used thematic and structural analysis in combination and applied them to all narrative data.

In the thematic analysis of the "lived life," the aim of the analysis was to create an "objective history" of life events which was—to an extent—"stripped of [the] subjectivity" of the participants (Wengraf, 2001, p. 144). These objective life events are apparent in the narrative in the form of transitions from a "**coda**" that signalled the end of one life event, and an "abstract" that signalled the start of the next (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). An example of the **coda-abstract** transition is show below, taken from the "entry" interview with Arya:

*Arya: I was super excited, and I was just like, "Okay this is it. It doesn't matter to me which country I'm working in as long as I'm working for [them]." **So, it was great.** I- I went to Mumbai, and um, and I started working with [them] and what- what- what I discovered is-- so my boss knew about [my university].*

These transitions were marked in field notes during interviews but also re-interpreted for accuracy in the verbatim transcripts. Due, in part, to the guidance in the information sheet, but also by virtue of the age and mobile nature of my participants, life events that received full narration were often significant international moves or educational transitions, but also included a variety of life events that were unique to individual participants. It is important to note that this is not considered to be a full record of important events within participants' lives, as what they decided to share at the time of interview was heavily contingent on factors that may have influenced what felt significant and important at that particular time. With this limitation in mind, I created a timeline of "objective" life events that were part of the participants' narratives. These were checked with participants after the second interview to ensure their accuracy.

The second track of structural analysis, concerned with the “telling of the told story,” was intended to allow insight into the meaning that participants attributed to these life events, including their “moral” evaluations of the events, and their desired self-presentation. This track of analysis required significant interpretive work on my behalf, and was not restricted to objective questions such as “what events and topics do they talk about?” but rather focused on: “how do they talk about these events?; how do they want us to evaluate the events and phases of their life?; how are they presenting themselves to me?; what ‘moral’ lesson are they presenting?; what ‘moral’ may they be trying to avoid?; why?” In this track of analysis, nothing was taken at face value, and the meaning and significance of life events was constantly interrogated by a movement between the narrative itself and iterative theorising about its significance. This track of analysis was aided enormously by paralinguistic and non-verbal communication that were evident both in the audio recordings and field notes, which gave additional information upon which to interpret the meanings inherent in these life events in light of the precise manner of the telling. An example of this is shown below, wherein Misty’s evaluation of her position within her American high school is clearer in light of her pauses, false starts, and laughter:

*Misty: I was a lot smarter than the kids there, and that's not like a, you know--.
Simply put, those kids were really dumb. Um, they thought I was a masked genius,
and I said, "Well, you are shit out of luck." Uh-- [laughter] Just to be fair, it was
a very different system.*

The advantage of the parallel use of both thematic and structural analyses is that they were mutually informing in understanding participants’ subjectivity and agency in their trajectories through the education-migration nexus. I was not only able to comprehend the objective life events that, in combination, formed the core of their narratives, but had an empirical way to evaluate each life event and interpret its significance to the individual participant. These analyses also informed the creation of personalised research instruments for the “exit” interviews, and the final analysis.

Agency-focused Coding Framework

This study was fundamentally concerned with the role of agency in the education-migration nexus and, in addition to the narrative analysis discussed above, I also employed a deductive analytical approach using the three agentic elements identified by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) as its framework. The top-level nodes for the second strand of analysis within my NVivo database corresponded to the iterational, projective, and practical-

evaluative elements of agency, with “subtones” of each element of agency included as “subnodes” under the appropriate top-level node. I began by identifying examples and “subtones” of each element of agency as they are described in the original article and used those that could be empirically identified within narrative transcripts as preliminary sub-nodes, into which I placed blocks of texts that showed evidence of a particular element of agency. Three examples are given in Table 8 below, including the top-level node, one sample sub-node and its description, and an example of text that was coded therein.

I also engaged in a degree of inductive coding, identifying examples of each type of agency that were not mentioned in the original framework and adding sub-nodes as I progressed through the text. Having completed one round of coding and adding further sub-nodes, I then passed through the data several more times to ensure that evidence that would fit into newly added sub-nodes was included. The full coding tree is available in Appendix 9.

Having completed the coding process, I used the data analysis functions within *NVivo* to look at patterns of agency on both an individual and cross-case basis. For example, at the individual level hierarchy charts and coding queries were helpful in identifying the relative frequency of different agentive elements that individual participants exhibited in their narratives, and I was able to make comparisons between the “entry” and “exit” interviews to see changes over time. I was also able to pinpoint sections of the narrative that were particularly dense with coding of certain elements of agency and identify life events in which certain elements appeared to be significant.

Table 8*Coding examples for chordal triad*

Top-level node	Sub-node	Code description	Example interview excerpt
Iterational	Socio-culturally defined routes	Evidence of “tendencies” i.e. present experiences being conditioned by past (possible shared or imagined) histories; process of “typification... “analogy” of an emerging experience with those of the past, either within the actor’s direct memory or within a social memory”; not necessarily recognised as such.	Karl: All of my classmates, all of my peers came from very similar backgrounds, they were returnees. Like 95% of us were foreign passport holders in Taiwan, and almost all of us ended up going back to college either in Europe, or Australia, or mostly in the US or Canada.
Projective	Imagination and evaluation	Evidence of “hypothesisation of experience, as actors attempt to reconfigure received schemas by generating alternative possible responses”; Evidence of “the work of identifying patterns of possible developments in an often vague and indeterminate future horizon”: Actors “playfully insert themselves into variety of possible trajectories... expanding their flexible response”	Arya: Well, honey, like I’ve told you, I’m very strategic about these things um, in the short term and this is- which is I was here... So that leaves me with two options. One, two options. Technically, four options. I’m thinking of- um I think of this in terms of- Now I think of my future in terms of universities, and not in terms of countries
Practical-evaluative	Potential to transform social relations	This includes the propensity to exert agentive action on existing social relations and has the greatest capacity for change; Exertions of practical-evaluative agency implies a judgment of the present conditions and an acknowledgement of the potential to “transform the situational contexts of action”	Chelsea: I mean sometimes you get-you get upset because you feel like there are too many things you cannot change about the society or something, but actually when you learn more, you will-you will have the ability to change some little things that will make little difference, but it’s still different and you are still making some contribution.

Limitations of Narrative Research and the Pursuit of “Truthfulness”

While the strengths of narrative research and the BNIM rendered them suitable for this research project, they also have a number of limitations that needed to be considered throughout the research process. The primary practical limitation of narrative research is that it is particularly resource intensive. It requires a large amount of time on the part of participants, and the researcher must set aside more time for analysis relative to other qualitative methods. The time required for extended interviews meant that few could be scheduled in the same day/week, and that an extended period for data analysis be scheduled within the research timetable from the outset.

Further limitations are inherent in the nature of narrative data, which emerge empirically from participants’ self-representations. Polkinghorne draws attention to the fact that “recollection of past events is selective and produced from the present perspective of the respondent” (1995, p. 20). As a result, some argue that narratives are more liable than other forms of interview data to conscious or inadvertent manipulation by the participants. Some researchers argue that participants engage in an act of self-preservation when telling extended stories of their life. Thus, while participants and researchers may feel that the narratives being created are a more-or-less accurate description of the events, some would suggest that decisions taken in the telling of these stories are influenced by the necessity for self-preservation in the present, and the desires of the person that they want to become in future. As John Barth (1958) observed, “everyone is necessarily the hero of their own life story.” Through the desire to protect one’s self-identity, narratives can become a “retrospective illusion” (Osterland, 1983, p. 285, cited in Apitzsch & Inowlocki, 2000, p. 56) that has more to do with the justification of their present situation and stating the motivation for their future trajectory, than creating an accurate record of their experiences. Wengraf summarises as follows: “the ‘stories as presented’ may not be the same as the ‘realities as were’” (2001, p. 26-28).

This issue of self-presentation is often used as an argument against the validity of narrative evidence. Given the concerns above, the very veracity of the empirical data collected through narrative interviews is in question, making claims towards validity very difficult. In light of these criticisms, researchers engaging in narrative methods do not generally attempt to argue for the rigour of their research in terms of validity, accepting that “narrative approaches are person-centred, unapologetically subjective. Far from a weakness, the voice of the person, the subject’s own account represents a singular strength” (Amos Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 118).

Rather than adapt to the requirements of validity at the risk of losing the greatest strength of narrative research, advocates have sought to create alternative criteria for evaluating the quality and rigour of narrative research, rather than borrowing concepts such as validity, objectivity, and generalisability. Yvonna Lincoln summarises the significance of these “traditional ideas” of research quality in reference to narrative research, stating: “it’s not that those issues don’t get done well in this form of research; they are simply not in the same universe” (Lincoln’s personal communication, cited in Amos Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 120). Responding to this criticism, leading researchers using these methods have presented a number of alternative methods for judging the rigour and quality of narrative research projects. Amos Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) provided a comprehensive summary of alternatives, including “fidelity” and “authenticity” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) “verisimilitude” (Barone, 1995; Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988) and “fairness” (Schempp’s personal communication, cited in Amos Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995), to name just a few. Key to many of these alternatives is the need to recognise and reflect upon narrative subjectivity, without trying to restrict its role within the research (Bloom & Munro, 1995).

Evident from the number and variety of different models for evaluating the quality of narrative research is the lack of a definitive account. While Wilson (1994) and Lincoln (2002) have attempted to provide generic criteria to evaluate narrative research, Freeman et al. (2007) argue that the heterogeneity in evaluative criteria is reflective of the heterogeneity that exists within the corpus of qualitative researchers, and they advocate against the temptation to apply generic criteria to evaluate the research process. Instead, they propose that each researcher must be forthright and open in defining the standards by which they judge their own research, while displaying an appropriate degree of scepticism. They should provide evidence of reflexivity and self-criticism, including open discussion of the “limitations and uncertainties” of the research, and adequate consideration of “alternative interpretations and explanations” for their claims (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 30). Rather than simple evaluative criteria that can be retrospectively applied to the research project, these concerns reflect the need to engage in a “continuing conversation about truth” throughout the research process, and this was my intention throughout this doctoral project (Freeman et al., p. 30).

In line with Freeman et al.’s recommendations, I tried to maintain a high level of reflexivity throughout the research process to ensure that I was appropriately self-critical, recognised the limitations of the study, and took appropriate steps to ensure the “truthfulness” of the final product. I identified the following points of focus which were of particular

importance, alongside a number of practical techniques that were used to mitigate or account for the limitations of the study. Reflecting the issue of co-creation that is ever present in qualitative research, it was critical to respect participants' narratives and ensure that the thesis is a fair representation of their account. As a result, member-checking was conducted in the "exit" interview to ensure that their experiences were accurately reflected in the thesis. Simultaneously, it was also necessary to recognise narrative subjectivity and self-presentation throughout, and to maintain a level of healthy scepticism to what participants included in their narratives. Practically, I sought corroborating and confounding evidence of the veracity of participants' narratives where possible, and was careful to identify and report contradictions and inconsistencies.

However, member-checking at the completion of the "exit" interview was not, in isolation, sufficient to account for my influence on the interviews and ensure their "truthfulness." It was also necessary to reflect on my positionality as a researcher. Positionality is the multidimensional relationship that exists between the researcher and social and political context of the community that is being studied (Rowe, 2014). Researchers, though sometimes aspiring towards objectivity, bring to their projects particular "thinking, beliefs, faith and knowledge" that inevitably affect the relationship that forms between them and their subjects (Wellington, 2015, p. 87). In addition, specifics of the data collection process can also influence this relationship. This is important because, particularly in research that is narrative in nature (Goodley, Lawthom, Clough, & Moore, 2010, p. 110), this relationship "determines the prevailing outcomes and results—whose voice(s) will be represented" (Rowe, 2014, p. 4). As described above, the empirical aim of my data collection was to capture participants' narratives of their trajectories in depth, with an emphasis on the life events that were of particular importance to the individual. The participants of this study were extremely diverse, and I did not share the same researcher-participant relationship with every respondent. As a result, I had to constantly review this relationship and be mindful of my positionality in relation to that particular participant at that particular time. To this end, I had to consider the way in which my positionality may influence the life events that participants chose to recount. Later in the research process, I also had to consider how my relationship to the data collected would influence the way in which I analysed the data, and subsequently interpreted the results.

My positionality during this study was complicated by a combination of insider and outsider relationships with my participants. On one hand, I, too, was a student at the time of the interview, an insider dynamic that helped build a degree of rapport with certain participants. However, on the other hand, I approached and interviewed participants in the

role of a researcher, an outsider position emphasised by the formalities of information sheets and consent forms. In general, participants seemed to treat me as a peer, but it was notable that the use of formal research instruments stiffened the discussion somewhat. Insider/outsider dynamics were also influenced by the age of participants. Many graduate students were of a similar age to me (late 20s during the interviews), creating an insider dynamic, however, the opposite was the case with undergraduate students, some of whom were significantly younger than myself. In addition, on rare occasions, an outsider dynamic emerged in participants' apparent perception of me as an "expert" who could help and advise them in their post-study trajectories, challenging the methodological goal to not guide the discussion. Furthermore, as I was speaking to international students, my status as a British citizen created a different dynamic in the two national cases. In the UK, my British status created an outsider dynamic with my international participants, whereas in Japan I, too, was an international presence, and therefore shared an insider dynamic with my participants.

Some of the challenges of these insider and outsider dynamics were minimised methodologically during the data collection phase. For example, the use of an open-ended SQUIN and limiting discussion to topics raised by the interviewee helped to maintain the power to direct the narrative firmly in the hands of the participant. In addition, I tried hard to monitor and adapt my behaviour during interviews to limit the extent to which I imposed myself on the interaction, prioritising making them feel comfortable and confident in guiding the conversation. The influence of my positionality could not be completely accounted for methodologically. Therefore, throughout the text I try to "expose my own subjectivity," being truthful about my positionality and the influence this may have had on the data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and explore alternative interpretations throughout (McKinley, 2005).

The Challenges of "Cross-Cultural" Research

In addition to the challenges and limitations of narrative research, the decision to situate the research in two national case studies, and the collection of data from international students from around the world, required that linguistic and cultural factors be considered. Researchers seeking to undertake "cross-language" or "cross-cultural" projects must necessarily engage in a process of linguistic and/or cultural translation, and the proper approach to such translations is still the subject of debate across the social sciences (Brislin, 1970, 1986; Jones, Lee, Phillips, Zhang, & Jaceldo, 2001). Multiple "camps" have emerged in the discussion of the proper approach to the linguistic translation of research documents and data. Some argue that systematic back-translation methods (Brislin, 1970, 1986),

properly timed within the research process, can identify the most “accurate” or “correct” translation that satisfies positivist conceptions of validity and reliability (Jones et al., 2001). However, such methods are extremely resource intensive, and suffer from limited reproducibility (Lewin, 1990; Broadfoot & Osborne, 1993). Others argue that, whatever methods are employed, “there can be no single correct translation” (Temple, 2005, p. 2). They worry that the tendency of social researchers to pursue “accurate” translations into natural English tends to privilege the perspective of the researcher/translator, at the expense of the situated meaning of the source text, and the “truthfulness” of the research account (Spivak, 2000; Venuti, 1998).

While researchers can reasonably justify a number of approaches to the thorny issue of translation, criticism is growing towards studies that do not make their translation method explicit, and do not adequately account for the influence of translation in their analysis and findings. Temple and Young (2004) criticise the growing tendency of much “cross-cultural” research to be “eerily quiet” about the translation process, ignoring the challenges and opportunities therein, and implying that the process of translation “is irrelevant if objectivity is achieved in the research process” (p. 163). Squires argues that, whether one seeks scholarly “rigour” in the positivist mode, or “trustworthiness” in a more relativist mode, explaining the translation process in full greatly improves the quality of the research project (Squires, 2009).

This study presents a particularly complex set of translational issues. I devoted significant effort to meet these challenges at the planning stage of the research, and maintained reflexivity and the willingness to adapt as the project progressed. It is important to clarify that I was the sole researcher/translator for this research study. I undertook the majority of the translation myself, only seeking targeted help and advice from a small number of native Japanese speakers when proofreading, piloting, and back-translating research documents. This situation was a practical advantage, as it was unnecessary for me to hire professional interpreters, transcribers, and translators to carry out the research project. However, this also came with additional methodological challenges and responsibilities to undergo additional training to improve my formal language skills (particularly important in phase 1), and communicative ability (fundamental to the quality of the phase 2 data). In line with these responsibilities, I undertook advanced language training at UCL-IOE, completing their highest level of Japanese language training during the first year of my doctorate. I also enrolled in further advanced training during my time at Hiroshima University, with a focus on formal Japanese constructions that feature within governmental strategy and legislative documents. On my return to the UK, I continued to study with a personal tutor, with whom

I could discuss weaknesses in my language skills and receive targeted support accordingly. In light of this training, I was able to carry out both phases of the empirical portion of this research independent from professional help, though advice was available from colleagues in Japan.

However, though my language skills were sufficient for the purposes of this research, researcher/translators must still check the validity of their interpretations and translations according to a chosen measure of quality (Temple & Young, 2004). Mirroring the broader measure of quality that I have applied to the whole research project, I chose to engage in a “continuing conversation about truth” (Freeman et al., p. 30) that does not make claims to validity or reproducibility. Rather, I hope in this document to provide sufficient evidence of the “cross-language trustworthiness” of the translation process used in this study (Squires, 2009, p. 8), that accounts for the influence of researcher/translator dynamics, and attempts to mitigate, rather than solve, the challenges of cross-cultural research (Broadfoot & Osborn, 1993).

In the planning stages of the research, including the creation of research documents, I implemented a structured process of iterative improvement that included extended consultation and back-translation with bilingual peers to support the identification and translation of key concepts. First, all of the research documents were created in English ahead of the first stage of data collection in the UK. Having completed this stage and moved to Japan, I began the process of translating the research documents into Japanese. In light of my language training and experience living and working in Japan, I have a degree of familiarity with the communicative and cultural norms that satisfies the level of sociolinguistic language competence that is necessary for work with international students studying in Japan (Squires, 2009). This enabled me to use culturally sensitive or appropriate translations, rather than rely on technically “accurate” or “verbatim” translations that may not effectively communicate with participants of the study. This is reflected in the presentation of project information in research documents, including different order of information, the use of different grammatical forms, and some differences in content. These changes were designed to make the documents feel more natural to the study participants, make information readily comprehensible to them, and avoid alienating potential participants.

To ensure that these translated documents served the purpose of adequately informing my participants and imparting all essential information, I consulted with colleagues who were native Japanese speakers, highly proficient in English, and trained in social research methods. With reference to the English language research documents, we identified key

concepts that were fundamental to the research project and which would require particular attention in the translation process. For example, as discussed in Chapter 3, the terms “migrant,” “migration” or “immigration” are used throughout the study to specifically identify international students as a migrant population. The choice to frame international students as migrants in the British case is not uncontroversial (The Migration Observatory, 2017), but this choice takes on a new significance in the Japanese case where direct translations for the term “immigration” (*imin*) carry particular social stigma. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage at length with the cause and nature of this social stigma, but in conversation with my colleagues, it became clear that there is no direct translation for many of these terms that can remain unassailably value-neutral, and avoid conjuring negative images of illegal immigration (*fuhōnyūkoku*) and fake refugees (*gisōnanmin*). Having identified such issues, and in the knowledge of their sensitivity, I decided, in consultation with my colleagues, that communicating the meaning of these terms would require additional explanation and multiple alternative terms to be included in the documents supplied to the study participants. It was also decided to remove terms derived from “immigration” or *imin* from the translated title of the study¹⁸ and header of emails sent to potential participants in Japan to avoid causing concern, though the term *imin* was included in the full description of the study. Having thoroughly translated these documents with the support of Japanese colleagues, I then piloted the approach letters, information sheets, consent forms, and interview protocols with international students within the department before approaching participants for the study.

Turning to the interviews, participants in the UK were provided only with English language documents, and all data collection and analysis took place in English. In Japan, participants were provided with the research documents in both English and Japanese and given the opportunity to be interviewed in their language of choice. Four participants chose to conduct their interviews entirely in Japanese, with the remainder choosing to communicate primarily in English. In every interview, the linguistic dynamics were quite complex. In almost all interviews, one or both of the interviewer/interviewee were speaking a language other than their mother tongue. In the UK, typically the interviewees were

¹⁸ The title of the study used in the Japanese language information sheet if translated directly into English is “The relationship between the international mobility of highly skilled workers and international students in higher education: A longitudinal study of the individual perspectives and outcomes of recent graduates.” The full Japanese title: 「高度人材の国際移動と高等教育における留学生との関係：新卒生の個人的志向と成果に関する経年的研究」

speaking a second or foreign language, though their linguistic abilities were typically very high. In Japan, whether the interviews were conducted in English or Japanese, the interviewees were almost exclusively speaking a second or third language, and there was a higher degree of variation in language ability. Some were practically fluent, while others had more difficulty in communicating at length. In addition to the linguistic differences, while participants in both countries were drawn from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, the different communicative styles that exist in the UK and Japan may have been, to a greater or lesser extent, internalised by the study participants.

These differences in linguistic competence and communicative convention contributed to a different experience in the interviews across the two countries. It was my experience that participants in the UK appeared more comfortable with the biographical-narrative interview technique, while interviews conducted in Japan typically transitioned to the “detail confirmation and narrative follow-up” subsession of the interview more quickly. I was required, therefore, to provide more supportive questioning—maintaining Wengraf’s [2004] methodological recommendations—to enable a comprehensive narrative to be completed. I also perceived that the interviewer/interviewee dynamic differed somewhat between the two national case studies. In the UK, the transmission of power to the interviewee was more straightforward to achieve, and participants appeared to enjoy the opportunity to guide the discussion and speak at length about their experiences in their own terms. In the Japanese case, participants appeared to expect a different form of communication in which a higher level of formality and a question-and-answer format was maintained. As a result of these factors, as was described above, the interviews in the UK case tended to be slightly longer and less structured than those in Japan.

Having completed the data collection process, all transcription and analysis took place in the original language. Indeed, according to recommendations from Squires (2009), I tried to delay translation until the latest possible opportunity, and only quotations that were to be included in written outputs from the study were eventually translated into English. To do this, I used an adapted back-translation method proposed by Jones et al. (2001), who suggest that a combination of back-translation and group discussions with bilingual peers can achieve sufficient conceptual equivalence, without prioritising precise verbatim translation and linguistic accuracy over the transmission of meaning. I initially translated Japanese language texts into the English language and provided these draft English translations to my bilingual colleagues. They then back-translated these drafts into Japanese. Subsequently, group discussions took place where the original English translation and back-translation were used as the basis for the final English translation used in the research outputs. These

translations were created with an emphasis on the “truthfulness” of the output language as a representation of and interpretation of the participants’ intended meanings, based on verbatim transcripts of what the participant had said, my fieldnotes from the time, and the audio recording (Amos Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Temple, 2005; Wengraf, 2001).

Ethical Concerns

All social research that deals directly with human participants must consider ethical concerns. The most pertinent to this study included the on-going nature of voluntary informed consent in longitudinal studies, issues of confidentiality, and the particularly sensitive nature of narrative data in the context of migration. To ensure that the research went to adequate lengths to protect its participants, I referred to the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), UCL Research Ethics Committee, and University of Oxford Ethics committee ethical guidelines when developing my research design, with the clear aim of minimising the risks to participants. Both the UCL and University of Oxford committees approved this research design upon ethical review, as evidenced in Appendix 1. I referred back to my ethics review applications and the BERA and institutional research ethics committee guidelines throughout the research process, to remind myself of the specific processes to which I must adhere to protect my participants. These are not all listed in full here, but I will discuss the most important issues in the context of narrative research.

Confidentiality and anonymity were a key concern, and universities in the UK and Japan take their responsibility to maintain student anonymity very seriously. Thus, it was made clear when approaching university gatekeepers and all participants in the study that all data will be anonymised and encrypted locally immediately following recording, and henceforth all data will be protected in a secure online storage platform to prevent any loss of sensitive or personal data. The desire to audio record interviews was made expressly clear to universities and participants, and only on receipt of approval from both did audio recording take place.

Issues pertinent to the education-migration nexus may be seen to be of a contentious nature, and this research required that participants relay their biographies, including personal perceptions and beliefs on issues of great personal significance and potential risk. Therefore, embedded in the BNIM methodology and interview proceedings were safeguards that informed and reminded participants that they only had to talk about topics they were happy to share. In addition, the fact that potentially contentious or sensitive issues were likely to come up in the interview was included in the information sheet and orally expressed to the participants prior to the interviews. Additionally, given the sensitive nature of migration

issues, the researcher had to be alert to the vulnerabilities of participants. While it is not the role of a social researcher to offer therapeutic or legal advice, particularly in areas in which they are not trained, I did feel a responsibility to help my participants in situations where they may be in danger. Thus, serious admissions of danger or liability, emotionally affected participants, or signs that they may benefit from additional help were to be met with an offer of referral to relevant support groups. This only occurred in one case, where the participant was considering deliberately breaking immigration laws by overstaying their visa.

Another indication of the success of the research design from the perspective of protecting participants from harm was the high incidence of words of thanks and gratitude at the end of interviews. Many participants expressed that the interviews had helped them to reflect on their life story in a manner that was often very positive. The following exchange is a typical example:

Emily: [The interview] is very, uh, it's surprisingly insightful because I didn't realise some of the things that I was saying before, because I was kind of like thinking out loud—just trying to go through some of things. But yeah, interesting. Really interesting.

Summary

As explained in this chapter, my research questions are designed to respond directly to the shared concerns of both higher education and migration studies researchers, and further the research agenda that has emerged at their intersection. My central research question, and the empirical methods that were chosen to answer it, were directed by the need for temporally sensitive research into the role of agency in student-migrants' trajectories through the education-migration nexus. These concerns warranted a qualitative engagement, and, due to their high temporal sensitivity and "high context" nature, narrative methods were most appropriate. As I have described in this chapter, narrative methods, particularly across cultures, are a particularly intensive form of research that requires dedicated data collection methods and skills that were developed throughout my doctoral studies. I did not possess all of these skills to a high level at the outset of the research, and their development was an active and gradual process. Other aspects of the research had to be adapted throughout the course of the study, owing to practical restrictions. This included the decision to carry out data collection asymmetrically, staggering interviews and employing different participant recruitment methods in each national case. Managing these challenges necessitated maintaining a balance of self-criticism and practicality regarding the data I would be able to

collect, taking every opportunity to collect data that was “truthful” to the experiences of my participants and sufficient to answer my research questions.

Chapter 5: The Evolving Legal Context in the UK and Japan

Introduction

In Chapters 3 and 4, I argued that student-migrants' agency is negotiated within a complex web of social relations that act as both enabling and confining structural factors. Thus, to understand the development and practice of agency in participants' migration trajectories, these "temporal-relational contexts" must be given sufficient consideration (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). As discussed above, migration processes are particularly subject to the influence of the state: "the freedom of migrants stops where the State's prerogatives start" (Zlotnik, 1987, p. 942). Regulatory frameworks designed by the state define the legal trajectories available to migrants and, as a result, these frameworks must be considered if participants' agency is to be analysed in light of the critical contextual factors. Given the lack of a comprehensive account of these frameworks in the context of student migration in the UK and Japan, it was necessary to develop one from scratch. Therefore, this chapter identifies the legal administrative frameworks in the UK and Japan as they evolved throughout participants' trajectories. I present a summary of the evolution of administrative frameworks that governed student migration in each case study country between 2004-2018, before considering the various trajectories available for in-country post-study transitions in each national case.

First, using the Temper project's policy trajectory analysis method, I identify policies implemented within this timeframe that changed the administrative framework according to seven key indicators of the nature of regulations affecting, and rights afforded to, international student-migrants. I then chart these changes longitudinally and discuss the significance of these changes pre-, during-, and post-study. I chart the receptivity of the legal frameworks in each national case between the years of 2004, representative of the situation when the earliest participants first applied to study in the host nations, and 2018, when participants graduated from their respective courses. To give a more comprehensive account of post-study pathways, I provide detail on post-study transitions possible for the study participants at the time of their graduation: summer 2018 in the UK, and spring 2018 in Japan. I summarise the pathways available to international graduates and provide detail from legal documents to reveal the administrative processes for pursuing these various transitions, and the rights afforded to those who transitioned into these new residence categories.

The Evolving Legal Context in the UK

The policy trajectory analysis in the UK revealed that 2004-2018 was a relatively turbulent time in migration policymaking, as the receptive policies that characterised the 2004-2008 period were repeatedly reformed by the successive Labour, Coalition, and Conservative governments, resulting in a measurable decline in their receptivity over the decade until 2018. This section charts that decline. I begin by describing the situation in 2004, which went broadly unchanged until 2008, the year in which Arya began applying for graduate studies in the UK. I then chart significant changes to this legal framework through the “managed migration” and “hostile environment” eras of British migration policy up until December 2018, representative of the situation when the final “exit” interview was conducted with Pochacco.

In 2004, degree-mobile international students were not subject to stringent criteria to receive a student visa prior to commencing their studies. They were not required to provide evidence of their language ability through an accredited language test (Indicator 1/1a = 1) or provide evidence of maintenance money to support them throughout their studies (Indicator 2 = 1). Furthermore, they were not required to have private health insurance prior to receiving their visa (Indicator 3 = 1). Thus, in 2004 the pre-study application process was highly receptive according to the Temper framework, when in-country degree-mobile international students continued to enjoy a number of rights that are characteristic of a receptive environment. They had access to the local labour market to help them support their studies financially, including the ability to work full-time during vacation periods from their course of study (Indicator 4 = 1), and were able to bring dependents to the UK under their student visa, removing the need to be separated from their spouse or children (Indicator 5 = 1). The only major restriction placed on international students, according to the Temper framework, was in their post-study options. Through the Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme (SEGS), students studying specific subjects related to science and engineering were given the opportunity to stay in the country for job-hunting purposes for a period of up to 12 months, even without a job offer (HM Government, 2004). However, this transitional arrangement was not available to those in all degree courses. As a result, post-study opportunity in the UK as of 2004 received a 0 on the Temper framework.

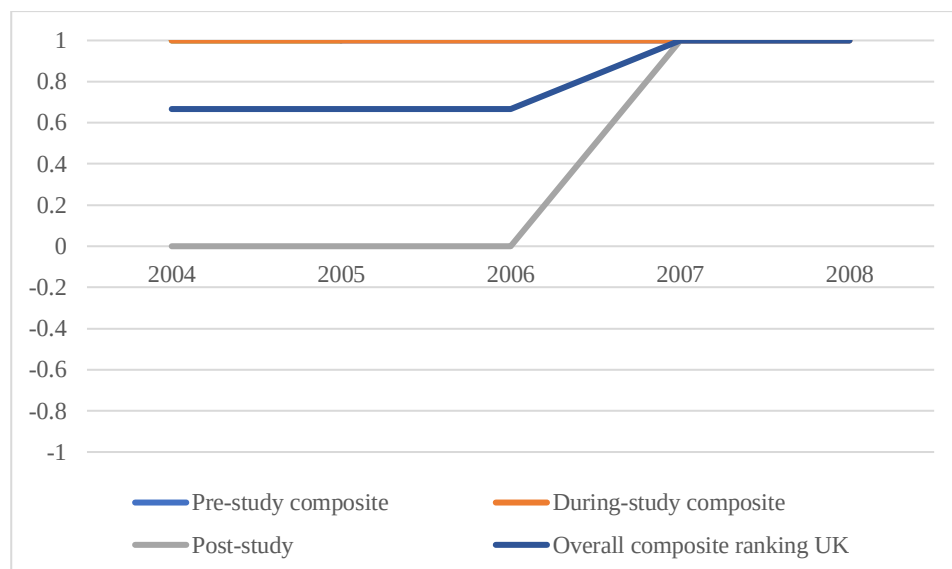
The first major change to UK policy affecting international students came in 2006, when the SEGS ceased to be restricted to only those on approved STEM courses and could be accessed by master’s and PhD students in any course, regardless of the subject they studied (HM Government, 2006), before being extended to all graduates in 2007 (HM Government, 2007). As a result, all degree-mobile students in the UK benefited from a

specific route designed to facilitate their entrance into the UK labour market, and the post-study situation in the UK was upgraded (Indicator 6 = 1) on the Temper framework. This change meant that degree-mobile students in the UK benefitted from a receptive set of policies pre-, during-, and post-study, making the UK one of the most receptive countries in the world to international students (Consterdine, 2014; MAC, 2009), in line with the intentions of the Prime Minister's Initiatives (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2011).

In 2005, the Labour government announced its intention to significantly streamline the immigration system by implementing a points-based system (PBS) based on five tiers, of which Tier 4 would govern international students (HM Government, 2005). Though a large number of reforms to migration policy took place as the Labour government rolled out the PBS, initially, none of these changes made a significant difference to the defined legal rights of degree-mobile international students. Indeed, the UK's score on all indicators of the Temper framework remained the same until growing disquiet around abuses of the migration system began to be reflected in policies which directly affected international students in 2009 (Home Office, 2007). The situation between 2004 and 2008 is illustrated in Figure 4:

Figure 4

Liberalisation of UK legal framework 2004-2008



The first significant change took place in 2009 when, as part of the transition to the PBS and the introduction of the Tier 4 visa, international students began to be required, at the point of application for their visa, to provide evidence of financial resources to support their studies (HM Government, 2009). This changed the score for Indicator 2 of the Temper methodology to -1, where it remained until 2018. A similar change took place in 2010, when

evidence of language ability began to be required. This change was first suggested by the Home Affairs Select Committee in their report on Immigration Control (Home Affairs Committee, 2006, p. 67) before it was finally implemented in 2010 for students below degree-level via the 18 March and 22 July changes to the immigration rules (HM Government, 2010a, 2010b), and on March 31 2011 for degree-level students (HM Government, 2011b). The new rules required that applicants be sponsored by an accredited institution that had been awarded “highly-trusted sponsor” status by the UK Borders Agency, and that the sponsoring institution must also ensure that the applicant possessed a standard of English sufficient for the level of study, which was B2 (upper-intermediate) on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for degree-mobile students (HM Government, 2011b, p. 2). As a result of these changes, both Indicators 1 and 1a changed to a value of -1 as of 2011, indicating that the admission and eligibility requirements for international students seeking to study in the UK had become more stringent.

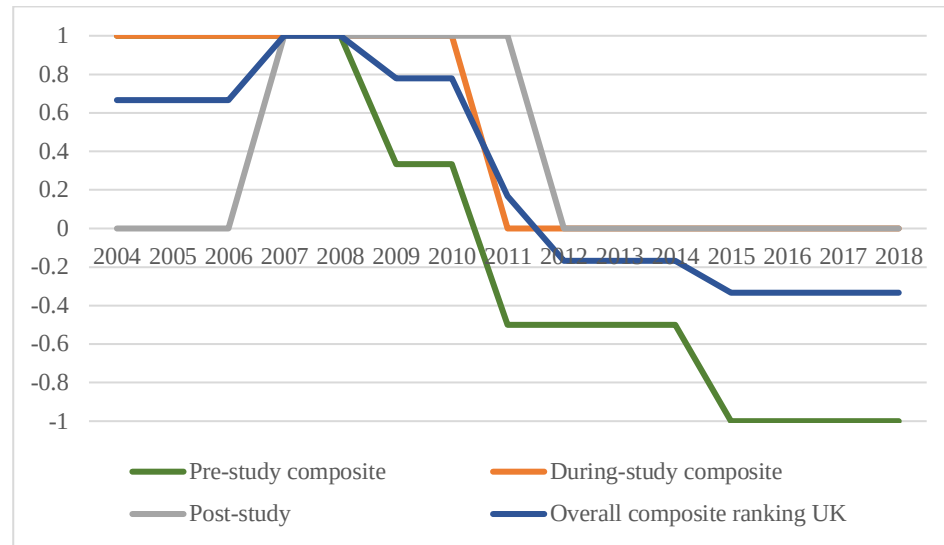
The year 2011 also saw changes to international students’ in-country rights that affected them during-study. Reforms implemented in the 13 June 2011 changes to the Immigration Rules restricted the right of some international students to work during their studies, and to be accompanied by a dependent spouse and/or children (HM Government, 2011a). These rules introduced greater restrictions on part-time employment for those studying in below degree-level courses, though work rights remained unchanged for those studying at degree-level or above, so, for the purposes of this study, the score for Indicator 4 remains unchanged. On the other hand, students on undergraduate courses, or graduate courses of less than 12 months’ duration, lost the right to be accompanied by their spouse or children, unless on a government sponsored program (Damien Green, 2011, p. 12; House of Commons, 2011). This results in a change on the Temper framework, (Indicator 5 = 0), indicating a reduction in the rights of international students during their studies.

The next substantial change took place in 2012 and significantly affected international students’ transition to the workforce upon completion of their studies. Since 2007, international students on any course had access to a visa/work permit that facilitated their entrance into the labour market. From 2007 to 2009, this took the form of the International Graduates Scheme (IGS) work permit, which gave students the right to stay in the country for 12 months to seek a job. From 2009, this was replaced by the Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) visa, which gave students the right to remain in the country for 2 years to pursue a job and continue to work (HM Government, 2008). These transitional arrangements were open to all students who graduated from a course that was of degree-level or above, therefore the UK maintained a score of 1 on Indicator 6 of the Temper framework. However, the Coalition

government's stated intention to limit such a transition (Damien Green, 2011; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2011; May, 2011b; Vine, 2012) was implemented in 2012 with closure of the Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) visa pathway, formalised in the 15 March 2012 changes to the Immigration Rules (HM Government, 2012). The Post-Study Work Visa (PSWV) was not replaced with another transitional arrangement to facilitate students on any degree-level course entering the labour market, and students who were unable to secure sponsoring employment were required to leave within 4 months of their graduation (May, 2011b). While the removal of the PSWV did not dictate that international students were no longer able to remain in the UK to work, it did remove the automatic right to transition to a visa that granted a period of job-hunting post-study. This results in a change on Indicator 6 of the Temper framework, reduced from a rating of 1 to 0. From 2012 onwards, those who wished to remain in the UK had to seek alternative transitional arrangements, discussed in more detail below.

A further substantial change took place in 2015 with the introduction of the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). While New Labour had argued that the benefits of international students to the economy outweighed the burdens that they placed on the National Health Service (NHS) (HM Government, 2005), the Coalition government voiced concerns about these burdens (National Audit Office, 2012). Their stated intention was to limit all migrants' recourse to the public purse, and this included students' access to the NHS. The Health Surcharge was announced in March 2015 and implemented the following month via "The Immigration (Health Charge) Order 2015" (HM Government, 2015). This meant that applicants for a Tier 4 visa were required to pay a health surcharge of £150 per year for the length of their desired course, at the point of application. For a typical undergraduate applicant, this required an up-front payment of £450. As a result of this policy change, the UK began to score -1 for Indicator 3 of the Temper framework. The surcharge was then doubled at the end of 2018 (HM Government, 2018).

When a composite ranking for the seven indicators (1-6 and 1a) is plotted longitudinally, the decline in the receptivity of the legal frameworks that governed international students in the UK is readily apparent. As Figure 5 illustrates, the period of time in which the participants of this study were present in the UK is marked by a measurable decrease in the UK's receptivity towards international students. This decline is not confined to a specific area of policy, but is evident in legal frameworks that governed participants' relationship pre-, during-, and post-study. This is illustrated by the three composite ranks that are also plotted on Figure 5.

Figure 5*The UK's legal framework for governing international students 2004-2018*

This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the shifting legal frameworks that governed the rights and responsibilities throughout the period in which my participants were in the UK. Based on the analysis above, it is easy to identify in any specific year the objective legal rights that any participant possessed, and the policy environment in which they were living, thinking, and acting. However, this is not to say that the participants possessed this knowledge. Indeed, the extents and limits of their understanding of their administrative context are critical in my attempt to identify their constraining or enabling influence, and this is discussed in the next chapter. Furthermore, this analysis does not give sufficient information regarding the post-study transitions that were available to participants at the time of their graduation, nor the specific bilateral arrangements that may supersede these general rules.

Possible Post-Study Transitional Visas for Graduates in the UK in Summer 2018

To give more information regarding the options available to participants at the time of their graduation, I reviewed the legal frameworks and potential/likely transitions that participants in the UK could have made in the summer of 2018. As described above, between 2007 and early 2012, all degree-mobile students in the UK benefited from a specific route designed to facilitate their entrance into the UK labour market, initially through the IGS work permit and subsequently the Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) transition visa. After the Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) pathway closed in 2012, graduating students have been required to find an alternative post-study transition visa. Since the removal of the PSWV, the Tier 2 working

visa has since been described as the “typical” transition for graduating students (OECD, 2012). However, a number of other pathways exist that are legitimate transitions graduating international students could follow to prolong their stay in the UK. To provide an in-depth overview of the options available to my participants, these transitions are summarised according to the respective tiers and visas that were available in the summer of 2018, when my participants graduated¹⁹. While this is not an exhaustive summary of all visa pathways in the UK, it includes all those for which recent graduates were likely to be able to satisfy the eligibility requirements, as written in policy guidance.

Tier 1: Graduate Entrepreneur/Innovator/Start-up visas

Initially intended to act as the most highly skilled pathway within the PBS, the Tier 1 (General) pathway has been closed to new applicants since April 2011. In its place, a number of distinct visa pathways aimed at “Exceptional Talent,” investors, and entrepreneurs were retained. The “Exceptional Talent” visa was limited to the leaders or emerging leaders in specific fields, requiring recognition by the relevant “Designated Competent Body” (e.g., the British Academy) and limited by a quota of 2,000 p/a. While not necessarily out of reach for new graduates, particularly those graduating from doctoral programmes, this was not a high-volume post-study route and was not pursued by any participant of this study. The Tier 1 (investor) visa will also not be discussed at length, due to the requirement for £2m in capital investment, which was also not pursued by the participants.

The most relevant Tier 1 pathway was the “Graduate Entrepreneur” visa. While this pathway closed on July 6th, 2019, it was relevant to the participants of this study at the time of their graduation. This category was designed to allow students with a credible business idea to be given leave to remain and put the plan into practice. This visa, too, was subject to an annual quota of around 2,000 p/a. Applicants were required to provide a letter of endorsement from the higher education institution from which they were graduating or the Department for International Trade of the UK government, to demonstrate the credibility of the business proposal and the applicant’s intention to work full-time in this endeavour (Home Office, 2019b).

¹⁹ With the exception of Arya, who unexpectedly extended her doctoral course into the new year.

Tier 2: “General” Work Visa

Since the Tier 1 (General) pathway closed in 2011, the Tier 2 pathway has since become the main route for skilled migrants to receive leave to live and work in the UK (OECD, 2012). In broad terms, applicants for a Tier 2 visa were required to already be in possession of a “skilled” job offer with a sponsoring employer, but this is just one among a complex series of hurdles. Jobs qualified as “skilled” according to the salary of the applicant, which was further subdivided according to the category of applicant and the field of the job itself. Applicants were divided into two subgroups: “new entrants” and “experienced workers.” Those who were transitioning directly from a Tier 4 visa, as was the case for participants of this study, were counted under the “new entrants” subgroup which was subject to lower salary requirements. On the surface, compared to the minimum salary threshold of £30,000 p/a for “experienced workers,” “new entrants” only required a minimum salary of £20,800. However, this was complicated by field-specific salary requirements that superseded the supposed minimum salary for “new entrants.” These field-specific requirements, delineated by the Codes of Practice for Skilled Workers (COS), were typically higher than the stated minimum of £20,800. For reference, the minimum salary for a “new entrant” who sought to be an “environment professional” was £21,300, but the same applicant would need to be paid £27,400 p/a if they sought to become an “electronics engineer.”

In addition to securing a job offer that satisfied the above requirements, the job offer was also required to come from an employer who was licensed to sponsor Tier 2 migrants. The application process for the sponsorship licence was costly and time intensive for employers, who were required to demonstrate: familiarity with the Standard Occupational classification (SOC) system in relation to the positions they wished to fill with a migrant worker; capacity to fulfil their “sponsor duties” (Home Office, 2019f); salary guarantees; and, in the case of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), a full overview of all existing staff at the company (Home Office, n.d.). Fees were levied according to the size of the sponsoring employer, shown in Table 9:

Table 9*Fees for Tier 4 Sponsor Licence*

Fee type	Large	Small
Sponsorship licence	£1,475	£536
Annual renewal fee	£1,475	£536
Certificate of Sponsorship	£199	£199
Immigration Skills Charge*	£1000 p/a	£364 p/a

*PhD level roles in science and research/Tier 4 switchers are exempt

Tier 4: Continuing in a New Course of Study

Another option for participants was to remain on a Tier 4 Student visa by transitioning onto another degree-level course. Much as when they first entered the UK as a student, applicants for such a transition were required to have a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) at an institution with a valid and current Tier 4 sponsorship licence. If switching from another course within the UK, applicants were not required to provide further evidence of their language ability, though they did have to provide evidence of their financial situation, to prove that they had adequate financial means to pay for their course and support themselves for the duration of their studies (Home Office, 2019c). In most cases, there was also a time limit to UK study that restricted the number of times applicants could renew their Tier 4 visa. Usually, this time limit was 5 years, though applicants were exempt from this limit if applying in specific subject areas, for a master's degree that directly followed an undergraduate degree (in which case the limit was set to 6 years), or if the applicant was set to commence a doctoral or research-based course.

Those on a Tier 4 visa could also transition to the Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES), which lay within the Tier 4 framework. This scheme allowed those who were graduating from a doctoral course to remain in the UK for 12 months after that course had been completed. Those wishing to follow this pathway were required to meet all the requirements of a standard Tier 4 application, including having a CAS that listed the expected end date of their course, and confirmed that the university was happy to remain their sponsor through the length of the extension.

Tier 5: Temporary Workers and the Youth Mobility Scheme

The Tier 5 pathway was a 2-year visa split between two general categories. The first was aimed at temporary workers from any country, with the second category also catering for temporary workers, but specifically those aged between 18 and 30 and from specific

countries. The first group was intended for charity workers, creatives, sportspeople, and religious workers, who were required to be sponsored by an employer in the UK under similar regulations to the Tier 2 visa, though Tier 5 sponsorship licences were notably cheaper for employers (Home Office, 2019e). On the other hand, the second category, known as the Youth Mobility Scheme, did not require that applicants be sponsored by an employer at the time of application. It allowed applicants between the ages of 18-30 from Australia, Canada, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Taiwan (as well as British overseas [territories] citizens, and British nationals [overseas]) to enter the UK without an in-country sponsor, as their national government acted as their sponsor for the duration of their stay. Applications through the Youth Mobility Scheme also had relatively lax documentary requirements, with applicants only asked to provide evidence of £1890 in available funding (Home Office, 2019d).

Summary of Regulatory Frameworks and Transitional Arrangements in the UK

According to the results of the Temper analysis, after a brief liberalisation between 2004 and 2008, all aspects of the regulatory framework in the UK became recognisably more restrictive over the following decade. Entry requirements were more stringent, further restrictions were placed on students' activities during study, and opportunities to pursue a post-study trajectory within the UK became scarcer. Clear from the description above, at their graduation in Summer 2018, there were no dedicated pathways for participants to remain in the UK, or any transitional arrangements designed to aid their pursuit of a job. Graduating students in the UK were required to transition to generic pathways shared by all economic migrants, and subject to the same quotas and stringent regulations as those entering from abroad. Outside of their ability to job-hunt while in the country and classification as "new entrants" for salary requirements under the Tier 2 visa, student status in the UK appeared to grant few advantages within the migration system. The UK system was also notable for having essentially closed its highly skilled worker pathway in Tier 1, with remaining visas being awarded according to capital investment rather than the embodied skills of applicants. Those with capital investment were also those with priority access to ILR.

The Evolving Legal Context in Japan

The Temper analysis indicated that between 2004-2018 the receptivity towards international students of the immigration legal frameworks in Japan was stable. Broadly speaking, while significant reforms have taken place within the wider immigration system,

the legal framework for international students remained unchanged in the pre- and during-study phases, though there were identifiable changes in the post-study environment. This section will consider the major changes in migration policy implemented since 2004, and illustrate how a receptive pre- and during- study environment has been maintained, while post-study transitions have become more receptive, to attract a larger number of international students and encourage more of them to remain post-study.

According to the Temper analysis, since 2004, Japan has maintained a receptive regulatory environment for new applicants for degree-level studies. While the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act is the fundamental document which defines the structure of the immigration system in Japan, it includes relatively scant information on the specific requirements placed on applicants in specific pathways, including “College Students.” Rather, these requirements are laid out in the “Ministerial Ordinance to Provide for Criteria Pursuant to Article 7, paragraph (1), item (ii) of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act.” While this document was amended numerous times between 2004 and 2018, there were no significant changes to the regulatory framework for degree-mobile applicants. For example, the administrative decision was made to merge the “College Student” and “Pre-College Student” residence categories in 2010, to promote the “proper and smooth acceptance of foreign college students and pre-college students” according to the revised Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act of 2009 (MOJ, 2009b, 2010, p. 6). However, this did not have a substantive impact in terms of the Temper framework, so the pre-study environment was effectively the same in 2018 as it had been in 2004.

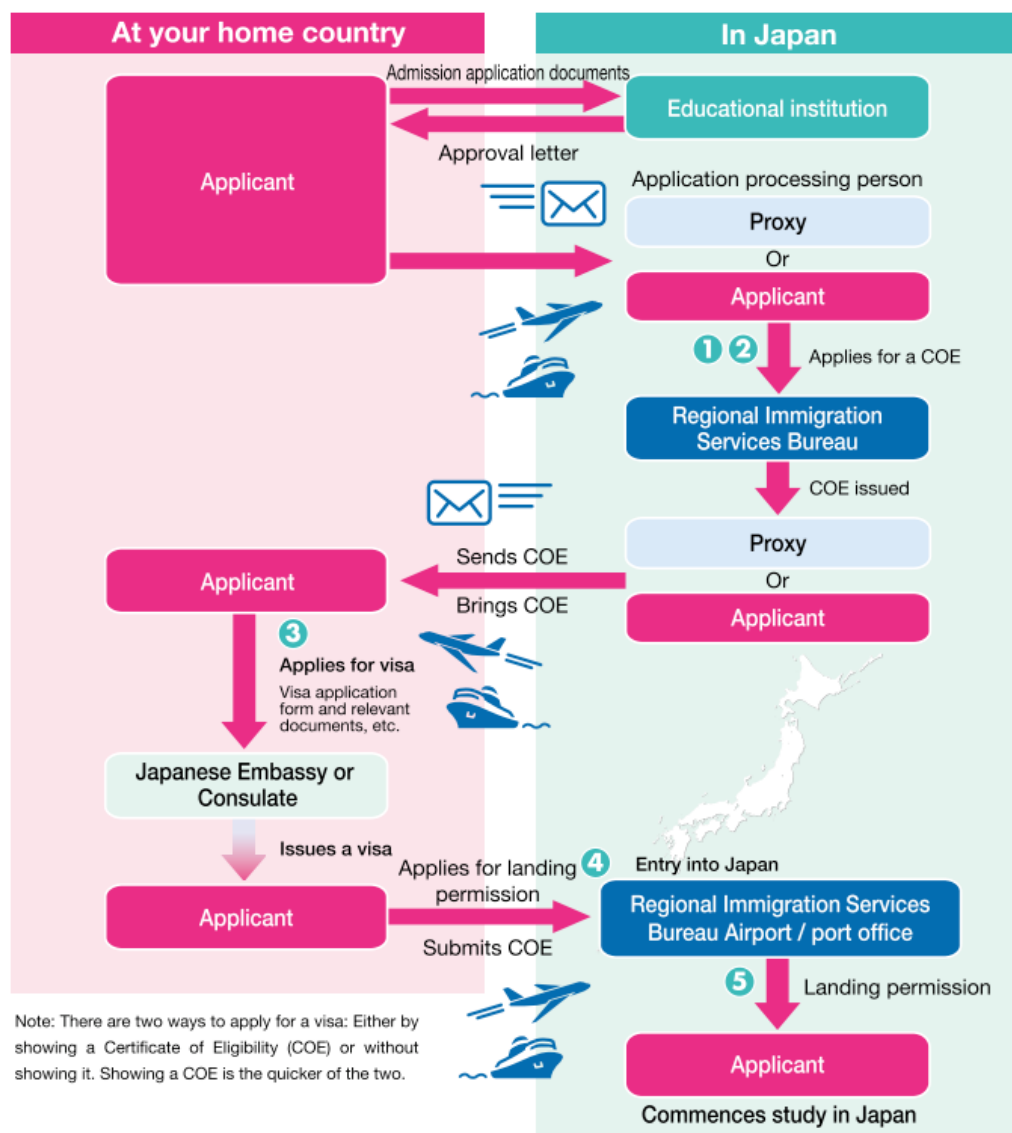
Considering indicators 1 and 1a (Language test/level), there were no blanket mandatory language requirements at the point of application, and it was not necessary to take a test to demonstrate language ability. Certain language requirements applied to those who were non-degree-seeking, particularly those on sub-degree courses at advanced vocational schools (*senshuugakkou*), or in primary and secondary education. However, these requirements were not applied to applicants for degree-level study (MOJ, 2008, 2018b). These requirements did not change between 2004 and 2018, resulting in a score of 1 on Indicator 1 throughout this period.

Similarly, concerning Indicator 2 (Economic Resources), there was no significant change in the legal framework affecting degree-mobile international student applicants since 2004. In 1990, financial viability rules were first introduced to the system (Komine, 2013) and applicants for the “College Student” residence status (or “Student” status post-merger with the “Pre-College Student”) have since been required to “have sufficient assets, a scholarship or other means of support to meet his/her expenses while in Japan,” unless they

have a third-party guarantor (MOJ, 2008, p. 25, 2018b, p. 69). In practice, this requirement is indirectly evaluated by the educational institution at which the applicant hopes to study and the relevant Regional Immigration Bureau (RIB), and confirmed by the provision of a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). According to the requirements of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, all applicants seeking to stay in Japan for more than three months are required to apply for a COE as part of a pre-screening process. While applicants are able to apply to the RIB directly if they plan to self-fund, host institutions or sponsoring organisations typically collect the necessary documentation from applicants and then apply to the RIB on the applicant's behalf (MOJ, 2019). This process is illustrated in Figure 6:

Figure 6

Illustration of immigration procedures for a student visa application (JASSO, 2019)



In the case that the sponsoring institution (labelled “proxy” in the above diagram) submits the COE application to the RIB, they are responsible for pre-confirming that applicants have adequate economic resources to support their studies. If the student has a sponsor, the sponsor is able to provide a form of “Statement of Financial Support”²⁰. If the applicant seeks to self-support their studies, they must prove the availability of the necessary funds via a “savings balance certificate, income certificate covering the past several years or taxation certificate” (JASSO, 2019), but the amount required and the necessary documentation for this process are not standardised, and vary according to the sponsoring institution. Neither the MOJ, MOFA, or the Immigration Services Agency of Japan list a specific monetary amount that must be demonstrated, and estimates from various sponsors and student support organisations vary. Some suggest that 120,000JPY p/m is adequate, others give estimates of between 1,000,000JPY and 2,500,000JPY p/a, whereas some provide estimates in alternative currencies such as 10,000USD p/a. As a rule, RIBs pass judgment based on whether the evidence that the applicant supplies is sufficient to prove they are able to cover both their tuition and living expenses for the duration of their visa (JPSS, 2019b). Thus, returning to Indicator 2, given the presence of a requirement to demonstrate their economic resources, but the lack of a clearly defined amount, Japan’s regulatory framework rated as 0, which remained the case from 2004-2018.

Turning to Indicator 3 (health insurance), applicants for a student visa in Japan are not required to demonstrate health insurance coverage at the point of application (MOFA, 2019a). Degree-mobile students, like all migrants in Japan who are resident for more than three months, are required to enrol in the National Health Insurance system within 14 days of their arrival (Toshima City, 2018)²¹. The NHI system has small premiums of around 3300JPY per month (varying slightly depending on the region of Japan), and covers 70% of medical expenses incurred due to injuries or illness. Under this system, all degree-mobile international students are required to enrol in the NHI program, but this is not a prerequisite for the student visa itself. As a result, Japan’s regulatory framework is rated as 1 on the Temper framework for Indicator 3. This has been the case since 2004.

²⁰ Universities tend to create and distribute original documents for this purpose. A typical example from a university not included in the study is available from Ritsumeikan University (2019).

²¹ Exceptions include those who are sponsored through their employers or another affiliated association that provides comprehensive health insurance.

This analysis reveals that the pre-study framework governing international students' application for a study visa in Japan was consistent throughout the period of 2004-2018. In addition, the framework has been relatively unrestrictive to applicants (averaging 0.67), suggesting that throughout the past 15 years degree-mobile international students have faced relatively few regulatory restrictions on their applications to study in Japan.

During-study, too, Japan's regulatory framework was consistent and receptive between 2004-2018. Starting with Indicator 4, those on a "College Student" or "Student" visa in Japan are not, from the outset, permitted to work during their studies (MOJ, 2005). However, since the 1980s and the Nakasone plan, it has been routine for international students to work during their studies (Komine, 2013). Under Article 19, Paragraph 2 of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, international students are able to apply for "Permission to Engage in an Activity Other Than Those Permitted by the Status of Residence Previously Granted". Through Article 19, the MOJ provides permission for foreign nationals to engage in a degree of economic activity, as long as it does not interfere with the activity for which the foreign national was originally admitted to Japan. Under this arrangement, most students apply for working permission during their studies, including 106,000 out of 173,000 (61%) recipients of student visas in 2004, and are approved by the RIB as a matter of course (MOJ, 2005, p. 42). This system was then simplified in 2012, from which permission to work can be granted to those on a "Student" visa at the port of entry to the country (international airports provide this service), effectively making the right to work during studies available to all degree-mobile students (MOJ, 2013). As a result, all students are able to work part-time during their studies, though there are some limitations on the number of hours that can be worked. Students are restricted to 28 hours of work per week during term time, and a maximum of 8 hours per day during the school break (JASSO, 2019). Despite these limitations on working hours, the Japanese regulatory rated as 1 for Indicator 4, as all students were able to work part-time without being subject to labour market tests or salary limitations. This was stable from 2004-2018.

Regarding Indicator 5, international students in Japan can be accompanied by certain dependents while studying at a degree-level. While elderly relatives are not eligible for a dependent visa, any applicant for a "College Student" residence status (latterly "Student") can apply to be accompanied by their spouse and/or unmarried children according to Table 4 of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. This has been the case from 2004 through to the present day, meaning that Japan's regulatory framework rated as 1 on Indicator 5.

Overall, the during-study administrative environment, too, was stable for degree-mobile international students between 2004 and 2018. Much like the pre-study environment, this framework was receptive on the Temper scale, with the during-study compositive value being 1 throughout.

The area of policy that has changed since 2004 concerns the post-study transitions available to international students. In 2004, there was no distinct permit or dedicated visa pathway allowing international students to remain in Japan to work after graduation. Despite this, some were able to transition to a “general” (working) visa (around 5,200 made such a transition in 2004), mostly changing to the “specialist in humanities/international services” or “engineer” residence statuses (MOJ, 2005). However, in the absence of a specific route that facilitated students’ transition to the labour market, in 2004, Japan’s regulatory framework rated as -1 on Indicator 6 of the Temper database.

In 2005, a new 180 day “Temporary Visitor” residence status was introduced for graduating “College Students” from degree-level courses (MOJ, 2005). The aim was to give international students the ability to remain in Japan for the purposes of seeking a job²², and to give those who had secured a job the ability to remain in Japan until their start date²³. This transition to a “Temporary Visitor” residence status was contingent on a recommendation by the applicant’s sponsoring university, which required some evidence of financial means to support the period of job-hunting and evidence of genuine intent to pursue employment, such as a record of visits to the university’s careers service or *Hello Work* public employment office. There is no evidence that universities typically reject a request for a recommendation, or that RIBs typically reject applications to transition to “Temporary Visitor” status. In 2012, about 11,700 foreign graduates applied for a change of status and about 11,000 (94%) of them were granted permission (OECD, 2014). Thus, as a result of this policy change, in 2005 the score on the Temper framework changed from -1 to 1.

This pathway was further updated in 2009, when the precise mechanism by which permission was granted for post-study job-hunting was changed. The appropriate residence status shifted from “Temporary Visitor” to “Designated Activities,” and a single extension of the 180 day permit was introduced to allow a job-hunting period of ~1 year in total (MOJ, 2009, p. 101). Under this residence status, recent graduates were also granted permission to work up to 28 hours a week to support themselves, if they continued to provide evidence

²² Implemented in FY 2005.

²³ Implemented in FY 2006.

that that were also committing to job-hunting activities for full-time employment. This is the legal framework that persists today, and the rating for Indicator 6 is still 1.

When a composite ranking for the seven indicators (1-6 and 1a) is plotted longitudinally, the overall stability and relative receptivity of the legal framework governing international students in Japan from 2004-2018 is evident. As Figure 7 illustrates, participants in Japan have enjoyed a relatively receptive regulatory framework, persisting from their applications pre-study, throughout their studies, and into the post-study environment.

Figure 7

Japan's legal framework governing international students 2004-2018



This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the stability of the legal framework that governed the rights and responsibilities throughout the period in which my participants were in Japan. In addition, we can conclude that the legal framework was receptive on the Temper scale, meaning that international students in Japan were not subject to significant regulatory burdens before coming to Japan, during their studies, or after their graduation. However, as with the UK analysis above, the various post-study transitions that were available to participants at the time of their graduation are not sufficiently captured by the Temper analysis. I therefore expand on this analysis by summarising these transitions below.

Possible Post-Study Transitionary Visas for Graduates in Japan in Spring 2018

On graduation, international students who wished to remain in Japan, even short-term, were required to change their status of residence from “Student” to another residence status

for foreign nationals. Generally speaking, if they had not yet secured employment but wished to search for a job in Japan, they were required to transfer to the “Designated Activities” residence category under the “Specified Activities” visa. Alternatively, if they only hoped to stay for under 3 months, they could transition to the “Short-Term Stay” residence status, which was most commonly used by overseas tourists. If they had already secured a job, they were able to change to one of a number of residence categories that fall under the umbrella of the “General” visa, or one of the three categories within the recently created “Highly Skilled (Foreign) Professional” visa. Alternatively, they were able to extend their student status by continuing on another course of study. As with the UK, I am not able to provide an exhaustive summary of all residence categories, so I discuss those for which graduating international students were potentially eligible in Spring 2018, starting with those categories most commonly pursued by recent graduates.

Specified Visa: “Designated Activities” Residence Category

Students who wished to remain in Japan for the purpose of job-hunting were required to change their status of residence to “Designated Activities,” which gave them permission to remain in Japan for 180 days (renewable once for a total of 360 days) for the purpose of seeking employment. Applicants had to submit a number of documents to support this transition, including materials demonstrating that they were actively searching for a job, a letter of recommendation from their university (which functions as an extension of the existing COE), and further proof of their financial support. The proof of job-seeking typically included a formal record of the job-hunting activities in which the applicant had participated during their studies, including visits to the university careers service, *Hello Work* (public employment office), and individual employers (JPSS, 2019a). In addition, applicants had to provide a plan for their subsequent job-hunting activities, including the events that they would attend and companies to which they would apply. The proof of financial support was processed in the same way as it had been for the graduate’s initial application for a student visa.

Throughout their stay in Japan under the “Designated Activities” residence category, foreign nationals were allowed to work up to 28 hours a week in part-time roles to support themselves financially, provided they requested permission from the RIB, mirroring the situation for those resident in Japan as a “Student.” Though no participants of this study made the transition, Pedro considered this at length when struggling to find a job during his studies, and Yes considered this option when looking for opportunities to change employer while in Japan.

“General” (Working) Visa: Category Depending on Professional Activity

The majority of international students who stayed in Japan to work changed their status to a residence category that fell under the “general” heading, which denoted the residence categories that allow the holder to work full-time, and this was also the status of residence used by a number of the study’s participants (e.g., Lili, Harry, and Tanya). To give an indication of the importance of this pathway, more than 22,000 graduating students switched to a status of residence that fell under the “General (Working)” visa in 2017 (MOJ, 2018a). Examples of residence categories within the “General” visa included “Engineer/Specialist in Humanities/International Services” (these previously distinct categories that were merged in 2015), “Business Manager,” “Professor,” and “Researcher,” which were the most common categories used by graduating international students. While the application process differed slightly between different categories, typically the transition to any residence category under the “General” visa required the applicant provide formal documentation of their graduation from their host university (Diploma, Certificate of Graduation, or Graduation Letter), and a number of supporting documents from an employer willing to act as sponsor (JPSS, 2019b). These documents included the registration and financial details of the employer, along with information regarding its business activities, and a copy of the contract and salary information for the applicant. In addition, it was advised by the JPSS that both the applicant and employer provide additional documentation to describe their reasons for such an application and to specify the job’s relevance to the applicant’s prior course of study. The complete application was then evaluated by the RIB to ensure that the applicant’s potential employment corresponded to the visa category to which they applied (the choice between “Engineer” vs “Business Manager”, for example), whether the applicant possessed the appropriate skills for this job, and whether the applicant would be fairly remunerated in the proposed position (MOFA, 2019b). The length of the residence status granted was between four months and five years, in the first instance, depending on the precise nature of the application and the stability of the proposed employment. This status is also renewable.

Highly-Skilled Professional Visa

A residence category titled “Highly-Skilled Foreign Professional” was first introduced under the “General” visa in May 2012 as part of Japan’s *New Growth Strategy*, which aimed to both increase the number of international students in Japan and open a new preferential immigration channel for foreigners deemed “highly-skilled” (Cabinet Office, 2010; OECD, 2012). This channel to working status in Japan remained relatively small-scale compared

with the “General” pathway, but began to expand in light of reforms designed to make it more attractive and less burdensome to applicants. Following its initial slow uptake (David Green, 2015; OECD, 2014), the “Highly-Skilled Foreign Professional” *residence category* was reformed to become a distinct “Highly-Skilled Professional” *visa* in 2015, before further reforms in 2017 made the system even more accessible and attractive (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2014). Under the reformed system, applicants could apply for 1 of 3 residence categories under the “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa, depending on their intended professional activities: (1) advanced academic research activities, (2) advanced specialised technical activities, or (3) advanced business management activities. Relative to the “General” visa, the advantages of the “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa included: permission to bring older dependents and domestic workers, a 5-year residence permit as standard (with a sub-category granting an indefinite period of stay), minimal limitations on employment and economic activities, a faster pathway to PR (applications are accepted after only 1-3 years of residence), and preferential processing by the RIB (Cabinet Office, 2018).

While this pathway was not yet among the most commonly pursued by graduating international students (the latest data available indicate that only 47 completed this transition in 2017 (MOJ, 2018a)), in light of the 2017 reforms, this pathway had become more accessible to postgraduate students finishing their courses in Japan (Ryan, 2018). The points-based system was reformed to grant more points for activities or qualifications that were attainable to recent international graduates, and to introduce bonus points for activities in which international students often engaged, effectively making it easier for applicants to satisfy the eligibility requirements. Notably, in the updated points system, bonus points were available for those who graduated from a Japanese university. In addition, those who had research achievements were further advantaged, helping those in postgraduate courses. The full points calculation table provided by the MOJ is available in Appendix 4. While data is not yet available to support the assertion that more graduates were now able and willing to transition from the “Student” residence status to a “Highly-Skilled Professional” in light of these changes, METI predicts that around 5,000 students will make this transition in the near future (METI, 2018, p. 4), and anecdotal evidence from this study suggests that this visa was being pursued by 2018 graduates. Karl, for example, was successful in receiving the “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa following his graduation.

“Student” Status of Residence: Continuing in a New Course of Study

Graduates were able to apply for an extension to their “Student” visa if they had been accepted to continue on a more advanced course of study within 3 months of the completion

of current course. However, if the next course did not begin within 3 months, graduates were required to return to their home country and reapply for a new student visa via their consulate. In the event that the applicant was switching institution without leaving the country, they had to notify the RIB of their intention to change their sponsoring organisation, and also apply for an extension to their residence status. To do so, applicants had to provide all of the documents required when applying for a student visa from abroad, along with copies of their current student visa, their residence card, confirmation of their academic record, and graduation certificate from their current course of study. Typically, universities had dedicated teams to aid in this process.

Summary of Regulatory Frameworks and Transitional Arrangements in Japan

The regulatory framework in Japan is notable for its stability over the past 15 years, and its receptivity on the Temper scale. Those seeking to study in Japan benefit from not having to prove their language ability and ill-defined financial requirements, and sponsoring educational institutions appear well equipped to support their applications. Students are also permitted to work throughout their studies and be accompanied by their dependents, supporting their studies both financially and socially. Post-study, the “Designated Activities” residence status acts as a dedicated transitional arrangement, allowing those who have not yet found full-time sponsoring employment to use an intermediate status to secure a more permanent move. In addition to the “General” working visa, the “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa provides a dedicated pathway for those with postgraduate qualifications, and considerable advantages on the path to PR.

Summary

The legal documents analysed in this chapter do not present an exhaustive view of the temporal-relational contexts in which the participants of this study were present throughout their trajectories. However, these regulatory frameworks represent a critical component of participants’ social-structural contexts, and how this developed during their education-migration trajectories. The chapter also provides evidence of the activities and transitions available to the participants of the study, particularly on their graduations in 2018.

Based on the analysis presented in this chapter, I argue that the tightening of the administrative framework in the UK and the liberalisation of the administrative framework in Japan had tangible consequences for the relationship between each country and the students they were hosting. As barriers were erected between international students in the UK and their potential universities and employers, the possibilities for the participants of

this study appear to have decreased accordingly. Conversely, the range of possibilities appears to have expanded for my participants in Japan, due to the introduction of additional post-study pathways and the liberalisation of those that previously existed, combined with the maintenance of a receptive environment pre- and during-study.

However, while the analysis above is instructive in highlighting the legal possibilities and restrictions that participants faced pre-, during, and post-study, as was argued in Chapter 4, individuals rarely have ready access to the full suite of information, and/or make the most informed and effective use of the available information, and their decisions are made in the context of incomplete knowledge of these frameworks. It is not clear from the analysis included in this chapter whether the possibilities and barriers created by these regulatory frameworks reflect individuals' perceptions of opportunity in the case study nations. Nor does the analysis in this chapter situate the impact of these regulatory frameworks in the life-courses of individuals, or illustrate the influence that they may exert on student-migrants' trajectories. Therefore, in the next chapter, I seek to evaluate the importance of the evolving social-structural contexts in the UK and Japan in light of their presentation in the narratives of the participants of this study. By reflecting on these regulatory frameworks from the perspective of individual student-migrants, I hope to identify recognisable disconnects between the realities of the administrative frameworks coded in law and their influence in individual life-courses.

Chapter 6: Legal Contexts Through the Lens of Narrative

Introduction

The legal documents analysed in Chapter 5 “reflect the general legal conditions” that existed in the case study nations between 2004-2018 (Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2013, p. 4), and defined the administrative frameworks and social-structural contexts that governed participants throughout their studies and in their post-study transition (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970). Though the analysis in Chapter 5 is instructive in highlighting the legal possibilities and restrictions that participants faced pre-, during-, and post-study, as was argued in Chapter 3, migrants rarely have ready access to the full suite of information, and/or make the most informed and effective use of the available information about such regulatory frameworks. There may also be some relevant items of information that cannot be obtained at all through normal channels. Individuals may be—to a variable extent—mis-informed about critical aspects of the temporal-relational contexts in which they are embedded (Bakewell, 2010). Indeed, this is reflected in participants’ narratives, as their descriptions of relevant administrative structures do not correspond perfectly to the real situation, as reviewed in Chapter 5. Therefore, when seeking to understand the agency of participants, in addition to the comprehensive overview of the legal frameworks included in the previous chapter, it is essential to understand the participants’ perceptions of these frameworks, as a component of the temporal-relational contexts in which they exercise their agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 994). Furthermore, these perspectives may also provide insights into the lived realities of these administrative structures, that are not yet reflected in legal frameworks, political discussions, or academic research.

In this chapter, I analyse participants’ narratives, presenting instances in which they explicitly discussed the legal and administrative frameworks that governed their time in the host country, including the post-study transition. I also evaluate the accuracy of their accounts of these frameworks, and interpret the significance that they held within their narratives. Each country is considered in turn, with the emphasis placed on aspects of the regulatory frameworks which received the most attention in the narratives of participants located in each national case, and not according to the aspects of the regulatory framework that appeared most significant in the legal documents. I summarise participants’ evolving perspectives on the legal and administrative context in each national case, by highlighting instances in which participants made direct reference to them. I also identify recognisable disconnects between the realities of administrative frameworks coded in law and their influence in individual life-courses, including the ways in which they appeared to enable or

constrict participants' perception of available pathways. In some cases, this took the form of misunderstandings of the significance of these frameworks, leading some participants to pursue illegal pathways, and others to fail to consider legal pathways that were unknown to them. I conclude by summarising the regulatory relationships that existed between participants and their host countries in each national case.

Narrative Reflections on the Legal Framework in the UK

Narratives of UK participants were marked by close attention to aspects of the administrative frameworks that governed their post-study transitions. While the story of how participants had initially come to the UK as a student were often presented in great narrative detail, these rarely included descriptions of the administrative frameworks through which they had applied and been granted permission to study in the UK. The most significant, detailed, and repeated references to administrative and legal frameworks were concerned with the right to work while an international student, and the subsequent pursuit of a visa and sponsoring employer post-study. These during- and post-study factors are discussed below, but I begin the discussion of the UK case by describing the pre-study administrative experiences of participants.

Pre-Study: "Getting in" and Chasing Sponsors

Generally speaking, participants' narratives of the pre-study regulatory framework were dominated by the issue of "getting in" to a desirable course of study, thereby securing the right to study in the UK and an institution to provide their CAS. Participants generally described "getting in" to be a relatively straightforward process, with universities being flexible and willing to adapt to their circumstances, with ample support provided by both the universities themselves and other actors within the education-migration industry. Jazz, for example, was able to negotiate a place at her eventual university, despite not attaining the required grades. She had completed secondary education in Spain using the medium of Spanish, and argued that the use of a second language had held her back. The university accepted this explanation. Kirsty's application to universities in the UK was supported by a charitable organisation that helped her to identify universities offering her course of choice, and to navigate the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The aid of the charity was particularly crucial in this case, as it provided information that was simply not available through the universities' websites that were "properly rubbish, I didn't really understand anything." Chelsea, too, called on a private company to proof-read and revise her research proposal. However, "[the company] were a complete nightmare... I finally had

them refund me because their services are just rubbish and I did a much better job than them.” Despite this setback, and the challenge of re-taking the IELTS at the last minute due to the previous one having expired, Chelsea was able to find a supervisor and a place to pursue her doctorate. In each case, Jazz, Kirsty, and Chelsea encountered challenges with their applications, but generally found that they were able to access other sources of support in order to secure a place to study in the UK.

However, having found a place, the process of getting the study visa presented challenges. Misty and Arya, in particular, provided particularly rich narratives of pre-study encounters with legal and administrative frameworks and how this affected both their pursuit of a place to study and the receipt of the study visa. Arya first came to the UK to study for a Master’s in 2009, before returning again in 2015 to pursue a doctorate. In comparing the experiences of applying for these two courses, six years apart, Arya’s narrative captures the impact that the changing administrative framework had on the pre-study application process. During the “entry” interview, she remarked on the level of support she received from staff at her eventual destination in 2009. Her options had been narrowed through the advice of an education agent located in India but, when struggling to decide between a variety of options, she recalled the additional support offered by her eventual destination. It was this support that encouraged her to attend:

Arya: I already had some email conversations with their staff there, and they were really friendly and really nice and encouraging... they also saw that I wanted to learn and that I wanted to make most of this opportunity. So, they were really encouraging and helpful in sort of fuelling my ambition.

The level of pre-application support and encouragement she received not only swayed her study destination, but also formed the basis of a lasting relationship with her host university and its staff. In addition to the academic relationship that developed with her lecturers and supervisors, she also maintained a personal relationship with the member of administrative staff who had actively encouraged her to come to that university. They supported her throughout her studies, and this support persisted after her graduation and her return to India:

Arya: I loved uh, the experience of learning there, of living there. Like I said um, you know, I had [administrator] who was like a mentor to me. I had [supervisor] who was like an academic idol to me. [The administrator] was more encouraging with me in particular, because I went to seek her out, and we would

have personal meetings um, to the point where we became friends... I showed her around India then I like, uh, I went back [to the UK] and I meet her, we chat, we are friends now. The relationship has evolved.

The welcoming and encouraging environment that the university projected in the application process was fundamental as a foundation to the positive experiences she had in studying in the UK in 2009. Furthermore, that welcoming environment was the basis for personal and professional relationships that persisted beyond her graduation. After working in India for a number of years, Arya decided the time was right to return to academia and pursue her PhD. Her first desire was to return to the same institution, and she reached out once more to the administrator/friend who had been so supportive, to inquire about a new PhD scholarship programme within the department. However, in contrast to the encouragement she had received in 2009, she received different advice:

Arya: [She said] "Arya, I have to tell you something informally." I was like, "Yes" and she said, uh, that "those scholarships, even though we say are open to everybody, are most likely going to go to UK nationals, more than overseas students"... I felt bad because this was not [just] any university, this was my university, you know? To have a feeling that I think of it as my university, but they don't think of me as their student [long pause] Okay [deep sigh] yeah that was devastating, I have to say. It was devastating.

Arya went on to provide an explanation of why the circumstances were so different on her reapplication than they had been in 2009. She recalled the administrator/friend saying that "formally it says we're open to everybody, but then because of the current climate," things were more difficult than before for foreign applicants. To clarify what was meant by the "current climate" Arya described that "I think the year after I left, or one year after that" the PSWV was "stopped" during Theresa May's tenure as "minister of foreign policy" because "she was very particular about bringing down the number of migrants in the UK." Arya continued to explain that the removal of the PSWV was intended to encourage British companies to hire British nationals, but her situation suggested that this extended into educational institutions such as her university:

Arya: She basically said that they were under a lot of pressure to make sure to take up, uh, PhDs who were UK nationals. Um, so, you know, it wasn't just, um, like a monetary choice for rejecting me, but it was also about this sort of, um, discourse that was going out in the political climate in the UK at that point.

The stark contrast between the pre-study environments that she encountered in 2009 and 2014 is illustrative of the demonstrable change in the “political climate,” to use Arya’s term, within this timeframe. When describing this change, Arya referred explicitly to the removal of the PSWV and Theresa May’s tenure at the Home Office, showing her recognition of the importance of these high-level policy changes in creating a “Hostile Environment” for international students such as herself. Furthermore, these changes had a “devastating” emotional and practical impact in her life-course, causing her to re-evaluate the relationship that existed with her previous institution, and eventually to study at a different university that “held no such views” regarding favouring UK applicants.

Despite the issues described above, having decided to study at a different institution, Arya’s second pre-study experience was broadly positive, and she was supported throughout the application and funding process. However, in contrast to the—broadly positive—pre-study experiences of Arya, Kirsty, and Elena, among others, Misty’s extended narration of pre-study administrative frameworks in the UK revealed more negative experiences. She was studying in a one-year postgraduate course at the time of the “entry” interview and mentioned that she had deferred entry to this course by one year due to delays with her acceptance and problems with receiving her Tier 4 visa. When asked for more information about her initial acceptance and deferral, she described her experience of the administrative process for the CAS as “so disorganised... I was so upset.”

Having applied well in advance of the January application deadline to begin her course in October 2016, she “heard crickets” for months, before finally receiving her acceptance letter in August of that year. She quickly began winding down her life in the USA, handing in her notice at work and accommodation, and preparing to move to the UK. However, based on the late notice of acceptance from the university, she realised that it would be impossible to apply for and receive her Tier 4 visa within the remaining timeline: “once I started doing the math in my head I was like ‘I can’t do this.’” Having realised the impossibility of this timeline, she requested a deferral from the university, and followed the procedures listed on the institution’s website. The university responded immediately that she would need to pay a holding deposit of £2000 within two days to secure an offer for the next intake. With the challenges of her initial application fresh in her mind, she “paid the deposit, whatever, because they were just like very insistent” before contact from the university ceased once again and she “didn’t hear anything for a while.”

She grew concerned in June 2017 when, again, she did not receive notification from the university of her CAS, a prerequisite for the Tier 4 visa application. The university had re-established contact to confirm matters of financing, loan applications and repayment

schedules, but she did not receive any information, or any responses to her inquiries about the missing CAS:

Misty: They're very insistent about student loans. They were like, very insistent, like, "Do this, finish that, finalise that." So, I did. Crickets on the CAS thing. July went by and I'm like, again crickets. And I was like sending them all these messages through the portal. I would like never hear anything back- and I just get the run-around from other people there.

In Misty's case it took an eighth "50-dollar call" before an administrator took on her case and discovered that deferral students had initially been missed from this year's cycle of applications, and had not been assigned a CAS number. While rectifying this issue they asked Misty to resubmit documents from her initial application including an original diploma at the cost of another \$200:

Misty: That was the only thing holding it up, as it turned out. Like, they had everything else. So, I like went off on this girl. I was like -- And then I lied I had a family emergency, like I've been sitting here like waiting for this stupid number. All this stuff. And she was like, "oh yeah, we're really sorry."

After further delays, she received CAS approval, but again found herself rushing to meet deadlines for the Tier 4 visa application. She applied immediately through her nearest visa application centre, including the "hefty, hefty" £700 application fee, and was left to hope that the visa would be processed quickly enough to allow her to board her flight in just a few weeks. Despite assurances that she would be kept informed of the progress of her application throughout, she received no notification that her application materials had been sent successfully from the application centre and had arrived at the embassy:

Misty: Two weeks go by. No email. And at that point- I had to like move out of my place, like the girl who was taking my room had already moved in and was like sleeping in like the other girl's rooms and it was like this whole big mess. And then, like yeah, they had my replacement at work. So, I was just like, "Jesus Christ."

When she was informed that her application documents had arrived at the embassy, she was told that processing the application would take a further two weeks, meaning that she would miss her scheduled flight, and potentially the start of her course. While panicking ("And I like call my friends and I was like 'you guys, like what the fuck can we do?'"), she

received another email from the application centre that confirmed the visa was approved and to await further contact. Having waited another week, Misty's parents encouraged her to be "very proactive, like clearly UK people are much lazier than we thought," a sentiment shared by Arya's parents following her experience of applying for British universities, and she went in person to the office to demand more information. She found that her passport and visa had already been at the application centre for four days, but she had not been informed. She was able to take her flight and attend her course on time, but the stresses and challenges of the administrative processes for entering the UK had lasted over a year and left a very strong impression. Misty lay the blame at the feet of her host university, which was her legal sponsor to receive the Tier 4 visa, but which had been a major stumbling block throughout the process:

Misty: So, had like, [my university] gotten their shit together my original timeline would have been like fine. Like, I really would have been out of there by like August. I wouldn't have had to pay another month's rent. I would have been home... They're just so disorganised. It's like really crazy. And it's surprising because they're such a big school. But apparently like a lot of my friends who like, are international said the same thing. They're like, "don't trust UK schools."

By virtue of the Tier 4 visa requirements in 2016/2017, when Misty experienced these events, a sponsoring institution and CAS number were necessary prerequisites for the visa application, the fundamental administrative barrier to receiving legal permission to live and study in the UK. As Misty's story illustrates, preparing to move abroad requires substantial preparation, concluding existing professional responsibilities and accommodation contracts, not to mention personal relationships with friends and family, all of which hinges on the success of the visa application. Misty's frustration that her sponsor had, in her eyes, failed to provide a level of support that reflected the make-or-break importance of the visa application had undermined her trust in the university. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, Misty's experience revealed what is at stake in the current regulatory framework in the UK, which relies so much on the support and professionalism of sponsoring institutions.

During-Study: Work Experience While a Student

The Temper framework identifies two important during-study factors in the education-migration nexus: (1) the right to work, and (2) the ability to bring dependents on a student visa. None of the participants of this study sought to bring dependents with them when coming to the UK, therefore this section will focus on participants' descriptions of their work

experiences during-study. Participants that engaged in employment while studying revealed the significance of this experience in moderating their relationship to UK, both during-study, and in their post-study transition. Elena was one such participant, who invested significant effort and time engaging in the labour market through volunteer opportunities, short-term internships, and part-time employment. For example, she showed me her planner from the previous year, illustrating her “time management, assignments, exams... essay[s] and part-time jobs, everything like I need to do, with different colours for different kind of activities.” Despite this planning and commitment, when she first arrived in the UK as an undergraduate, on a double-degree course between her university in China and an isolated British institution, she could not find paid part-time employment. As a result, she sought volunteer experience through her university, before eventually securing a four-month paid internship at a local credit management company. This became one of the most important supplemental experiences that contributed to her overall sense of self-transformation while in the UK:

Elena: It's like very unique experience in the UK because not many, you know, international students can find job in the UK, and I learned a lot from the experience... I got something out of that working as well.

In addition to the experience and practical skills that she gathered in the workplace, this internship also helped her to integrate into a community of local actors and adapt to the requirements of the British labour market. Her initial stress and embarrassment were quickly replaced by excitement that she could contribute professionally and fit in socially with her colleagues. Elena was thrilled, and the company was so impressed with her development in the role that they sought to offer her permanent post-study employment. Emily had a similar experience, as her summer internship resulted in a job offer. In her words, following her internship, “the path kind of sat” for her to remain in the UK. Elena and Emily’s experiences indicate the way in which short-term or part-time employment during-study may become an important factor influencing the international students’ incorporation into the host country, and aid their post-study transition to the workforce. However, it does not follow that internship experience provides guarantees of post-study employment. I will return to this below, with further reference to Elena’s narrative.

However, as described in Chapter 5, there are limitations placed on the employment rights of international students during their studies. A number of participants (Pochacco, Kirsty, Laboo, Misty) struggled to find meaningful work experience during their studies, arguing that a lack of local networks and the limited availability of support from university careers support services, were a significant barrier. There was also evidence that the quality

of part-time employment opportunities was restricted by the conditions placed on student visas. For example, Pochacco was rejected from a number of part-time internship programs in his field of civil engineering due to his international status, informed that “if you require sponsorship, unfortunately we can’t really take you.” As a result, he settled for part-time work experience in the offices of generic engineering firms, though mainly found himself “offering tea and coffee.” Misty, too, found that the majority of employers were not well inclined or organised to take advantage of international students as part-time workers or interns. She felt that they displayed little understanding of students’ educational commitments in term-time, or willingness to show flexibility in relation to academic schedules and the conditions of students’ visas:

Misty: [The employer] heard "student" and it was, like, strike one. And then they heard "American" and it was two, three, out...

In the quotation above, Misty touches on a number of important issues. The fact that student status was discouraging to her potential employers reflects that, in the eyes of an employer, there are disadvantages or uncertainties associated with hiring international students relative to hiring locals. While Misty did not initially divulge her interpretation of the precise reason for employers’ uncertainty in this regard, she does suggest that it was the fact she was “American” that particularly restricted her chances of employment. When asked to expand, she gave examples of how some employers had initially hired her as a part-time employee “thinking that [she] was some sort of unicorn student that was, like, had a US background but then was, like, a UK or EU citizen.” However, when she told them that she did not have an unrestricted right to work in the UK they withdrew their offers, stating “we don’t sponsor.” As described earlier in this chapter, employers are not required to sponsor international students who work during their studies while they are on a university-sponsored Tier 4 visa. Despite this, both Pochacco and Misty’s experiences indicate that some employers were unwilling to hire international students even in a part-time or unpaid capacity.

Furthermore, Misty also indicated that having restricted working hours severely curtailed her opportunities. Like all international students, Misty was restricted to a maximum of 20 hours per week during term but, as a postgraduate student in a research-based degree course, this restriction extended outside traditional term dates. This further restricted her options, as short-term internships were not an option for her:

Misty: With this visa, I can only work 20 hours, like, no matter what. Even during winter and, like, summer, I can only work 20, which is, like, kind of frustrating.

Pochacco and Misty's narratives indicate that their international student status made them less attractive as a part-time employee or unpaid intern during their studies, revealing how work restrictions can place barriers between international students' need to support their studies financially, and the experience to further their post-study prospects. Pochacco suggested that, in retrospect, his struggles to find meaningful work experience during his studies created barriers in his search for post-study employment. He recalled in the "entry" interview that possible employers had criticised his CV for his lack of practical experience, saying that "they couldn't really see any engineering details so far." At the time of his "exit" interview, Pochacco had still not been able to find a sponsoring employer, and when discussing the challenges that stood between him and such a sponsor he reflected: "I realised from my CV that that [my] lack of internship experience in the industry, I also believe it's another faded [sic] point of my application."²⁴ He attributed his lack of a sponsoring position to his limited work experience, particularly in his desired field of civil engineering, suggesting that he had underestimated the importance of practical experience as a factor in securing full-time employment. Having briefly returned to Hong Kong before transitioning to a Tier 5 visa, at the time of the "exit" interview, Pochacco was looking for short-term industry placements to make up for lost time and make him more attractive to employers who might later sponsor a long-term visa.

Thus, while Pochacco was not legally restricted from working while an international student in the UK, and was able to secure some part-time experience, he illustrates the importance of quality part-time or short-term experience in securing the level of employment post-study that will satisfy the requirements of visa sponsorship. In light of this, a number of participants felt that being an international student restricted their part-time work opportunities, whether for social or administrative reasons, suggesting that present restrictions on during-study work may be an important barrier to a successful post-study transition within the UK.

²⁴ When listing the factors that he thought were preventing his success in the job market, Pochacco was emphasising the weaknesses in his CV when he referred to his lack of industry experience as "faded".

Post-Study: Between Visas and Sponsorship

The narratives of UK participants were notable for the high concentration of discussion regarding the regulations that governed the post-study transition, and this was true throughout both the “entry” and “exit” interviews. Although some participants had arrived in the UK prior to the removal of the PSWV, at the time of this study this route had been closed. Thus, discussion centred around their knowledge and negotiation of remaining post-study transitions. As described above, there are many different routes that can support the immediate post-study transition but, in any one participant’s narrative, typically only one or two alternatives were discussed in depth. Participants also exhibited a varying degree of certainty, a reflection of the extent to which they had invested in a particular course of action. They also indicated a variable degree of knowledge regarding the eligibility requirements of pathways that were under consideration. Although some were well-versed in particular pathways, all participants revealed a degree of misunderstanding regarding the specifics of regulatory frameworks. These are covered below, first with a focus on visa regulations, and then the role of sponsors. I also summarise the role of information and support systems in influencing participants’ navigation of the visa and sponsorship framework.

The transition from a Tier 4 student visa to another visa pathway heavily featured within participants’ narratives. The pursuit of a post-study visa dominated the “entry” interviews, in particular, in which participants discussed the challenges of the visa system while also recognising its significance in the post-study transition. For example, Chelsea described receiving a work visa as “the only way for me to stay,” while Karen stated that “I have to get [a visa] before I graduate.” However, participants lacked the confidence in their ability to successfully pursue such a transition, particularly in the absence of successful peers or role models. Karen explained that the desire to work for a few years before pursuing residency status was, anecdotally, a standard pathway for people from Hong Kong. However, she confessed that she had not witnessed anyone successfully pursue this trajectory: “generally, I don’t really see a lot of people doing that. Not a lot of successful examples around me. So, you can see how hard it is.” Even Emily, who had already successfully secured her post-study sponsor and visa at the time of the “entry” interview, reiterated how hard the post-study transition could be. Her parents’ suggestion that she “might as well apply for a permanent residenceship” after working for a few years was now “impossible to do,” and even the first step to secure a job was “incredibly difficult.”

In this context, participants gave various accounts of the post-study residence statuses available to them. As described above, since the removal of the PSWV there is not one clear pathway that caters for international students, and participants had to negotiate between

multiple potential options, each of which with a different combination of eligibility requirements, rights, and restrictions. While unanimously aware of the necessity to identify and pursue a visa transition, and recognising the challenge that such a transition represented, participants displayed a varying degree of understanding of, and investment in, the various transitions available to them.

It is notable that no participants in the study seriously considered the Tier 1 “graduate entrepreneur” visa. Tier 1 visas were only mentioned once, and in very unusual circumstances. Chelsea worked part-time during her studies in the UK and, when discussing the possibility of Tier 2 sponsorship, her employer offered “a very dodgy option” to allow her to remain in the UK. Lacking a Tier 2 sponsorship licence, they proposed to transfer the then-requisite £200,000 investment to her personal account, with which she could then apply for the now defunct Tier 1 entrepreneur visa, which is distinct from the visa aimed at graduate entrepreneurs. They proposed that she enter the UK on the Tier 1 pathway, and continue to work for the company after returning the money. Recognising this as a “risky” pathway, and having been strongly advised against it by her academic supervisor, Chelsea chose to reject this offer and look for other opportunities.

The Tier 2 visa scheme, on the other hand, was a prominent feature throughout participants’ narratives. The Tier 2 “General Work Visa,” to which participants commonly referred informally as the “working visa,” or “T2,” was typically at the heart of participants’ plans to remain in the UK. However, there was considerable variance in participants’ understanding of the eligibility requirements for the pathway. While some were relatively well-versed in the Tier 2 scheme and had considered the eligibility requirements and their strategies to fulfil them, others were misinformed, giving widely varying estimates of the salary requirements or being unable to name the visa when prompted. Some, including Pochacco, appeared to have acquired more detailed knowledge between the “entry” and “exit” interviews.

Returning to Chelsea’s narrative first, having rejected the “dodgy” offer for a Tier 1 visa, she recognised a Tier 2 visa as her next best option. She was excited to feel valued in the labour market for the skills she had developed during her PhD, and claimed during the “entry” interview that “there [is] potential for me to-to find a job here.” However, she described this pathway as “very difficult,” and worried about her ability to satisfy the eligibility requirements of the visa. Despite knowing the basic structure of these requirements, she did not express precisely what was required even when prompted, stating: “they have a requirement for your salary rate every year if you want to, to get a visa, job visa or something.” Karen and Emily, too, displayed a degree of knowledge about the specifics

of the Tier 2 visa, but were mistaken about the specifics of the salary threshold. Karen claimed a threshold of £35,000 p/a for new graduates, whereas Emily, who appeared to have a better grasp of the regulations, explained them as follows in her “entry” interview:

Emily: So, to get a work visa, you need to, uh, get a job that pays you at least 30 grand and then within five years, you need to be earning at least 35 grand, otherwise, your visa is revoked. Um, and initially, to get that visa, you need to find an employer who will sponsor you.

This description matches up well with the salary requirements for applicants for the Tier 2 visa that are considered “Experienced Workers,” which dictates that recipients must be sponsored to work in a graduate-level position, typically earning more than £30,000 at the point of entry, which then rises incrementally to £36,000 for eligibility for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) after 5 years, which is the maximum length of the visa. However, these precise salary requirements do not apply to all applicants for the Tier 2 visa, and not typically to international students. As described above, the Tier 2 visa is further subdivided into two pathways, for “Experienced Workers” and “New Entrants,” respectively. Those switching from the Tier 4 “General” student visa category are typically classified as “New Entrants,” and eligible for a lower rate. Apart from Pochacco during the “exit” interview, none of the participants recognised or described the “New Entrants” rates, and usually estimated salary thresholds of at least £30,000 p/a when describing the visa regulations.

At the time of the “entry” interview, Pochacco, like many other participants, saw the Tier 2 visa as the “most ideal” visa pathway to pursue, having seen his sister follow this pathway a few years before him. However, at that stage he was disheartened and not optimistic about his chances to secure a job that would allow him to remain on a Tier 2 visa. He had regularly been rejected for jobs due to his international status and the fact that he would require sponsorship. In some cases, this policy was stated by the employer at the outset of the application processes. In others, this was only revealed after applications and interviews had taken place. He was particularly concerned that the costs to sponsors were a serious deterrent to his employment, which “[made him] more worried about, um, getting the job here.” However, at this stage, Pochacco was under the impression that he could only apply for jobs that would pay more than £30,000 p/a, discouraging him from applying to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that typically paid less than this to recent graduates. Reflecting his misperception of the minimum salary requirements, he limited his applications to highly competitive graduate schemes or large-scale companies that offered higher salaries. Unfortunately, by Pochacco’s own admission, these graduate schemes and

large companies receive an enormous number of applications from UK and EEA applicants, and there is little incentive for them to take on the extra costs of sponsorship licences for non-EEA candidates. Furthermore, as he would go on to describe in his “exit” interview, his decision to only apply for positions that paid more than £30,000 p/a was based on a misconception, as new graduates can enter the Tier 2 pathway under the—typically lower—“New Entrant” salary threshold:

Pochacco: [I had thought that] there was no point and there was no chance that someone would sponsor me with that much money [30k], where the starting point for civil engineering graduates is 23k to 26k... I think yes, that was a misunderstanding on that.

Having recognised by the time of the “exit” interview that he could apply for positions paying less than £30,000 p/a, he had refocused his job search on SMEs and was actively applying and interviewing. In contrast to his discouraged demeanour during the “entry” interview, Pochacco seemed energised by this new form of job search:

Pochacco: There are many opportunities, I think... Certainly- if our margins are really open to anything now- [there are] so much more opportunities because at the end of day, like, the UK is still larger than like Hong Kong, really.

Pochacco’s newly discovered energy following his recognition of the “New Entrant” salary threshold was in stark contrast to other participants who lacked awareness of this lower salary requirement. Emily and Karen, in particular, directly referenced the “Experienced Worker” salary thresholds as a discouraging factor that dissuaded them from seeking to remain in the UK. Emily had researched the average graduate salary at around £21,000 p/a, and felt that the discrepancy between this and (what she perceived to be) the required salary for international graduates “kind of reinforced how unwanted, um, like foreign-foreign students are.” She also felt that the requirement to find such a high-paying job would restrict international graduates from seeking a job in a wide range of professions, functionally limiting them to “just like investment banking, consultancy, law,” in which graduate salaries may more frequently surpass £30,000 p/a. Misty echoed this point, stating “If you’re not working at Barclays, you have, like, no chance.” While this did not constitute a major problem for Emily herself, as she wished to work in the finance sector, she recognised that “it could very well easily go down like the other way of like, ‘I hated it but I do have to take it.’” Extending this point, Karen recognised the requirement to have some

measures designed to regulate those who remain in the UK after their studies but argued that:

*Karen: The barriers is the visa thing, for working visa we've got to get a special-
- which has £35,000 a year. It's very harsh for fresh graduates. It's not good...
Every country needs to have some regulations like that, this is very normal.
Maybe just the pressure is a bit too high. Like 35k... that's impossible.*

Whatever the accuracy of their perspectives, it appears from these accounts that some participants felt the Tier 2 visa was out of reach, with a set of eligibility requirements that they could not hope to attain. For participants who voiced these concerns but still wanted to remain in the UK, the discussion turned to Tier 5 visas or a renewed Tier 4 visa. To a certain degree, these took on the role of bridging-visas, allowing participants the necessary time to prepare for a subsequent transition to the de-facto “general” working visa (Tier 2) and a more stable and extended stay in the UK.

Pochacco gave the Tier 5 “youth mobility scheme” visa extended consideration, describing in the “entry” interview his strategy to use the Tier 5 to bridge to an application for a later Tier 2 visa, or even an application for ILR. While recognising that he “would much prefer it if [someone] offered him a T2,” the Tier 5 visa was another attractive option, and one that he favoured at the time of the “entry” interview, which he did indeed pursue. Comparing the two pathways, Pochacco remarked that Tier 2 was reserved for “long term worker[s],” in contrast to the Tier 5 visa which could not be renewed and was inherently “short-term.” In addition, one great advantage for Pochacco in applying for a Tier 5 visa, was that, as a Hong Kong national regarded as a “British National (overseas),” he was not subject to quotas on the number of Tier 5 visas available in any one specific year “which makes me quite easy to actually apply for it.” He did not mention the additional benefit of exemption from the sponsorship requirement, which allowed him to come to the UK on a Tier 5 visa without a pre-arranged job. During the “entry” interview, Pochacco also thought that it was possible that, by a circuitous route, his possession of a Tier 5 visa may aid him in securing a permanent job in the UK, by allowing him to fulfil the “long residence” requirements for ILR. If he were able to reside in the UK for a further two years, when the visa expired, he would have been resident in the UK for a decade, meeting the “long residence” requirement. In addition, he thought that imminent ILR may help to persuade employers to hire him, if he could promise that he would no longer require sponsorship just two years after his graduation. However, he was uncertain of this as a legitimate route through the regulatory framework, and had spoken to his sister about additional “restrictions”

placed on ILR applications. Though unsure of the specifics at the time of the “entry” interview, he explained during the “exit” interview that additional restrictions did, indeed, block that pathway:

Pochacco: For now, my mind changes, so I don't think that actually it was a good way, with anybody. That's just a way for me to actually look for some temporary role in the UK... [In our] meeting 20 months ago, that I was thinking getting a Tier 5 would be an alternative way to secure a permanent job in here. It's different now... I'm currently coming back to the UK through the Tier 5 Youth Mobility Scheme visa, which allows me to stay in the UK and work in those jobs for two years. I came back in December the 1st. I'm allowed to work until 2020 December the 1st. By that time, I've already been in the UK for more than 10 years because I came in the UK in 2010- probably in late August 2010. Unfortunately, I've gone back too many days. I left the country for too many days that I'm [not] going to fulfil all the requirements for started getting indefinitely to remain until at least the summertime of 2021 now. Basically, I got six more months gap.

Because of the extended holidays he had taken since arriving in the UK, he was not eligible for ILR immediately after securing 10 years of residence, and Pochacco realised that the Tier 5 visa would not serve as the bridge to ILR as he had previously hoped. However, it could still act as a bridge to secure short-term employment, allowing him to gain work experience, develop his skills, and improve his CV, raising his chances of finding a job that fulfilled the requirements for a Tier 2 visa. Pochacco’s experience would indicate that, even to those without the advantages of being a “British National (overseas),” the Tier 5 visa could be used as a bridging visa to more secure residence statuses. In light of its lower eligibility requirements, a Tier 5 visa is more easily attainable to new graduates, relative to the Tier 2 visa.

Continued study on a Tier 4 visa appeared to serve a similar role in some cases. Elena, Karen, and Pochacco all considered it as a bridging visa within a more long-term strategy. Elena stated this in very concrete terms during the “entry” interview, describing how both working and further study in the UK were two stages of a future plan, but somewhat interchangeable temporally. At the time of the “entry” interview she was enrolled in a 1-year master’s program having previously completed a dual degree course that included two years at a British university. When approaching graduation, she applied simultaneously for both a Tier 2 visa through an employer awaiting a sponsorship licence, and a postgraduate course.

When her potential employer failed in their application for sponsorship status, she decided to take the opportunity to “generate more knowledge” and prepare for a further round of applications for employment the next year.

Karen had prioritised getting a sponsoring job after graduation but was unable to balance a concerted search for an eligible position while studying for her end-of-year exams. Her struggles with the application for a Tier 2 visa are documented above, and as an alternative pathway she, too, chose to apply for a postgraduate course. She “struggled whether to do a master’s” throughout the final year of her undergraduate, eventually deciding to continue onto a Legal Practice Course (LPC) “because- well first I didn't really know what to do-- and it's, uh, the most usual way if you want to continue [in law without a training contract].” Continuing on a Tier 4 visa under a different course was attractive to Karen as it allowed her to further pursue her desire to live and work in the UK, while also giving her time to settle on law as a career: “because I want to see maybe it's different for studying law and actually doing law in the real world.” She also took this time to consider the long-term practicalities of practicing as a lawyer in the UK or her home country of Hong Kong. The last participant to consider a transition to a Tier 4 visa was Pochacco, who discussed in the “exit” interview the possibility of doing a 1-year MSc from Autumn 2020 “to carry on that [long-term residence] process to get my indefinite leave to remain.”

The above discussion illustrates the extents and limitations of participants’ understanding of the various transitional visas available to them. Nobody expressed an interest in every available pathway, and most displayed a degree of misunderstanding of the administrative frameworks that governed post-study transitions. Before discussing sponsorship regulations, it is worth noting that Emily was the only participant to bring up an alternative pathway than those discussed above. After stating the requirements for the Tier 2 visa and ruling out further study, she jokingly concluded that if the Tier 2 pathway fell through: “Or, you know, ultimately find a nice British boy and get married.”

With few exceptions, transitional visas that allow graduating international students to stay in the UK after they complete their studies require a sponsor of some form. Typically, this is an employer or higher education institution. In an abstract sense, therefore, securing a visa to remain in the UK is contingent on finding an appropriate sponsor for any one visa pathway, and the pursuit of a sponsor typically precedes the visa application itself. Indeed, Misty summarised a number of participants’ characterisation that the fundamental process of seeking to stay in the UK was the pursuit of a sponsor, rather than the choice and pursuit of a particular visa: “sponsorship versus no sponsorship. That is really it. If you get sponsored, then fine, you'll stay.” Reflecting the significance of the sponsorship process,

participants' narratives regularly featured extended discussion of the pursuit of, and interactions with, organisations that they hoped would allow them to stay in the UK. These narratives were often characterised by frustration directed at sponsoring institutions who were either unable or unwilling to offer sponsorship. I will present such reflections below, but first I will introduce the sponsorship process in general, as perceived by the participants.

By the time of the "entry" interviews, participants recognised that sponsorship required a degree of investment from their potential employer. As described in Chapter 5, employers face significant costs to be a sponsor of a Tier 2 or Tier 5 visa. Participants often referred to the existence of sponsorship fees, some even providing a specific estimate. After going through a number of applications with limited success, Misty described the sponsorship process as follows:

Misty: I actually did look into it. I think [employers] do have to pay at least, like, more than £2,000 just to like get on that, like, register. And so, you know, it is an investment at the end of the day... I realised it is like a monetary investment in the sponsored students, and there's a whole process [to go through.]

Elena, too, appeared to have made some inquiries, suggesting that it costs "a thousand pounds per year per person- something like that."

No other participants spoke in specifics about the costs of the sponsorship process. However, participants shared the perspective that employers would be discouraged from hiring international students by the cost and hassle of applying for a sponsorship licence: "[they] are just not gonna be interested in doing that" (Misty). They recognised the relative burden that sponsoring an international graduate—rather than a local graduate—may place on their employer, which served to make them less competitive within the graduate labour market. This manifested itself in employers' reluctance or inability to act as a sponsor, even in situations where they liked the candidate:

Misty: I think a lot of them are just sort of like, "This is what it is," like, "I wish we could do more but, you know, we can't go-- move forward from this point."

Most participants gave examples of situations in which potential employers made clear that they did not hire international students as a point of policy. In many cases this was expressed at the first point of contact, which Pochacco described as a "very kind" recruitment process which stopped participants from wasting time applying for a lost cause. On the other hand, many other employers required applicants to apply for the job without giving them the opportunity to clearly express their position regarding sponsorship at the outset. In other

cases, they asked applicants to “describe your situation” (Pochacco), and, in others, applicants were required to declare their residence status. Some employers were clearly unprepared for international applicants and did not possess prior knowledge of the sponsorship system. They provided no opportunity for applicants to declare their nationality or sponsorship requirements in the early stages of the application process. When such companies realised that they would need to provide sponsorship, participants suddenly found themselves removed from contention having invested a significant amount of time providing application materials and even interviewing:

Pochacco: You could be, like, just applying, and then, um, they kind of accept you and you tell them, "Okay, I need a visa." Well, then when you apply for it and your visa, then they cancel their-- your application.

Misty: They'll make you do the test and they'll make you do all of their, like, application process and then somewhere in a teeny-tiny font it'll be like, "Oh, by the way if you're not a UK citizen, we can't move forward from this point."

While participants were discouraged by the large number of employers who explicitly did not offer sponsorship, the lack of transparency was even more frustrating. As these frustrations grew, Elena and Misty took to “screening calls” with potential employers to ensure that they wouldn’t waste any more time on applications that were, in reality, doomed to fail from the outset:

Elena: I ask them during interviews, during telephone interview, even before I came to the company. Because it's time consuming for me.

Misty: I was just being like, I just need to be straight-up here like, I am a US student, like, here on a visa, like you know before we continue the conversation any further 'cause I just don't want to schedule second and third rounds or whatever.

Misty continued to describe that, even before it came to the issue of finding a job that fulfilled salary requirements, “you are restricted greatly in terms of the places you can work and the companies that are likely to hire you.” Laboo summarised the lack of transparency and frustration at being excluded from certain opportunities as follows, in reference to careers events on her campus:

Laboo: I think these little things like that sentence, "All are welcome," in the emails, always annoyed me because I knew that sometimes yes, everyone were welcome but then sometimes some people like international people, all people who don't have permanent residence permits are not. It's really helpful to mention that.

As a further challenge, a number of participants encountered situations where they had successfully been recruited by an employer who was willing to become their sponsor, but who was unable to fulfil this role. Returning to Elena's narrative once more, following a very successful internship experience at a small credit management company seeking to expand its Chinese business, they sought to recruit her full-time after her graduation, offering to get a sponsorship licence for this purpose. Despite the fact that Elena offered to help with the application process, they were slow to follow the application procedures, leading her to lose faith in their ability to become her sponsor in time for her graduation:

Elena: My manager, he put a performance review there to say how good I performed at the company and because I only went there for three or four months, said [he was] really impressed my performance there, so that's why they would like to offer me the sponsorship... [However] It's like not very organised, you know, like the director can't decide everything... They applied before, but they failed the application - and I don't have to -- have time to waiting for them.

Elena's statement that she didn't "have time to waiting for them" alludes to the fact that international students are typically seeking sponsoring employment on a relatively tight schedule, and that the consequences of a failed application or late rejection could potentially have an enormous impact in their lives. If they miss visa application deadlines, or have insufficient time to apply for other positions if a particular application falls through, they may be forced to return to their home country suddenly, putting their life and relationships within the UK at risk. Elena sought to avoid this uncertainty by reverting to her alternative plan of postgraduate study, giving her more time to find a sponsor. However, for other participants, further study was not an option.

Misty's experience is particularly evocative of the dangers of investing in a potential sponsor who is not yet licensed. On the day of the "exit" interview,²⁵ Misty was working for an SME in London, with her student visa set to expire in just 10 days. Her company had offered to act as a sponsor and was in the process of applying for the sponsorship licence, but, four months later, due to incompetence and mistakes on the part of her company, this had still not been confirmed. Here is an extract from the post-interview research diary:

Misty (Diary): [Her employer] had to send evidence [to the visa bureau] that this is a very special case and that it has to be rushed through, because there's no one else who can do the job and it's absolutely necessary for her to stay for them to be able to complete the contracts that they have outstanding... It seems like the boss is trying to be helpful with that but, to date at least, they haven't been successful.

In this position of limbo, Misty was considering overstaying her student visa if the sponsorship licence was not approved before its expiry date, in the hope that she could quickly apply for a Tier 2 visa the day the licence was granted, with a minimal overstay. She saw this as the only option that would allow her to take this position and continue living in the UK. Of course, overstaying is a criminal offense under the Immigration Act of 1971, but there is some precedence for these very short overstays, and a "14 day with good reason rule" was implemented in November 2016 (HM Government, 2016). Misty directly cited the "14 day" rule during the "exit" interview, and hoped that the delays to the processing of her sponsor's licence would qualify as a "good reason," though this was unclear according to official guidance, which cites emergency medical treatment, family bereavements, and delayed acceptances for study. In the absence of any professional legal advice, Misty was considering overstaying in the hope that a retrospective application would qualify under the "14 day" rule, and her transfer to the Tier 2 visa would be approved. Needless to say, this was a particularly dangerous option which put her at substantial legal and financial risk, so I referred her to a free legal consultancy service for immigrants in the UK. She was already aware of these services but had not yet consulted them directly as they were heavily oversubscribed, and Misty stated that others had a greater need for legal advice than herself.

²⁵ Misty declined to be audio-recorded in the second interview in light of its legally sensitive subject-matter. Analysis is, therefore, based on extensive fieldnotes from the interview and an immediate post-interview research diary in which I recorded the narrative of the interview in my own words. While the events of the narrative are preserved, I am unable to give direct quotations from this interview. Thus, quotations taken directly from my fieldnotes or the research diary are attributed as such.

Both Elena and Misty's experiences attest to the time-sensitive nature of securing a sponsor, and the difficult decisions that must be made in this insecure environment. Administratively, participants were heavily reliant on finding a sponsor who was willing and qualified to support their transition into the workforce, but the lack of expertise and commitment they witnessed in potential sponsoring organisations was deeply concerning. To gain a sense of control over the process, Misty and Elena had to chase their potential sponsors in a form of managing-up, providing information and impetus to confirm their sponsorship as soon as possible. As Misty describes, many potential sponsors did not display a full awareness of the eligibility requirements for becoming a sponsor, and sponsoring individual migrants:

Misty: Apart from the very high paying jobs and particularly the Googles and the big international Silicon Valley type companies, most companies aren't really aware of the requirements and particularly most of them aren't sponsored or don't have a sponsorship licence.

This is not necessarily surprising, as most companies in the UK have never sponsored an international employee. However, the fact that participants were regularly interviewed at such organisations is testament to the uncertainty of the labour market with which they were engaged. One company "actually asked [Misty] what the process was for sponsorship," prompting her to "learn more about the visa because that puts some people at ease," and finding ways of arguing her case as a potential employee, based on the advantages of hiring graduating international students:

Misty: I was explaining to like the person who asked about the sponsorship process. Like I told him, oh, because I'm here on a student visa though, like, you- - I guess if I had applied from the US there's a market skills test that I have to pass. But since I'm here on a student visa that's exempted, like, that's not an issue. So, it is in some ways easier to hire me, I guess.

Misty believed that by learning the sponsorship regulations herself and the ability to explain these to potential employers within the interview process would help her to justify to those who "don't like to get involved" with immigration authorities that she may be worth the investment. Not only did she regularly explain the regulations to employers to facilitate the process of being hired, she also sought to guide her eventual employer through the application process in order to increase the chances of being approved ahead of the tight deadline. In light of the company's lack of expertise and experience as a sponsor, Misty

researched the necessary steps and created a “cheat sheet” (Misty, diary) summarising what information had to be provided and what guarantees made. Despite this, she felt the company were muddling through the process in a somewhat haphazard way and, while they were trying hard, there was still a high chance that the application would fail and Misty would have no other option than to leave the UK.

The interviews reflected a sense of uncertainty and insecurity that dominated the sponsorship process. Firstly, participants were required to navigate through the job market without always knowing when they applied for a job whether the company would be a willing sponsor. Secondly, having found a company that expressed a willingness to sponsor them in theory, participants didn’t know whether they had the expertise and commitment to sponsor them in practice. Thirdly, the sponsorship process is governed by a list of eligibility requirements and regulations that neither applicants nor their employers necessarily had a firm grasp on. Finally, this all had to take place within a condensed timescale with a firm deadline which, if missed, would have serious consequences for the applicant.

In general, participants felt an inability to maintain control over their destiny within the UK. Karen described the search for a sponsor as “not something that I can control. I just have to see whether I can find an offer,” whereas Laboo seemed to be alienated by the whole process:

Laboo: I think it's very hard [laughs] because you only have a few months before your visa ends and also, it's hard to find the places that sponsor visas, and just everything. I don't know.

In light of the intricacies and uncertainties of the sponsorship process, participants’ sources of support and information played an important role in helping them to evaluate their options and secure their future. One important source of information was the “List of Registered Sponsors” which is published online and regularly updated to include all companies within the UK with a valid sponsorship licence. In light of her disappointment at the credit management company, Elena used this list to check the sponsor status of companies before making applications, and she saw it as a valuable resource to avoid future uncertainty. Emily, too, made use of the list to guide her search and advised people in her position to do the same. On the other hand, many participants did not see the list as particularly helpful, and may even have been put off by the bulk of information, lack of contextualisation, and further support. Laboo, for example, sought advice from the careers centre at her institution but after her preferred options were rebuffed by the advisor, she was provided with the list, but with little additional information:

Laboo: I was like, "Okay, what are my options here?" I was given a list of all of the places that sponsor visas. I couldn't really understand the list. It was a really, really long list of every company or organisation that sponsor visas. It was mostly abbreviations, I couldn't really understand what was in there, so it wasn't very helpful.

Other participants shared Laboo's experience when consulting with careers advisors at their institution. Misty, too, was given the "non-formatted list" of sponsors and tasked herself with working her way down it while personally vetting each company located in London. Karen recalled being told to "tailor your applications," without receiving any advice on how to do so, or where to apply. Pochacco remarked:

Pochacco: Certainly, I think there's much huge contradiction in [their] advice just from my experience, but certainly, I don't feel like [they] know the options or how to actually help international applicants to ace any job search.

Rather than support and guidance in their search for a sponsor, Misty was actually informed of the difficulties of finding a job and actively advised against seeking to remain in the UK. She attended an event specifically aimed at students from the US during which they advised that most return to the US after graduation, because "they don't want you to be unrealistic in your job search." She was later told that England, in particular, was likely to be particularly challenging, but she might have better luck in Scotland. In the absence of useable advice from university careers offices, participants often turned to other sources of information. Emily declared that she got through the process by "just talking about careers to, um, my friends," while Karen suggested that her peer group "usually ask for help from like Hong Kong society," a student-led organisation within the university. Elena found a mentor through a local community organisation and Kirsty had peer support through her church, while Pochacco looked online at various groups through social media. Others, such as Laboo, never found a source of advice and information that they could trust, leaving them to struggle alone:

Laboo: I wasn't expecting it to be so hard to just figure out how to find a job... Then when you actually have to do something about it, it's like, "What do I do? I don't know."

Laboo's confusion was indicative of the opacity that participants encountered in the post-study landscape. In the frequent absence of targeted support from their host institutions,

participants of the study were left to seek information from informal sources of varying formality and veracity.

Summarising Narratives of Regulatory Frameworks in the UK

Participants' narratives of the regulatory environment for international students illustrate not only the extents and limitations of their knowledge of their rights and responsibilities when resident in the UK. They also provide valuable insights into their broader sense of opportunities to remain in the UK post-study, and their interpretation of the hurdles and opportunities that must be navigated to be successful in this transition. While the policy trajectory analysis methodologically distinguished between the pre-, during-, and post-study regulatory frameworks, these findings illustrate how, in the lives of participants, they are fundamentally connected. Arya's narrative illustrates how pre-study interactions with the regulatory framework may set the tone for student-migrants' relationship with the UK throughout their stay. Elena, Emily, Misty, and Pochacco's narratives highlight how the ability to work during-study appears to exert a great influence on their post-study prospects. Furthermore, almost all participants of the study (excluding Kirsty and Jazz whose circumstances are explained in more detail in the next chapter) spoke at length about the challenges of navigating a regulatory framework that takes control over the post-study transition out of the hands of individual student-migrants, and places it into the hands of potential sponsors.

Summing up their experiences, participants revealed that the administrative system felt generally restrictive and often opaque. Opportunities to remain in the UK, while perfectly possible legally, did not appear attainable for many participants who, despite significant investment in a post-study transition, were unable to negotiate such a transition successfully. Many of these challenges were attributed to the sponsorship system, which restricted opportunities more than participants had anticipated. In addition to this lack of opportunity, participants felt that the process of navigating this system often took place in the dark and on the fly. After months of searching, Chelsea felt that "it's still not clear for me right now about what I can do in the UK," while Misty attributed a successful transition to "luck honestly... there's just a lot that's out of your control at the end of the day." When evaluating these frameworks and their effects, participants urged caution to potential students and were guarded in recommending the UK as a potential destination.

Narrative Reflections on the Legal Framework in Japan

It was notable that participants in Japan discussed administrative frameworks relatively infrequently in their narratives. While the apparent effects of these frameworks are evident, participants rarely expressed any perceived restrictions or difficulties as a result of the administrative frameworks that governed them pre-, during-, and post-study. On the contrary, participants were complimentary of the ease with which they were able to navigate the necessary legal transitions post-study. In this section, I present examples of participants' reflections on these frameworks. They emphasised the advantages of the right to work during-study, the emotional importance of being accompanied by dependents, the opportunities and challenges of the search for a visa sponsor, and the existence of a fallback or "Plan B" pathway if they were unsuccessful in their search for employment.

Pre-Study: Limits to Language

Though the specific administrative frameworks were not discussed directly, the influence of two pre-study administrative factors was evident in the narratives: the lack of a language test or the need to prove economic resources. As discussed in the previous chapter, degree-mobile international students in Japan are not required to prove their language ability when applying to be granted residence status as a "Student." There was, therefore, a large degree of variation in the language ability of the participants. Some participants had little to no language ability at the time of the interview, having arrived with no Japanese skills, studied in English, and focused on academic pursuits other than language learning during their time in Japan (e.g., World, Ariana, Charles). Some had arrived in Japan with little language ability but had committed to learning the language during their course, developing a degree of proficiency—or even fluency—by the time of "entry" interview (e.g., Harry, Mo, Jan). Others had studied before coming to Japan and were more-or-less fluent at the time of arrival, becoming increasingly comfortable during their studies (e.g., Tanya, Lili, Yes). The significance of this variation in their ability, and the fact that some participants were able to enter and leave Japan without focusing on their Japanese language ability, was notable from the narratives.

Those with limited language ability were studying courses taught in English, meaning that the lack of Japanese did not directly interfere with their academic pursuits. Indeed, some participants suggested that the decision to prioritise their academic work over the necessary commitment to language learning was a conscious decision, particularly in relatively short courses of study. World, for example, was effusive of how much he had learned in his major, and stated that he had "no time to study about Japanese," and had even been discouraged by

senior colleagues who suggested “if you [would] stay for five years you should study Japanese, but if you take only two years then you should not.” He went on to explain that he would not have dedicated any more time to Japanese even if he had the opportunity. As a result, World ended his two-year degree course with little more Japanese ability than when he arrived in the country. While Ariana agreed that a lack of Japanese language ability did not appear to have interfered with her academic pursuits, she did discuss how an inability to communicate had impacted on her broader social interactions. She reflected that “the difficult thing is the language, because we are all communicating by the secondary language.” She thought that language issues caused her to have “very few friends,” and had, at times, contributed to a degree of social isolation for her and her family. Charles, too, suffered with communication issues due to his weaknesses in both Japanese and English. While he had no problems expressing himself in everyday settings in English, his Japanese communication skills were low. In addition, he found that reading or writing academic texts in either Japanese or English was extremely time-consuming. Eventually, he revealed that his supervisor had been critical of his language abilities, and Charles regretted that he did not have the ability to study both Japanese and English simultaneously. He felt that he had made little progress, which was a significant source of “pressure” throughout his studies.

Like the participants discussed above, Mo, Jan, and Harry had arrived in Japan with limited Japanese language ability, but they had invested time into the study of the language, with varying degrees of success. Mo had become proficient in spoken Japanese, developing close friendships with some local students and residents, who later supported him as he made the post-study transition. However, he didn’t develop confidence in his ability to use Japanese in written form or in professional environments, which had come to be a significant barrier in his post-study endeavours. He explained that “in interview processes you can manage... but in order to like replying emails and other daily things, you need to learn Japanese writing skills,” and he had therefore committed to learning Japanese *kanji* (Chinese characters) as his “first thing” to focus on after completing his studies. Jan and Harry had more success in their language studies. Jan had arrived in Japan with no knowledge of the language but had made significant progress during her PhD. At the time of the “entry” interview she was working in lab which spoke exclusively in Japanese, and she felt comfortable communicating in both every day and research settings. Harry recalled that when he moved to Japan couldn’t read simple sentences but had “dedicated [him]self to learn Japanese well” during his studies. He studied in a formal classroom environment, committed to self-study, and engaged in a number of part-time jobs to develop his language ability. He improved enough to deliver his thesis defence in Japanese, despite this not being

a requirement on his course. He also volunteered to interview in Japanese with his eventual employer, which he felt was influential in securing a job offer.

Participants who had arrived in Japan with a degree of Japanese language proficiency discussed the importance of this ability in their academic and social lives during their studies, but also argued its significance in their post-study opportunities. Shaun possessed some language ability due to self-study during his youth, and this had allowed him to engage in research collaborations and international research projects during his master's. This paved the way for his transition to a PhD course in Japan, and success at securing an academic job after his doctoral graduation. Lili's language ability, partially studied in China prior to her move to Japan, and supported with some formal language study after her arrival, allowed her to build confidence in social situations. At the time of the "entry" interview, she used Japanese exclusively in almost every aspect of her life, which no longer represented a barrier in social or professional contexts. Tanya, too, had arrived with a degree of Japanese language ability, which she developed further throughout her studies to a high degree of competency, allowing her to secure a job in a monolingual Japanese company. Yes and Golden had begun their postgraduate courses with established Japanese language ability having majored in Japanese language during their undergraduate studies. Both had also previously completed an exchange program in Japan, though they did not echo other participants' confidence. They both suggested that their lack of native fluency represented a barrier in their everyday lives and professional endeavours, a point echoed by Pedro, who recognised that near-native language skills would become critical in the post-study landscape and when searching for jobs. This final point is expanded on below.

The fact that participants were able to study in Japan without first proving their language ability, then, appears significant for a number of reasons. It is clear that it was possible for some participants to complete their EMI master's courses successfully without ever learning a significant degree of Japanese, and that there was sufficient academic support to guide them through this process. However, there was a cost to life in Japan without a direct means of communication with the native population, whether it be social isolation during the course of study, or a narrowing of opportunities post-study. Participants who arrived with or developed a degree of language proficiency appeared to benefit socially and professionally, and revealed the advantages of language proficiency in the post-study job-hunting process. Language proficiency generally supported a degree of confidence in social interactions, but was not necessarily sufficient in securing a fulfilling social life for all participants of the study.

In summary, the lack of a language requirement at the point of entry to Japan allowed a wider variety of international students to study in Japan and, from a systemic standpoint, has facilitated the expansion of EMI courses. This widening of access was a necessary condition for candidates such as Ariana and Charles to receive a postgraduate education, which may have been prevented if more stringent language requirements were in place. However, simultaneously, it appears that arriving in Japan with little language ability and studying in English throughout may have some negative consequences for post-study opportunities, as there are relatively few chances to work in the English language, as Mo's experience can attest. These experiences may indicate that post-study transitions within Japan are—to a greater or lesser extent—reserved for those who possess fluency in the Japanese language, and more likely to have studied in Japanese throughout their degree. I will return to this question in the conclusion of the Japanese case.

Turning to the issue of economic resources, participants did not discuss the specifics of the administrative process by which they provided this proof when applying for a student visa. However, financial matters were regularly implicated in the narratives. First, it is important to note that a number of participants were supported by a scholarship of some kind, whether through JICA (e.g., Ariana, Charles etc.) or MEXT (Pedro), scholarships provided by the Japanese government, or through smaller institutional programmes (e.g., Tanya, Harry). Within this study, participants from Southeast Asia were typically supported by Japanese public funds through JICA, and they expressed that it was the relative availability of scholarships that had first drawn them to consider Japan as a study destination. Pedro, on the other hand, had long aspired to study in Japan, and having researched funding sources saw the MEXT scholarship as the only way he would be able to support his studies. Tanya and Harry studied in Japan on scholarship programmes sponsored by their host institutions, who then handled all visa procedures including the financial declaration. The result is that, in practice, none of these participants were subject to the requirement to submit evidence of their financial eligibility, as they had sponsoring institutions to fulfil that burden. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the financial viability eligibility requirement did not feature heavily in their narratives.

On the other hand, some participants were self-funded and did, indeed, have to show sufficient finances to cover their costs. However, even though the costs of living in Japan required them all to work part-time during their studies, the initial financial declaration did not feature in participants' narratives directly. In Karl's case, studying in Japan "is much more affordable compared to [universities in the US], it's like one tenth," and, as a result, the relatively low financial outlay meant that the burden of the financial declaration process

was lower than it would have been in other contexts, like the UK. For Karl, it was actually a sound financial decision to study in Japan, rather than in a number of other countries with highly developed higher education systems, and consequently the burden of the financial viability test was not overly significant.

During-Study: Dependents as Social Support and the Importance of Part-Time Employment

As described in the previous chapter, the study visa afforded participants in Japan the right to work part-time during their studies and the right to bring dependents. Both of these rights played a significant role in their narratives. Three of the study participants were joined in Japan by dependents. For Ariana, the stated right to bring dependents allowed her to consider the option of relocating her whole family to Japan prior to applying for and ultimately accepting the JICA scholarship:

Ariana: My husband and me, uh, discussed about [that] when I got the scholarship, what-- what would happen... And before the result we had already discussed about it. And-and, uh, we already decided if we got the- scholarship-- I got the scholarship, [we would] come to here together. So that's this, uh, decided before [the results of the scholarship]. [laughter]

This move was not completely painless for Ariana's family, who shared her struggles with language ("[my husband] doesn't know Japanese language, and English very little"), but given the difficulties of her academic work and challenges of socially integrating into the community, her family provided critical emotional support during her studies. In addition, her husband was able to secure part-time work, and her young daughter had access to education, illustrating they were able to support their living costs and access vital services. In a sense, Ariana's ability to bring dependents not only prevented the short-term breakup of her family unit, but also supported her studies by providing the social and emotional support that she struggled to find elsewhere. Sal, too, was in a similar situation. He did not wish to leave his family in the Philippines when coming to Japan to study. They travelled as a family and co-habited throughout his studies, effectively allowing Sal to pursue postgraduate study without sacrificing his role as the sole financial supporter of his family. Steven married his partner—also an international student—during his studies and they had a child together shortly afterwards. He remarked on the significant changes that occurred within a short space of time ("starting my job, and having marriage, and having a son in this year"), but did not discuss any administrative barriers he had faced in the process. When

asked if he had encountered any challenges during this time, he simply replied “it’s been quite nice.”

In Ariana, Sal, and Steven’s narratives, the ability to be accompanied by and support dependents during-study was vital. For Ariana and Sal, this enabled them to come to Japan in the first place, and to remain for a number of years without requiring the family to live separately. In addition, the ability to live with family was important due to the support this provided to the student in their acclimatisation and academic work. By allowing dependents to come to Japan, the regulatory framework allowed family life to be less disrupted, to the benefit of all involved.

As introduced above, the ability to work part-time during-study was a feature of the majority of narratives. Part-time employment helped to finance participants’ degree programs and living costs, while also supporting their adaptation to Japanese society, and providing advantages when job-hunting post-study. The financial aspect of this was particularly important to some students who were not able to support themselves without the income from a part-time job. These participants were reliant on the opportunity to work as a necessary enabling factor for their studies in Japan, where the cost of living is relatively high:

Mo: When coming we- we always compare the prices from our country to here. That looks like, how do I say, it's very costly here. After we started to do part-time and we come to know that we're depending on how much we earn... Now, we can adapt, and we can manage.

As Mo describes, even as a scholarship student with support from the Japanese government, for those coming from countries in which the cost of living is much lower and/or the currency is weak against the Yen, the ability to work within Japan and earn money in the local currency better enabled participants to meet the cost of living. Though lower than other developed countries, the price of studying and living in Japan was significant for all participants.

Even with the ability to work part-time, financial pressure was a feature of the student experience, and narratives included statements to this effect. Yes argued that for “privately financed students who don’t have a scholarship” there was “a lot of financial pressure in our lives,” that he hoped would abate post-study when he began to earn a salary. The ability to work part-time, therefore, was not necessarily enough for full financial security while studying, a point which the Immigration Bureau is at pains to emphasise in their online advice regarding work to support studies. Despite these warnings, part-time work was

necessary for students like Mo to supplement the financial support received from their scholarship, and for participants like Yes to afford to study at all.

However, financial reasons were not the only incentive for participants to engage in part-time work. For Harry, it provided both the ability to “brush up my Japanese skill” and “to learn Japanese work culture.” He was effusive about the impact of his part-time experience working in a sushi restaurant and bread factory throughout his studies, which helped him to “manage [his] responsibility” and become an “on-time person.” These jobs were also the source of a powerful reflection on Japanese work culture that he cited in an interview with his eventual post-study employer:

Harry: [I said] Japanese never think about your results, but they just want to know your progress. As long as you grow, I think it's okay, it's fine. Little by little it's okay for them. Yes, never give up is the important thing... [My company] were so excited with my answer. It's relevant with their vision, I think so. They just want to grow their company as well. They want to grow their employees as well.

Lili echoed some of Harry's thoughts, speaking at length about how her part-time employment at a convenience store gave her the confidence in her language abilities and social skills that later supported her job-hunting. At the outset, her part-time job acted as a “change of pace” to relieve some of the stress of her academic studies. Incidentally, she also became close to her Japanese colleagues, and despite being the only international student working at her branch of the convenience store, she became a valued member of the team. Having worked there for a while she noticed that her co-workers ceased to frame questions to her in terms of her Chinese heritage. She remembered questions such as “do you know any nice Chinese restaurants around here?” or “have you been travelling around Japan recently?” when she first arrived, but they had become subtly reworded: “do you know any good restaurants?” and “have you been on any trips recently?” To Lili, these small changes were an indication of a gradual integration into Japanese society at large, and a significant breakthrough in her eyes. In this sense, part-time work functioned for both Harry and Lili as a way to integrate into the broader community, building their confidence, and social and linguistic fluency.

Yes provides an alternative perspective on this issue. He echoed Harry and Lili in asserting the importance of work experience in “gaining knowledge about society and its rules, including the skills and manners that you have to be aware of.” However, Yes regretted that he had not worked during his studies, due to pressure from his parents to focus

completely on his academic pursuits. As they were funding his degree, Yes acquiesced to this pressure, and was successful in his degree programme. However, upon his graduation, he found that his lack of work experience and exposure to the requirements of a professional environment held him back in the job-hunting process. As he described in the “entry” interview, at which time he was having great difficulty in the search for employment, “I have to develop this knowledge, [employers] expect that I’ll follow convention.”

Post-Study: Job-Hunting and a Clear “Plan B”

As in the UK case, post-study pathways within Japan are contingent on the applicant being able to secure a sponsor for their new residence status. This could be an employer willing to support a change to a “General” or “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa. Alternatively, it might be an educational institution happy to sponsor further study or a period of job-hunting under the “Designated Activities” residence status. However, participants in Japan did not typically discuss in any depth the administrative requirements of finding a sponsor. There was a palpable sense that the transition to a “General” visa was merely a formality, providing they were able to secure any “meaningful employment,” to use Shaun’s words. Karl, the only participant to discuss the “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa pathway specifically, indicated that it wasn’t “too arduous”:

Karl: It was actually very easy to get above 80 points, I think I had like 100 plus points. Honestly just doing graduate school alone will net you 40 points or 50 points by itself which I think is absurd.

He also discussed how “jumping the queue” for PR provided him with long-term security and “the most optionality” of all available residence statuses.

Courtesy of the lack of a minimum salary threshold and the ease with which employers could qualify as visa sponsors, the transition to a “General” or “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa was painted as a mere formality if one was to find a job. In addition, even participants who were struggling to find employment had a route to stay in Japan post-study. The “Designated Activities” residence status functioned as a “Plan B” (Pedro) that would limit the negative consequences of being unable to immediately secure a job.

Indeed, narratives from Japan were characterised by a lack of discussion regarding the specifics of administrative frameworks and visa regulations as barriers in navigating a post-study transition. All participants indicated their confidence that the legal framework itself would not represent a barrier to them staying in Japan post-study. Furthermore, participants

did not express difficulty identifying a residence status to which they could transition, which was clearly a challenge for some UK participants.

Furthermore, participants' indicated that the practical process of transferring sponsorship was unproblematic. Not only was the process itself relatively straightforward, as described in Chapter 5, there was ample support from their universities and potential employers, who were generally well-versed in the requirements of the sponsorship process and managed procedures on the participant's behalf. This is evidenced by Harry's confession that "I don't know what type of procedure actually. The company gave me a lot of documents. [chuckles] I just have to submit it only." This was echoed by Tanya, who stated that "my company will do that for me... I just hand them my passport and residence card and they handle everything." Harry and Tanya had both already secured jobs at the time of the "entry" interview, at large companies with experience of hiring international students. It stands to reason that those companies may be more familiar with the sponsorship process than other smaller employers with less experience in this regard. However, Steven, Shaun, Yes, Lili, Pedro, and Karl also found jobs in Japan, and in much smaller companies. Nevertheless, none of these participants expressed any administrative difficulties in changing their sponsorship: "it's easy, very easy. Some papers, I can change my visa" (Shaun).

As touched on above, however, some participants spoke at length of their concerns about the job-hunting process itself. While participants did not suggest that the visa system or their international status would deter employers from acting as their visa sponsor, they identified a number of barriers within the job market that disadvantaged international students. They recognised a tension between an amorphous sense of opportunity afforded to international graduates in the Japanese labour market, with more tangible barriers to their integration into professional life. On the positive side, they recognised that certain sections of Japanese industry were actively trying to attract more foreign talent, and as a result, opportunities for their recruitment appeared to be more readily available:

Yes: The types of companies recruiting international students, they tend to be those working with foreign countries. For example, trading companies, or those providing services to foreign tourists etc. There's a lot of companies like that recruiting international students.

Lili: It seems like Japanese companies are actively recruiting international students, too, so I think we have a good opportunity.

Yes went on to explain how advanced social issues such as demographic decline and labour shortages meant that, on a conceptual level, foreigners were highly valued, particularly international students who could be convinced to remain for a “few years” after their graduation. However, despite expressing a sense that they were valued in certain quarters, participants expressed practical concerns that had resulted from their experiences within Japan’s notorious *ikkatsusaiyō* (batch recruitment system). In the pursuit of a job, participants entered the same recruitment channels as their Japanese counterparts and were largely expected to conform to the minutiae of this system. While they may have been attractive to employers for their international experience and skills, they still faced various struggles as they lacked an ingrained understanding of Japanese workplace culture and business practices, and the recruitment system that values them. Pedro who, along with some friends, had dedicated much of the second year of his master’s course to the job-hunting process, even to the detriment of his academic studies, describes this issue:

Pedro: In order to get the job, if you are going to do it in a Japanese way is pretty hard for foreigners... You have to wear things a special way. You have to wear a suit and this-- you have to have the special job-hunting bag and this kind of things.

As an indication of the required investment in the job-hunting process, Lili described the process itself as being “like a job,” requiring time and effort to be diverted from other parts of life, including academic studies. Pedro was conscious of this diversion of efforts, deciding that “this is work for me,” and altering his academic pursuits to suit the job-hunting schedule. At the time of the “entry” interview, Pedro described the difficulties of balancing research for his graduate thesis with the job-hunting process, but he also described how there was a tacit expectation that job-hunting would take precedence throughout the second year of his degree. He recalled being recommended to “get all the credits of the master’s in the first year” to allow for greater dedication to job-hunting during year two. He followed this advice, and job-hunting was his first priority until he finally secured a job that would sponsor his “General” (working) visa. He spent 9 months of his second year finding such a position.

As Pedro revealed, from the cut and colour of suit that applicants must wear, to the type of bag they must carry, even to hair style, the *ikkatsusaiyō* has myriad rules, some unspoken, that are challenging for Japanese graduates, but particularly inaccessible to international students with less exposure to what is expected by employers, and less targeted support. While there are companies that do not use the batch recruitment system, and Karl was able to secure a job by alternative means, the majority of jobs for new graduates in Japan

are still acquired through this process. Participants' narratives of their encounters with this system contributed to an emerging picture of the struggle to adapt to the job-hunting process, and the frequency of failure and rejection. The challenges of the job-hunting process itself were described at great length in participants' narrative, and appeared to partially contradict the general perception that Japan and its labour market are receptive to international talent. This was often a severe disappointment:

Yes: I applied for 27 jobs, and did lots of selection tests and interviews, but after all that I only had offers from three. From my friends, that's just normal. Everyone took the entrance exam at 10 or 20 companies and passing just one or two is the norm.

Pedro: I applied for, more or less, 50 companies and I just got one acceptance. I went to the last interview at [some] company[ies], but I was rejected at the end. I got only one job offer.

These statements are indicative of the challenges of securing employment in Japan for international students, and the significant time investment often required to secure a job through the *ikkatsusaiyō*. The full extent of this challenge was not necessarily clear to participants from the outset. As described above, the same participants who had been optimistic about the opportunities to find a job in Japan subsequently spoke at length about their encounters with an unexpectedly closed job-hunting process, exacerbated by the lack of available support, compared with Japanese nationals:

Lili: Probably Japanese people themselves are basically used to it, whereas foreigners aren't. I think that's the issue.

Golden: It's difficult. Probably particularly so for international students... Compared to Japanese students you just don't have any strong selling points.

While most participants dedicated themselves to overcoming the barriers of the job-hunting process, in light of these unexpected difficulties, Golden was eventually discouraged from staying in Japan. She bemoaned the job-hunting system for being "rigid, too serious" and the feeling of being "right at the bottom" of the talent pool. Even participants who overcame these difficulties and found a position post-study, gave examples about peers who had been discouraged from staying in Japan by the job-hunting process. Pedro shared the job-hunting experience with other members of his course, and they often collected information and attended job-hunting events and assessment centres together, but many of

these peers “gave up early” and returned to their home countries. Pedro, on the other hand, was one of the few to get a job, thereby fulfilling his long-held “dream” to live in Japan after his studies.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, in the pursuit of a job Pedro, along with Yes, Lili and Golden, felt obliged to make job-hunting their top priority during their final year of study. Part of the reason for this was the annually cyclical nature of the *ikkatsusaiyō*. Under this system, the majority of recruitment activities, including campus visits, job fairs, and interviews, takes place over the course of a few months before companies decide on their annual intake for the following April. As Pedro describes, if graduates are unable to secure a job during their final year of study, they must wait for the next application round:

Pedro: The scholarship will finish when I graduate, and if I didn't go to any job at that time I will not work for maybe an entire year, because you usually, in Japan you have job-hunting, you have a period, a limited period to get a job- so if you don't get a job in that period, it's really difficult that you will- you will be able to get a job after that. You have to wait an entire year for the next period to start and then you have to do the job-hunting again.

The annually cyclical nature of the job-hunting system in Japan has long been an issue for Japanese graduates, contributing in part to the *rōnin* and *furītā* phenomena, where graduates fail to get a job and must survive for a year until the next recruitment period. International students, too, may find themselves in this liminal position, due either to being unable to secure a sponsoring employer during their studies, or only making the decision to work in Japan after the primary recruitment window had closed. It is in such a situation that Pedro's “Plan B” becomes the likely pathway for international students committed to remaining in Japan: changing the residence status to “Designated Activities,” and trying to survive economically until the next recruitment window, when they could secure a full-time position and transition to a “General” working visa.

In contrast to the challenges described above, some participants avoided the traditional job-hunting system in Japan by taking advantage of affiliations their universities had with employers, or by focusing their search on alternative employers not using the *ikkatsusaiyō* system. Both Harry and Tanya benefitted from studying at a university that was strategically pro-active in creating links with local employers, particularly in assisting their international graduates to secure jobs. Both arrived in Japan from Southeast Asia on scholarship programmes that sought to create a pathway to employment in Japan. Despite being a relatively young program, the university had links with a number of employers who took a

particular interest in their international graduates. This was a great advantage for both Harry and Tanya, who were able to focus their efforts in a smaller number of applications, exert more selectivity over their chosen employers, and secure jobs relatively quickly with employers well-equipped to host international graduates.

In contrast to other participants, Harry described the job-hunting process as “quite fast, I think, because it has only taken one month.” The university administrators that managed his scholarship program were “more than my expectation... they really helped me, helped the students to get a job in Japan, really,” by providing detailed information about potential employers and support in “how to write your [CV], how to prepare [for] the interview.” Harry spoke about his friends at other universities who lacked this kind of support, and who had more difficulties in finding a job. Indeed, Harry confessed that he did not think he would have been able to find a job without the support provided by his university. Tanya, too, described how the relationships between her university and employers acted as a pre-recommendation to various companies who would visit her university, giving her the confidence to be more selective in her applications and find a job that was the best “fit” to her personality and goals.

Karl, on the other hand, was particularly independent in his job search. Though he began by searching through the *ikkatsusaiyō*, having met other international graduates who “were generally ambivalent or negative” about working for traditional employers, he subsequently changed his job-hunting tactic. He began to avoid traditional job-hunting methods that would lead to traditional employers, and after a period of frustration with the “huge gaping local-foreign divide,” was motivated instead to focus his efforts into alternative areas of the labour market:

Karl: Thankfully, somebody actually suggested to me that, "Oh, well, if these things aren't working out, why don't you check out start-ups. Go look at venture capital or look at start-ups if you are interested in these things. Might as well take a look." And so, I casually did. I started sending out cold emails to VC and start-ups and stuff and was fortunate enough to get a meeting with one.

Having changed his approach and refocused on non-traditional employers, Karl found that they were more open and receptive to his international experience and skills, and that the challenges of being a foreign national instead became an advantage. Having secured an internship, he felt “accepted” despite being the “only foreigner on the team,” describing the environment as very different from the “stereotypical image of the Japanese workplace.” He attributed this to the “start-up culture” of the company, which was more open to foreign

ideas and less beholden to traditional business practices and age hierarchies, leading to fewer “cultural issues inside the organisation.” These employers were also able to sponsor Karl in his application for a “Highly Skilled Professional” visa, which was “stressful, but in retrospect it was relatively straightforward.”

A further administrative factor with a big influence on a number of participants’ post-study trajectories was the “condition of return” placed on those studying in Japan under a JICA scholarship. Four participants in the study had come to Japan for graduate study under this scholarship, designed to support those from developing countries to build research skills and links with Japanese academics, in order to aid in the development of their home countries. These participants showed a variable degree of awareness of the “condition of return” between the “entry” and “exit” interviews. Ariana and Sal were disappointed to have to leave Japan, but understood this as an “important part of the scholarship” (Ariana), and a requirement in the short-term. Ariana hoped to return to Japan in the future for further study or employment, having fulfilled the requirements of her scholarship and her responsibilities in her home country. In his “entry” interview, Sal expressed concern that leaving Japan would form a barrier to his future academic work, but at the time of the “exit” interview he had secured a PhD position, and was able to balance his academic work with his service in the local community. Despite his return, he looked back on living in Japan as a “very good job opportunity... a peaceful environment.” Charles, on the other hand, had a desire to stay in Japan at the time of the “entry” interview, and was considering the best way to discuss the possibility of remaining with his supervisor, though he also felt an obligation to his family, to take care of his parents and grandparents. He had not resolved the competing responsibilities of his family and his work at the time of the “entry” interview, but he finally returned to Laos because, in his words: “I have to follow our scholarship rule.” He expressed that he continued to miss Japan, and was considering a return in future, potentially returning to the same research lab. World did not discuss the “condition of return” during the “entry” interview and was looking for further scholarships to study for a PhD in Japan, or in a European country, before hoping to settle in Japan as “the most developed country... the good symbol for Asia.” However, having returned to Myanmar, in the “exit” interview he described the effect of the “condition of return,” and the thought process of scholarship holders:

World: Once they've done a fellowship program for 2 years, they think about two options. One option is they want to go back to other foreign country to study again, or they want to stay in Japan and find out the future. These are the two

options. However, the government provides only one option. We have to go back to our country.

Much like studying in the medium of English, the condition of return presents a significant barrier to remaining in Japan post-study. For those on JICA scholarships this was imposed by the Japanese government itself, indicating that in some cases the ODA imperative takes precedence over the broader strategic goals to attract and retain highly skilled talent, and the desires of the individual participants themselves.

Summarising Narratives of Regulatory Frameworks in Japan

The analysis in the previous chapter indicated that the regulatory framework in Japan was highly receptive to international students throughout their trajectory. While this appeared to be the general experience of participants of this study, the narratives discussed in this chapter did reveal a series of challenges and tensions within this regulatory framework that were not clear from the policy trajectory analysis. First, the advantages of being able to work during-study and bring dependents to Japan was of immense importance, whether supporting the period of study or in preparation for the post-study transition. In addition, the low eligibility requirements for those seeking to study in Japan appeared to widen the net to applications from a broader cohort of potential students.

However, while the availability of student visas to those without Japanese language ability may aid in student recruitment for Japanese universities and scholarship organisations, and serve to widen access to Japanese higher education for those from less economically developed backgrounds, it may also result in challenging social experiences throughout the course of study and more restricted post-study transitions for the students themselves. This appears to reveal a tension between overlapping policy imperatives in the Japanese case. In particular, the desire to attract international students and retain them within the workforce appeared in tension with the ongoing ODA imperative. This tension is also at play post-study, as those invited to Japan on scholarship programmes may be required to return to their home country immediately after graduating, effectively ruling out the possibility of post-study work.

Similarly, the apparent receptivity of the administrative framework, at least in terms of the policy trajectory analysis, does not capture the difficulties of the search for a sponsoring employer. The job-hunting space, and particularly the *ikkatsusaiyō* through which the majority of recruitment takes place in Japan, required particularly challenging adaptations by the participants of this study, and their presumed advantages in the Japanese

labour market were not so apparent. Non-traditional aspects of the labour market appeared to offer better opportunities for the participants of the study, indicating that other sectors may be more receptive to international talent. However, it was notable that the availability of a dedicated pathway for students to remain in Japan post-study, even if they had not yet secured a sponsoring employer, was not seen as a particularly attractive pathway for those struggling in the job-hunting arena. It was clearly portrayed as a “Plan B,” only to be taken in the worst-case scenario.

Summary

The analysis presented in this chapter indicates that participants exhibited a variable level of understanding about the regulatory frameworks by which they were governed. Furthermore, there was evidence that participants in the UK and Japan had different regulatory experiences. In the UK, the relationship between participants and the regulatory framework appeared to be hostile, with the regulatory frameworks often being described as more restrictive than they had anticipated before commencing their studies. Participants also appeared to struggle with a lack of information regarding the specifics of the regulatory framework. In some cases, a misunderstanding of what trajectories were available to them needlessly limited their options. Others struggled with the lack of comprehensible and accurate guidance on how to navigate their post-study transitions. In the Japanese case, the regulatory relationship appeared to be neutral. Few participants described major difficulties that had arisen in their interactions with regulatory frameworks. Due to the support of sponsoring universities and employers, many were able to pursue their trajectories without ever coming into direct contact with the immigration authorities. Overall, participants in Japan appeared to have access to adequate support and information in negotiating the post-study environment.

The findings illustrated in this chapter highlight the significance of the regulatory relationship between host countries and individual student-migrants as a critical feature of the “temporal-relational context” of the education-migration nexus. Receptivity was critically important, as it framed the relationship between participants and the host country in a manner that began prior to their studies and persisted beyond their graduation. In addition, the stability and clarity of regulatory frameworks were important. The instability and opacity of the UK framework had a particularly restrictive influence on participants’ trajectories, exacerbated by a lack of institutional support. Participants in Japan benefitted from clear regulatory frameworks, reflected in their clarity of purpose in the pursuit of

specific trajectories, and targeted and adequate support from sponsoring organisations who were well-versed in eligibility requirements and procedures.

In the following chapter, I will build on these findings and engage directly with the development and practice of participants' agency, using the "chordal triad" model. I evaluate the influence of receptivity, stability, and transparency in regulatory environments on participants' agency. In particular, I am concerned with identifying the extent to which different temporal-relational contexts experienced by participants may support or be conducive to the development and practice of particular elements of agency. Further, I analyse the extent to which a change in participants' agentic orientation may allow them to exert a different form or degree of freedom in navigating their trajectory. I then seek to identify instances wherein changes in participants' agentic orientations may indicate an ability to exert an influence on, and potentially change, their temporal-relational contexts.

Chapter 7: Agency in Narrative and Education-Migration Trajectories

Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I discussed the “general legal conditions” by which participants were governed throughout their studies and into the post-study landscape, and illustrated the significance of the receptivity, stability, and transparency of the regulatory frameworks that participants had to navigate throughout their trajectories (Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2013, p. 4). Chapter 6 built on that discussion by illustrating the variable degree to which these legal conditions featured within the narratives of participants. The results indicated that participants were not all equally conscious of and knowledgeable about the regulatory frameworks by which they were governed, each being—to a greater or lesser extent—misinformed about the opportunities available to them, and the requirements placed on them in pursuit of their preferred trajectory. In addition, participants’ narratives appeared to indicate that they had vastly different experiences of navigating their post-study transition, in part influenced by the regulatory frameworks’ receptivity, stability, and transparency. The results of Chapters 5 and 6 are, in isolation, contributions to our understanding of the education-migration nexus in the UK and Japan. However, their primary role in this study is to form the foundations for the central concern of the thesis: identifying the development and practice of agency in student-migrants’ trajectories through the education-migration nexus.

Thus, building on the foundation provided by Chapters 5 and 6, this chapter aims to provide an overview of the evidence of agency within participants’ narratives, and reflects on the influence that various elements of agency may have exerted on their particular trajectories. This chapter is based on a comprehensive analysis of participants’ changing agentic orientations, as defined by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) in their “chordal triad” model of agency. With reference to both the “entry” and “exit” interview data, I seek to illustrate how particular elements of agency emerged and receded as “dominant” tones in participants’ narratives, and how participants’ agency developed and changed throughout their narratives. Specifically, I discuss evidence of the ways in which participants’ “choices and actions” in the construction of their life-course were indicative of particular agentic orientations (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). In addition, I consider the relationship between these agentic orientations and the points of tension within the regulatory frameworks identified in earlier chapters.

The chapter is structured around an extended discussion of each element of agency in turn. Each section begins with a brief re-introduction to the element of agency in question. I go on to consider the breadth of its exhibition in the data before I provide more intensive

analysis of sub-tones that were particularly prominent. These dominant sub-tones are evaluated in terms of their influence on the “choices and actions” of participants. I also consider the chordal nature of participants’ agency, and show how participants account for changes in their agentive orientations in light of their changing temporal-relational context.

The Iterational Element

The iterational element of agency, as described in Chapter 3, captures participants’ tendency to look backwards temporally and draw on experiences and knowledge accrued in the past to guide their “choices and actions” in the present. Iteration is typically associated with the idea of “habitual or routinised” patterns of action that have been successful over time and become accepted, legitimised, and normalised within a particular community (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 978). These pathways become part of a “repertoire” of accepted and legitimised trajectories of action that are often deployed in response to particular circumstances. This element of agency is evident in actors’ recognition that their current circumstances are similar to those that they or others have navigated previously, and the “selective reactivation” of particular “trajectories of action” that they understand to have been successful before (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 979-80).

Iteration was present across all the narratives, as participants routinely drew on the experiences and advice of important others to guide their own trajectories. Participants recalled looking to family and friends when first considering a study abroad sojourn, and the way they were funnelled towards particular trajectories of action according to normative routes valued in their social milieu. Socio-culturally legitimised routes and the influence of important others were fundamental in the identification of trajectories of action that were attractive to the participant, and which they associated with success. In this sense, the iterational element of agency was—or had been—a dominant orientation for many participants, though it could be shaken and usurped by the emergence of unexpected challenges to their chosen pathway.

The Recognition of Legitimised Trajectories of Action

Participants’ narratives were characterised by frequent reference to particular trajectories of action that were—to a greater or lesser extent—seen as “default” or legitimate pathways to follow. These “default” pathways were defined in relation to socially-accepted patterns of action that participants’ recognised among others who occupied or had occupied a similar position. In recognising particular patterns of action as legitimate, participants developed an overview of the opportunities available within their particular temporal-

relational context. Participants' ability to recognise such patterns of action and experience and contextualise these patterns within their own narrative and trajectory, was a dominant sub-tone within the iterative element of agency.

Participants' recognition of socially-acceptable trajectories of action was evident from the outset and throughout their narratives. For example, those who chose to begin their narratives in their early years either typified or othered their own experiences in relation to dominant patterns of action among their childhood peers. Chelsea, for example, discussed her origins in "a small village" in China as the reason for her not considering mobility until later in life, recalling that in such a social milieu "everything is settled... just go there and do what other people do." Karl, despite growing up in quite different and more prosperous circumstances, similarly recognised a strongly defined peer-group that demonstrated shared patterns of action which exerted a heavy influence on his own future trajectory:

Karl: All of my classmates, all of my peers came from very similar backgrounds, they were returnees. 95% of us were foreign passport holders in Taiwan, and almost all of us ended up going back to college either in Europe, or Australia, or mostly in the US or Canada... I have a sense as long as I can remember. Probably, literally second grade of elementary school, I knew that I was going to go to [university] in the US. That was never a question.

Participants' narratives seemed to suggest that the influence of these pre-defined trajectories of action was particularly strong early in their lives and prior to gaining the independence afforded by international study, when the influence of peers and parents was stronger. Karen and Laboo, for example, felt pressured to study in particular fields and at particular institutions when pursuing higher education, because it was the typical pathway for people in their position. Karen was excited to study in the UK but only felt justified in applying to study in the UK as a "Plan B" if her applications to prestigious universities within her country were rejected. She recalled being told by her parents: "if you can study in Hong Kong University, why do you want to go abroad?" Similarly, Laboo wanted to study education, but having been particularly successful at school was unable to resist pressure from peers, family, and teachers to enrol in a medicine course that was more prestigious, and for which she was qualified:

Laboo: I was always interested in education, even before going to medicine, and the only reason I went to medicine was just- I didn't feel like I had any other

choice... I didn't feel like I had any other options, because if you get the marks, you're kind of pushed into going into medicine.

In each case, from an early age, participants were familiar with the strong sense of social pressure to follow trajectories of action that were seen as legitimate for someone in their position. This continued into the present, and when describing options available and choices taken within the education-migration nexus itself, participants portrayed a strong sense of which trajectories were legitimised within their social circle.

Arya recalled that the pathway she had taken had been advised by an education agent in her native India. She revealed that “in India it's sort of a given, that you would do a master's degree- after your bachelors, it's not really a matter of choice. It's just one of those things that you do.” Following this pre-defined pathway, she chose to pursue her master's course in the UK because “in India... [it] is considered quite prestigious.” Continuing, she explained how Indian international students' post-study abroad options, too, are strongly interlaced with cultural expectations that follow the decision to study in the UK:

Arya: [Returning to India] didn't seem like an option. The option was, "Okay, you work in the UK for a bit after finishing." Because again, that was the option everybody took up, I think, or everybody tried to, at least take up... That was what was considered the successful route... That stigma associated with moving back to India after a degree from abroad- there is a sense of failure associated with that. It's that, "Okay, so you had to come back because you couldn't make it there."

The example that Arya gives is particularly rich, but the description of such normative study abroad trajectories was widely shared by participants. Laboo described remaining in the UK after graduating as the “cool option,” and that a desire to return to Iran post-study would be met with the question: “What? Why did you even go?” Having eventually chosen to return to Iran after graduating, Laboo recalled in her “exit” interview having to explain herself to many who saw remaining in the UK as the standard trajectory:

Laboo: I think culturally, it's not something that is valued... A guy who I met today said the exact same thing. He was like, "Why did you come back?" Exactly, "Why did you go in the first place?" It was expected of me to stay. At first, when I got the job [in Iran], my family didn't even think of- They didn't even believe it... They tried to convince me to stay and do something, maybe a master or something.

Lili, on the other hand, described how, among her Chinese peers studying in Japan, the typical pathway was to return home shortly after graduating:

Lili: Around me it's common. Study abroad, then go home. Few people stayed to work. Though everyone is different, studying abroad before quickly heading home is the overwhelming impression that I have.

While the dominant trajectories themselves were different in each case, participants routinely described trajectories of action that they felt were “a given,” “prestigious,” “successful,” “cool,” “culturally valued,” or simply “common” among those in their position. While the pressure to pursue such normative pathways is evident, and the tendency of participants to pursue such pathways may on the surface indicate a lack of personal reflection or agency, I argue that such patterns of thought are “by no means devoid of agency” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 978). This ability to recognise these socially and culturally accepted routes is a critically important part of their developing agentive orientation, helping them to understand the temporal-relational context in which they were present and which patterns of action have proven to be successful by others in a similar situation, before making personal decision of which pathway they would pursue.

Important Others and the Formation of Preferred Trajectories of Action

The ubiquity of discussions of trajectories of action that were socio-culturally legitimised is evidence of how such trajectories can become a central feature of participants' ways of making sense of their contexts and opportunities therein. In addition to these socio-culturally legitimised pathways of action, the significance of important others—family, romantic partners, friends etc.—was particularly notable from their narratives. These important others served as role models, helping participants to select their preferred pathways. In this way, important others conditioned participants' responses to the various pathways of action that were normalised within their social sphere, helping to focus towards the pathway they would eventually pursue.

Familial ties were particularly important in this regard, as socio-cultural preconceptions were often reflected in participants' narratives through their discussion of expectations placed on them by their families. World was born and raised in Myanmar, and discussed how his parents' emphasis on stability influenced his decision to give up on his individual preference to work in the private sector, and seek a more stable job as a public servant:

World: Most parents, they want to see their son or daughter doing something stable, you know? In the government sector, we can get a stable salary and then after the retirement, we can get a pension. So, they don't want [me] to be a rich person, to me, they want to see the stable person.

Similarly, a number of participants from China discussed the influence of familial expectations to look after their parents, and the assumption that they would rapidly return to their home country after completing their studies. As Chelsea described: “you know as Chinese people, we feel like we need to stay with our parents.” For Dolly, this expectation was particularly influential. As her father aged, she realised that he struggled to take care of the whole family and that her role as a caregiver was becoming increasingly important: “several years ago I began to protect my mother- and before that uncle, brothers and sisters. I think when I graduate, I need to protect my mother further.” To get a better paying job on her return that would enable her to fulfil this caregiver role, she decided to remain in Japan to pursue a PhD after completing her master’s course, but reiterated in the “exit” interview that she “long[ed] to graduate as soon as possible, and go back home.” For Elena, the expectation to return to China did not dictate an immediate return post-study, but certainly influenced her understanding of the trajectory she should pursue long-term:

Elena: I want to find a job in the UK first and then go back to China like two or five years later, because all my parents and grandparents are in China, so I might have to. I'm the only child in China because of the one-child policy, so they need me, maybe. They would really miss me if I don't come home.

When considering the decision to study abroad, in particular, the existence of prior mobility or migratory experiences within the family group featured heavily in participants’ narratives. In some cases, this relationship was particularly direct. Among those whose mobility experiences began at a young age, the initial move was catalysed by their parents’ strategies, rather than an individual decision on the part of participants. For example, Pochacco’s initial move to the UK during his school years was a unilateral decision on behalf of his parents to remove him from the Hong Kong education system. Others moved internationally at a young age as their families tried to prepare them for higher education in an English-speaking country. Emily’s family relocated from Indonesia to Singapore when she was young, before Emily and her older sister were then sent to the UK to finish their schooling and prepare for study in a British university. Similarly, Misty and her older sister were sent to live with family in the US for the final years of high school, to acclimatise to

social life in the West, and qualify for in-state tuition at an American university. For these participants, international mobility was part of a familial strategy to provide better educational opportunities, reflecting a wider cultural value placed on education.

However, the significance of important others was not limited to culturally-defined normative pathways emphasised by the family and shared within the local community. Indeed, there was widespread evidence that individual role models could be similarly influential on participants' recognition and evaluation of available pathways. Ariana did not describe a tradition of mobility within her community, having grown up in a Ger district in Ulaanbaatar, but her parents were still the prime role models that led her to study abroad. Ariana was in her 30s at the time of this research, but had aspired to study abroad since the age of five or six. She had realised that her parents' high status within the Ger community emerged from the fact that they had studied engineering in Russia. She characterised that realisation as the catalyst for her desire to study abroad, which did not materialise until three decades later when she moved to Japan with her family. Harry, too, described his older brother as a "role model" who challenged his desire to "finish my bachelor's and get a job, that's it," by securing a scholarship to study in Taiwan. Finishing his bachelor's a few years later, Harry gave up a stable job offer in one of the biggest companies in his native Indonesia to pursue his own opportunity to study abroad. Neither Ariana nor Harry described their eventual decision to study abroad as emerging from any socio-culturally normative pathway within their communities, but attributed it to the influence of individual role models.

Such role models did not necessarily come from within the family. Golden previously had "no interest, no desire to come to Japan" or study abroad, before the opportunity to go to Japan was suddenly offered by a professor, and a childhood friend "all the way from primary school" who encouraged her to pursue it. Mo, too, was first alerted to the chance to go to Japan by a Japanese researcher who came to his lab in India on a one-off exchange programme. Kirsty had always followed in her older sister's footsteps, going through the same educational trajectory until the completion of high school. However, during a gap year experience, her boss encouraged her to "become just bolder, going out and finding people instead of expecting people to find me always." At the end of that year, Kirsty and her boss made the joint decision to look into degrees in the UK on an "if you apply, I'll apply" basis, breaking from the familial norm. In each case, participants highlighted the influence of a particular individual who had alerted them to a trajectory of action that was not necessarily socio-culturally embedded within their family or community.

In combination, socio-culturally pre-defined pathways, and the influence of particular role models who could demonstrate alternative patterns of behaviour, had the effect of

revealing alternative trajectories of action that were available to participants. In effect, pre-existing examples of practice formed a map that participants could use to then navigate similar temporal-relational contexts. All participants exhibited some degree of iterative thinking in their narratives, often being guided through difficult and complex decisions and trajectories by their evolving cognitive map of available patterns of action. However, as discussed previously, no trajectory is completely free of the influence of an individual's unique temporal-relational contexts. As such there is no guarantee that past patterns of behaviour will be equally successful when employed again by a different actor.

Responding to Impediments to Normative Pathways

When established patterns of action are challenged by changing circumstances, participants' propensity to employ alternative agentive orientations was invoked. At various times in their narratives, the points of tension identified in earlier chapters often became "lived conflicts": recognisable impediments to participants' in-progress trajectories of action, dictating that they must change tack. This is evident in participants' responses to impediments such as the restrictive, shifting, and opaque regulatory frameworks and eligibility requirements, language difficulties, and the challenges of securing visa sponsorship. Participants offered two dominant responses, either switching to another pattern of action within a repertoire of socio-culturally legitimised pathways, or turning to alternative agentive orientations.

Manoeuvre Between Repertoires of Socio-Culturally Legitimate Routes

One common response to unexpected impediments to ongoing trajectories of action was to draw on a repertoire of socio-culturally legitimised routes. As discussed above, Dolly's goal was to study abroad in Japan before returning to a job that would allow her to financially support her family, preferably in her hometown, allowing her to help care for elderly relatives. Her intended trajectory of action had been to study for a master's before returning to work in a hospital in China. However, when nearing the completion of her master's course, she was unable to find a well-paying job in her hometown, and would not be able to support her family if she returned as planned:

Dolly: If I go back with my major in China, I don't think there will be a good enough job for me. Because in China your final degree influences your pay.

When grappling with the emerging incompatibility between her temporal-relational contexts and her previously desired trajectory of action, she discussed the situation with her

uncle in China—to avoid worrying her parents—and also a Chinese friend who had already graduated from her department in Japan with a PhD. Her uncle suggested that she work for two years in Japan before returning, using that work experience to negotiate a higher salary. Alternatively, the friend recommended that she pursue a PhD in Japan to both secure a higher salary and have more control over her place of work on her return to China. Based on the successful example of the friend who was, at that time, living near family in her home city and able to financially support both her husband and parents, Dolly chose to remain in Japan and pursue a PhD.

Such examples are widespread in the data. Ariana's original plan after graduating from her bachelor's degree had been to work for one of the telecom companies in the capital. However, after she failed to secure a position that matched her ambitions in the private sector, she followed peers from her university cohort and found work as a public servant. It was this position that eventually brought her to Japan. Similarly, when Arya finished her master's course in the UK, she was unable to stay at what she called "my university," as restrictions on available scholarships proved an insurmountable barrier. She was then guided by the advice of an administrator-turned-friend to an alternative institution, with reference to previous graduates who had taken the same trajectory.

In cases where participants were strongly committed to a particular project, they described manoeuvring between a number of different trajectories of action as circumstances required. Pochacco was the most striking example of this, reflecting at length on the barriers encountered, and the "tactics" he had identified in discussion with family and friends, and later employed in his mission to remain in the UK indefinitely. Pochacco failed in his initial plan to transition to a Tier 2 visa as he was unable to navigate the labour market. In light of this failure, Pochacco first considered further study as an intermediary step, before settling on the pursuit of a Tier 5 visa. At the time of the exit interview, Pochacco had realised that the two-year Tier 5 visa would still not quite fulfil the residence requirements to qualify for ILR, leading him to, once again, consider further study. This repeated manoeuvre between trajectories of action reflected his practical and emotional commitment to securing a future in the UK. These commitments were also becoming deeper the longer he invested in that particular goal. He remarked that it was getting harder to accept that his future may lie outside the UK, but was still concerned that he had not identified the optimal "tactics" in this pursuit:

Pochacco: As time goes on, at some point, you start to say, "I really want to get that." If I had stopped earlier, I would regret [failure] a bit less... I just don't

want to think about it now. That's why I kind of push back on everything really. I don't think that I actually got the right tactics. Actually, I'm trying everything, and I just hope something comes through.

Participants who manoeuvred between different pathways reflect a dominance of the iterational element of agency that persisted despite barriers encountered en route. For some, this orientation was remarkably successful. Tanya and Emily, in particular, were able to secure top jobs in their field and extend their stay in Japan and the UK respectively, while maintaining iteration as their dominant agentic orientation. In Tanya's case, she followed an established pathway from Vietnam, through a bachelor's and master's in Japan, to employment in an affiliated company, all instigated when an older student returned to her high school to introduce a scholarship. For Emily, having followed the advice of her peer group on the same course at university, "the path just kinda sat for [her] to stay." However, for Pochacco, shifting between established pathways to remain in the UK had not yet allowed him to achieve his goal, indicating that, while the iterative mode did allow a degree of flexibility in manoeuvring between different established pathways of action, it was not able to provide effective responses to all barriers and contingencies that emerged during participants' trajectories.

Transitioning to Other Dominant Orientations

Unlike those above, some participants began to exhibit alternative dominant agentic orientation when faced with impediments to their ongoing trajectories of action. These alternative orientations provided additional agentic tools to complement those provided by iteration. While these transitions are discussed in more detail in later sections of this chapter, here I will give brief examples of participants' recognition of these impediments, and the subsequent changes in their dominant orientations. Participants who began to exhibit a more projective orientation became more explorative and creative, looking to improvise or draw on innovative sources of information to identify and reconfigure alternative trajectories of action in pursuit of their desired pathways. Misty is a strong example of this transition from iteration to projective agentic orientation in light of unexpected barriers. As described in Chapter 6, her decision to study in the UK was heavily influenced by the possibility of remaining in London to work post-study. When she discovered that the post-study labour market was not as open to international talent as she had been led to believe and, in the absence of meaningful advice from university support staff or positive role models, she tried a number of creative alternative strategies to negotiate the transition on her own terms. This

indicates how the perceived failure of established pathways of action could inspire participants to become pioneers of alternative routes, even though they were not all necessarily successful in this endeavour. This is discussed in more detail below.

Alternatively, those who transitioned to a practical-evaluative dominant orientation were more openly contemplative regarding the impediments they had faced, and discussed how these impediments reflected broader issues within their temporal-relational context. Arya and Karl illustrate this transition, arguing that challenges in their trajectories were illustrative of incompatibilities between their desired trajectory and the social milieu. Arya responded to the discrimination she faced in securing a funded PhD position by becoming immensely critical of the lack of diversity within her institution and advocating for systemic change through the university senate. Karl's frustrations with the working and social environments in Tokyo resulted in him questioning his role as a foreign worker within Japan's modernisation project: "Well, is it my battle to fight?" The practical-evaluative orientation is discussed in more detail later in the chapter, but these examples begin to illustrate how a dynamic shift from an iterational to a practical-evaluative agentive orientation may be associated with a changing relationship between actors and their context, with possible consequences for their evaluation practices and future trajectories of action.

Anti-Iterational Action

Another feature that was prominent within a minority of participants' narratives was anti-iterational sentiment. While the dominant reaction to the recognition of socio-culturally legitimate trajectories was to consider and potentially pursue this pathway, sometimes participants indicated a degree of distaste for that pathway due to a desire to characterise oneself in contrast to an established norm. To be clear, such an agentive orientation is not reflected in Emirbayer and Mische's "chordal triad," but due to its prominence in the data, and the potential impact of such anti-iterational sentiment on participants' trajectories, it warrants consideration in this chapter.

The desire to characterise oneself in contrast to established norms took various forms in the interviews. For Kirsty, getting away from "routine" was at the heart of her desire to "[do] what I want to do instead of what people are telling me I should do." She understood avoiding the "easy option" as a method to "stretch the limits of my comfort zone, to make that bigger," thus becoming more "confident" and "bolder" in taking on new challenges without support. In this sense, freeing oneself from normative behaviour was described as a means to attain both independence and personal growth. Chelsea expressed similar sentiments, arguing that the idea of studying in China like her school peers felt "boring."

More than this, she felt that the financial constraints and challenges faced by her family were an artefact of their lack of mobility, which made her “feel more strong willingness to go.” Karen, too, felt frustrated by the constraining influence of her parents and Hong Kong society, in which she perceived there to be only narrow scope for acceptable conduct. She had a sense of “just want[ing] to live on my own and experience[ing] things” free from such constraints. For these three participants, the pursuit of more challenging pathways was part of a strategy to escape the “easy,” “boring,” or constraining norms of their social milieu.

Others, in contrast, indicated that they had always seen themselves as different from their peers, and thus were not influenced by the normative pathways that those around them had chosen to pursue. Misty reflected on her youth spent in Pakistan, stating that she “was never one of them... never a part of that crowd,” and regularly qualified decisions in her narrative as being in opposition to the perceived majority. Jazz conflated a desire to be different from her peers with her self-identity, stating that “I don’t know why I want to be different, but I guess I just am different.” Karl consistently painted himself as an outlier, not just among his peers, but also on a larger scale, and this outlier status underpinned the flexibility in his mobility trajectory:

Karl: I guess it’s a certain kind of person who thinks like that, because most people are more committed to their nationality. I have relatively little commonality that way, it’s more like, “I’ll go to the country that fits me the best,” type thinking.

While these examples give an indication of the widespread tendency among participants to define themselves in contrast to the norm, it is important to note that this anti-iterational tendency did not always become a dominant agentic orientation that resulted in the action that deliberately avoided normative patterns of behaviour. Such anti-iterational thoughts were just one among a broad swathe of considerations, and, while emphasised in many participants’ narratives, did not always explicitly influence their trajectories.

Summarising the Iterational

The iterational element of agency was a feature across all participants’ narratives, sometimes remaining a dominant orientation throughout. The recognition of trajectories of action that were socio-culturally appropriate, or those that had been successfully employed by role models was universal, and the influence of that recognition on participants’ chosen pathways of action cannot be understated. In many cases, such pathways maintained an air of being the “default” course of action for participants, with deviations from that course of

action requiring adjustments to made in response to emerging impediments in their particular temporal-relational contexts. Often, the choice to study abroad was heavily influenced by important others, family, or role models who encouraged or demonstrated international mobility as an option. For the participants in this study, it was the vagaries of the post-study transition, and the impediments which arose therein, that challenged “default” pathways and required a shift in agentic orientation. Some participants’ remained iterative by manoeuvring to an alternative pathway of action among the repertoire of those that were socio-culturally legitimised. Others shifted to a projective or practical-evaluative orientation. In addition, the evidence of anti-iterational orientations is an interesting finding that may help to expand upon the chordal triad framework. Anti-iteration, as described by the participants, required them to recognise the trajectories of action that were seen as “default,” a distinctly iterational act, before subsequently deciding to deliberately not act in this way. This decision appears to be a method by which participants could achieve “social distinction” from their peers (Prazeres, 2018). Emirbayer and Mische argue that iteration is associated with stability and social reproduction, but the actively anti-iterational orientations identified in this research would appear to indicate that iteration may also be the catalyst for original social action, with the potential to undermine and change social relations over time.

The Projective Element

The projective element of agency, typified as the “hypothesisation of experience” by Emirbayer and Mische, concerns actors’ attempts to move “beyond themselves into the future and construct changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present” (1998, p. 984). Projectivity thus captures actors’ recognition of the uncertainties of the future and their capacity for creativity in valuing and pursuing a particular future. Sub-tones within the projective element include actors’ “anticipatory identification” of the “limited and yet flexible structure of future opportunities,” and their imagination of “possible trajectories” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 988-990). Projective actors may also attempt to mitigate uncertainty by proposing “hypothetical resolutions” to a given course of action, or even “experimenting” in a pathway before fully committing (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 990).

Participants’ narratives were littered with examples of the “hypothesisation of experience,” as they presented their creative imagination and re-imaginings of their future trajectories. Throughout, they showed evidence of creatively reconfiguring the myriad possible actions they could take, imagining how each would resolve itself, before choosing a pathway that they predicted would best serve their life-course project. Furthermore,

“experiential enactment” emerged as a strategy employed to bring greater certainty to an uncertain future. Interestingly, a small number of participants appeared to indicate that, in service of an extended life-course trajectory within the host country, the study-abroad experience itself was “experiential enactment” of what more long-term residence might entail.

Hypothesisation of Experience

Within participants’ narratives, the hypothesisation of experience was primarily expressed in two forms. The first of these was what Emirbayer and Mische describe as the “symbolic recomposition” of various scenarios and their related trajectories of action in which “actors playfully insert themselves into a variety of possible trajectories... thereby expanding their flexible response to a given field of action” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 989-990). The second was the manner in which they offered a “hypothetical resolution” to these imagined trajectories, anticipating how things would play out, before deciding if a given trajectory would “adequately respond to the moral, practical, and emotional concerns arising from lived conflicts” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 990). Essentially, these two sub-tones reflect participants’ propensity to ask the questions: “what could I do?”; “what would be the result?”; and “is this what I want?”

Such discussions were a significant feature within the interviews, though the target of projection evolved with participants’ general temporal focus. Specifically, during “entry” interviews, participants’ primary target of projection was the impending post-study transition and the immediate post-study environment. In “exit” interviews, however, the target of projection was notably more varied across the participants, with different temporal and substantive foci according to the individual’s trajectories, goals, and conflicts. To reflect the differences between “entry” and “exit” interviews, I discuss the results from each set of interviews in turn.

“Entry” Interviews: Hypothetical Resolution in the Post-Study Transition

At the time of the “entry” interviews, participants were all approaching the post-study transition, wherein the conditions they had experienced during their studies would necessarily give way to a new state of affairs. All participants were just months away from finishing their course of study and entering the post-study environment, and the evidence of projectivity within these interviews was typically directed at the post-study transition. Arya and Misty were explicit in stating that they were not yet projecting beyond the immediate post-study transition:

Arya: I'm thinking about the future only a couple of years in advance. Okay, maybe for, like, two years and that's it. Beyond that, I don't really like to plan and put down roots.

Tom: For the last few minutes why don't we talk about where you're going next?

Misty: Oh. Yeah. I remember this was like part of your [research] and I was like, "oh, he's gonna be shit out of luck on this one," 'cause generally I don't know. All my decisions are based off the idea that I'm not going to be here this time next year.

This transition does not just represent an opportunity to choose and construct the “next step” in their life-course journey—though such imagination was a feature of these narratives—but was also an active negotiation with ongoing and impending “lived conflicts.” The degree to which an imagined trajectory offered a “hypothetical resolution” to these conflicts influenced their decisions. Finding the right balance between a positive next step that would satisfy their personal goals that was also an appropriate response to the various “lived conflicts” at hand, was the acid test of their projections.

For Mo, remaining in Japan was preferable, offering professional opportunities and simultaneously the potential resolution to conflicts that had come to light during his PhD. While his original plan had been to return to India after submitting his thesis, in his pursuit of an academic position he felt that remaining in Japan post-study was a sound professional decision. Mo had come close to securing an academic position but been rejected at the final round of a number of applications. However, he remained optimistic that, despite these struggles, he had not yet exhausted the opportunities available to him within the country: “In the next stage, I want to continue here in Japan at least, because almost I had a few [positions] in my hands... I want to finish here first.”

While his professional goals urged him to pursue opportunities in Japan post-study, additional personal conflicts also influenced the decision to remain. In light of Mo's experiences and opportunities as a graduate student in Japan, his sister had recently moved to Japan to pursue a master's degree. This is an interesting reflection of the iterational element of agency in which Mo acted as the role model for his sister, proving the success of studying in Japan as a trajectory of action, but his sister's arrival also further motivated Mo to invest in opportunities in Japan, as he felt a personal responsibility to remain and support his sister throughout her studies:

Mo: My sister started her career as a master student in this university last September... It was very hard to get her from home. Myself and my father escorted her until this point. Especially in India, mostly, they won't allow young girls, especially females to move abroad to study more... I want for her- at least for one year, I want to be here. That's a personal reason.

Mo's experience indicated that the decision to stay in the host country or return home is not merely dictated by the personal pursuit of opportunity, but is arrived at in negotiation with broader conflicts. By remaining in Japan as a research assistant, Mo predicted that he could adequately serve his own professional interests while simultaneously resolving the familial conflicts that had emerged regarding his sister. The ability to address both his professional and personal "lived conflicts" led him to decide to take a research assistant position.

Yes, too, explained his concerted process of imagination of possible post-study trajectories and how their hypothetical resolutions were compatible with the emerging conflicts in his life. On arrival in Japan, Yes had intended to complete his master's course before returning to China to take the highly competitive civil service exam, but during his time studying in Japan he had come to imagine other trajectories as attractive alternatives.

Yes: I had wanted to be a civil servant because that's a stable job. But now I want something more challenging, where I can try different things... Since coming to Japan my whole sense of values, my view of the world has changed.

He had come to value stability less, and instead desired a job that was "more challenging, [with] more variety of experience," including international travel. Yes was well qualified for such a position, speaking a number of languages with experience across East Asia. Following this realisation, he had considered moving to South Korea or Southeast Asia to apply his skills and gain the international experience that reflected his new sense of values. However, he had also entered a relationship with a partner who was living in southern Japan, and who would remain there for a number of years until the completion of her PhD. In light of these considerations, he provided the following explanation for choosing to remain in Japan for work:

Yes: Within my reasons there's also my girlfriend doing her PhD in [southern city]. For her sake I'd like to work in Japan, possibly in her city. That's the first cause for staying in Japan. Another is that, if I were to go back to China immediately after graduating, my competitiveness would be low compared to

other graduates. By staying abroad for a few years I'd gain more experience and have a competitive edge on my return.

In light of this discussion, relative to opportunities in South Korea and Southeast Asia, remaining in Japan post-study thus served the appropriate compromise between his personal goals and lived social conflicts. By remaining in Japan, Yes thought that he could sufficiently satisfy his wish for international experience and adventure, while also responding to the needs of his relationship.

“Exit” Interviews: Hypothetical Resolution in a Broadening Horizon

In light of the different temporal-relational contexts of the “entry” and “exit” interviews, the focus of projection in the latter interviews was more diverse. In the post-study environment, participants’ narratives placed a new emphasis on the unresolved questions of their broader life-course project, including long-term mobility and career options, and the prospect of settling down. Emily is a good illustration of this transition. While a student, Emily had “never questioned” remaining in the UK post-study, but having remained and worked for a number of months at the point of the “exit” interview, her horizons had begun to broaden:

Emily: [Previously], I was like, "I like the UK. Great, I'll stay here." But there has been sometimes I'm like, "I could go and work in Europe in like a few years. The Netherlands sounds great. They have Indonesian food. I do miss Indonesian food. They have great Indonesian food. I could go there, I could go to the US and then Donald Trump got voted and I'm like, "I'm not going to the US" because they're going bonkers ... I was thinking more like, Europe. Maybe go to Paris.

In the “entry” interviews, Emily’s sights had been firmly set on the immediate post-study, with a firm geographical focus on remaining the UK and the steps she would have to take to resolve that transition. Following her success in securing a sponsoring position and a working visa in the UK, it was striking how a short-term and focused target of projection was replaced with imagination of broader and more diverse potential trajectories. Harry expressed a similar change in focus. He described Japan as his “second home” during “entry” interview—a point reiterated in the “exit” interview—and had been completely dedicated to pursuing employment in Japan after his studies. He was successful, securing a position and demonstrating remarkable dedication in spite of the practical challenges of this transition.

However, in the “exit” interview it was notable that his focus of projection had turned to future mobility projects:

Harry: I want to take a lot of experience in around the world because Japan's good but, we don't know, the world is so damn huge. We need to go to travel around and see what others do also... Actually, I want to go to London or England, because not only I'm huge fan of Manchester United, but also, at least I want to use my English ability and also, I want to learn. [The UK] is a huge country, I want to learn how a global company grows there.

This change in focus was not something that Harry was consciously aware of at the start of the “exit” interview but, as his narrative developed, he became aware of the increasing breadth of his future projections, and he reflected on this change in his goals. While Japan had been the “first priority” at the time of the “entry” interview, largely due to the opportunities he had in the country and his gratitude for the way in which living in Japan had supported his individual development throughout his studies, he went on to explain that it was just a step on a larger life-course journey. He described in the “exit” interview how his effusive praise for Japan was heartfelt, and how it was “beyond [his] imagination” that he would secure a job to work in Japan. However, he concluded by emphasising that he had a broader purpose and would “never forget about [his] goals in life, being a global person.” To Harry, studying and working in Japan represented significant progress towards becoming a “global person,” but as his success had opened more opportunities, he was alerted to new potential trajectories that would better serve that larger project.

Ariana was another whose projections had become increasingly broad in the post-study environment, as she sought to reconcile her personal affinity for Japan and the opportunities that she saw there, with her family's preference for life in Mongolia:

Ariana: They are more happy to live in Mongolia because in my daughter's case, there is a language problem and also my husband has a good job in Mongolia. He is not sure to live in Japan.

In light of these family concerns and the rules of her sponsorship, she put her own desire to live in Japan and pursue a PhD on hold, and Ariana returned to her job in Mongolia. At the time of the “exit” interview, she was seeking to transfer from working in the IT department at her ministry to urban planning, thereby making the most of her new expertise in waste management and implement a pilot project in the Ger district in which she had grown up. She hoped that the pilot project would be completed within the mandatory 2-years

that she would be required to remain in Mongolia, but she was also beginning to consider a broad range of future options to capitalise on her links with Japan.

Her preferred option was to return to Japan for doctoral study, contingent on successfully securing another scholarship from the Japanese government. However, in the event this wasn't possible, she was optimistic about other opportunities in NGOs or business: "I have a chance to do something connected with Japan. I will do business. That is another way." Ariana had already begun to forge links with various NGOs interested in her ideas for development in the Ger communities, and she was proposing a number of ideas to capitalise on "a big chance to make business in that Ger area, [potentially] heating technology." Furthermore, she was considering capitalising on the Japan-Mongolia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to build an export business:

Ariana: There is a Mongolian and Japan trade contract. According to that we can export to Japan some products and we can pay more lower taxes on some products. For example, wools or Kashmir and some meats and things like that. So that kind of business also has a very big chance.

Whatever the precise pathway that she would eventually pursue, Ariana had begun to think more broadly about the trajectories she might take, and the temporal focus of her projections was now more long-term:

Ariana: My point of view, that's changed. I started thinking more long-term, not in the short-term. Maybe before I thought about maybe two or five years, but now I'm thinking 10 years, 15 years, 20 years in the future. It's big change.

Overall, Ariana's projections had become strikingly more diverse, but, as with Harry, there was a sense that they continued to serve an overarching life-course project that was anchored in leveraging her relationship with Japan to contribute to the success of her immediate family and the development of the Ger areas. While she was unsure of the precise trajectory of action that would support this, whether she would live in Japan or work between the two countries from a base in Mongolia, capitalising on her connections and knowledge in Japan was a central concern:

Ariana: If I'm not working there, I want to make business with Japan. I will continue. I will work, cooperate with Japan.

In summary, participants' narratives indicated similar patterns of symbolic recomposition during the "entry" and "exit" interviews, but there was a greater emphasis on

“hypothetical resolution” in the “entry” interviews. Furthermore, in the “exit” interviews there was a higher degree of variation in the target of participants’ projections. They became more diverse in their temporal, geographical, and substantive foci as the conflicts at hand ceased to be the immediate barriers in the post-study environment, and broadened out to the entire life-course project.

Experiential Enactment

Another significant sub-tone of the projective element of agency was “experiential enactment,” in which students tested their hypothetical resolutions “in tentative or exploratory social interactions” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 990). Participants took advantage of short-term or liminal periods to toy with particular trajectories of action, see the likely results, and evaluate the extent to which they solved present conflicts and served their broader life-course project. This provided a low-risk opportunity to gain insight into the possible consequences of a given course of action without requiring full financial and emotional commitment.

For some participants who had long considered living in the host country, the very idea of studying abroad was an opportunity to experience that without the full risks and investments required to enter the labour market directly from abroad. Karl was particularly explicit about this line of thinking. He had felt the persistent influence of Japanese culture throughout his youth in Taiwan and enjoyed more than ten visits to Japan before beginning his studies. Karl indicated that these trips had “left a pretty deep impression, but I hadn’t lived in Japan before, and wanted to try that out.” When he was looking at graduate school opportunities, the chance to study in Japan arose as a way to “try out” life in Japan with minimal risk:

Karl: One last thing from the dual degree program, it was hypothesis testing to see if a life in Japan would be viable. It was a low risk way to do it. Everything fails, rocks fall, I go back to the US, or I go somewhere else.

This explanation, given in the “entry” interview, indicates that studying in Japan had given Karl the opportunity to test whether his interest in Japan would translate to a positive living experience, before making the decision to forgo career opportunities elsewhere. He reflected on this strategy positively in the “exit” interview, saying “I came here to evaluate [living here]... and in that sense it has worked out.” He went on to describe how he was continuing to use this approach in the post-study environment. To gather more information about his long-term professional opportunities and ability to integrate into Japanese society,

he said “I’m projecting two years in the future... giving myself two years here” to evaluate life in Japan as a foreign worker, without committing to a permanent move.

Karl was not the only participant to directly reference such a strategy. Arya, too, took the “very strategic decision” to pursue a short-term overseas research fellowship based on two primary motivations. It would provide an opportunity to receive advice on her doctoral work, and also function as a “test job application period in case I decide to later apply for a position.” Mo, similarly, revealed in the “exit” interview that he had taken a short-term research assistant position “a little far from [his] field” after graduating, to give himself the opportunity to “understand and adapt” to the requirements of academic positions in Japanese universities before committing to a longer contract. Tanya used a similar strategy to improve her chances in the job market, attending a number of interviews for jobs that she did not intend to take, “to try it, for practice purposes.” Lili also experimented in the job-hunting process, attending a large number of interviews and test centres as a way to ascertain precisely what she wanted from a job. She also interned at various companies, not just to improve her chances of being hired in future, but also to clarify if such a position was truly what she wanted:

Lili: I understand that some people just think “I want to go into consulting” and dive right into their applications, but I don’t think they can really know if that’s right for them. I think you can only know once you give it a try. It’s important to really make sure while you’re trying it out. “Will I really enjoy this if I receive an offer, and start working here?” You’d better give that some thought.

The process of experiential enactment, or “hypothesis testing” in Karl’s terms, was implemented by participants to decrease risk in contexts of uncertainty in their life-course. Karl and Arya used this strategy to confirm their compatibility with a new environment before making a long-term international move. Their study sojourns became the source of invaluable first-hand experience for evaluating their future in the host country. Mo used such a strategy to make the best of an imperfect situation, taking an intermediary step that required little further risk on his part, and which would help him to evaluate and later attain his goal of becoming an academic. Tanya and Lili illustrated how a strategic approach to the job-hunting system in Japan allowed them better to adapt to its demands, while also providing an opportunity to clarify to themselves that they were indeed on the right path. Both successfully found jobs and were positive about their early work experiences at the time of the “exit” interview.

Karen eloquently described the positive influence of first-hand over second-hand experience, comparing the perspectives of international students leaving Hong Kong while imagining working life in the UK, with those who, like her, had been able to experience the post-study reality:

Karen: What they see is the version at university and just generally “staying” in the UK. But what do you actually do when living here as a resident if you want to work here for a few years? It’s very different from what you’re doing in university. I feel like I’ll know after this year whether I really want to stay here.

While still a student during the “exit” interview, from which the above excerpt was taken, Karen’s transition to a practical master’s course with work experience was the first time that she saw the reality of living and working in the UK. Despite having wanted to work in the UK for the previous three years, only now did she have the necessary perspective to decide “whether I really want to stay.”

Summarising the Projective

While iteration was a widespread orientation exhibited by all participants, projectivity played a more selective role in participants’ narratives. For those participants whose trajectories through the education-migration nexus were relatively untroubled by unexpected impediments en route, there appeared little tendency to move “beyond the self into an uncertain future,” perhaps because they had fewer tangible reasons to doubt the success of their current trajectory. However, those who retained an iterational dominant orientation throughout their trajectory were in the minority, and a degree of projectivity was present in the majority of cases. Projectivity was critical in allowing participants to engage with the uncertainty of their trajectories, as the imaginative process of “hypothesisation” allowed them to creatively reconfigure opportunities in pursuit of their greater life-course project. While iterational thinking only alerted participants to pathways that were already socio-culturally legitimised, projection presented participants with a broader array of trajectories of action. However, the movement away from iteration was also accompanied by additional risk, as deviation from precedent brings with it greater uncertainty of where a particular trajectory of action may lead. However, the use of “experiential enactment,” low risk short-term investments in a particular pathway functioned as a way to project into an uncertain future with a greater degree of certainty. The examples contained in this chapter illustrated how “experiential enactment” was both present and effective across participants’ narratives. Crucially, participants reported that, having engaged in these short-term experiments, they

now had more information with which to evaluate and subsequently confirm their commitment to long-term trajectories of action. As described in previous chapters, decisions are often made with incomplete information, drawing heavily on second-hand experience, or the iterative implementation of pre-determined pathways. However, through experiential enactment, individuals have the opportunity to gather first-hand experience of a particular pathway of action. The results of this study indicate that “experiential enactment,” however fleeting, may help individuals to make informed decisions regarding their future actions and trajectories. In summary, projectivity as a dominant agentic orientation provided tools to respond to emergent impediments and uncertainties, and pro-actively negotiate uncertainty and risk before committing to a trajectory of action.

The Practical-Evaluative Element

As described in Chapter 3, the practical-evaluative element of agency concerns actors’ ability to “make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). Judgments of the correct course of action in a given situation are made “in the face of considerable ambiguity, uncertainty, and conflict,” and the ability to see through this ambiguity and understand the “contingencies of the present” is a distinct element of agency deeply rooted in the present (p. 994). Emirbayer & Mische describe actors’ process of identifying ambiguities and uncertainties within their life-course project as “problematization.” Such problematisations must be “characterised” in terms of existing schemes of understanding the world, before actors can critically “deliberate” the optimal trajectory of action. Crucially, the authors also describe how “resistance, subversion, and contention” emerge as a transformative feature of the practical-evaluative element of agency, as proponents learn to “resist and subvert the logics and practices of the established order” (p. 1001). In so doing, actors not only have the opportunity to “get around the rules of a constraining space,” but may become transformative actors and contribute to changing the very rules that constrain them (De Certeau, 1984, p. 18).

In this study, participants’ narratives showed evidence of a propensity to “problematise” aspects of their temporal-relational contexts that constrained or brought ambiguity to their life-course projects. “Identification” and “characterisation” of these problems were features throughout their narratives, whether focused on the regulatory frameworks in the post-study transition, or broader issues in the incorporation of student-migrants in the post-study environment. Participants also provided much evidence of “resistance” and attempts to

subvert the constraints they had encountered, with a select few actively challenging these barriers in an attempt to make their temporal-relational contexts more receptive to future student-migrants.

Problematisation and Characterisation

These two sub-tones of the practical-evaluative element of agency were particularly widespread in the data and are intricately linked. Problematisation reflects an actor's ability to recognise that a certain aspect of their ongoing life-course project "is somehow ambiguous, unsettled, or unresolved," while characterisation is the subsequent ability to situate this problem within their "principles, schemas, or typifications from past experience," thereby recognising the problem's significance in relation to their past experiences and those shared with their peers (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 998). In drawing on existing schemas, characterisation is the practical-evaluative sub-tone that most implicates the past, and thus blends, to a degree, with the iterational element of agency. In combination, problematisation and characterisation represent the ability for an actor to recognise and understand the significance of particular aspects of their temporal-relational context as barriers within their broader life-course project.

In illustrating this, I present examples of the manner in which participants narrated their "problematisation" and "characterisation" of the "ambiguous, unsettled, or unresolved" issues within their life-course project. The discussion below follows a similar structure to earlier discussion of the projective element, in which the presentation of evidence will be split between two sub-sections, each focusing on data from "entry" and "exit" interviews, respectively. As above, the decision to present data this way reflects the way in which participants' narratives shifted from a narrow focus on the post-study transition in the "entry" interview, towards broader concerns in the "exit" interview.

"Entry" Interviews: Problematisation of the Post-Study Transition

Participants typically began their study abroad sojourn with an idea of what they hoped to gain from the experience and the role it would play in their broader life-course project. At various times throughout their studies, however, they also became aware of various uncertainties and challenges, some within the study abroad process itself, and others awaiting in the post-study environment. Recognising, understanding, and overcoming these challenges became a critical factor in their trajectories. In the "entry" interviews, such ambiguities were routinely the subject of extended narratives, as participants relayed the issues they had encountered during their studies—some of which had already been

resolved—and others they anticipated in the post-study transition. For the purposes of this study, the moments in which participants discussed the post-study transition itself as a challenge within their broader life-course trajectories, are particularly interesting.

As described in previous chapters, the regulatory frameworks that governed participants' transitions from the university to the labour market were a fundamental factor, constraining or supporting particular trajectories of action. I have already discussed how these frameworks varied in their receptivity, stability, and transparency, and the variable degree to which participants were aware of frameworks and their eligibility requirements. I will not recount at length, therefore, the problematisations themselves, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 6, but will focus on how these were characterised within participants' existing schemas and worldviews.

For Lili and Yes, the job-hunting process in Japan had been an alienating experience, and despite their eventual success they could not reconcile the unwritten rules and expectations of the *ikkatsusaiyō* with their existing frameworks for understanding the world. Lili could not understand why “individuality” was so devalued in the job-hunting process, feeling that the limits placed on individual expression prevented people from taking control of their own destiny. While adaptation to the idiosyncrasies of the process was not impossible, she worried that by adhering to the unwritten rules of job-hunting she became more at the mercy of recruiters, as “the whole way through things are just decided for you” and it becomes “like a job in itself.” Similarly, Yes felt that the process was alienating for international students, which he found particularly difficult to countenance given his understanding that foreign workers were supposed to be valued within Japan in light of demographic decline and a skilled labour shortage. He characterised the process simply in terms of a perceived “preference/priority for Japanese” (*nihonjinyūsen*), and the impression that the 27 companies to which he applied would avoid hiring foreign workers.

In the UK, participants characterised the unreceptive, changeable, and opaque nature of the regulatory frameworks as a system that was impossible to fully comprehend, preventing participants from maintaining control over their own destiny. Having spent months searching for and evaluating the various ways to remain in the UK, Chelsea was “disappointed” by what she found. She stated that the visa regulations were so unclear that “it’s still not very clear for me right now about what I can do in the UK.” Despite all of the advantages of life in the UK, and the fact that her boyfriend was a British national, she was convinced that she could not control her destiny if she remained. Misty echoed the concern that student-migrants in the UK had limited capacity to control their future:

Misty: So much of it is luck honestly, like who's gonna read your application, where it ends up going, kind of whose lap it falls into, and I mean there's just a lot that's out of your control at the end of the day... [It's] not that a lot of hard work won't get you anywhere, but I think so much of it is just fate.

Beyond the regulatory frameworks in the host country, however, participants also had to negotiate their future trajectory in light of myriad social pressures in their home countries. Coming to the UK had originally served Karen as a short-term and exciting alternative to studying at the most elite institutions in her native Hong Kong. However, by the time of the “entry” interview, Karen’s long-term life-course project was to remain in the UK post-study. She had adapted well to life in the UK, and was effusive of the benefits she had discovered during her studies:

Karen: They've got more work-life balance here than in Hong Kong, and they probably have nicer people, nicer weather, and nicer air. In general, the environment is good.

Remaining in the UK served several short- and long-term goals. In the short-term, she saw remaining in the UK as an opportunity to further her career prospects while enjoying a better quality of life than she could expect if she immediately returned to Hong Kong. She remarked on friends who had returned to a challenging job market and was happy to avoid such challenges by gaining experience before her return in the distant future.

However, she was also struggling with the sacrifices that staying in the UK required. Karen felt a degree of isolation that had been manageable throughout her studies, but the prospect of this isolation deepening after her graduation, when other students returned to Hong Kong, was in conflict with her personality: “I feel like social life to me is very important. I’m not as quiet as I think- not a person that can live actually alone.” On the other hand, she also worried that the poor work-life balance in Hong Kong may preclude her from enjoying living in proximity to her friends and family, and at the cost of her professional development. Karen recognised that the short-term career opportunities available to her in the UK—themselves far from guaranteed in a job market that was “very harsh for fresh graduates”—may require a significant sacrifice in her social life. Conversely, a return to Hong Kong required professional sacrifices. In seeking to move past this problem, Karen characterised the situation as follows:

Karen: I feel like, well, if I can deal with [the social] part, then probably staying in the UK is very attractive to me. Just in general, all the external factors, I'm thinking whether I actually like this sanctuary²⁶ or not.

Such balancing acts were typical of the ambiguities that participants faced in the post-study transition. They typically had several mobility options, each with their own opportunities and drawbacks, and each requiring variable degrees of investment by the participant. They also had a variable probability of success. Laboo, for example, was caught between a desire to stay in the UK, to achieve a personal sense of belonging that had eluded her through her studies, and a sense of responsibility to return to Iran and use her education for the benefit of those living in poverty. Shaun was balancing the advantages he enjoyed in the job market in Japan, against the day-to-day discrimination and lack of social inclusion he experienced.

“Exit” Interviews: Problematisation in a Broadening Horizon

In the post-study environment, participants' problematisations were no longer focused to the same degree on the post-study transition. With the exception of those who had continued into another course of study, all participants—whether they had opted to remain in the host country or move on—had ceased to be a “student” and transitioned to another phase of their life-course that had the potential of greater permanence. Accordingly, in the “exit” interviews, participants were negotiating a more fundamental level of compatibility with their temporal-relational contexts. Karl described this process as follows:

Karl: I guess the tricky part now that I am past [the transition] is that now, this is the evaluation period for seeing if Japan is place where I could settle.

As their projections became more long-term, their evaluation of their current situation came to consider a wider range of factors. Yes, for example, had successfully found a job in a small town around 45 minutes away from the city in which his girlfriend was studying, thereby following the general pathway that had been his goal at the time of the “entry” interview. When we met for the “exit” interview, Yes was working for an interior design company, managing imports from mainland China with the prospect of future international travel to meet with suppliers. While this situation appeared to correspond to the desired

²⁶ Karen described living in a foreign country as a “sanctuary” from familial pressures, balanced with the loneliness of isolation from family and friends with a shared cultural background.

future that Yes had described nine months previously, his narrative did not reflect the positivity one might expect.

Yes: I think I've been successful to an extent, but it's far from perfect. I have more personal responsibility, and I was able to get some financial independence and I'm making a fist of living alone. But, yeah. [long pause].

Yes continued to explain that the post-study environment was not what he expected, with a tangible gap between his imagined trajectory and the reality, with the professional situation proving particularly difficult. He recognised that “anywhere, in any country” the first job after graduating is often challenging, but he found himself surprised by the extent of his unfamiliarity with the culture of work he had entered:

Yes: There is a particular culture, a particular set of rules that are difficult for me, yeah... As you might expect, Japanese people think differently, and they work differently than those from other countries. It's completely different than China, especially. I'm doing my best to come to terms with it, but some things I just can't comprehend.

Despite his years living in Japan, academic success, and high level of Japanese proficiency, it became apparent through his narrative that he felt under-utilised and denigrated at work. While aware and open about his own weaknesses, he was also assertive about his strengths in a variety of foreign languages, in addition to his master's degree. He could not keep up with Japanese colleagues in certain language-intensive tasks—always staying late to make up for lost time—but was often chastised by his boss who did not recognise his additional efforts. Simultaneously, Yes was expected to carry out all the work that Japanese colleagues were unable to complete due to their own language constraints, and this body of work was increasing as he used his foreign language skills to open new doors in new markets. Despite balancing these dual roles, working longer hours than many of his Japanese colleagues, Yes received the lowest pay in the company. He confided, “I don't know if they'll ever recognise my skills,” and that he would expect to earn more in any city in China.

When reflecting on the problems he had encountered, he characterised them as reflective of broader social issues regarding the incorporation of foreign residents into Japanese society. He understood the US and Europe as “countries that welcome migrants.” Japan, by contrast, was “not accustomed to migration issues” and remained “composed only of Japanese people.” Yes felt that his lack of recognition in the workplace was reflective of

a wider lack of recognition afforded foreign residents in Japanese society, which expected them to be the solution to issues of demographic decline while being unresponsive to their needs. Given the degree to which his own problems were reflective of ingrained prejudices in broader Japanese society, Yes did not foresee a meaningful change in affairs in the near future, a concern echoed by Dolly: "Always a foreigner... I think it will not change in our lifetime." In this context, Yes struggled to imagine staying in Japan for an extended period and had begun to think about leaving Japan for other opportunities.

Among participants who remained in Japan after their studies, problematisation of the position of foreign residents was a fundamental part of their narratives, as they sought to renegotiate their relationship with the country in their new capacity as a worker. Uniformly, participants described new tensions with their context that had emerged after their studies. Indeed, while fulfilling earlier goals, their transition to the workforce presented as many issues as it had resolved. Pedro described this feeling as follows:

Pedro: It's not like, "I'm already done, I can just live in Japan and that's all." I need to keep doing something forward in my company, also in my life in Japan because since it's another country, every day is like seeing something new, discovering something new, so it's still uncertain in that way.

Pedro alludes to the fact that post-study, the uncertainty around whether one could initially stay in the country after graduating had been replaced by uncertainty over whether one could achieve stability long-term. The workforce did not offer stability for participants, and they also felt increasingly isolated as they became independent from educational institutions better equipped and more willing to support them. Indeed, participants felt that they now occupied a completely different space within society, where uncertainty prevailed.

Pedro characterised the ongoing uncertainty and lack of support as reflective of a change in status within society, that being the transition from *gakusei* (student) to *shakaijin* (working adult):

Pedro: Now I contribute in another way to society, especially now being part of the company, I'm what the Japanese call a shakaijin. Now, I'm contributing to the society, providing this kind of IT services. On the other hand, when I was a student, it was just studies and kind of preparing myself. I interpret it in that way... Some of my Japanese friends, they are treating me differently. It's like, "You are shakaijin now."... When they graduate from university, they start

saying that, "Now you are an adult, you have more responsibilities, you have to do everything by yourself and stuff." They change the way they treat you.

Shakaijin are expected to pay their own way as productive members of society and are not afforded the same levels of support and protection as students. Accordingly, upon entering the workforce and becoming *shakaijin*, Pedro not only lost the support of his university and host family, but also that of his friends and peers. This explained why, despite finding a well-paid job, he felt less stability in the post-study environment than he did as a student, indicating that the temporary nature of student status may be preferable to the more permanent but solitary status of *shakaijin*.

The change in role that participants experienced post-study should not be underestimated, as the negotiation of their new status in society was central to their relationship with the host country going forward. Karl built on this discussion, recognising that becoming a *shakaijin* was accompanied by increased expectations placed on migrants within Japan, but he argued that, in light of their contributions, foreign workers should also be afforded a greater degree of ownership of the society in which they are resident:

Karl: I think, as a migrant, you like to feel welcome, that you feel not invisible and that you have a voice of some sort in society... to feel that you're somewhat acknowledged as part of the fabric of society, since you theoretically are. You're paying your taxes, you're buying stuff, you're providing services of some sort.

Evident in the quotation above, Karl, too, recognised the significance of becoming a tax-paying, commodity-consuming, and service-providing member of society, and he emphasised his expectation that migrants in this role should be acknowledged as a fundamental part of the "fabric of society." Karl was still negotiating the degree of "ownership" he felt as a net contributor in society, which I return to in more detail below, but most participants still felt a degree of exclusion.

Resistance, Subversion, and Contention

Some participants discussed instances in which they sought to resist, subvert, or contend with the constraints and challenges that they faced in their trajectories. Emirbayer and Mische draw on the work of De Certeau, who described the way in which actors can "get around the rules of a constraining space" by employing appropriate tactics and being alert to the emergence of opportunities "on the wing" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 18, xx). If effective in identifying and implementing such tactics, actors may not only discover new

pathways to negotiate the constraints faced, but also begin to “resist and subvert the logics and practices of the established order” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 1001). This feature of the practical-evaluative element of agency is not only productive in terms of aiding the trajectories of individual actors, but may also be the catalyst of more concerted social action against the constraining temporal-relational contexts themselves, pointing to the potential for individual agency to be the source of structural change. In this study, narratives of resistance, subversion and contention were not universally apparent across the body of participants. However, a small number of participants’ narratives were powerfully evocative of this element of agency, including extended and enthusiastic discussion of the effort invested in subverting the constraints they encountered.

Arya faced several constraints throughout her trajectory, characterised by frustration that she was unfairly treated and inadequately represented as a foreign and minority presence. Some constraints that she faced have been covered in more detail earlier in this thesis, but to briefly summarise, despite stellar academic performance she was excluded from scholarship opportunities due to her international status, a “devastating” incident that drove her away from her existing academic community. At her new institution, she was shocked to find that internal strategy documents similarly prioritised “retaining our top UK graduates” over international students like herself. She encountered racial discrimination by the local community during an overseas research fellowship and felt an ongoing sense of social exclusion from those with influence. In combination, these issues not only served to form an emotional burden that permeated her entire experience in the UK, but also formed a tangible barrier in her post-study career prospects.

In response to these constraints, she was candid about her emotional struggles, but had also developed a clear strategy that would serve both her own interests and possibly contribute to subverting these barriers:

Arya: It was really disheartening and- [sniffs], I guess that all that you can do is try to, you know, as I always say, try to work within the system to change the system. Because that’s all that you can do. And not with a very radicalised ideology where I want to break the wheel. But I try to do my best to at least change what I can in the system.

Arya’s strategy to “work within the system to change the system” included making efforts to ensure representation in positions of influence, to be more assertive of her own rights within the university space, and to share the successes that she was able to achieve with others in a similar situation. First, she joined the university senate “sparked from a

conversation that [she] had with one of the international staff members” who was also concerned by the lack of diversity. She joined to ensure that international and minority students were represented and had an advocate within a position of influence at the university. Within the senate, her campaign to change the strategy document mentioned was successful, affording international and local students of equal academic merit the same emphasis in recruitment activities. Later, she successfully argued for the right to be examined by publication to be extended to international doctoral students. She argued that the delay in publications that often results from examination by monograph might place further barriers between international students and post-study employment in academia.

While she had succeeded in challenging some of the constraints she felt as an international student in the UK, she was also very realistic about the limited change that one person could affect. She evoked a mixture of frustration, stating that “those things are just not going to change without a change in policy... that’s still a big problem that I can’t solve,” and acceptance that “there is only so much that I can control, [but] it will come, it will happen.” As an individual advocate, she did not feel that she possessed enough power to argue for systemic and lasting change to the treatment of international and minority students in her university. But, having acknowledged the limits of her individual efforts, she sought to spread awareness of the perspective that she had gained throughout her studies to others who may be similarly disadvantaged:

Arya: I have been thinking about that for a while now. I guess I’ve realised that you can’t change this part of the structure, so my way to try to still make some sort of a change is by telling the other PhD [students] about it. By informing the future generation of something that is being kept hidden from them, something that is not very much out there.

Shaun, too, experienced considerable social and professional constraints due to his international status in Japan, but was far less positive about his ability to resist or change the system. The constraints that Shaun encountered centred around the preferential treatment that Japanese locals enjoyed in the job market in Japan, which he felt required him to significantly outperform or outqualify native Japanese applicants for the same position. In his words, “the companies first select Japanese people, and second the Chinese ones... for Korean people or other Asian students from other nationalities, it’s very hard to get jobs... [anyway] the internal labour market is filled by the Japanese students.”

To overcome what he perceived to be a clear preference to hire Japanese graduates for the limited jobs in his academic field, Shaun attempted to subvert the expectations of

potential employers to increase his chances. Initially, he attempted to perfectly emulate Japanese customs in an attempt to “pass” as a Japanese native²⁷. As he described, “if South Koreans follow the Japanese culture or customs, it’s difficult to distinguish Koreans and Japanese, so it is one strategy.” However, he was concerned that this put him into direct competition with his Japanese counterparts, in which, despite his best efforts, he would always be at a linguistic disadvantage. His other strategy was to follow Japanese customs to a degree, but to “push to find a job *as a foreigner*” (emphasis added). Shaun indicated that leveraging his foreign status, which was a disadvantage in some social and professional situations, could be used to his advantage within the specific confines of an academic career. This strategy was successful for him, as he eventually secured a job in an institute specialising in foreign studies. However, he was still widely critical of and resigned to the negative treatment of international students and workers in Japanese society:

Shaun: Frankly, I don’t care anymore about the situation... [but] overall, most people see the current changes towards the right wing in Japan. Because of these things, in these situations, it’s easy to lower your expectations.

Having explained his diminishing expectations for change in the treatment of foreign residents in Japan, Shaun went on to argue that it was not his place to argue with or resist the treatment of which he was so critical. He stated that he did not air such views “in public” because it was “too dangerous” for his career. He went on to explain that “I’m just a foreigner... it’s difficult to participate in speaking out about social problems and social issues in Japan.” Interestingly, Shaun remained politically active in his home country, stating that he continued to engage on social media and participate in elections in his hometown. He described this as a “double strategy,” allowing him to assert himself democratically without threatening his professional and social life in Japan. However, such a “double strategy” did nothing to address or subvert the social barriers of which he was critical. Unlike Arya, Shaun demonstrated no intention to resist or challenge the social system that had presented such a challenge to him, nor to express himself in the public domain to raise awareness of these issues.

Emily, too, did not express her resistance in a public forum, but was vociferous in her resistance to the constraints placed on her post-study opportunities by the expectations of

²⁷ Karl also asserted the value of being able to “pass” for short periods of time to increase professional opportunities.

her family and their growing concern with her ongoing “westernisation” in the UK. Having been sent to live and study in the UK in her early teens, Emily had been resident in the UK for close to a decade at the time of the “exit” interview. At that time, Emily had all but overcome the challenges of language and racial discrimination and been able to successfully navigate the post-study transition to the workplace by virtue of her early and dedicated investment in the job-hunting process. More broadly, her attitude had softened with regards to her experiences of racism in the UK, and she had come to be critical but philosophical about the hostile “political climate” towards migrants: “As long as I don’t let myself be bothered with it that much and keep a strong support network around me, I’ll be fine.”

However, since her graduation, a new and unexpected challenge in the post-study landscape had emerged in her relationship with family. Emily had adapted very successfully to the norms and value systems of the young and cosmopolitan community with which she had studied for much of her life as a young adult, and she had come to “question a lot of things, how they do things back home, and it doesn’t necessarily sit very well with my parents.” She had begun to experience more frequent and divisive episodes of culture clash around issues such as gender roles and her caring responsibilities towards her parents and was “finding it really hard to come to terms with that.” Considering these clashes, her parents had recently admitted that they regretted ever sending her to the UK:

Emily: My relationship with them is really quite strange. Because of the whole culture clash thing, [Dad] was like; “I don’t even know you anymore. You’re completely westernised, you don’t appreciate Asian values anymore.” [Long pause; Tom raised eyebrows] Yes, really. Yes, “I regret sending you away and you should have stayed or [we] should have kept you in Asia for longer.”

In seeking to negotiate these issues, Emily looked to the example of her older sister, who had also studied in the UK, but had left East Asia at an older age. Emily remarked that when her sister had left for the UK, she “already [had] the grounding of the great Asian virtues of how a daughter should behave, [but] I never had the chance.” Thus, Emily and her sister had vastly different experiences of the UK and relationships with East Asian culture, to the extent that Emily could not draw on her sister’s experiences for guidance. These issues had put enormous strain on relationships within the family, as Emily’s desired trajectory—remaining in the UK for the foreseeable future—seemed to indicate that she would become further westernised, and further at odds with the “Asian virtues” expected by the family.

However, by the time of the “exit” interview Emily had recently taken a new approach to the challenge of balancing the competing expectations of her life in the UK and her family.

Since moving away to a new city for her post-study job, Emily had made a concerted effort to reconnect with the East Asian diaspora, reaching out to various international societies and diaspora communities, and actively engaging with the culture and values that she had begun to lose. In light of these actions, she had started to renegotiate her relationship with her East Asian heritage:

Emily: I actually reached out to, it's like an Indonesian society.... They're quite a substantial group... and it turns out they're really cool. Turns out, my friend from school in Singapore, she's there right now... It has given me a bit more perspective on why people want to go home just because like [pause] It is, there's a sense of camaraderie that you get when you, all Asians come together.

The conflict between her life in the UK and her family was far from completely resolved. However, by engaging with a community of migrants who shared some of her concerns she had begun to reconnect with the cultural patterns and ways of thinking that she had gradually lost since leaving Singapore at an early age to study in the UK. While she did not yet feel ready to return to Asia, she saw the process of reconnecting with her culture as “something to work toward” and “a maturity thing. Maybe in two years’ time, I’ll be fine and accept both.”

Karl provided particularly rich insights into resistance, subversion, and contention, encompassing, and expanding on features illustrated by the other participants, and forming a coherent and comprehensive account. Karl was particularly candid throughout both interviews, revealing his ongoing critical appraisal of Japan as a potential place to settle, his persistent frustrations with the treatment of foreign residents, and the constant negotiation of whether to directly challenge the constraining aspects of his temporal-relational context.

Reflecting first on the discrimination that he had felt or witnessed as a foreigner in Japan, Karl described at length how this had constrained him and his peers. Karl himself experienced “specific types of discrimination that are small,” such as being asked by strangers whether he had “Japanese blood,” and more systematic issues such as housing discrimination in which “a significant proportion of the time [landlords] would specifically discriminate against foreigners... citing some bad experience [they] had with a foreigner in the past.” However, he also reflected that he could “pass” as ethnically Japanese which, combined with a high level of language ability, put him “at a lower risk for being tokenized.” Accordingly, he felt less susceptible to discrimination than his friends who “on the surface come from the same [young and foreign] demographic [but] who don’t speak Japanese and can’t pass.” Karl’s friends had been refused service at gyms, restaurants, and hairdressers,

leading to a shared “sense of injustice” that he struggled to come to terms with throughout his time in Japan.

Like Shaun, Karl became strategic in engaging with the discrimination he experienced and witnessed, attempting to balance his own desires to be successful in Japanese society with an urge to directly challenge its negative aspects. As described previously, Karl was successful in his personal transition to the workforce, leveraging his ability to “pass” as Japanese, taking advantage of the “limited international talent pool,” and emphasising the “differentiate value proposition” he could offer as a foreign worker with international experience. In this, his strategic navigation of the labour market was evocative of Shaun’s decision to market himself “as a foreigner,” discussed above. However, unlike Shaun, despite being able to personally navigate and come to terms with the challenges of discrimination that he encountered, Karl did engage with discrimination against foreign residents and women in the public and political sphere: “half the time I walk around I want to smash the system or join a punk rock band and rage against the system and start a revolution.” He consistently discussed these issues with his international peers and Japanese colleagues, challenging the discrimination that he witnessed and drawing on his educational background in public policy to criticise the perceived inaction of policymakers in Japan:

Karl: How has Japan or the national government or anything about the society, tried in any way-- Sorry, they have tried in some ways... but have they made honest-to-God financial commitments and more than surface-level changes and investments in the foreign population? Are they changing the employment system? No. Are they changing how they recruit talent or new graduates? No. Are they changing or enforcing rental discrimination laws? No... I feel like whatever success I've had in Japan, it's in spite of the society working against me.

Karl’s perspective reveals the underlying issues that were at the heart of the post-study challenges facing participants in Japan. Despite its openness to international students and the wide availability of scholarships, a lack of meaningful investment in reforms to traditional employment and social structures, and ongoing failures to ensure fair and equal opportunities for international students and women undermined Karl’s trust in Japan as a welcoming environment for student-migrants. Despite his frustrations, he was at pains to emphasise that “ultimately, my person-to-person interactions with a majority of people here have been positive,” and that he was generally comfortable and satisfied. The internal negotiation between these positive personal experiences and his more negative appraisal of

broader social and political issues remained unresolved, and he described the result of that negotiation as the factor that would influence whether he decided to stay long-term. He recognised that, like Shaun, he could follow the “train of thought among expats who bury their head in the sand and try to ignore the bad parts about Japan,” but this would not suit his personality. Alternatively, he proposed engaging in deeper discussions with peers, and a collective effort to confront the “foreigner-Japanese dichotomy” he felt was at the heart of the challenges he and his peers had encountered in Japanese society. While this line of thought was in its early stages, Karl exhibited some optimism:

Karl: I think there's work to be done, for sure, and there's a long way to go. But it's not impossible for people to get past those labels. Japan is getting to the point where it might have to slowly renegotiate how it positions itself vis-a-vis the rest of the world.

Summarising the Practical-Evaluative

The practical-evaluative element of agency was widely prevalent. However, like projectivity, participants' narratives indicated that the practical-evaluative element of agency was more likely to be expressed as a dominant agentive orientation in the face of unexpected or emergent “lived conflicts.” The practical-evaluative element of agency seemed to develop in real-time through participants' trajectories, evolving and becoming more prominent in light of their experience of the realities and contingencies of their particular temporal-relational context. It also appeared to provide a number of tools to navigate impediments encountered en route, to complement and extend upon those that iteration and projectivity offered. Practical-evaluation was the process by which participants identified and understood the specific challenges that needed to be overcome. By identifying the particular “problem” at hand, and “characterising” it within their existing frameworks, they could actively negotiate specific impediments to their current course of action. Furthermore, the identification of the issues and challenges within their temporal-relational context formed the basis of their critical stance towards these problems. In developing a clear concept of the impediments faced, participants had a target towards which they could direct their desire to resist, opening up new opportunities to subvert these impediments, and potentially influence structural change in future.

Summary

For the purposes of clarity, in this chapter I discussed the three elements of agency separately, however, they were not practically separate in the narratives and trajectories of

the participants in this study. Rather, the elements all played different but complementary functions in participants' trajectories, receding or becoming more prominent in narratives according to the shifting temporal-relational contexts and the dynamic subjectivities of participants. The data indicated that iteration is not simply a "habitual" or "baseline" agential orientation, but potentially a very effective form of agency in guiding student migration trajectories in temporal-relational contexts that are stable and conducive to established and "default" trajectories of action. For example, the trajectories of action that Tanya and Lili pursued pre-, during- and post-study were "default" within their particular context. Both participants encountered minimal impediments in the process, and, in the absence of such impediments, they maintained an iterative dominant orientation throughout their trajectories.

On the other hand, both projectivity and practical-evaluation became more prominent in response to "lived conflicts" that challenged "default" trajectories of action. Both projectivity and practical-evaluation appeared to support the negotiation of challenging contexts, but in different ways. Projectivity allowed people to playfully engage with the breadth of possibilities available to them and become more creative in considering a wider range of trajectories of action that were not necessarily socio-culturally legitimised. As Ariana's narrative suggests, in becoming projective, participants were provided with the tools to maximise their opportunities, opening new doors to navigate the "lived conflicts" encountered in their life-courses. Also influential was "experiential enactment," which not only provided participants with the opportunity to achieve greater certainty about which course of action to pursue, but also reduced the risks they faced in these trajectories.

Practical-evaluation, on the other hand, aided participants in recognising the "lived conflicts" they had encountered, and to understand them through "characterisation" within familiar normative frameworks. This process of "problematization" and "characterisation" played an important role in participants' narratives, allowing them to come to terms with the challenges of their chosen trajectory and forming the basis from which they could contend with and negotiate the impediments they encountered. Following such recognition, the variable propensity of participants to become actively resistant to the "lived conflicts" they encountered was another finding. Those who did express a desire to subvert or contend with these conflicts are evidence of how, on a long enough time scale, individual actors can contribute to social changes.

Evident in this chapter is the dynamic development of different elements of agency in participants' narratives, and the influence that this had on their trajectories. Based on this evidence, it seems justified to suggest that different temporal-relational contexts were

conducive to different elements of agency emerging as dominant agentive orientations. The data suggests that receptive and stable environments may support the persistent dominance of the iterational element of agency, as the absence of structural barriers reduces the likelihood that actors must dramatically change their ongoing trajectories of action. Conversely, less receptive, changeable, and uncertain temporal-relational contexts posed unexpected challenges that rendered established patterns of action ineffective. As a result, they were less conducive to the ongoing dominance of iteration. Rather, these less receptive environments appeared more conducive to the emergence of projectivity and practical-evaluation as dominant orientations, with each providing tools for agents to negotiate or resist these impediments, and reduce uncertainty in their trajectories and life-course projects.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

This research set out to shed new light on the development and practice of agency in the education-migration nexus. Through three findings chapters, I have presented the results of this two-phase study, which sought to provide new empirical insights into the social-structural contexts of student-migration, and chart the variable development and practice of agency through individual student-migrants trajectories. In combination, the results presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis provide a contextually grounded and rich engagement with student-migrants' agency as it evolves throughout their trajectories. In this chapter, I seek to summarise and synthesise these results in an attempt to provide explicit answers to the research questions presented at the start of this thesis. I consider each of the SRQs in turn, reviewing the results of my analysis and presenting my interpretations, before critically arguing the extent to which these findings present a satisfactory answer to the SRQ. Having evaluated the SRQs individually, I provide a synthesis of findings and offer a holistic answer to the CRQ that encompasses all of the results of this research. I continue the chapter with a summary of the empirical contributions of the study, attempting to situate its findings within the fields of higher education and migration studies, outlined in Chapter 2. I present some methodological and theoretical reflections on the limitations of this study, building on the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4. Finally, I provide some recommendations for future research, policy, and practice, before some concluding remarks.

Sub-Question 1

The first SRQ for this study was: "What is the regulatory framework for student-migrants throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus in the UK and Japan?" The findings presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis revealed that regulatory frameworks for student-migrants vary on two fronts: their receptivity and their stability. This variation was evident not only between the national case studies but emerged within the national cases as they evolved, between 2004 and 2018. The variation in these regulatory frameworks, themselves the critical social-structural factors in the context of regular migration (Baubock, 2006b), indicated that the temporal-relational contexts of student migration may change on a time-scale that is shorter than that of the trajectories of actors therein, therefore challenging ongoing trajectories of action.

Reviewing the UK case in more detail, the results of the policy trajectory analysis revealed that all aspects of the regulatory framework became demonstrably more restrictive over the past decade. Eligibility requirements for student visas had become more stringent,

and student-migrants had also seen their activities during-study become subject to greater restrictions. Importantly, pathways to pursue a post-study trajectory within the UK had narrowed due to the removal of the Tier 2 (Post-Study Work) and skills-based Tier 1 visas, and the introduction of more stringent eligibility requirements for alternative routes. Changes to the regulatory frameworks affecting student-migrants pre-, during-, and post-study made the regulatory environment less receptive, indicating that the social-structural contexts had become less conducive to student-migration trajectories. In addition, the number and frequency of changes made over the past 15 years would indicate instability in the regulatory framework. These frequent changes have the potential to disrupt trajectories in-progress, by changing the eligibility requirements in such a way as to make ongoing trajectories and intended transitions unattainable.

Turning to the Japanese case, contrary to the common assumption that Japan is a country closed to migration flows (Komine, 2018), the regulatory framework for international student-migrants was notable for both its receptivity and stability between 2004 and 2018. Throughout the period of analysis, applicants for a study visa were not subject to language requirements and benefited from the flexibility of financial requirements and relatively low cost of the NHI system. During their studies, international students in Japan have been subject to few restrictions on their economic activities, and have enjoyed the right to be accompanied by their nuclear family. Since 2005, they have also had access to a dedicated PSW pathway, followed by the subsequent introduction of new alternative pathways particularly favouring international postgraduate students, and which provided preferential treatment in the pursuit of PR. The Japanese system has witnessed only one policy change that made a meaningful difference to the receptivity of the overall legal system for student-migrants: the 2005 introduction of the 180 day “Temporary Visitor” residence status for graduating “College Students.” In summary, the regulatory framework was not only receptive to student-migrants, but relatively stable. This is partially a reflection of the pre-existing receptivity of the system at the 2004 boundary of the analysis, at which many indicators were already rated at the most receptive end of the scale, but also appears an artefact of the fact that few amendments to immigration law in general were implemented between 2004-2018. This combination of receptivity and stability would appear to create “general legal conditions” that are conducive to in-country post-study transitions for international students (Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2013). Pathways to remain are not only available, but the eligibility requirements and regulatory frameworks have remained stable on a time-scale that exceeds that of a standard course of study. If anything, eligibility requirements have become less-stringent over time, meaning that from the perspective of a

given student-migrant, conditions would have remained conducive to post-study work from the planning stage of their initial mobility, throughout the course of study, and into the post-study environment.

In summary, when supplemented with additional information regarding post-study transitions, the policy trajectory analysis provided a satisfactory answer to the first SRQ of the study, providing an overview of the regulatory framework for student migration in both case study nations as it had evolved throughout the participants' trajectories. In combination these findings indicate that regulatory frameworks in the UK and Japan differed in their degrees of receptivity and stability, and that the frameworks were also variable over the temporal span of the analysis. These findings are important to the study as a whole, as they highlight that student-migrants' temporal-relational contexts, and specifically the social-structural factors that constrain and enable action in the education-migration nexus, are not only variable but they are susceptible to rapid change. Regulatory frameworks and legal conditions may change with a speed and frequency that can impinge upon trajectories that are already in progress. This seems to corroborate the work of Mares (2018) and Roberts (2019), who suggested that immigration policies and regulatory frameworks tend to change at a faster rate than student-migrants can complete their trajectories, potentially blocking ongoing trajectories and introducing uncertainty to the education-migration nexus. Therefore, while an argument can be made from the state's perspective that these student-migrant flows are more predictable in the context of stringent controls (Marginson, 2012; Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018), they may conversely bring instability and insecurity into the life-courses of individual student-migrants.

Sub-Question 2

The second SRQ proposed for this study was: "How is the regulatory framework for student-migrants throughout their trajectories reflected in their narratives?" To engage with this question, I analysed participants' narratives for instances in which they reflected upon the administrative frameworks that governed their trajectories. The results of this were presented in Chapter 6, revealing that participants had a highly variable degree of understanding of the regulatory frameworks by which they were governed, with consequences for their ability to navigate the post-study transition. The narratives also appeared to indicate that, in addition to receptivity and stability, regulatory frameworks exhibited important variation on a third front: transparency. Furthermore, interactions with regulatory frameworks appeared to influence participants' relationship with the host country, potentially causing them to re-evaluate their trajectories.

It was notable in the UK that the challenges of navigating the post-study transition were the subject of particular attention across the participants' narratives. Some participants reported that the post-study regulatory framework represented a tangible barrier to the pursuit of their desired post-study trajectory and, even in the case of participants who made a successful transition, this regulatory framework was described universally in negative terms. The framework was described as restrictive and opaque, and many saw post-study transitions as near unattainable due to the stringency of the sponsorship system, reflecting the implicit goals of the "hostile environment" (May, 2011). Having said this, it was also evident in the data that participants had highly variable knowledge of the specifics of the post-study regulatory framework. While some understood the general processes of the post-study transition and some of the eligibility requirements of visa sponsorship, few participants demonstrated in-depth knowledge of what was required of them to satisfy these requirements and qualify for a working visa. Indeed, misinformation caused some participants to pursue pathways that were legally impossible, or to neglect to pursue pathways that were available to them. While it is difficult to attribute this misinformation to any one factor, it did appear that the relative lack of targeted support for international graduates aspiring to work in the UK was a contributing factor. Furthermore, the apparent confusion on the part of potential sponsoring employers, when viewed next to the way in which some participants misinterpreted the regulatory frameworks as written, would seem to indicate that the frameworks themselves are difficult to parse and understand. Indeed, this would appear to reflect broader criticisms of the UK's legal framework which has been described by employers and the Law Commission as "labyrinthine" and "archaic" (Grierson, 2019; Sapsted, 2019). In summary, some participants' narratives appeared to indicate that they were navigating their trajectories in the context of misinformation regarding their opportunities. Participants expressed difficulties in finding and parsing information regarding the immigration rules to help understand the available pathways to remain in the UK, and found little support from their sponsoring universities. None of the institutions attended by the participants of this study provided targeted support to aid their international students in safely and securely navigating the post-study environment (Beech, 2018).

Narratives in the Japanese case, on the other hand, appeared to reflect a more neutral relationship between participants and the regulatory framework. While the impacts of the regulatory framework were evident in their narratives, the frameworks themselves rarely played a prominent role in participants' descriptions of their trajectories. For example, the ability to come to Japan with a lack of language ability may have had a negative social impact on some participants, just as the right to bring dependents to Japan may have had a

positive impact on their wellbeing during-study. However, it was rare that these factors were discussed in such terms by participants. This changed somewhat in reference to the post-study environment, as participants exhibited a degree of knowledge about the requirements of negotiating a post-study transition within Japan. The narratives reflected an understanding that the pursuit of a sponsoring employer was the critical factor, but also illustrated that the “Designated Activities” job-hunting residence status provided a “Plan B” to fall back on if necessary. The narratives appeared to indicate the perception that, if any employer could be found, the eligibility requirements for the “General” (working) visa or the “Highly-Skilled Professional” visa were readily attainable for a recent graduate, presenting little impediment to post-study work. Indeed, participants revealed that they were often able to make this legal transition without coming into direct contact with migration authorities, due to the ready support of their universities and employers. In general, the regulatory framework in Japan was represented in neutral terms by participants, neither an active support nor meaningful impediment to their trajectories. The exception to this is the case of those participants who came to Japan on a scholarship program, whose mandated return emerged as a point of conflict during their trajectories. A number of participants on scholarship programmes—predominantly from South East Asia—had developed a desire to remain in Japan, to the extent that they attempted to negotiate a waiver of the “condition of return.” All were unsuccessful. This appears to reflect the uneasy overlap of two different areas of Japan’s international education policy, specifically the concurrent skilled migration and ODA imperatives for attracting international students (MEXT, 1983; The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2014; Yonezawa, 2008).

In summary, the findings presented in Chapter 6 appear to support the assertions of migration studies scholars that regulatory frameworks are a powerful structuring influence in the context of regular migration (Baubock, 2006b; Favell et al., 2007; Zlotnik, 1987). Participants’ narratives revealed practical examples of the structuring influence of regulatory frameworks’ receptivity, stability, and transparency, showing how they have the potential to restrict or enable individual student-migrants in their trajectories through the education-migration nexus. The importance of the receptivity and stability of these frameworks is reflected in earlier work (Consterdine & Hampshire, 2016; Mares, 2018; Roberts, 2019), but the emphasis placed on transparency and access to up-to-date and comprehensible information to navigate post-study transitions is a novel finding. Post-study transitions in Japan were relatively straightforward administratively, but participants there also appeared to have a clear understanding of the pathways available to them, and readily available support from informed staff members when pursuing their desired trajectory. In contrast, the

opacity of the regulatory framework in the UK was evident in the fact that both the participants of the study and the employers to which they were applying were unable to accurately grasp the available post-study pathways and their eligibility requirements. Furthermore, even those with an explicit interest in remaining in the UK, who had actively sought information on the available pathways and their eligibility requirements, were unable to access information in a digestible form, or find support mechanisms that could help them to identify and comprehend post-study pathways. This would indicate that, beyond the receptivity and stability of regulatory frameworks, transparency can influence student-migrants' trajectories through the education-migration nexus.

Sub-Questions 3 and 4

The third and fourth SRQs proposed for this study were: (3) "To what extent and how do the iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative elements of agency feature in student-migrants' narratives of their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?"; and (4) "To what extent and how do the iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative elements of agency inform student-migrants' practice in their trajectories through the education-migration nexus?" Answering these questions required an in-depth analysis of the chordal triad as reflected in participants' narratives, the results of which were reported in Chapter 7. It revealed that all three agentic orientations were prevalent across the narratives. These different elements of agency appeared to play different but complementary functions in participants' trajectories, with agentic orientations changing in relation to changes in circumstances and their personal development. These different functions, their relationship with the temporal-relational contexts, and their influence on participants' "choices and actions" (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) can be summarised as follows:

The iterational element of agency was prevalent across all narratives, with every participant of the study demonstrating a propensity to draw on personal or shared experiences to guide their trajectories of action through the education-migration nexus. In many cases this took the form of the influence of important others—family, romantic partners, friends—though sometimes broader social influences were also seen to provide model trajectories of action that influenced participants' choices. Participants' propensity to rely on the normatively valued or legitimised trajectories of action reveals the influence of the "cultural context," in which cultural discourses and shared social narratives appeared to influence participants' understandings of the education-migration nexus and the possibilities that lay within it. In the identification of trajectories of action that were associated with success, the iterational element of agency appeared to help participants of this study

understand “typical” or “default” pathways that they could pursue, playing a critical role in guiding participants through the education-migration nexus. However, the narratives also revealed that, given the changeable and uncertain nature of the conditions of the education-migration nexus, established trajectories of action are liable to be usurped by new and emerging impediments to their success. This research has identified a number of points of tension in the regulatory frameworks for student migration in the UK and Japan, and these appeared in narratives as practical challenges to participants’ ongoing trajectories of action, in some instances rendering their chosen pathways as functionally impossible to pursue. Despite these emergent impediments requiring a change in participants’ actions, the iterational element of agency did not necessarily cease to feature within their narratives. They discussed a multitude of “standard” or “typical” pathways, and the discussion of manoeuvre within this “repertoire” was prominent. While the iterational element of agency appeared to play an important role in guiding participants’ actions, the discovery of anti-iterational sentiments in a minority of cases is an interesting counter-example that is not yet reflected within the chordal triad framework. Anti-iterational sentiments appeared to emerge in narrative when participants sought to assert their individuality or independence, reflecting earlier work that conceptualised student mobility as a process of “social distinction” (Brunner, 2017; Prazeres, 2017, 2018). The prevalence of the iterational element of agency in participants’ narratives, and its significance in guiding participants’ trajectories of action, would indicate that it plays a critical role in trajectories through the education-migration nexus. Choices of destination and preferred post-study transitions were universally influenced by reference to “default” patterns of action, tacitly defined by the precedents set, and beliefs expressed, by important others in the shared social milieu.

Projectivity, too, was a fundamental component of all participants’ narratives, as they routinely hypothesised the likely results of any particular trajectory of action. This was often followed by a discussion of how their chosen trajectory had emerged as the frontrunner in light of this process of imagination. Interestingly, the target of “hypothesisation” was dynamic throughout the study, reflecting the changing circumstances and the evolution of participants’ life-course projects. In “entry” interviews, the primary target of projection was typically the immediate post-study transition, with longer-term goals appearing to be a distant concern. This focus on the “lived conflicts” in the immediate transition, and reluctance to engage in distant projections, could reflect participants’ understanding of the uncertainty of the post-study environment. Given that longer-term trajectories were heavily contingent on the outcome of their post-study transition, it may have been that the unresolved nature of the post-study transition discouraged long-term projection. This interpretation

would be supported by the fact that, in the “exit” interviews, participants whose new position in society was more stable had begun to project towards a more distant temporal horizon. However, this research is insufficient to make confident assertions as to whether this change in imaginative horizons is attributable to the uncertainty and precarity identified in the post-study transition, or merely an artefact of the changing temporal context of the “entry” and “exit” interviews. Despite the difficulties in explaining why the target of projection changes, the evidence that participants’ target of projection was dynamic during trajectories through the education-migration nexus is a point of interest.

A further finding from the analysis of participants’ narratives was the clear practical application of the projective element of agency in the form of “experiential enactment.” Emirbayer and Mische (1998) proposed that actors may choose to sample certain trajectories of action in low-risk settings, to aid in the evaluation of their likelihood to resolve the “lived conflicts” of the present. The findings of this study would appear to support their proposition. Not only did a number of participants’ narratives include evidence of experiential enactment of the post-study environment and the pathway to it—often in the form of work and volunteer experience, community engagement, and tentative job-applications—but the decision to study abroad itself was characterised as a form of “experiential enactment” of living in the host country post-study. These results would indicate that, in addition to a purely cognitive activity that aided ongoing decision-making processes, the projective element of agency was associated with present actions and strategic investments of time and energy into particular trajectories of action that could be pursued in the longer term. The importance of this sub-tone of the projective element of agency was a particularly interesting finding, as it appeared to give participants a tool to counteract the uncertainty of the post-study transition, providing more tangible evidence of the likely outcomes of particular trajectories than is available in the iterative mode. Therefore, in instances where the iterational element of agency could not bring certainty in the face of participants’ “lived conflicts” in the education-migration nexus, projectivity appeared to offer alternatives that, through “hypothesisation” or “experiential enactment,” could be evaluated as potential solutions.

Turning to the practical-evaluative element of agency, the results of this study indicated that it was not as universally widespread across the narratives as the iterational and projective elements, being all but absent in some narratives. However, in narratives in which practical-evaluation became a dominant agentive orientation, both its prevalence within these narratives and its potential to impact participants’ trajectories through the education-migration nexus were striking. Like the projective element of agency, practical-evaluation appeared to be associated with participants’ narratives of “lived conflicts” within their

trajectories through the education-migration nexus, and particularly those that were unexpected or emergent impediments to their ongoing trajectories of action. The practical-evaluative element played a different role in participants' narratives than the projective element, however, in being associated with participants' attempts to understand the precise nature of the "lived conflicts" that they encountered during their trajectories. The "problematization" of their contexts and subsequent "characterization" of these problems was an important feature of participants' narratives. Often this was directed towards the regulatory frameworks, and the general reception of student-migrants in the post-study environment, thereby representing direct critique of the "structural contexts" of student migration in the case study countries. The presence of "problematization" and "characterization" in participants' narratives did appear to play a role in guiding their trajectories, as it portrayed the fact that the participant in question had recognised and could comprehend the nature of the challenges they faced in their trajectory. This was critical in helping participants to manage and direct their effort towards overcoming these challenges and recognise opportunities to bypass the barriers on their preferred pathway.

A further important sub-tone of the practical-evaluative element of agency was that of "resistance, subversion, and contention," associated not only with attempts to negotiate and bypass the constraints posed by the "lived conflicts" they encountered, but also their attempts to actively act against the temporal-relational contexts that were the source of those constraints. It should be noted that resistance was concentrated in the narratives of a small number of participants who were more directly critical of the barriers inherent in their temporal-relational contexts. Even within this minority group, not all had chosen to take direct action to challenge these barriers. While it is difficult to assert what might lead student-migrants to take on this critical stance, and possibly encourage them to actively resist and subvert their contexts, this research does provide some clues. It does not seem that a critical and/or resistant stance emerges naturally in student-migrants who encounter barriers during their trajectory. Almost all participants reported barriers to a greater or lesser extent, but a resistant or subversive orientation remained unusual. Rather, it seems more likely that such criticism is associated with their level and type of education, and personal tendency to think critically about social issues, both factors that relate to the social-psychological context of the individual participant. To illustrate, resistance, subversion, and contention were most evident in the narratives of Arya, Shaun, Karl, Misty, and Emily, all of whom were, or had experience, in elite educational institutions and—with the exception of Emily—were studying in postgraduate or doctoral courses in the social sciences at the time of the study. It could be that the type of training provided in these degree courses inculcates a critical

mindset that shines through in students' reactions to their own circumstance, in this case in reaction to the challenges faced in their trajectories and the possible injustices they represent. Whatever the catalysts of this resistant sensibility, the narratives did appear to suggest that this sensibility had an important role to play in participants' trajectories. Importantly, it provides a window into how individual actors may choose to actively resist the aspects of the temporal-relational contexts that they feel put a barrier between them and their goals, which illustrates how, on a long enough time-scale, individual actors have the potential to be reciprocally transformative on the temporal-relational context in which they are present.

Synthesis and the Central Research Question

In light of the findings from all three empirical chapters, I offer a synthesis in response to the central line of enquiry of this thesis: identifying “how the agency of student-migrants is developed and practiced throughout their trajectories through the education-migration nexus.” First, it is clear that the regulatory frameworks governing student migration have the potential to tangibly restrict the possible trajectories of individual student-migrants. In line with the literature on the influence of state control of migration flows (Baubock, 2006b; Favell et al., 2007; Zlotnik, 1987), the results of this study indicate that regulatory frameworks exert a powerful guiding influence on the “choices and actions” that international student-migrants may take in their trajectories through the education-migration nexus. Partially, this is due to the receptivity of the frameworks, illustrated in the struggles faced by some of the UK participants despite their efforts, and the success of participants seeking to remain in Japan, some of which was near-incidental. However, this influence is not only exerted through the opening and closing of pathways to residence that are restricted to those who satisfy particular eligibility requirements. The stability and transparency of these frameworks also played a pivotal role. I believe both of these factors are important as they influence the availability of information regarding the regulatory frameworks, reflecting the importance of information in guiding individual agency. Unstable and opaque regulatory frameworks make the provision, identification, and comprehension of up-to-date information more challenging, and the lack of such information leads some student-migrants to pursue their trajectories without knowledge of influential structuring factors.

So, given the regulatory constraints which appear—to a greater or lesser extent— inherent to the education-migration nexus in different contexts, how is agency developed and practised in student-migrants' trajectories? I argue that the role of agency is dynamic within the education-migration nexus, and that it can be conceived as playing multiple roles at different times, depending on the evolving relationship between the individual student-

migrant and their temporal-relational contexts, and the simultaneous evolution of the individual's life-course project. These roles can be summarised as follows: the iterational element of agency may play an important role in helping student-migrants to situate themselves within the education-migration nexus, recognise their position within the complex and overlapping webs of social relations that intersect therein, and identify trajectories of action that had been shown by important others to be appropriate in navigating their temporal-relational contexts. However, these contexts are changeable and uncertain, and projective and practical-evaluative elements of agency each provided important tools that could aid the navigation of these contexts throughout their trajectory. The projective element of agency appears to play a creative role, allowing student-migrants to imagine new pathways in response to the contingencies of their present, and address uncertainty in the post-study landscape. The practical-evaluative element may be associated with a critical sensibility that allows student-migrants to comprehend the contingencies of the present, in a way that is supportive of all agentive orientations and the deliberative process of choosing the correct trajectory of action in support of their life-course project.

The dynamic roles of agency have significance that extends beyond the trajectories of individual student-migrants. As I have argued throughout this thesis, structure and agency exist in a reciprocal relationship, in which individual social actors have the potential to act in a transformative way on their temporal-contexts of action. The results of this study would appear to tentatively support this position. In line with Emirbayer and Mische's proposals, I, too, found evidence that the projective and practical-evaluative elements of agency have the potential to enact change within agents' social relations. Projectivity offers potential for the discovery of new trajectories of action through the creative pursuit of a desired future and in response to the "lived conflicts" posed by the present temporal-relational context. While not necessarily the case, the introduction of novel forms of action has the potential to disrupt and reconfigure social relations, as the imaginative horizons of legitimate action are expanded. Practical-evaluation, too, has inherent transformative potential, as student-migrants recognise and characterise the "lived conflicts" faced during their trajectory, the uncertainties of the post-study transition being a prime example in this study, before they consider whether to engage, resist, and potentially subvert these conflicts. The decision whether to engage in behaviours of resistance appears contingent on the subjectivities of the individual student-migrant, and the recognition of "lived conflicts" was not necessarily the precursor to subversive action. However, the results of this study do indicate that characterisation is a necessary precursor to any conscious acts of resistance, whether they decide to "break the wheel" or "work within the system to change the system" (Arya). The

results of this study would seem to disagree with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) assertion that the iterational element of agency is essentially reproductive in nature, tending towards the status quo. I found that anti-iterational orientations, themselves emerging out of a recognition of established pathways of action in the iterational mode, could themselves have transformative potential.

Finally, the findings of this study, particularly in light of the contrast offered by the UK and Japan, provide preliminary evidence of the way in which different temporal-relational contexts may be conducive to different agentic orientations. As has been argued throughout this thesis, participants in the two national case studies had to navigate strikingly different regulatory environments, and it is notable that these environments appeared to support different agentic orientations. The receptive, stable, and transparent environment of Japan was home to participants who appeared to retain iteration as a predominant agentic orientation. This was most clearly demonstrated by participants whose trajectories were relatively untroubled. For example, both Tanya and Harry encountered few barriers during their time in Japan, and were able to navigate the post-study transition with relative ease. In combination, it appeared that the availability of relevant visa pathways and attendant support in pursuing these visa pathways enabled these participants to pursue their trajectories without requiring significant personal investments or taking on unnecessary risk and/or uncertainty. I believe this is an important factor leading participants in Japan to maintain an iterational agentic orientation. In the absence of barriers to ongoing trajectories of action—themselves typically inspired by precedent in the iterative mode—participants potentially lacked an external catalyst to encourage the extensive activation of alternative agentic orientations. On the other hand, the contrasting environment of the UK appeared more strongly associated with a transition towards alternative agentic orientations, in which projectivity and practical evaluation were more strongly evident. This was demonstrated by participants whose trajectories were marked by significant barriers that did require significant personal investments, and confrontations with uncertainty and/or risk. Arya and Misty, for example, demonstrated a distinctly practical-evaluative orientation in light of the challenges they had faced during their trajectories, while Karen's transition to an alternative study programme is evocative of "hypothesisation" in the projective mode.

Fundamentally, the evidence suggests that the impetus to explore agentic modes beyond the iterational comes, in part, from the barriers encountered in, and external pressures impinging on, actors' ongoing trajectories. There is strong evidence for this in the UK case, where interviewees typically encountered more frequent and more significant barriers to their post-study transition, in particular. However, there are also examples of this from the

Japanese case, as some participants whose trajectories were marked by more barriers relative to other participants in Japan, demonstrated a similar shift to alternative agentive orientations. Yes, Pedro, Karl and Shaun are illustrative examples, each encountering challenges in the job-hunting system that gave rise to alternative agentive orientations. Thus, while the accumulation of evidence presented in this thesis indicates that structural conditions—whether regulatory frameworks or other social systems—may have an influence on agentive orientations and, by extension, the practice of agency in the education-migration nexus, I would strongly resist the conclusion that regulatory frameworks are solely or even predominantly responsible for participants' changing orientations. Rather, I would argue that the regulatory frameworks reviewed in this thesis are one factor with the potential to influence agentive orientations, and contribute to the dynamic development and practice of agency. I would even argue that these regulations are a particularly powerful factor, drastically changing the temporal-relational contexts of participants in the two national case studies. However, these regulations are just one among innumerable factors that also contribute towards shaping student-migrants' agency. Thus, to further our understanding of the interplay of structure-agency in the education-migration nexus, taking in both the influence of structure on agentive orientations and the capacity for agents to subvert their temporal-relational contexts, a wider range of factors must be the subject of further empirical investigation. I return to this below in my recommendations for future research.

Summary of Empirical Contributions

This study makes the following empirical contributions to literature regarding the education-migration nexus. It provides an in-depth summary of legal frameworks in two critical case-studies within the global landscape of student migration. By adding two in-depth examples from divergent contexts that had not previously been the subject of analysis, this study builds on the work of Mezger and Gonzalez-Ferrer (2013), Consterdine and Hampshire (2016), and Levatino et al. (2018), serving as further proof-of-concept for the Temper project's policy analysis framework and its applicability to contexts outside the EU.

In its analysis of these regulatory frameworks, this research also revealed new insights into three critical factors that may influence student-migrants' trajectories through the education-migration nexus: receptivity, stability, and transparency. A strength of this research is that it combined the policy trajectory analysis, with its focus on receptivity and stability, with situated qualitative data that provided nuanced insights into the significance of receptivity and stability in the lives of individual student-migrants. This helps to move beyond a state-centric approach to policy studies (Geddie, 2015; Hawthorne, 2010a; Sá &

Sabzalieva, 2018; Ziguras, 2012), and contributes to the recent body of research that has sought to capture the significance of these policies in the lives of student-migrants (Tran et al., 2019). The importance of this shift in perspective is evident in the results of the second phase of the study, which not only provided insights into the development and practice of agency in navigating student migration trajectories, but was also critical in revealing the importance of the transparency of regulatory frameworks, which would not have had an empirical evidence base if the study were restricted to the policy trajectory analysis alone. The fact that the importance of transparency, in particular, only emerged in the narrative data, supports the assertion of many authors (e.g. Brooks & Waters, 2011; Favell et al., 2007; Page & Chahboun, 2019) that migrants' own perspectives are a source of important insights into the internal dynamics of migration processes.

Furthermore, this study responds to persistent calls (Arthur & Nunes, 2014; Vladimír Baláž & Williams, 2004; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Mavroudi & Warren, 2013; Tan & Hugo, 2017; Tran & Vu, 2018) for analyses of structure-agency relations in the education-migration nexus by providing a bespoke and extended analysis of these relations, grounded in both the temporal-relational contexts and the narratives of individual student-migrants (Page & Chahboun, 2019). Beginning with the specific influence of the three important social-structural factors on student-migrants' agentive capacities—receptivity, stability, and transparency—the research showed that the receptivity of regulatory frameworks has the potential to direct and filter flows of student-migrants through the construction of pathways or barriers that promote or restrict particular trajectories of action. The research revealed that the receptivity of the regulatory framework also has a significant impact on the regulatory experience of student-migrants, and the relationship that develops with their host country. Stability, on the other hand, appeared to influence the degree of certainty actors could have in their trajectory, as changeable regulatory frameworks introduced uncertainty that could be associated with greater precarity and insecurity for individual student-migrants. Transparency may influence the availability of information and support available to student-migrants, with knock-on effects for their ability to pursue legitimate pathways within the regulatory framework. Opaque systems may introduce greater uncertainty to trajectories, whereas transparent systems enable actors' "choices and actions" by providing access to relevant information that might influence their trajectory.

Turning to other empirical contributions of the second phase of the study, participants' narratives revealed that not only do student-migrants' agentive orientations change dynamically, but that each element of agency provides different tools to aid them in navigating their trajectories through the education-migration nexus. Through these findings,

the study provides evidence that the role of agency within the education-migration nexus is neither static nor uniform (as supposed by proponents of RAT e.g., Goldthorpe, 1998; Lindenberg, 2006), but can be conceived as a dynamic quality that is variably enacted by student-migrants throughout their trajectories in negotiation with their temporal-relational context. The research revealed that individuals develop different dominant agentive orientations in response to their changing conditions, and may become able to exert a greater degree of control over their trajectories by developing and practicing new forms of agency. Each element of agency appeared to be associated with different practices, akin to Tran et al.'s (2019) discussion of "micro-tactics" in navigating the post-study environment. Like Tran and colleagues, I argue that student-migrants may increase their opportunities in the post-study environment by actively seeking, or being introduced to, different forms of practice that may help them respond to the specific contingencies of their present. The fact that not all students exhibited evidence they developed and practiced all elements of agency in their trajectories, and often found themselves muddling through their post-study transitions with a lack of information and support, is also further evidence of the partial and "bounded" nature of migrant agency (Evans, 2002; Simon, 1955). This research revealed that the extent of student-migrants' knowledge of the regulatory frameworks that govern their trajectories is highly variable, and dis- and mis-information may prove a substantial stumbling block in post-study transitions and broader trajectories through the education-migration nexus. It also provided a more granular perspective on the changing roles of agency in the midst of trajectories that play out over a number of years, complementing recent work that seeks to conceptualise the diverse and dynamic nature of agency in the education-migration nexus (Tran & Vu, 2018).

Theoretical and Methodological Reflections and the Limitations of this Study

In addition to these empirical findings, I would like to briefly reflect on some theoretical and methodological issues that emerged during this research. As described in Chapter 3, this study is located in the "middle ground" between functionalist and historical-structuralist approaches to the study of migration (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1690). The study drew on existing texts' recommendations for empirical research to "put migrants first," embrace the subjectivity of migrant experiences, and consider the temporally dynamic nature of structure-agency relations at play in migration processes (Castles, de Haas, et al., 2014; Conway, 2007; Morawska, 2001; Ratcliffe, 2007). The results of this study are evidence of the strengths of this "subjectivist" approach. Guided by the work of leading scholars in the "subjectivist" mode (Bakewell, 2010; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Wingens et al., 2011), I

adopted a life-course perspective as the foundation for my study of the role of agency in education-migration trajectories. As Wingens et al. (2011) argued, this perspective is powerful in revealing the interplay between structure and agency over time, and this was borne out in the study. Many of the empirical contributions of the study are attributable to its longitudinal nature, and the efforts taken to draw on both “individuals’ life-courses in their timing, pacing and sequencing of life events (micro-level), [and] the dynamics of social structures and institutions (macro-/meso-level),” (Wingens et al., 2011, p. 6). If the research had drawn on only one of these sources of data, or foregone the longitudinal approach, it would have sacrificed a great deal of its explanatory power. Having said this, the precise research methods chosen to collect and analyse data in this study, while sufficient for the needs of this research, were not without shortcomings.

Beginning with phase 1 of the study, the Temper projects’ policy trajectory analysis methodology did not appear to provide exhaustive empirical acuity in its representation of changes in the regulatory frameworks for student migration. For example, the results from the Japanese case appeared to indicate that the ordinal categories are perhaps not sufficient to capture changes that may seem minor but could have significance in the lived experiences of student migrants. This is particularly true in both national cases regarding the post-study environment, which did not capture changes in the availability and accessibility of labour migration transitions, which meant that I had to carry out another layer of analysis not included within the original Temper framework. On reflection, I feel that the original Temper projects’ approach to policy trajectory analysis may be better suited to macro-level comparisons between national systems, rather than gaining nuanced insights into the functioning of individual regulatory frameworks in relation to particular groups of migrants.

Turning to phase 2 of the study, the analysis was limited by the temporal span of the project. While the 18-month data collection period was the maximum feasible period given the constraints of my doctoral training, this required that data collection begin during participants’ studies and end soon after participants’ graduation. Certainly, given the importance of capturing dynamic agency throughout participants’ trajectories, it would have been a great advantage to have the opportunity to speak to participants prior to their arrival in the host country, at various intervals during their studies, and with a longer time-lag between their graduation and the final “exit” interview. This would not only allow for the dynamism in participants’ agentic orientations to be captured over a longer time-frame, it would allow outcomes of their trajectories to stabilise before the “exit” interview data were collected. In the case of this study, it may be that “exit” interviews took place in the “honeymoon phase” wherein the post-study transition had not yet shaken out. Furthermore,

the fact that the “entry” interview took place during-study, meant that their reflections on the decision to study abroad were subject to—often distant—recollections, influenced retroactively by the ongoing experience of studying in the host country. While a degree of reflection is inevitable in life-course research, gathering data across a longer temporal span would allow for the development and dynamism of participants’ narratives and evolving self-perception to be captured in greater detail. Alternatively, other forms of triangulation, perhaps participant diaries, could have been an effective addition to the study if the introduction of more interviews was not feasible.

On completion of this study, I have some reflections on the use of the chordal triad as an analytical framework in the study of migration processes. Overall, it proved a powerful tool, not only providing a theoretical foundation for my understanding of agency as a temporally moderated quality, reflecting the processual nature of migration trajectories, but also by delineating different elements and their subtones that could be tested empirically. The delineation of three elements of agency, in and of itself, is an important theoretical leap, as the complete “triad” subsumes the contributions of Bourdieu, Giddens, Dewey, and Mead, among others, while moving beyond them in the creation of an inclusive theory. However, that is not to say that I did not identify shortcomings in the chordal triad model. Importantly, this study revealed that the availability and accuracy of information is critical in informing individuals’ agency, but the authors do not provide a convincing account of this in their introduction of the chordal triad model. To Emirbayer and Mische, actors’ primary sources of information are the “cultural resources” upon which the iterational element of agency draws. This is certainly important, but does not capture the variety of information sources that participants of this study routinely consulted when negotiating their post-study transition.

Within the confines of the chordal triad model, if information is understood only as “cultural resources,” the influence of information in individuals’ trajectories would be confined to the process of “manoeuvring between repertoires” of action. This does not reflect the role of information as revealed in this study, nor the information-seeking behaviours in which participants engaged. Within participants’ narratives, information served not only to guide participants’ choice between established trajectories of action, but had a demonstrable impact on participants’ success in their pursuit of any particular pathway. I propose that subsuming a broader conceptualisation of the role of information and information seeking into the chordal triad framework would serve to increase its utility in the study of migration. Furthermore, the discovery of anti-iterational sentiment and its influence on participants’ choices and actions was not only an important empirical finding, but could encourage a further adjustment of the chordal triad framework. Participants’ choices to deliberately forgo

established pathways of action, driven by a desire to assert their independence and achieve “social differentiation” from their peers, cannot be situated in the chordal triad framework as written by Emirbayer & Mische (1998). But, in transformative or self-formative contexts such as the education-migration nexus, I urge researchers utilising the chordal triad to be alert to anti-iteration, as well as iteration, as an important agentic orientation. Despite these limitations, the potential of the chordal triad is far from exhausted in the study of student mobility and migration. I was impressed by the depth of insights that it provided in this study, and I would be interested to see it implemented as an analytical heuristic in the study of, for example, study abroad destination and course choice, where it has potential to offer further counterpoints to ongoing assumptions of homogeneity and deficit among the international student population.

I would also like to discuss some limitations that were not attributable to the methods chosen but are associated with the specifics of this study, in particular. Among these were the sampling biases I mentioned in Chapter 4. The fact that the UK sample, for example, was heavily biased towards female participants puts some limitations on the certainty with which I can interpret the narrative data. Furthermore, in light of my assertion in this chapter that participants’ narratives and trajectories may have been sensitive to quite granular temporal variations, the asymmetrical design of the study may have been a greater limitation than I predicted at the outset of this research. To illustrate this point, given that the temporal orientation of participants’ projections changed considerably between the “entry” and “exit” interviews, and my interpretation that this is associated by a changing temporal horizon of their overall life-course journey, the fact that these interviews took place at a different time relative to participants’ trajectories in the different national cases is a distinct limitation. For example, I conducted the “entry” interview closer to graduation season in the Japanese case than in the UK, potentially resulting in participants’ having more settled post-study trajectories and, by extension, appearing to have encountered fewer or better dealt with “lived conflicts” of the post-study transition. While the presence of the “exit” interview can mitigate this slightly, the only way to adequately control for this would be to use a symmetrical research design across the national cases.

Recommendations for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

Recommendations for future research

In light of contributions and limitations of this study, I would like to offer some tentative recommendations for future research that might deepen our understanding of the role of agency in the education-migration nexus. I recommend research that falls under two

broad themes: (1) research to identify different forms of student migration in different contexts and systems, and (2) research into the conditions and resources that shape the agency. The first theme is valuable because, reflecting the geographical limitations of this research, there is merit in extending analyses of the education-migration nexus to more diverse contexts. This means greater attention paid to host nations not generally regarded among the majority host nations of international students, but nevertheless are a study destination. This would also include analysis of the role of agency in more diverse pathways, not limited to full degree-mobility in universities. For example, there is certainly potential for analyses of alternative providers, including residential language schools and technical and vocational colleges. Alternatively, credit-mobility programmes could be the site of alternative insights into the education-migration nexus. Though such programmes are not typically associated with post-study migration transitions in the same way that degree-mobility is, given the importance of “experiential enactment” in this study, it could be fruitful to investigate the extent to which short-term credit-mobility could be associated with later returns to the destination country as a degree-mobile student or labour migrant. As a side note, all of this research could be improved by the contributions of “insider” researchers from the participating student-migrants’ countries of origin. Such contributors would bring with them a more nuanced understanding of the specifics of participants’ cultural and social-psychological contexts than I could provide in this study.

Again developing the first research theme, I propose that we seek to engage in a more critical analysis of the role of individual HEIs in student-migrants’ post-study transitions and future trajectories. As I reviewed earlier in the thesis, universities are beginning to be recognised as “intermediary organisations” in the education-migration nexus (Beech, 2018), that may even function as de-facto “selection actors” in migrant trajectories (Brunner, 2017). However, research to date has primarily focused on their role in attracting international students, with little attention being paid to their role in supporting student-migrants’ integration to the workforce and wider society after their graduation. Given the findings of this study, and the degree to which participants seemed to be navigating their trajectories—to a greater or lesser extent—in the absence of institutional support, this seems to be an important oversight. I propose that future research should consider HEIs’ relationship with student-migrants throughout their post-study trajectory, and perhaps provide a critical perspective on the degree to which universities should take responsibility for international students’ post-study outcomes. Formal accountability measures for local students’ outcomes and satisfaction exist in a number of national systems and, in light of the

findings of this study, it could be argued that similar measures should be implemented for international students.

I turn now to the second research theme, concerned primarily with developing our understanding of the conditions and resources that shape agency. This thesis represents a preliminary foray into this line of inquiry, focusing on the conditioning influence of official regulations on student-migrants' development of agency throughout their trajectories. As argued throughout the thesis, in the context of regular migration pathways such as student migration, this is an important factor in influencing migrants' agentive capacities, potentially acting as the catalyst to inspire agents to explore agentive modes beyond the iterational. However, regulations are far from the only factor with such an influence. A non-exhaustive list of other background conditions that likely influence agentive development and practice includes gender identity, ethnic background, family income and wealth, language of use, prior education, and country of origin. These factors were peripherally considered in this thesis, but due to my desire to consciously account for the influence of regulation and the development of agency over time, it was not possible to place the same level of emphasis on these other factors. Furthermore, the complexity of these overlapping factors is not possible to capture in a study of this size.

Thus, I propose that future research make a concerted effort to engage with the influence of the various background conditions and resources that shape agency in the education-migration nexus. This is an enormous theoretical and empirical endeavour, requiring large samples of intensive data, captured longitudinally and in diverse geographic, cultural, and personal contexts. While immensely challenging, developing our understanding of the interplay of structure/agency in light of these various influencing factors may provide significant advances in our understanding of the internal dynamics of migration processes more broadly. Such research thus offers an opportunity to revolutionise our understanding of migration flows, thereby better informing policy and, crucially, protecting migrant communities from insecurity and risk.

Recommendations for future policy and regulation

The evidence from this study supports the recommendation that national governments and universities should do more to ensure that student-migration pathways are stable and transparent. I recognise that the receptivity of legal frameworks will always be subject to change according to the needs of the government in power and, as such, it is unreasonable to assert that migration frameworks should always be receptive to student-migrants. However, given the clear negative impacts of instability and a lack of transparency on the

security of student-migrants governed by these frameworks, I think it is justifiable to argue that governments and universities should commit to offering a regulatory experience that is both stable and transparent. In relation to the need to reduce insecurity and instability in migration flows, I concur with the United Nations' Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, published in 2018, which recommends that:

[States should] provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration... publicize a centralized and publicly accessible national website to make information available on regular migration options, such as on country-specific immigration laws and policies, visa requirements, application formalities, fees and conversion criteria, employment permit requirements, professional qualification requirements, credential assessment and equivalences, training and study opportunities, and living costs and conditions, in order to inform the decisions of migrants. (UN, 2018, p. 9-10)

In my eyes, the final clause of the above statement, “to inform the decisions of migrants,” is the critical point. If migration is to be safe, orderly, and regular, where possible the decision to migrate must take place in possession of the relevant information that may affect that migration trajectory. This research has revealed that instability and a lack of transparency can prevent this from being the case for student-migrants. If the regulatory framework is unstable, it may change in the midst of migrants' trajectories rendering the conditions under which they decided to move irrelevant. Similarly, if there is a lack of transparency or availability of information regarding the conditions of the relevant move, migrants may be mis- or dis-informed about the realities of their chosen trajectory. This study has provided ample evidence of the negative impacts this can have on those pursuing their migration trajectory without fully grasping their legal rights and responsibilities and the pathways legitimately available to them.

In light of this, I propose that regulatory frameworks should be simplified such that a typical migrant can identify and understand the relevant regulations that will influence their trajectories. The 1,100 pages that make up the immigration rules in the UK are a fitting example of bad practice in this regard (Grierson, 2019). Furthermore, a degree of stability should be maintained. This is the case in Japan, but again the UK provides a counterexample, where more than 5700 changes were made to the immigration rules between 2010 and 2018, alone (Bozic, Barr, McIntyre, & Noor, 2018). Clearly, regulatory frameworks have to be modified in response to changes in migration flows and other contextual factors, but constant and haphazard amendments to immigration regulations only serve to confuse and confound.

With such frequent changes, and migration trajectories being played out on the scale of months or years, how can anyone have any degree of certainty that their trajectory will remain legal and legitimate? The answer lies in temporal guarantees that a particular regulatory arrangement will remain in effect for a set period of time. This may take the form of clearly marked policy periods (such as five-year plans), or in grandfather clauses that ensure that, for any individual, the regulatory arrangements at the point of departure will be honoured for the duration of their trajectory. However it is managed, governments should aspire to create a system in which student-migrants embarking on their study abroad journey should have ready access to easy-to-parse information regarding the regulatory framework that will govern them throughout their trajectory and into the post-study environment. Only then will the decision to embark on a trajectory through the education-migration nexus be fully informed.

However, if student-migration is to become more “safe, orderly, and regular,” responsibilities cannot end with national governments. As argued in Chapter 2, migration trajectories are typically managed through the interaction of an “ensemble” of actors, whose input at different stages of migration trajectories provides targeted support for individual migrants at particular times (Cranston et al., 2018; Spaan & Hillmann, 2013). In the context of student migration, universities are critical actors within this ensemble, serving as one of the primary attractors of students in the first instance, and the formal sponsor for students’ residence in the host country throughout their studies (Baas, 2019). Evidence appears to indicate that the universities dedicate significant resources towards the attraction of international students, often in concert with overseas agents (Beech, 2018), and ensuring compliance with immigration regulations during study, in concert with the national government (Marginson, 2012; Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018). However, evidence in this study indicated that universities may not always dedicate similar resources to liaising with employers and supporting international students’ post-study trajectories, leaving them to fend for themselves in negotiating transition to the labour force. This is problematic for a number of reasons. First and foremost, this is an abdication of the responsibility to support the safety and wellbeing of their international student body. Beyond that, neglecting to support international students’ transition to the workforce threatens to undermine many of the arguments for attracting student-migrants, including the “race for talent” and public diplomacy imperatives. A restrictive regulatory environment may prevent international graduates from becoming contributing members of the labour force in the host country, and the sense of being neglected or forced out will inevitably impact on the relationship between the host country and student-migrant, making them less likely to serve the public diplomacy

imperative by acting as “ambassadors” on their return home. To avoid this eventuality, I recommend that targeted support systems be developed by universities to aid international students in their transition to the workforce. These systems may seek to draw on relationships with willing employers and the recommendations of Tran and Vu (2018), who argued that support systems can “facilitate and empower [the] agency of international students” by awakening them to opportunities outside the university early in their sojourn, and providing the necessary information to support the pursuit of these opportunities.

Concluding remarks

During the writing of this thesis, the landscape of student migration in both the UK and Japan has changed significantly. In the UK, the new Conservative government, elected by landslide in December 2019, is in the process of re-implementing a two-year PSWV for those graduating in or after the 2020/21 academic year (Home Office, 2019). Though the precise maintenance requirements and right to bring dependents on this visa are not yet confirmed, the Home Office states that both full-time and part-time employment will be permitted on the new PSWV, which would suggest that post-study work opportunities will broaden for graduating students in the near future (UKCISA, 2020). By extension, this visa indicates that international student-migrants have returned as a central component of labour migration policy in the UK. In Japan, both absolute inbound mobility and post-study retention continue to rise, with the “300,000 international students” target surpassed, and up to 50% of international graduates expected to remain after their graduation in April 2020. In general, the foreign-born population of Japan is on the up, with the latest amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (April 2019) designed to attract 345,000 more foreign workers over the next 5 years. This amendment appears to indicate that, alongside student-migrants, new forms of labour migrants are now officially recognised as a partial remedy to labour shortages and demographic decline. When viewed next to the “Comprehensive Policy to Accept Foreign Talent and to Live With Them,” which seeks to set up “one-stop” clinics for migrants and locals to exchange information and receive consultation services in local government centres, we may be witnessing the start of a more holistic attempt to prepare Japanese society and industry for the influx and integration of foreign nationals.

The ongoing changeability of the education-migration nexus in both national case-studies is testament to the fact that student migration remains both politically salient and contingent. National policies in both the UK and Japan continue to re-position student-migrants within their international education and labour force management strategies. As we

have seen, the management of student migration pathways at the hands of national governments, universities, and other intermediaries, has significant consequences for individual students-migrants. Pathways to post-study work open and close, and student-migrants that aspire to remain in the host country are subject to the swing of the political pendulum.

Further uncertainty has arisen due to the outbreak of COVID-19, which poses a new and unpredictable threat to the future of these flows. At the time of writing, concerns about the communication of the virus across borders have brought student flows to an emergency stop. As a result of the stringency of ongoing lockdowns and travel restrictions, and the likelihood of further waves of infection and intermittent lockdown in the coming years (Ferguson et al., 2020), students' ability to travel is likely to be restricted for the foreseeable future. Already, hundreds of thousands of students have been unable to, or refrained from travelling to commence or continue their studies. While travel to the UK is still possible, Japan's borders remain functionally closed, even to foreign residents (including students) in possession of a visa²⁸. Around the world, international students have been forced to isolate in their country of residence, without classes to attend. Many of these students have been unable to access the social support systems afforded to local residents, leaving them reliant on charity (Henriques-Gomes, 2020). Crucially, the unprecedented recession will cause enormous disruption to the post-study labour market, potentially curtailing opportunities after graduation. The full scale of disruption will emerge over time. It may be a matter of years before the international education market stabilises, and it may never return to the pre-COVID normal (Marginson, 2020).

The education-migration nexus, therefore, is an evolving phenomenon that seems destined to remain changeable and contested, and the landscape of student migration has only been further disrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19. In light of this, it is critical that we develop robust theoretical frameworks that are responsive to these changing contexts, and aid us in understanding the significance of the education-migration nexus from the perspectives of nation-states and the higher education sector, but particularly in the lives of the student-migrants themselves. In this effort, at the outset of this research I set out to understand how student-migrants' agency may be developed and practiced in the education-migration nexus, using empirical data from the UK and Japan. Drawing on these contexts as contrasting case studies, the study revealed that agency is a dynamic quality in the context

²⁸ In May 2020, only 1,700 foreign visitors entered Japan, relative to 2.7m in May 2019 (JNTO, 2020).

of student-migration, evolving over time through complex interactions with regulatory frameworks, individuals' past and shared experiences, and their evolving life-course projects. However important the political and social contexts of the education-migration nexus, the narratives provided by participants in this study revealed that habit, imagination, and judgment each provide tools that individuals can use to navigate the challenging terrain of student migration trajectories. While all participants were influenced by context and circumstance, they exhibited the capacity to draw on these tools when making choices and taking action in the pursuit of their goals. Contexts change, that much is clear, but, going forward, it is imperative that we also recognise that student-migrants are evolving actors in the midst of a process of self-formation, whose goals and agentive capacities are not constant, but develop throughout their trajectories.

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Participant Vignettes

Ariana - Japan

Ariana was born in Mongolia and raised in the Gers of Ulaanbaatar. The first 15 years of her life were marked by struggles with poverty. Like other children in her community, she spent much of her time gathering safe drinking water due to the lack of sanitation and waste systems. As she emotionally described in the “entry” interview: “At that age, I understood that that is my work... But... that is not children’s work.” Despite the struggles shared by all in her neighbourhood, Ariana’s family was relatively privileged. Her parents had both studied abroad in Russia, returning as community leaders. They were also able to support her education. Ariana completed an undergraduate and masters course at a university in the city, later becoming a systems analyst and civil servant.

Working in the Urban Planning department of the Mongolian government, Ariana primarily worked on upgrading ICT systems. However, she grew frustrated that her work was not directly linked to the development of the Ger communities in which many of her family and friends still lived. Wanting to have more of an impact, she began to apply for the JDS program to develop skills more directly applicable to the social and infrastructural problems that she had witnessed throughout her childhood. After a great deal of effort, she was successful—at the 6th attempt—in gaining sponsorship from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to pursue a master’s degree in Japan. She studied urban planning, with an emphasis on wastewater management. For her graduate research project she administered a survey in her home neighbourhood, seeking to understand the most pressing challenges facing the community, and developed a pilot project to encourage better wastewater disposal. Throughout her two years in Japan, she was accompanied by her husband, who was able to find part-time employment, and daughter, who attended the local public school. The family enjoyed life in Japan and, when approaching the end of the two-year programme, Ariana pursued a doctoral position in her department. However, the conditions of her scholarship dictated that she return home in the short-term.

At the time of the “exit” interview, Ariana had returned to Mongolia and her job in the Urban Planning Department. However, she planned to return to Japan in the future, aspiring to study for a PhD when the opportunity arises, and she expressed excitement about maintaining the relationships she had built with researchers in Japan. Alternatively, she was also considering business opportunities that could capitalise on the recent Japan-Mongolia trade agreement, and create jobs in her local community.

Arya - UK

Arya was born in India, and grew up reading Harry Potter and Jane Austen books with her mother, slowly developing an affinity for the UK. This became important in her teenage years, when considering opportunities to study abroad at university. As Arya described, the “general route that a middle-class Indian child would take” involved the completion of undergraduate studies in India before moving to the US for postgraduate studies and pursuing employment. However, her scepticism towards the “general, normal route,” her image of the US as “very alien and distant,” and her pre-existing affinity for the UK caused her to look to British universities for postgraduate studies and employment.

At the time of this research, Arya was in her second period of study in the UK. Having finished her bachelor’s degree in her native India, in 2009 she began her first “comfortable adventure” in the UK in the form of a postgraduate degree in marketing. Originally planning to stay in the UK on a post-study work visa (PSWV), her head was turned by a job offer from one of the largest media companies in India, and she instead returned home shortly on completion of her master’s degree. After some years in that position, and with the encouragement of her parents and memories of life in the UK, Arya decided to look for opportunities to return to the UK for her doctoral studies. Some challenges (finding funding) resulted in Arya changing her institution and supervisory team. She finally began her PhD in 2015. At the time of the “entry” interview, she was in the third year of her doctorate, writing her thesis and looking for opportunities for postdoctoral positions around the world. She confessed to be “strategic” in her pursuit of jobs, and ranked four universities spread across three countries in order of preference. This list of ideal institutions depended on her “two priorities”: “where it’s best for my research and where it’s not difficult for me to live within the society.”

At the completion of this research, Arya had extended her studies and was a few months away from completing her thesis. She was still pursuing postdoctoral positions in the UK and abroad, but between the “entry” and “exit” interviews her priorities list of ideal institutions had changed. Changes in the political arena had caused her to rule out positions in North America, while changing lifestyle preferences had reduced the attractiveness of the original first choice: “I think that’s just not the right environment for me.” In light of these changes, Arya had created a new strategy for post-study work opportunities, and was more likely to move to London in pursuit of a lifestyle that better suited her needs.

Charles - Japan

Charles was born in a small rural town in southern Laos, isolated from the capital by poor roads and a general “lack of good infrastructure.” Growing up with limited access to water and electricity, he heard rumours of people travelling to China or Vietnam to study, but never seriously considered study abroad as an option that he could pursue. He had never personally met anyone who had studied abroad, and had little access to people or media that could explain what it was like to live and study in a foreign country. “I couldn’t imagine... I only read about that in the newspaper.” Recognising his enthusiasm, his parents and teachers suggested that he, too, could have the opportunity to study abroad, if he worked hard and got accepted to study at the University of Laos. Committing himself to this goal and with the support of his family, Charles was accepted for undergraduate studies in Engineering.

After his graduation, Charles worked for the government in his native Laos, and was assigned to the Ministry of Public Work and Transport. By his own admission, he had no expertise in this area and was mainly engaged in administrative duties. However, after a couple of years gaining experience, Charles was nominated for a JICA scholarship by the head of his department. Recognising this as an opportunity to fulfil his dream of studying abroad, he rushed to apply. Despite issues with his English language skills, he was able to pass the eligibility exam at the second attempt and was accepted for a master’s course, thereby attaining his dream to study overseas. However, he had never considered studying abroad in Japan, in particular. He was understandably nervous, and even considered turning down the opportunity. He eventually accepted the scholarship and travelled to Japan to study for a research-based master’s in Engineering.

Though he loved his time in Japan, he struggled with both the Japanese and English language requirements of researching in Japan. He had difficulty communicating with his colleagues, and recalled several conversations with professors and other students who would regularly pressure him to work harder on his language skills. Despite these difficulties, he still aspired to remain in Japan and pursue a PhD, though the conditions of his scholarship required that he returned to Laos on the completion of his degree to share his knowledge and the results of his original research. At the time of the “exit” interview, he was sharing the results of his research with managers in his department, and developing a research proposal with his professor in Japan ahead of a possible return for doctoral studies in the near future.

Chelsea - UK

Born in a small rural village, Chelsea's earliest memory was the year that her family did not have any money to buy food for the Chinese New Year festival. Chelsea was three years old. Growing up in harsh conditions, she began to dream of travel and the possibility of a life abroad at a very early age, and decided to "study hard and try to go as far as I can." Her first step away from her hometown took place after finishing junior high school, when her father's friend helped her to gain entry to attend a more prestigious high school in a nearby city. Later, she travelled to Northern China for her undergraduate studies, during which she spent a year studying abroad in Taiwan. Having completed her undergraduate, she tried to pursue a master's degree in the UK. Despite being accepted, her parents blocked her from travelling due to a lack of money to support her throughout her studies. Instead, she completed her postgraduate degree in China, before trying to find a scholarship to pursue doctoral studies in the UK.

Finding a position in the UK that was supported by a scholarship proved difficult, with Chelsea having to prove her English ability and create a research proposal in a very short time span. Studying hard for the IELTS exam, she turned to a company to help develop a research proposal. She was disappointed by the results, so took another year to work on both her English and her research plan, and was eventually successful in attaining a scholarship to study in the UK. During her time studying in the UK, Chelsea not only worked on her research but started a successful blog, and completed some consultancy work for Chinese companies with an interest in her area of research. Alongside her academic studies, she saw both of these additional activities as increasing her opportunities post-study.

Importantly, Chelsea also found love during her doctoral studies, which significantly impacted her post-study plans. During the "entry" interview she described plans A and B for her post-study transition. Plan A was to return to China, find a job in her field that would pay enough to help her support her family. Plan B was to stay living in the UK with her partner, finding a job that linked the UK and China to allow her to visit home regularly. When we spoke again at the time of the "exit" interview, she was pursuing Plan B, in the process of paying back her scholarship money to allow her to continue to live in the UK with her partner. Openly ambitious, she hoped to use her experience of studying in the UK to create a business that would enable her to live in the UK while also supporting her family in China through financial remittances.

Dolly - Japan

Dolly was born and brought up in a large city in China, as an only child in a small working-class family. Her family endured many financial challenges during her youth, and in navigating these challenges she had developed a particularly close relationship with her mother and father. In her eyes, they had made large sacrifices to support her education, at a time when not all young women in her community were accorded the privilege. Recognising the sacrifices made to support her, she took on the responsibility of being the future breadwinner for the family, by securing a job that would enable her to support her parents financially in their old age. Indeed, she began her narrative with the following statement: “The most important thing in the future is my work- my work and my pay.”

With this future social role in mind, she had committed to becoming a doctor. After completing both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in her hometown, she was struggling to find positions for doctoral studies. In addition, she had started to experience an urge to broaden her horizons, specifically by moving away from the town in which she had lived and worked since childhood. Upon hearing about Dolly’s struggles, a professor from her postgraduate studies recommended her to a research lab in Japan where she might find a scholarship to complete a research master’s, making her more competitive in her application for later medical training. Despite the protestations of her family and her own self-confessed trepidation, she decided to take this opportunity due to its possible positive impact on her future earning potential.

At the time of the “entry” interview, Dolly was nearing the end of her master’s degree in Japan. The experience had been broadly positive, allowing her to satisfy her sense of wanderlust, while also providing better opportunities in the future. However, she harboured some guilt about the distance from her family. She stayed in contact regularly, but chose to hide some of her extra-curricular activities from her parents fearing that they would worry about her safety or begin to feel more detached. This guilt intensified later in her studies as she grappled with her post-study opportunities. Before travelling to Japan, Dolly had originally intended to return to China to find a job in a hospital or complete her medical training. However, with the expense of supporting her family in mind, she eventually decided to stay in Japan and complete her doctoral studies to allow her to command a higher salary on her eventual return home. During the “exit” interview, Dolly described the feeling of independence she had gained during her studies as positive, but always accompanied by guilt attributed to her distance from her family.

Elena - UK

Elena's narrative was marked by a professional tone. She began her narrative, not by describing her family, upbringing, or educational background, but by offering me a copy of her CV and describing the graduate labour market in China: "You know, there are eight million graduates every year in China. If I just finish education in the UK and go back to China straight away, I probably won't get a good job." This opening statement could scarcely have been more appropriate. This information not only reflected the context behind her decision to study and work in the UK, but revealed her strategic approach to navigating the education-migration nexus.

Eager to balance international mobility ambitions and future career opportunities in her native China, Elena initially spent two years in the UK on a dual-degree course. She spent the second and third years of her undergraduate in a rural British university as part of her strategy to further her prospects in the Chinese job market. During those two years, she took internship positions and gained a wealth of volunteer experience, activities she pursued to improve her prospects of post-study employment. However, despite impressing in an internship setting, she was not able to secure sponsoring employment. A tentative offer was available with a company at which she had interned, but they lacked the sponsorship licence required to extend her employment. Having failed in her first round of applications, Elena chose to pursue a master's degree as an intermediate step that would improve her CV while also allowing her to remain in the UK for further job-hunting.

At the time of the "entry" interview, Elena was in the midst of her postgraduate studies but spending every spare hour researching and applying for jobs throughout the UK. When we met in a small café, she had come from a meeting with the careers service at her university, and had scheduled another meeting for the following week. She showed me her diary, neatly colour-coded for different types of activities. I noted at the time that the majority of her diary was shaded blue, indicating job-hunting, and comparatively little was red, indicating it was related to her studies.

Elena dedicated herself to the hunt for a job throughout her master's degree, and was successful in finding employment at a British company. At the time of the "exit" interview, Elena was working in a large company in London. She had also gained more clarity about the time she hoped to remain in the UK before returning home, estimating that it would take her three years to become a chartered accountant, and have the necessary qualifications to return to a good job in her hometown.

Emily - UK

Emily's parents had worked their way into the Indonesian middle class through great investments in their education, and they planned the same for their two daughters. To support both Emily and her elder sister's studies, the family relocated from Indonesia to Singapore when the children were still in elementary school. Despite the challenges of fitting into a new culture and language both sisters excelled academically. However, Emily had a persistent "niggling feeling at the back of my head" that she did not fit in, nor "feel local." She recalled mentioning this feeling to her parents who repeatedly "reinforced: 'you're here to study, that's it,'" who saw a dedication to education as the best way forward for the children. In this pursuit, as teenagers both sisters were sent to study at a private school in the UK. This second move, independent of their parents, was intended to improve their English abilities and prepare them to pursue undergraduate studies in the UK. The final goal, of course, was to secure degree certificates from British universities, which the family believed would help the sisters to secure a good job in Singapore.

Emily was very successful in her education in the UK, thriving in the safe academic environment of her private school before making the transition to an elite university. Despite some challenges in adapting to the social patterns of British undergraduates, she settled well into her course and developed a close friendship circle. In their second year of study, this group of friends began to search for jobs in the UK, and Emily joined in these activities. At the end of her second year, she spent the summer working as an intern in a large bank which eventually offered her a job on her graduation.

At the time of the "entry" interview, Emily was considering this job offer while weighing up other opportunities. Emily's parents had always intended that she would return to Singapore after her undergraduate, and enter the job market. However, having become accustomed to life in the UK, Emily decided that she would prefer to remain after she graduated, thereby breaking away from her sister's example and familial expectations. Reflecting on her desire to stay, she revealed a growing divide between her own value system and that which was dominant in Singapore. Comparing herself to her older sister, she described herself as "less grounded in the great Asian virtues of how a daughter should behave," and less willing to adapt to the expectations of her parents. Against the wishes of her parents, and despite encouragement from her sister to return, Emily took the job at the bank, informing her parents that she would not be coming home immediately after her graduation.

Golden - Japan

Golden confessed that she had never been a particularly dedicated student during her youth, until she became passionate about learning Japanese as an undergraduate. For the first time, she felt that her studies were important and something that she was inspired to take seriously. In the third year of her undergraduate studies at a local Chinese university, Golden joined an exchange programme shared with a university in Tokyo, bringing her to the capital for a year. During that time, she felt she had started to understand Japan as a country and a culture, further confirming her commitment to Japanese language studies and cementing her desire to return to Japan in future.

After finishing her bachelor's, Golden had decided to pursue a career as a Japanese teacher. As the first step towards qualification, she pursued a master's degree in Japan, both to improve her language skills and gain technical knowledge in the field of education. She spent two years on her master's course, meanwhile working part time to support her studies. During this time, she had considered a teaching job in Japan after completing her postgraduate. However, Japanese teachers in Chinese universities are required to have a PhD, so Golden's plan was to remain in Japan for doctoral studies, or to work in a private company to save money to support her doctoral studies at a later date. However, she was later discouraged by her peers who had struggled in a professional environment and failed to navigate the job-hunting process. Golden, too, had experienced some social difficulties during her studies, and was not fully satisfied that she had achieved everything she had pursued during her three years in Japan.

Fearing the uncertainty of the job market and the persistent challenges of socially integrating into the local community at her university, Golden realised that her priority was to find work in which she could use her Japanese language skills, rather than to live in Japan itself. Eventually, she decided to return to China to work. Luckily, she found a job in the Chinese branch of a large Japanese bank, and was able to utilise and further develop her language skills while saving money to, potentially, return to Japan for her doctoral studies. Simultaneously, Golden began working weekend and evening shifts at a local Japanese language school, building experience as a language teacher and to further her dream of becoming a Japanese teacher.

Harry - Japan

Harry grew up in Indonesia in a small town close to the Borobudur Buddhist temple. As a young boy, he remembered encountering many tourists who were lost on their way to the UNESCO World Heritage site, and the joy of slowly becoming able to use English to help them find their destination. He described the “hero’s feeling” of helping a group of German tourists as the catalyst for his desire to live and work abroad. While the opportunity to study abroad did not materialise until a few years later, as Harry summarised: “From there I took opportunities. I decided to quit work and get a job in other countries. Because of that, since the beginning, I moved to Japan.” Harry first had the opportunity to work with academics in Japan during his undergraduate studies. Harry took an internship working with an Engineering professor with links to universities in Japan. Eventually, the opportunity arose to attend a symposium in Japan, and the journey became Harry’s first trip on an aeroplane. During that short symposium he built links with researchers in Japan which he decided to pursue after his graduation.

Turning down a job offer with the largest Indonesian company in his field, he instead took a scholarship to study at a regional university in Japan. Harry excelled throughout his studies, leading his class in both the engineering course itself and in language study. Despite arriving in Japan with little language ability, during the two years of his postgraduate study he was able to become highly proficient, so much so that he wrote his graduate thesis in Japanese. He also became comfortable working and living in Japan, and sought the opportunity to stay post-study.

In light of his success during his course and in line with the overall objectives of his scholarship programme, Harry’s host institution helped him in the job-hunting process. Initially, the university linked him with affiliated employers who had previously hired graduates of the programme. Subsequently, they provided targeted guidance in preparing application materials, and offered mock interview practice. On the back of this support, the university was able to help Harry to secure a job in a leading auto manufacturer. As he described it, Harry had turned down a “local career” in Indonesia for the opportunity to pursue a “global career,” and the support he received from his university helped make this a success.

Jan - Japan

Hailing from a small village in the distant outskirts of Beijing, Jan had never anticipated or pursued the opportunity to travel or study abroad. Studying and working while living with her parents, she barely left her hometown until she was nearing the end of her master's degree in medical science. Jan was an excellent student and talented researcher, and, when completing her graduate thesis, her supervising professor recommended that she pursue her doctoral degree in Japan. The professor had contacts in Japan, and put her in contact with an affiliated institution which could host her in their research lab and sponsor her studies. This was Jan's first opportunity to see another country and visit a large city, so despite having no background in Japanese or previous desire to travel to, work, or live in Japan, she took the chance.

Jan enjoyed her time in Japan and the inclusive research environment she had joined. She revealed that "the most important person to me is my professor... they gave me many everyday things, for my apartment. They were very kind and warm-hearted." Despite her lack of Japanese language skills, Jan settled well into life at the university, focusing her mind on her research and excelling in her work. Enjoying professional life, Jan wanted to remain in Japan after completing her doctoral studies. She had researched opportunities for medical training or further research roles, but found that it was difficult to train in Japan as a non-native speaker, and that her small lab could not offer her a full-time job. At the time of the "entry" interview, despite wishing to remain in Japan, Jan cited these difficulties as the reason she had all but resigned herself to returning to China.

When we spoke again at the time of the "exit" interview, Jan was working for a large state-owned biomedical company in her hometown. While the initial transition back to life in China had been difficult, she recognised that, in retrospect, returning to China had been a positive move for her. She was enjoying being closer to her family and having a more active social life. Furthermore, her new job required extensive travel to medical conferences and events across China, allowing her to see the country in a way that had never been available to her before. She was positive about the move home, and reflected that many of her friends and colleagues shared similar experiences with doctoral work in Japan: "I have many friends that chose a medical PhD. Only a few would stay in Japan... to be a doctor there is very, very difficult."

Jazz - UK

Raised between the UK, Costa Rica, Africa, and Spain to a Honduran mother and “proper British” father, Jazz had moved frequently throughout her youth. She described her history as separated into semi-distinct blocks defined by where her family was living at the time: “Africa would be more like childhood; Costa Rica is like babyhood. Spain would be, like, high school, I guess.” Jazz fondly remembered her youth living and learning in different environments, and provided a lot of positive memories that revolved around their experiences of different contexts as a family. Approaching the end of high school, however, Jazz began to experience anxiety about her future. By her own admission, she “freaked out” for a few years, finding it difficult to commit to her next step. For nearly four years she worked part-time as an assistant language teacher in Spanish primary schools, before finding new motivation to finish her studies and apply to university as a mature student, aged 21.

Jazz decided to apply to universities in the UK rather than remaining in Spain, hoping to study Archaeology and Anthropology. She was accepted by a number of institutions, and began her studies in 2015. Her time as an undergraduate was marked by the ongoing negotiation of her complex positionality within British society. At the application stage she found that, despite being a British citizen, due to residence rules and not having lived in the UK since she was very young, she was officially deemed an international student when she returned to the UK for her bachelor’s degree. This was not just an official position, but also emerged in her identity. In Jazz’s own words, she was “British but not from Britain... not Spanish, but from Spain.” This complex positionality was constantly negotiated during her time in the UK, throughout which her anxiety over her identity slowly gave way to clarity over her goals and intentions.

Jazz had initially thought that her time in the UK would end at graduation, as a natural continuation of the “where are we going next?” approach to mobility that had persisted throughout her youth. However, at the time of the “entry” interview she had decided to stay in the UK. She had met a British boyfriend and found that she thoroughly enjoyed her degree programme and wanted to remain to work in the field. Her transition was difficult, marked by “panic” around the return of uncertainty of finding employment and accommodation. Indeed, she had to move several times within a few weeks after finishing her studies. At the conclusion of this research Jazz had settled into a community of workers who travelled around the country on short-term archaeological digs, and was optimistic about a future in the UK.

Karen - UK

Karen first studied in the UK on a short-term summer programme while a high school student. In comparison to the education system in her native Hong Kong, the summer programme was challenging yet exhilarating. As she described it, this was the experience that “awoke [her] independence.” Following this “awakening,” Karen began to look outside the restrictive and prescribed educational and social systems in which she had grown up, taking it upon herself to search for alternatives that better suited her changing value system that prioritised mobility, flexibility, and independence. Her decision to study in the UK and subsequent pursuit of a place is the perfect example.

Karen had long been encouraged to study business and apply to the leading universities in her native Hong Kong. However, after she had successfully secured a place at Hong Kong University, she decided to turn it down. Instead, she bypassed both her parents and the education agents working with the family, and began to research British universities, to satisfy her desire for mobility, and in particular those offering degree programmes in law. Karen saw law as a degree with which “you can be really flexible, despite what my parents think,” and she preferred this to business which she saw as more restrictive. Wanting to take control of her destiny, she “didn’t go through any mediator or middleman” and she applied for and secured a position to study law without support. Reflecting, she said “that was a pretty good experience, [applying] on my own and independently.”

Her time as an undergraduate was a new challenge, as her newfound independence clashed with the challenges of living and studying in a new city. At the time of the “entry” interview, Karen had actively connected with the British Asian community to support both her social integration and post-study job-hunting, as she had decided to remain in the UK post-study. Despite their help, she continued to feel somewhat socially isolated in the UK, and had been unable to find a legal training contract or an alternative job that could sponsor her visa after graduation. She was frustrated with the job market and was critical of the extra pressure experienced by international students to perform job-hunting tasks while balancing the pressures of studying in a foreign country, culture, and language. However, not wanting to return home or forfeit her independence, she instead chose to remain in the UK as a student, and at the time of the “exit” interview Karen was pursuing a master’s degree at a different institution. While an imperfect transition, she did describe the move to a different city and exposure to a different community of students as beneficial to her development and likely to help her secure the legal job she sought in the near future.

Karl - Japan

Born in the US to Taiwanese parents, Karl spent his early years in Connecticut, Texas, and California before his family returned to Taiwan when he was seven years old. His parents were highly educated and returned to jobs in the semiconductor industry, where the family lived in a community of other employees of the same company. He described his upbringing as “very bilingual... all of my peers came from very similar backgrounds, they were returnees,” and his youth was marked by a focus on education and an emphasis on mobility in the pursuit of the best educational opportunities. For this bilingual community, studying at an elite university abroad was “a given,” and the majority of his peers pursued undergraduate education at selective colleges in North America. Karl followed this pathway, graduating with a minor in Japanese language studies inspired by Japan’s persistent cultural influence in Taiwanese society. After graduating, he then travelled the world as a missionary and volunteer, spending time in Thailand, Laos, and Mongolia, and learning several more languages along the way.

After his years of volunteering, Karl saw postgraduate education as a route to reintegrate to the labour market, and he enrolled in a joint degree program. He spent a year in the US before studying in Japan for the second and final year of his studies. Karl chose a course with time in Japan due, in part, to the affordable tuition costs compared to American institutions, but predominantly to satisfy his long-held desire to spend an extended time in Japan. His interest in Japan had begun in his youth and been cultivated during his undergraduate, and he was curious as to whether living in Japan long-term would be the best way forward. As a result, Karl studied in Japan “with the intent of seeing whether [it] is a place where I want to stay. I was assessing it as a potential migrant.”

Karl’s time studying did not provide a clear answer to the question of Japan as a place to stay long-term. He enjoyed many aspects of his position in Japanese society, but had persistent issues with discrimination and micro-aggressions directed at some of his peers. In addition, he was not sure that the opportunities and environment in Japanese companies would live up to his professional goals. Despite some misgivings, Karl decided to stay in Japan post-study, having found a position in a Tokyo start-up. However, at the time of the “exit” interview, he was already considering a return to the US in pursuit of professional challenges and a greater sense of integration into the social fabric.

Kirsty - UK

Kirsty framed her narrative as a story of slowly moving further away from home. The youngest of four siblings, Kirsty was brought up in a close-knit religious family in Norway. Recalling her eldest sister moving to boarding school, she remembered how difficult it had been to see the breakdown of the family unit in which she was so comfortable. However, she also recognised it as the start of her own journey to independence, and she had her first sense of wanderlust. When she reached the age of 15, Kirsty followed her older siblings' example and moved away to a private boarding school. Finding that she enjoyed the independence of living abroad and her ability to shape her own identity, soon after finishing high school she went further afield, taking a gap year on the other side of Norway. During this time, she and an acquaintance decided that they would both apply to universities in the UK to continue their adventure, and take another step on their journey away from the comfort of their family homes.

Kirsty chose to apply with the support of an international education charity, which helped her to narrow down her chosen course and suggested institutions at which she might study. She was finally successful in being accepted to study Psychology at a leading institution. Her time in the UK was marked by a renegotiation of her identity. With perfect English and the ability to "pass" as British, Kirsty felt more at home with British students than the majority of the international community, and found herself adapting to British social norms both inside and outside the university. While excelling in her studies and supporting some international students who were less able to seamlessly integrate into life in the UK, she joined a local church group and volunteered in a local community centre. Even in her first year, she found returning to Norway for family holidays to be a jarring experience, to the extent that "I feel strange every time I go home... it is really weird speaking Norwegian again." Symbolic of her changing identity, Kirsty chose to have a second baptism at her church in the UK.

Settling into life in the UK Kirsty was eager to contribute to society and help those who lacked the social support from which she had benefited. Kirsty decided during her studies to pursue work in the NHS, particularly in the mental health sector. At the time of the "entry" interview she was seeking work in local hospitals, but eventually she chose to pursue a master's course for the additional training that would help her secure a job as a clinical psychologist in the future. She had no plans to return to Norway, and felt completely settled in the UK.

Laboo - UK

Born and raised in Tehran, Laboo had a happy childhood. At an early age she was fascinated by schools, but did not like the school that she attended because it was so strict. While still at the school she had begun to keep a notebook about everything that she wished she could change, a list of ideas to give the students more freedom: “the children would be free to do as they wish, there won’t be any kind of discrimination, everyone will be accepted, that kind of thing.” Despite feeling restricted at school, she excelled academically and was among the top achievers in her class. Upon completing secondary school, her parents and teachers pressured her to pursue a career as a doctor and enrol in a medicine course. At the time she “didn’t feel like [she] had any other options, because if you get the marks, you’re pushed into going into medicine.” However, she spent the first three years of her degree going through the motions, while taking online courses in education and sociology in her spare time. At the end of her third year, she was resigned to the fact that medicine was not for her and resolved to change direction.

She dropped out of her course and applied for courses in the UK to study education. She felt guilty for going against her parents’ wishes, but desperate to pursue her passion and to make a difference in Iran’s schools in the future. Laboo spent her years in the UK trying to negotiate a sense of belonging. After struggling to integrate initially and feeling a keen responsibility to give back to her home country, she committed herself to her studies and planned to return to Iran after graduation. However, the influence of Iranian peers—including her sister—who were all looking to remain in the UK, and a personal mission to achieve a sense of belonging in the UK, told her that she had not exhausted her opportunities. At the time of the “entry” interview Laboo was torn. She did not want to stay in the UK just because it was the “cool thing... it’s just kind of expected of you.” Equally, she did not feel ready to return to her life in Iran. In light of this uncertainty, Laboo was tentatively looking for job opportunities in both the UK and Iran while weighing up her options.

At the time of the “exit” interview, Laboo had returned to Iran to work for an international education charity. She had decided that the opportunities available to her in the UK were not enough to convince her to delay her desire to contribute in her home country. She was particularly disillusioned by the poor working conditions and lack of support towards become a teacher, despite ongoing shortages, and recalled being rejected from some training programmes due to her international status. However, she looked back on her time in the UK very fondly: “my experience in the UK was in so many ways perfect.”

Lili - Japan

Since secondary school Lili had always been interested in languages, excelling in both English and Japanese studies. She longed for the opportunity to travel abroad and use her language skills, but her family was not able to support the expense of sending Lili overseas. Instead, she was encouraged by the English teacher to study languages at her local university and apply for study abroad scholarship opportunities. Lili took this advice and decided to study Japanese and English as an undergraduate student, and she was able to spend one month in Japan during her second year. This experience was incredibly formative, leading to a growing interest in Japan in particular that encouraged her to focus on Japanese as her major and consider Japan for further study. In her graduation year she applied for master's courses at Japanese universities, intending to work part-time to cover her tuition and living costs, but was unable to pass the entrance exams for her chosen course. Instead, she joined the *rōnin* community in Japan, travelling to study in a language school and work in a convenience store, building her language skills and preparing for the next year's entrance exams. Passing at the second attempt, Lili pursued a second bachelor's degree in sociology, continuing to work at the convenience store to support her studies.

Lili had become very comfortable living and working in Japan, citing her experience at the convenience store as a critical factor in her linguistic and cultural adaptation. Her parents had begun to put more pressure on Lili to return to China, but she did not feel ready to return to the stability of life back home. She spoke about her friends who had returned and explained that returnees were usually drawn home by romantic partners waiting on the mainland, a tie that Lili did not share. Though trepidatious about a long-term future in Japan, she decided that her next step would be to remain post-study. At the time of the "entry" interview, she was engaged in job-hunting and hoping to find full-time work. Job-hunting was a struggle. Lili felt that she was constantly treated differently as an international student and foreigner, and she longed to "just fit in, as a normal member of society, and be treated as such." Her main criteria for an employer became one that would treat her like any other applicant.

Lili found what she sought in a large department store chain, and was successful in attaining a full-time position. At the time of the "exit" interview, Lili was training alongside a new cohort of recent appointees, most of whom were Japanese, and happy to enjoy equal treatment. She was considering her long-term future, weighing up the advantages of social and financial independence from her family, and the difficulties of managing distance from loved ones.

Misty - UK

Misty was born and raised in Pakistan, but enjoyed joint Pakistani/American citizenship. She grew up in the knowledge that when she reached her teens she would be sent to live with family in the United States to complete her secondary education. Following the precedent set by her older sister, Misty left Pakistan for California at the age of 16 to live with her aunt and uncle. The goals of this move were to improve her English, get an American high school diploma and qualify for in-state tuition costs for the University of California. However, after two years of high school and two years of community college, Misty decided that she wanted to move away from family to complete her undergraduate. She eventually transferred to an Ivy league school to complete her undergraduate, and also spent some time studying abroad in Australia. Enjoying her independence and seeking new challenges after her graduation, Misty moved to Washington D.C.

After gaining some work experience, Misty decided to pursue postgraduate studies and began to apply for master's degrees at universities in the UK, with a view to living and working in London after her studies. Facing significant administrative issues along the way, she eventually arrived in the UK in 2017, studying at a prestigious London university. During her studies she sought to work part-time during her degree and to secure post-study employment. However, Misty came to realise that the market for both part-time work and internships during study, and the full-time post-study job market were challenging to international students. She had been rejected from a number of competitive internships due to her international status, and was gradually coming to terms with the fact that finding an employer that would sponsor her would be more difficult than she had predicted, with many employers resigned to the fact that they couldn't hire her despite her skills and experience: "A lot of them are sort of like, 'this is what it is,' like, 'I wish we could do more but, you know, we can't go forward from this point.'"

Despite the challenges faced en route, at the time of the "exit" interview Misty was in full-time employment in the UK. She was working on a student visa while her employer went through the application process for a sponsorship licence. However, as the days ticked by, time was running out for the company to receive the licence and for Misty to change her visa status before her student visa ran out. On the day of the interview, her student visa was days away from expiring, and she was still awaiting confirmation that her employer had been granted the sponsorship licence. Predicting further delays, Misty had begun to research the consequences of overstaying her student visa until a sponsorship decision was made.

Mo - Japan

Mo described coming to Japan in light of the lack of opportunities in India. He grew up in a large city in the south of the country, and dedicated himself to education with the financial support of his family. He completed his undergraduate and master's degrees at a local university, excelling in research in his field of bioimaging. Nearing the end of his postgraduate studies, he found that opportunities to pursue a PhD in India were few and far between. He had left to choose between entering industry or looking abroad for doctoral studentships. Despite being offered a job at an international corporation with offices in his hometown, Mo felt the pull of opportunities abroad and chose the opportunity of mobility over the promise of stability. Looking for opportunities abroad, Mo turned to a professor at his university, who had previously worked in Japan. The professor encouraged Mo to consider the same for his doctoral studies, and he began to search for scholarships. After a year of searching, he eventually succeeded in securing a position in the same lab in which his Indian supervisor had previously worked.

Mo's time in Japan was his first extended stay abroad. Recalling the challenges of the first few months, in which he did not have a phone or internet and relied heavily on neighbours for support and advice, he was openly of about his personal development during his time in Japan. He had developed some language skills, a familiarity with Japanese culture and social behaviours, and become an important part of a cultural exchange group in his small town. Nearing the end of his PhD at the time of the "entry" interview, Mo saw this small town as his second home. He missed living close to family, but had a close-knit community of international students and interested locals. In light of his positive experience, Mo had encouraged his younger sister to follow in his footsteps and pursue postgraduate studies in Japan. She had taken this advice and was studying at the same institution.

Settled into his new home and keen to remain at least until his sister had completed her studies, Mo decided to remain in Japan after graduation. Unfortunately, his supervisor had recently entered retirement and was unable to give the necessary job-hunting support. As a result, Mo found the academic labour market closed and difficult. Lacking a full-time position, at the time of the "exit" interview, Mo was working in short-term research assistant contracts to remain in Japan in support of his sister, while looking for something more permanent.

Pedro - Japan

Born into the large Japanese diaspora in South America, Pedro was introduced to Japanese culture and language at a young age. His grandparents had moved to Argentina after World War Two, and though they had lost some of their language skills, they still practised aspects of Japanese culture around their home. Pedro took an interest in both the culture and language, enjoying Japanese music and television shows that were aired on Argentinian television. While he was still in elementary school, he decided that he would like to live in Japan at some point in the future: “my dream was to come here, that was the first part. The second part was to live in Japan, stay living in Japan.” He was encouraged by his parents to pursue this passion. He taught himself Japanese in his spare time, and during high school he began researching scholarship opportunities for undergraduate studies in Japan. He found the MEXT scholarship and weighed up the best time to apply. Eventually he decided to complete undergraduate studies and gain some professional experience in Argentina, to ensure a safety net if his later trip to Japan went poorly. After a number of years working in a bank, he applied for masters courses and was accepted for a MEXT scholarship in 2017.

Having attained the “first part” of his dream, during the second year of his course he dedicated himself to job-hunting. He was highly aware of the challenges of the Japanese job market for foreign graduates, and completed all coursework during his first year to allow complete dedication to the task of finding a job. He applied to “more or less 50 companies,” struggling throughout to pass through to the second and third rounds of interviews. Recognising that he may not find a sponsoring position immediately, Pedro was highly strategic in devising a number of plans to allow him to stay in Japan post-study, with a view to later finding a full-time role. In researching these plans he had become highly knowledgeable about the visa and employment systems in Japan, and in the “entry” interview he described Plans A, B, and C, complete with the type of visa and form of employment they would require.

Luckily, Pedro was able to find a sponsoring position. He moved to Tokyo shortly after finishing his studies and, at the time of the “exit” interview, was working full-time for a large software company. Pedro felt that he had achieved the second part of his dream, and was truly living in Japan. He fondly recalled his parents’ recent visit to Japan, during which he had been able to show them around and reintroduce them to the roots that they had never before had the chance to experience.

Pochacco - UK

Pochacco was born and raised in Hong Kong, but began to struggle in school as a teenager. As his academic results declined his stress increased, and his parents began to discuss options for alternative educational arrangements. In 2010, they suggested that he study abroad, taking advantage of a more relaxed study atmosphere than was available in Hong Kong's schools, to help him prepare for undergraduate studies at a later date. Later that year he was sent to a residential boarding school in the UK, where he studied for GCSEs and A-levels. This environment was more suited to Pochacco, and he made close friends with other international students who had also left their families to study in the UK. He also performed well academically, and secured a place to study engineering at an elite university.

Life at university had also been an academic success for Pochacco, though at the time of the "entry" interview he was again beginning to become stressed about his future. Nearing the end of his studies he still had no firm plans for his post-study transition. He missed his family and a large part of him wished to return to Hong Kong, but he also feared that he would not be successful at home. His written Chinese ability had declined during his eight years in the UK, and he worried that a lack of work experience in the UK would put him at a disadvantage compared to other returnees to Hong Kong. He concluded that, if he were able to get a good job, he would prefer to return home to Hong Kong. However, in light of these concerns, Pochacco had decided to seek work experience in the UK for a few years to become more competitive in the Hong Kong job market, while also hoping to satisfy the residency requirements for ILR in the UK. Pochacco searched widely for employment in the UK, or alternative ways to bridge the remaining two years until applying for ILR. While his older sister had graduated from university and almost immediately begun working in a British company, Pochacco struggled to find a job, citing his visa status and a lack of internship experience during his degree as major stumbling blocks.

Despite being unable to find a sponsoring employer, Pochacco was still living in the UK at the time of the "exit" interview. Following his graduation, he had briefly returned to Hong Kong to see family and friends, before returning on the Tier 5 Youth Mobility Scheme. He intended to use the two years of the scheme to find a job, and Pochacco was living with friends and family while looking for employment in a wide range of companies. He hoped that the Tier 5 visa would encourage employers to give him a chance, while also bridging the residency requirements for ILR.

Sal - Japan

Born into a Muslim minority community in the Philippines, Sal's youth was marred by a civil war that interrupted his education. During his undergraduate studies Sal had been forced from his home, and he spent a number of years in a detention and evacuation centre, with roadblocks preventing him from travelling home or to his university. By the time the conflict concluded, the housing, infrastructure, and agricultural systems in his region had suffered greatly and, in lieu of returning to full-time education, his efforts were instead dedicated to starting a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to aid the rehabilitation of infrastructure in his region. The NGO grew significantly in the subsequent years, taking on many volunteer staff from the community and engaging in a variety of development projects. Following a long-awaited political settlement to the civil war, Sal took time to complete his education, studying housing policy at a local university. During his studies he realised the scale of the challenges faced by his community, and sought new opportunities to acquire and share the skills that could aid more fundamental re-development in his community.

Using connections in the NGO sector, he applied for opportunities to study in Japan, and was offered a scholarship to study architecture for a master's degree. This opportunity exceeded his expectations, providing him with technical and research skills required to help his community on his return, but also allowing him and his family to experience a peaceful environment and deal with the trauma of conflicts experienced in the past. Sal and his family spent two years in Japan, and they were able to heal immensely during this process. The family travelled to speak to survivors of the Nagasaki and Hiroshima bombings, learning from their experiences of living with trauma.

When we sat down for the "entry" interview, Sal was only a few weeks away from finishing his course, and he was grappling with the competing needs of his community in the Philippines and his family in Japan. Sal had come to Japan to gain the skills and experience necessary to support fundamental and long-lasting development in his home community, but during his years in Japan he had seen his family live happily and peacefully for the first time. He was weighing up whether to remain to pursue a PhD, reasoning that developing his skills further would allow him to have an even greater impact on development following his eventual return to his home country. The other option, as he described, was to return home for a number of years to begin some development projects, before later returning to Japan for doctoral studies. Eventually he chose to return home with his family, enrolling in a PhD programme there, and trusting that his family could enjoy a peaceful life around their extended family and fulfil a growing sense of responsibility to the wider community.

Shaun - Japan

When Shaun was growing up in Seoul, he was fascinated with video games. While still in school he taught himself to program, hoping to one day find work in the games industry. Games were also his first introduction to Japanese culture, and he developed a keen interest in Nintendo and Sony's games, and as potential future employers. However, as he reached his late teens and was applying for university places, Shaun found extended accounts of terrible working conditions in the games industry, with widespread exploitation of early-career programmers and endless hours at "crunch" periods of development. He became interested in the social systems that gave rise to such conditions, and chose to study Sociology at university to understand these issues, while maintaining his interest in programming and Japanese language study as hobbies. He later found that he had a passion for sociology, continuing into postgraduate education and excelling in his master's programme. As part of this course he developed links with Japanese universities, and at the conclusion of his studies he decided to pursue doctoral studies in Japan.

Shaun felt that pursuing a doctorate in Japan would provide him with better opportunities in the academic labour market both in South Korea and internationally, while also providing an opportunity for him to pursue his hobbies more directly. He called on academic networks and professional connections that existed between his institution in Korea and potential suitors in Japan. He was not immediately successful in finding a position, being rejected from a number of universities due to his lack of Japanese language skills. However, he eventually found a position and began his doctoral studies in 2015. As a natural extension of his early interest in the games industry, he studied labour market conditions for his doctorate, and applied his academic understanding of these issues to his own ongoing job search.

At the time of the "entry" interview Shaun was actively pursuing academic positions in Japan. His original intention had been to return to South Korea after graduation and use his experience and networks in Japan as leverage to secure a permanent job. However, during his studies Shaun found that the Japanese academic environment offered greater stability, and he decided to stay. Despite some struggles with the job-hunting process, he committed to applying for as many positions as possible. He was largely critical of the process, but nevertheless managed to secure a competitive 5-year position at a prestigious private university.

Steven – Japan

Steven's first interest in Japan came as a language learner. He began learning Japanese as a hobby while a high school student, becoming proficient before beginning his undergraduate in Japanese studies. His years of studying Japanese culture and language were the catalyst for a desire to experience Japan first-hand, and after graduating he looked for opportunities to move. He had strong language ability in Japanese and wanted to further extend these skills while getting experience abroad, before returning to China for work. On the recommendation of his professor back in China he enrolled in a master's programme in a leading Japanese university.

Steven enjoyed his studies, and was committed to his plan to remain in Japan after graduating. This commitment grew further in light of drastic changes to Steven's personal circumstances during his studies. He found love in Japan, meeting a fellow Chinese national who had come to Japan for postgraduate studies. They married in the second year of their studies and, soon thereafter, Steven's wife decided to enrol in a PhD programme at her university in Japan. With that, Steven committed to finding work in Japan for at least the next four years, helping to support his wife's studies and fulfilling his own desire to experience more of Japanese society through the labour market. Steven worked hard in the job-hunting process, taking several short-term internships, and applying to companies over a six-month period. He struggled throughout, fearing that he would not be able to secure a job that would support him and his wife, but he eventually secured employment in a general trading company.

At the time of the "entry" interview, Steven and his wife planned to stay in Japan at least until she completed her doctorate, but perhaps longer depending on the opportunities for progression available to Steven in his work. He had no desire to work in the same position for many years, and aspired to enter a management role as soon as possible. However, at the time of the "exit" interview Steven's outlook on his future in Japan had changed in light of his work experiences to that point, and the birth of their first child. Steven found that building professional relationships in Japan was more difficult than he expected due to the importance of different interpersonal styles familiar to Japanese workers. He had resigned himself to this fact and tried to adapt, but felt that the "inefficiencies and ineffectiveness" of this work-style was not professionally fulfilling. At home, the birth of his son had reaffirmed the importance of family, and Steven was longing to return to China and be surrounded by his relatives.

Tanya - Japan

An ambitious and talented student from Vietnam, Tanya could not remember a time when she did not want to study abroad. In the early years of high school, she began to apply widely for scholarships, both for short-term exchange opportunities in high schools abroad, and long-term study abroad scholarships for degree programmes. Having been unsuccessful in a number of applications, including government-led programmes in Singapore and Hong Kong, she first heard of the opportunity to study at universities in Japan from an older student who had recently returned to Vietnam from such a programme. The older student came to her school and introduced an institution-based scholarship program at a national university in rural Japan. The programme offered full sponsorship for undergraduate studies, the potential to continue for a postgraduate degree, and boasted job-hunting support and impressive links with local businesses. Despite having no particular affinity for Japan, and having never studied Japanese language in any capacity, Tanya was inspired by the introduction to the programme and committed herself to pursuing this opportunity. She put all her efforts into learning the Japanese language, attending night school and studying in her spare time. Learning quickly, she soon rose to the top of her class, above those who had been studying Japanese for a number of years. In light of her efforts in learning the Japanese language, and overall strong academic performance, her application was successful.

She completed her undergraduate course in engineering and was accepted for postgraduate studies. She emphasised how important her Japanese language studies had been, particularly at an undergraduate level, allowing her to excel throughout. She also stressed how the presence of other students from Southeast Asia had been important in allowing her to settle into life in Japan and enjoy her time there, as she had been otherwise somewhat isolated throughout her studies. Indeed, at the time of the “entry” interview, when Tanya was nearing the end of her master’s degree, she was still not completely sold on living in Japan long-term, due to a persistent sense of being on the fringes of society. However, the opportunity for post-study work associated with her program, and her recent marriage to another Vietnamese student at her university, encouraged her to stay in Japan for the time being. Using the contacts provided by her university, she had secured a position at a large engineering company, and planned to move to Tokyo shortly after graduating.

At the time of the “exit” interview, Tanya and her husband had moved to Tokyo to begin their new professional lives. She was broadly optimistic about the future, but apprehensive about the length of commute necessary and challenges of working in a more restrictive professional setting. Tanya foresaw a return to Vietnam within a couple of years.

World - Japan

World was born in Myanmar and raised by two civil servants. He was lucky to be highly educated, attending a private school that gave him a comprehensive education and helped him to develop a high level of English language skill. He later went on to pursue his undergraduate at a prestigious university, graduating as one of the most educated people in his community. In light of these opportunities, his parents engrained in him a sense of responsibility that came with their privileged position as a highly-educated family. As a result, World had a keen sense of his “role” in society, a phrase he uttered throughout his narrative. It was this sense of responsibility that led him to become a public servant. Though he entered the private sector on his graduation, mainly to pay back the loans his parents had taken out to support his studies, he later took the civil service exams and attained a position in the housing provision department.

After a number of years working in this department, his manager presented the opportunity to travel to Japan on scholarship, to study for a master’s degree and gain research skills to aid his work. Having considered study abroad before, he leapt at the opportunity. Completing a master’s in Urban Planning, World was effusive about the experience, learning an enormous number of skills he felt he could apply to the problems of housing development in his native Myanmar. However, nearing the end of his studies he did not feel ready to return, and was looking for other opportunities. During the “entry” interview, he described how he was looking for scholarship opportunities in Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands, hoping to pursue his doctorate. However, at that stage he was not aware of the conditions of his scholarship, which dictated that he return to Myanmar for a minimum of two years.

During the “exit” interview World revealed that he had tried to remain in Japan for a PhD but had been denied by the conditions of his scholarship. Having returned to Myanmar and recommenced work at the ministry, World had rediscovered his sense of responsibility to his nation. He was committed to his job and relished deploying his research skills in a work environment. Reflecting on his experiences, World was not looking to leave in the near future, but was keeping an eye open for opportunities to pursue doctoral studies in the Netherlands and Singapore should they arise, with a view to perhaps returning to Japan in a number of years.

Yes - Japan

A lover of languages, Yes studied Japanese and Korean during his undergraduate degree in China. He did not have the opportunity to study abroad during his degree, so when nearing his graduation he was determined to find an opportunity to test his language skills by living in Japan or Korea. His plan was to pursue a master's degree, and then remain in the country of study to work after his graduation. He struggled with the decision about whether to study in Japan or Korea, trying to weigh up the different economic opportunities and the social context of each. Eventually, he chose to study in Japan as he perceived there to be more professional opportunities and, predicting a return to China in the near future, a higher value placed on Japanese experience within the domestic labour market.

Soon after his graduation he began postgraduate studies at a university in the north of Japan. However, after commencing his programme, he found that his supervising professor was unwilling to support his research plan and unable to give a good reason as to why. He tried to switch to a different supervisor, but received little to no support from his department or institution, so chose instead to suspend his studies. Luckily, Yes was able to find an alternative supervisor at a different university who was willing to supervise his project and welcome him as a transfer student. Working with his new supervisor, he enjoyed and excelled in his studies, and settled into life in Japan.

Approaching the end of his studies, he struggled once more with the decision of what to do post-study, weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of doctoral studies against finding employment. Finally concluding that he would seek work, Yes invested an enormous amount of effort in the search for a sponsoring employer. However, citing a general preference for Japanese nationals in the job-hunting process, he struggled to find a job. Yes also found that there was no support from his university, which lacked a careers service with experience in supporting international students' employment prospects. Luckily, he found support in the form of Hello Work, the Japanese government's employment services centre, who put him in contact with a number of employers. After applying for 27 positions, he finally received offers, and took a position in an interior design firm in southern Japan. While he had found employment, he was dissatisfied with the position, arguing that it was below his level of qualification and with a low salary. At the time of the "exit" interview, Yes was seriously considering moving on to new pastures.

Appendices

1.0 Ethical Approval documents

UCL/IOE Ethical Approval Confirmation



Departmental use	
If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, you may refer the application to the Research Ethics and Governance Administrator (via IOE.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk) so that it can be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A Research Ethics Committee Chair, ethics representatives in your department and the research ethics coordinator can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the Research Ethics Committee.	
Reviewer 1	
Supervisor name	Simon Marginson
Supervisor comments	I am satisfied that Tom has reflected well on the ethical implications of his research and attended adequately to all relevant requirements.
Supervisor signature	
Reviewer 2	
Advisory committee/course team member name	William Locke
Advisory committee/course team member comments	The applicant has addressed the ethical issues raised by his research and proposed appropriate measures to resolve these.
Advisory committee/course team member signature	
Decision	
Date decision was made	10/2017
Decision	Approved ☒
	Referred back to applicant and supervisor ☐
	Referred to REC for review ☐
Recording	Recorded in the student information system ☒

University of Oxford CUREC Approval Email

Dear Thomas

Considering agency in the education-migration nexus: A temporal analysis of structure-agency relations with student-migrants

Thank you for all the recent communications and explanations of the transfer of the project from UCL.

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

If your research involves participants whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question (this includes those under 18 and vulnerable adults), then it is advisable to read the following NSPCC professional reporting requirements for cases of suspected abuse

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/information-service/factsheet-child-abuse-reporting-requirements-professionals.pdf>

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to research.office@education.ox.ac.uk for consideration.

Good luck with your research study.

Sincerely,

With kind regards,

Liam

Dr LF Gearon

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2.0 List of policy documents

Below is a classified and consolidated summary of the policy documents that were included in the policy trajectory analysis. An unabridged list of all documents is not provided, as it was discovered in the analysis process that only a small proportion were of direct relevance to the study. In line with recommendations from researchers at the Temper project, the documents included are classified as major acts (primary legislation), secondary legislation, and government circulars and guidance (Consterdine & Hampshire, 2016; Consterdine et al., 2015; Mezger & Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2013). Under each heading, I have included a description of the documents included in each national case, and either an exhaustive list or extended series of examples of the documents that were included.

Major Acts

Major acts of parliament are the fundamental pieces of primary legislation which change legal frameworks, including the introduction of new legislative agenda and/or the repeal of previous legislation. Both Japan and the UK host a bicameral legislature, and any act of parliament must receive majority support in both the lower and upper houses of parliament before being entered into law. For the purposes of this study I reviewed a number of major acts that were passed between 2004-2018, and were of direct relevance to the study, in that they contributed to creating or changing the legal conditions for the mobility and migration of international students.

UK

In the United Kingdom, the Immigration Act is the fundamental piece of primary legislation governing migration. In addition, a number of other acts have been implemented over the last 15 years to alter various aspects of the immigration framework. Furthermore, I reviewed acts designed to make reforms to the higher education system. All of these acts were reviewed in this study and are listed in full below, according to their date of publication/amendment.

Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act, 2004

UK Borders Act, 2007

Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, 2006

Borders, Citizenship, and Immigration Act, 2009

Immigration Acts, 2014, 2016

Higher Education Act, 2004

Higher Education and Research Act, 2017

Japan

Since its introduction in 1951, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act has been the fundamental primary legislation governing migration in Japan. I reviewed all revisions of the act that took place between the years of 2004-2018, listed below according to their year of amendment and the Order number:

Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, revised in 2004 (Order 16), 2005 (Orders 16 & 95), 2006 (Orders 21, 29 & 80), 2007 (Orders 9, 47 & 50), 2008 (Orders 43 & 61), 2009 (Orders 18 & 50), 2010 (Orders 10 & 39), 2011 (Order 22), 2012 (Orders 28 & 37), 2014 (Order 35), 2015 (Order 59), 2016 (Order 40), 2017 (Order 19), 2019 (Order 7)

Alien Registration Act (amendment), 2004 (Order 125)

Human Resources Development Promotion Act, 2006 (Order 81)

Basic Act on Education, 2006 (Order 120)

Secondary legislation

Secondary legislation is usually implemented for the purpose of adjusting specific areas of existing legislation without the need for a new Act to pass through the bicameral legislature. In this section I list the secondary legislation that was analysed in this study. These documents were analysed as they represent the secondary legislation that has been used to change immigration frameworks.

UK

In the UK, the “Statement[s] of Changes in Immigration Rules” form the typical secondary legislation by which precise details are applied to the broad framework provided by the incumbent Immigration Act. Such changes are implemented regularly in the UK context; indeed, these statements form the bulk of secondary legislation put forth by the Home Office. This list contains all of the “Statement[s] of Changes to the Immigration Rules” that were analysed for the purposes of this study, titled according to their date of publication and the document’s series number within brackets.

12 January 2004 (HC 176), 26 February 2004 (HC 370), 31 March 2004 (HC 464), 29 April 2004 (HC523), 3 August 2004 (Cm 6297), 24 September 2004 (Cm 6339), 18 October 2004

(HC 1112), 20 December 2004 (HC 164), 11 January 2005 (HC 194), 7 February 2005 (HC 302), 22 February 2005 (HC 346), 24 March 2005 (HC 486), 15 June 2005 (HC 104), 12 July 2005 (HC 299), 24 October 2005 (HC 582), 9 November 2005 (HC 645), 21 November 2005 (HC 697), 19 December 2005 (HC 769), 23 January 2006 (HC 819), 1 March 2006 (HC 949), 30 March 2006 (HC 1016), 20 April 2006 (HC 1053), 19 July 2006 (HC 1337), 18 September 2006 (Cm 6918), 7 November 2006 (HC 1702), 11 December 2006 (HC 130), 19 March 2007 (HC 398), 3 April 2007 (Cm 7074), 4 April 2007 (Cm 7075), 7 November 2007 (HC 28), 13 November 2007 (HC 40), 19 November 2007 (HC 82), 6 February 2008 (HC 321), 17 March 2008 (HC 420), 9 June 2008 (HC 607), 10 July 2008 (HC 951), 15 July 2008 (HC 971), 4 November 2008 (HC 1113), 9 February 2009 (HC 227), 9 March 2009 (HC 314), 24 April 2009 (HC 413), 9 September 2009 (Cm 7701), 23 September 2009 (Cm 7711), 10 December 2009 (HC 120), 10 February 2010 (HC 367), 18 March 2010 (HC 439), 28 June 2010 (HC 59), 15 July 2010 (HC 96), 22 July 2010 (HC 382), 19 August 2010 (Cm 7929), 1 October 2010 (Cm 7944), 21 December 2010 (HC 698), 16 March 2011 (HC 863), 31 March 2011 (HC 908), 13 June 2011 (HC 1148), 19 July 2011 (HC 1436), 10 October 2011 (HC 1511), 7 November 2011 (HC 1622), 8 December 2011 (HC 1693), 20 December 2011 (HC 1719), 19 January 2012 (HC 1733), 15 March 2012 (HC 1888), 4 April 2012 (Cm 8337), 13 June 2012 (HC 194), 9 July 2012 (HC 514), 19 July 2012 (Cm 8423), 5 September 2012 (HC 565), 22 November 2012 (HC 760), 12 December 2012 (HC 820), 20 December 2012 (HC 847), 30 January 2013 (HC 943), 7 February 2013 (HC 967), 11 March 2013 (HC 1038), 14 March 2013 (HC 1039), 9 April 2013 (Cm 8599), 10 June 2013 (HC 244), 31 July 2013 (Cm 8690), 6 September 2013 (HC 628), 9 October 2013 (HC 686), 8 November 2013 (HC 803), 9 December 2013 (HC 887), 10 December 2013 (HC 901), 18 December 2013 (HC 938), 10 March 2014 (HC 1130), 13 March 2014 (HC 1138), 1 April 2014 (HC 1201), 10 June 2014 (HC 198), 10 July 2014 (HC 532), 16 October 2014 (HC 693), 26 February 2015 (HC 1025), 16 March 2015 (HC1116), 13 July 2015 (HC 297), 17 September 2015 (HC 437), 29 October 2015 (HC535), 11 March 2016 (HC 877), 3 November 2016 (HC 667), 16 March 2017 (HC 1078), 20 July 2017 (HC 290), 7 December 2017 (HC 309), 15 March 2018 (HC 895), 15 June 2018 (HC 1154), 20 July 2018 (Cm 9675), 11 October 2018 (HC 1534), 11 December 2018 (HC 1779) and 20 December 2018 (HC 1849).

Below is a short list of additional pieces of secondary legislation, not directly related to revision of the Immigration Act, that were also reviewed.

The Immigration (Health Charge) Order 2015

The Immigration (Health Charge) (Amendment) Order 2018

Japan

In Japan two pieces of secondary legislation are regularly used to make changes to framework outlined by the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. The “Ordinance for the Enforcement of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act” provides additional explanation and clarification of each article included within the Act itself, including the definition of eligibility requirements. In addition, the “Ministerial Ordinance to Provide Criteria Pursuant to Article 7 paragraph (1), item (ii) of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act” is frequently updated to alter visa and residence categories (delineated according to the “Activities” of the applicant), and the eligibility criteria for each category. Every version of this ordinance published between 2004-2018 was reviewed, and these are listed below according to their year of publication and serial number.

Ordinance for Enforcement of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, revised in 2010 (Ordinance 253), 2011 (Ordinance 421), 2012 (Ordinance 4 & 164), 2015 (Ordinance 30, 301 & 392), 2016 (Ordinance 302), 2019 (Ordinance 38).

Ministerial ordinance to provide criteria pursuant to Article 7, paragraph (1), item (ii) of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, revised in 2004 (Ordinance 12), 2005 (Ordinance 16 & 95), 2006 (Ordinance 21, 29 & 80), 2007 (Ordinance 9, 47 & 50), 2008 (Ordinance 43 & 61), 2009 (Ordinance 18 & 50), 2010 (Ordinance 10 & 39), 2011 (Ordinance 22), 2012 (Ordinance 28 & 37), 2014 (Ordinance 35), 2015 (Ordinance 59), 2016 (Ordinance 40), 2017 (Ordinance 19), 2019 (Ordinance 7).

Government circulars

Government circulars are written statements released by ministries that are intended to update relevant stakeholders on the particular details of policy. They tend to be short documents that condense larger legislative instruments and provide only the necessary information for each stakeholder. While not being legal statements of law, they do provide a readily comprehensible account of policy on their date of publication. In the words of the Home Office, they are “useful to people who work for, or with, the Home Office or who need to know the latest policy updates.” In this study, government circulars were reviewed to corroborate the significance of legislative documents.

UK

In the UK, each government ministry maintains a database of their published circulars on the gov.uk website. Those too old to be included in the gov.uk database is available in the national archives. For the purposes of this study, I reviewed the Home Office circulars that were published between 2004-2018. In addition, the Home Office provides targeted guidance for both applicants and sponsors on individual visa routes. These were also reviewed between the years 2004-2018.

Japan

The Ministry of Justice releases an annual statement reviewing all policy changes made in the previous year entitled “Immigration Control.” These documents are published bilingually (though the English translation is often delayed by a number of years) and are published in four distinct sections. The first is outlines “Immigration Control Administration,” focusing on administrative issues from the past year, including key trends and the plans for the coming year. The second section reviews immigration control in recent years, identifying trends in entrants, the number of foreign residents in various residence categories. The third section provides a comprehensive overview of “Major Policies Related to Immigration Control Administration.” This section describes all policy changes from the previous year, outlining their justification, intentions, and practical implementation. The final “Data” section condenses the data from above, providing statistical insights into recent policy changes and any other organisational issues. Every “Immigration Control” document since 2004 was reviewed for the purposes of this study, to corroborate the impact of legislative changes.

3.0 Example of the Temper analysis spreadsheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1	Admission and eligibility															
2	Indicator 1 - Language test															
3	Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
4	UK	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
5	Japan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6																
7																
8	Indicator 1a- Language level															
9	Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
10	UK	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
11	Japan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12																
13																
14	Indicator 2 - Economic resources															
15	Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
16	UK	1	1	1	1	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
17	Japan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18																
19																
20	Indicator 3 - Health insurance															
21	Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
22	UK	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-1	-1	-1	-1
23	Japan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
24																

4.0 The points table for Japan's "Highly skilled professional" (visa)

Points Calculation Table

	Advanced academic research activities		Advanced specialized / technical activities		Advanced business management activities	
Academic Background	Holder of a doctor's degree (excluding professional degrees)	30	Holder of a doctor's degree (excluding professional degrees)	30	Holder of a doctor's degree or a master's degree (See Note 7)	20
	Holder of a master's degree (including professional degrees)	20	Holder of a master's degree (including professional degrees) (See Note 7)	20		
	Holder of a bachelor's degree or acquisition of an education equivalent thereto (excluding holders of a doctor's degree or master's degree)	10	Holder of a bachelor's degree or acquisition of an education equivalent thereto (excluding holders of a doctor's degree or master's degree)	10	Holder of a bachelor's degree or acquisition of an education equivalent thereto (excluding holders of a doctor's degree or master's degree)	10
	Holder of doctor's degrees, master's degrees or professional degrees in multiple areas	5	Holder of doctor's degrees, master's degrees or professional degrees in multiple areas	5	Holder of doctor's degrees, master's degrees or professional degrees in multiple areas	5
Professional Career (Practical Experience) (See Note 1)			10 years or more	20	10 years or more	25
	7 years or more	15	7 years or more	15	7 years or more	20
	5 years or more	10	5 years or more	10	5 years or more	15
	3 years or more	5	3 years or more	5	3 years or more	10
Annual Salary (See Note 2)	The lower limit of the annual salary to which points are awarded, will differ depending on the age group. For further details, refer to ②.	40	The lower limit of the annual salary to which points are awarded, will differ depending on the age group. For further details, refer to ②.	40	30 million yen or more	50
		5		5	25 million yen or more	40
		10		10	20 million yen or more	30
					15 million yen or more	20
Age	Up to 29 years of age	15	Up to 29 years of age	15	10 million yen or more	10
	Between 30 and 34 years of age	10	Between 30 and 34 years of age	10		
	Between 35 and 39 years of age	5	Between 35 and 39 years of age	5		
Bonus Point 1 (Research Achievements)	For further details, refer to ③.	25	For further details, refer to ③.	15		
		5				
Bonus Point 2 (Position)		20			Representative director or representative executive officer	10
					Director or executive officer	5
Bonus Point 3			Holder of a Japanese national qualification related to the work (5 points per qualification)	10		
Bonus Point 4	Work for an organization which receives financial support measures (measures provided for separately in a public notice) for the promotion of innovation (See Note 3).	10	Work for an organization which receives financial support measures (measures provided for separately in a public notice) for the promotion of innovation (See Note 3).	10	Work for an organization which receives financial support measures (measures provided for separately in a public notice) for the promotion of innovation (See Note 3).	10
Bonus Point 5	Employed by a small or medium-sized enterprise whose experiment and research expenses add up to more than 3% of the total revenue.	5	Employed by a small or medium-sized enterprise whose experiment and research expenses add up to more than 3% of the total revenue.	5	Employed by a small or medium-sized enterprise whose experiment and research expenses add up to more than 3% of the total revenue.	5
Bonus Point 6	Holder of a foreign qualification, etc. related to the work	5	Holder of a foreign qualification, etc. related to the work	5	Holder of a foreign qualification, etc. related to the work	5
Bonus Point 7	Acquisition of a degree from a Japanese institution of higher education	10	Acquisition of a degree from a Japanese institution of higher education	10	Acquisition of a degree from a Japanese institution of higher education	10
Bonus Point 8	Acquisition of Level N1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (See Note 4), or a person who graduated from a foreign university having majored in Japanese language.	15	Acquisition of Level N1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (See Note 4), or a person who graduated from a foreign university having majored in Japanese language.	15	Acquisition of Level N1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (See Note 4), or a person who graduated from a foreign university having majored in Japanese language.	15
Bonus Point 9	Acquisition of Level N2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (See Note 5) (excluding points acquired through Bonus Points 7 or 8)	10	Acquisition of Level N2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (See Note 5) (excluding points acquired through Bonus Points 7 or 8)	10	Acquisition of Level N2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (See Note 5) (excluding points acquired through Bonus Points 7 or 8)	10
Bonus Point 10	Work on an advanced project in a growth field (limited to the project recognized by the Minister of Justice)	10	Work on an advanced project in a growth field (limited to the project recognized by the Minister of Justice)	10	Work on an advanced project in a growth field (limited to the project recognized by the Minister of Justice)	10
Bonus Point 11	Graduation from a university separately specified by the Minister of Justice in a public notice	10	Graduation from a university separately specified by the Minister of Justice in a public notice	10	Graduation from a university separately specified by the Minister of Justice in a public notice	10
Bonus Point 12	Completion of the training separately specified by the Minister of Justice in a public notice (See Note 6)	5	Completion of the training separately specified by the Minister of Justice in a public notice (See Note 6)	5	Completion of the training separately specified by the Minister of Justice in a public notice (See Note 6)	5
Bonus Point 13					Investment of 100 million yen or more in the business the person manages	5
	Required score	70	Required score	70	Required score	70

① Required minimum annual salary

An annual salary of at least 3 million yen is required for advanced specialized / technical activities or advanced business management activities

② Annual salary points allocation table

	Up to 29 years of age	30-34 years of age	35-39 years of age	40 years of age or above
10 million yen	40	40	40	40
9 million yen	35	35	35	35
8 million yen	30	30	30	30
7 million yen	25	25	25	—
6 million yen	20	20	20	—
5 million yen	15	15	—	—
4 million yen	10	—	—	—

③ Research achievements

	Advanced academic research activities	Advanced specialized / technical activities
Patent invention 1 item or more	20	15
Record of engaging in research using a grant funded by a public agency prior to entry into Japan 3 items or more	20	15
Past record of research papers (limited to those for which the applicant is the corresponding author), which appeared in an academic magazine registered in an academic research paper database used by Japanese national organizations: 3 papers or more	20	15
For items other than the above: in cases where the applicant submits a research record equivalent to the above items (such as a record of winning a distinguished award), the Minister of Justice will determine whether to give points to the applicant on a case-by-case basis, after listening to the opinions of the heads of the relevant administrative organs.	20	15

* In the field of advanced academic research activities, 25 points will be awarded in cases where the applicant comes under two or more of the above.

(Note 1) Limited to practical experience pertaining to the work which the applicant intends to engage in.

(Note 2) *1 Annual amount of remuneration from the principal accepting organization.

*2 In the case of transfer from an overseas institution, including the annual amount of remuneration received from such institution.

*3 Bonuses are also included in the annual income.

(Note 3) An additional 10 points will be awarded in cases where the organization employing the applicant is a small or medium-sized enterprise.

(Note 4) Including applicants with equivalent proficiency which was certified through testing (for example, a score of 480 or more in the Business Japanese Language Proficiency (BJT) Test).

(Note 5) Including applicants with equivalent proficiency which was certified through testing (for example, a score of 400 or more in the Business Japanese Language Proficiency (BJT) Test).

(Note 6) In the case of the training in a Japanese institution of higher education, excluding points acquired through Bonus Points 7.

(Note 7) An additional 5 points will be awarded in cases where the applicant is the holder of a professional degree in business management (MBA, MOT).

5.0 Information sheet

AN ESRC & HEFCE
INVESTMENT

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Project title: Considering agency in the education-migration nexus: A temporal analysis of structure-agency relations with student-migrants.

Information sheet Draft

I am a PhD researcher at the Centre for Global Higher Education at University College London's Institute of Education. I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD project. You are under no obligation to take part and choosing not to will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you make your decision, I'd like to explain to you why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take your time and read the following information carefully. Feel free to ask me any questions you may have, or if you'd like more information.

What is the study trying to find out?

The study seeks to better understand the nature of the process by which international students in [the UK/Japan] decide and attempt to remain in the host country after completing their course of study. There have been many studies looking at the number of students that stay or return to their host country, but I would like to understand the perspective of students like yourself. The hope is to conduct a series of interviews with a small number of final-year students who have an interest in remaining in [the UK/Japan] after their graduation. I hope that the study will allow me to understand:

- To what extent and how the biography of a student affect their experiences as a student and future outlook
- The important factors in deciding whether or not to stay in the host country
- Some of the difficulties that arise when trying to stay in the host country
- How students' ideas and identities may change in the process

I believe that if we can understand these issues we will be better able to advise and support students and universities in the future, and can make recommendations to governments to lessen some of the difficulties that students encounter.

What does the study involve?

If you are happy to join the study you will be one member of a focus group. I am interested to hear a little about your experiences as an international student and your plans for after graduation. If your story is particularly interesting and you are happy to share it, I may ask to interview you a second time, one-to-one. In these interviews I would love to hear you describe in detail your experiences to date in your own words. If possible, we would also like to have a final follow-up interview about ~6 months after you graduate, to understand how your thoughts and experiences may have changed.

Why have I been invited to take part?

Your university has been selected as one of a number of case studies for the project. I am inviting international students in their final year of study to take part in the study, and I hope to hear perspectives

from a diverse group of students. Therefore, you are one of many students who has been invited to take part in the study. I very much hope you would like to take part in the research.

What will happen if I take part?

If you choose to take part in the study you will be given this information sheet to keep for your reference and asked to sign a consent form. We can then commence with the study and begin the focus group. If you are invited to join the later part of the study, at a time convenient to you we can call or email to discuss the interview procedure, and arrange an interview in a place of your choice. Interviews will be audio recorded, subject to your permission. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Will anyone know that I took part?

You will be kept completely anonymous throughout the study. I will not disclose your name to anyone and you may choose a pseudonym used to refer to you in final publications.

What happens to the results of the research?

The results of the research will be used for a number of purposes. They will be the basis of the researcher's doctoral thesis, and parts of the study are expected to be suitable for publication as working papers, journal articles, and presentations at academic seminars and conferences over the next 2-3 years. The results will also be used to advise and support students and universities in the future, and to make recommendations to governments to lessen some of the difficulties that students encounter.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in the study and may choose at any time to withdraw. You may also withdraw part or all of your words at any time prior to the end of data collection. If you choose to do so your data will not be used.

I am very grateful for your time in reading this information sheet. If you have any questions do not hesitate to ask me before you decide whether to take part in the study. Also, you can contact me at any time on: Thomas.brotherhood@education.ox.ac.uk or by phone 020 7612 6299.

This information sheet is yours to keep for future reference

I would greatly appreciate if you would consider being a part of this project, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Brotherhood

PhD Researcher

www.researchcghe.org | @ResearchCGHE

CGHE is a research partnership of international universities, funded by the ESRC and HEFCE

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INVESTMENT

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「高度人材の国際移動と高等教育における留学生との関係：新卒生の個人的志向と成果に関する経年的研究」

Considering agency in the education-migration nexus: A temporal analysis of structure-agency relations with student-migrants 説明および同意書

本研究を次のように実施いたします。研究の目的や実施内容等をご理解いただき、本研究にご参加いただける場合は、同意書にご署名をお願いいたします。研究に参加しない、あるいは一度参加を決めた後に途中で辞退されることになっても、不利益を被ることはありません。あなたの意思で、研究にご参加いただけましたら幸いです。

1. 研究の意義・目的

この研究は、卒業を控える留学生の方における国際移動に関する志向や成果を明らかにすることを目的として、実施いたします。世界中には、流動的な人々の大半は高等教育の留学生ですが、留学生がどのようなときに留学先の国に留まることを考慮するのか、その決断に影響を与える要素は何か、「移民」をどのように考えるのか、要素を考慮するのか、またどのように新しい環境に同化できるのかについてはよく知られていません。明らかになることによって、留学生が卒業後の支援に貢献できるのではないかと考えております。

2. 研究方法、研究期間

この研究では、二つのインタビューをさせていただきます。第一インタビューは2018年3-5月に行います。第二インタビューは2018年12月に行います。インタビュー内容はICレコーダーで録音し、逐語録を作成して分析いたします。研究期間は2019年10月までを予定しております。

3. 研究への参加と撤回について

研究の趣旨をご理解いただきご参加いただければと思いますが、参加するかどうかはご自身で決定してください。説明を聞いてお断りいただくこともできますので、研究の辞退については、研究者に口頭もしくはメールにてお知らせください。お断りになったり、一度参加を決めてから途中で辞退されることになっても、何ら不利益を被ることはありません。また途中で参加を辞めることもできます。その際には、それまでに収集したデータを分析対象としてよいのか、廃棄を希望されるのかをお聞かせいただければ、それに従ってデータを取り扱います。

4. 研究に参加することにより期待される利益

この研究に参加することにより、直接的にあなたの利益となることはありません。卒業を控える留学生の方における国際移動に関する志向や成果を明らかにすることによって、留学生を支援する方法理解が進み、社会に貢献することを期待しています。

5. 予測されるリスク、危険、心身に対する不快な状態や影響

この研究の参加には、何ら身体的な危険は伴いません。しかし、インタビューを進めるなかにて、過去のつらい経験を思い出されることがあるかもしれません。お話になることがつらい場合、お話しになりたくないことが質問された場合は、無理にお話しただかなくて結構です。また、お申し出いただきましたら、いつでもインタビューを中断します。インタビューを中断された方は研究を辞退していただくことになりますが、改めてインタビューに参加いただける場合は、研究者にお伝えください。

6. 研究成果の公表の可能性

この研究の成果は、博士論文としてまとめるとともに、論文誌に論文を投稿する、学会にてポスター発表を行う予定です。論文や発表ではお名前や勤務先などの情報は、個人が特定できない表記にいたします。

ご希望であれば論文作成前に逐語録を確認していただくこともできます。インタビューの際に録音させていただきました音声を聞きながら、ご自身の発言が誤りなく引用されているか、また個人が特定できる情報が含まれていないかを確認していただくことができます。

また、完成後の修士論文につきましては、内容について資料及び口頭でご説明させていただきますので、ご希望をお聞かせください。

7. 守秘や個人情報、研究データの取り扱いについて

この研究でお話いただいた内容、逐語録を研究目的以外に用いることはなく、守秘をお約束いたします。また、個人情報を保護するため、逐語録のお名前は研究データから取り除き、符号に置き換えて管理いたします。ICレコーダーの録音データは、逐語録を作成しましたら廃棄いたします。データ開示や廃棄のご希望にお応えするため符号とお名前の対応表を作成いたしますが、逐語録と対応表はそれぞれにパスワードを設定した2つの記録媒体にて保管します。また、同意書を含む紙媒体については鍵のかかる棚にて厳重に保管します。対応表を廃棄しました後は、データ開示や廃棄のご希望にはお応えできないこと、また、一度論文等にて発表されましたら、記載内容の修正はいたしかねることをご了承ください。

匿名化し、個人が一切特定されない形にした研究データは、年間保管いたします。5年経過後には同意書を含む、全てのデータを廃棄いたします。

8. 研究に関する資金源

この研究は、日本学術振興会や Economic & Social Research Council 研究費補助金の補助を受けて実施いたします。

9. 研究者、および問い合わせ先について

この研究は、ロンドン大学の Institute of Education(教育研究科)・博士課程のブラザーフッド・トーマスが行ないます。研究内容に関するご質問は、以下の連絡先までご連絡ください。また、研究者の研究倫理等に関する問題が発生した場合は、<email: Thomas.brotherhood.16@ucl.ac.uk> までご連絡ください。

6.0 Consent form

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Considering agency in the education-migration nexus: A temporal analysis of structure-agency relations with student-migrants.

Duration of project: October 2016 - October 2019.

University of Oxford Research Ethics Committee Reference:

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. I will now explain fully the research plan. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or my explanation, feel free to ask me before you decide whether to join in. You can keep a copy of this Consent Form and refer to at any time. If you are still happy to participate, please complete **all three sections** and sign this consent form, and give it back to the researcher.

Section 1 – General	Yes	No
1. I have read the information sheet and understood the research	☐	☐
2. I agree to be interviewed	☐	☐
3. I am happy for my interview to be audio-recorded	☐	☐
4. I understand that my name and that of my institution will not be used in publications and presentations arising from this research	☐	☐
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time up to the point of the writing up of the research findings, and any data I have contributed will not be used	☐	☐
6. I understand and accept that some of my words may be read by a translator	☐	☐
7. I understand and accept that results will be published as academic publications, policy papers and will be shared with the public and the media	☐	☐
8. I understand and accept that anonymised and redacted datasets will be made available to other researchers through the UK Data Service as per ESRC requirements at the end of the project	☐	☐

Section 2 – Use of direct quotations in reports or presentations arising from this research

Please tick the box corresponding to the statement that you agree with:

- ☐ I agree to be quoted directly with no information provided that would allow me to be identified
- ☐ I agree to be quoted directly with no information provided that would allow me to be identified, but only after the transcript of my quotations is made available to me for review prior to publication

Section 3 – UK Data Service

The ESRC Research Data Policy document (available at <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/about-us/policies-and-standards/esrc-research-data-policy/>) states that 'Publicly-funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest, which shall be made openly available and accessible with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner that meets a high ethical standard and does not violate privacy or harm intellectual property' (p. 3). In line with these ESRC requirements, the research team will anonymise and curate all interview transcripts before transferring data to the UK Data Service for sharing. All personal data and potentially contentious, or sensitive material will be removed.

Please tick the box below if you agree with the statement:

- ☐ I am happy for the researcher to anonymise and curate the data arising from my interview to remove all identifying information, and to subsequently transfer this curated data to the UK Data Service

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Researcher's name _____

Signed _____

研究参加の同意書

私は、本研究について以上の事項について説明をいけました。研究の目的、方法等について理解し、研究に参加いたします。

	同意します (○をしてください)
1. 以上の事項について説明を受けました。	
2. 研究の目的、方法等について理解します。	
3. インタビューの逐語録について理解します。	
4. 守秘や個人情報やデータの取り扱いについて理解します。	
5. 途中で参加を辞めることもできるについて理解します。	
6. 修士論文の概要報告を希望します。	
7. この研究の成果は、博士論文としてまとめるとともに、論文誌に論文を投稿する、学会にてポスター発表を行う予定について理解します。	

E-mail:

参加者（署名）

日付： 年 月 日

7.0 Entry interview protocol

“Considering agency in the education-migration nexus: A temporal analysis of structure-agency relations with student-migrants” – “Entry” Interview Protocol

Objective: The objective of this “entry” interview is to understand in as much detail as possible the biographies of the individual students, and allow them to portray in their own words and their own estimation the narrative of their life-course development to date, a crucial window into the development of their individual agency. The project as a whole hopes to not only develop an understanding of the evolving nature of student-migrants’ agency and its relationship to issues of migration, but also to gain an appreciation of the complex interplay of established structures and individual agency in the experiences of individual student-migrants during their migration transition, and develop a temporally sensitive model of the education-migration nexus.

Relevant research questions:

1. What is the present understanding of the regulatory framework for international student migration transitions?
2. How may international students come to consider migration transitions?
3. To what extent and how may individual student-migrants act in accordance with their intentions, and what might be the effects for the students and their hosts?
4. How can the social, civic, and political identities of student-migrants change during their migration transition?

Ethics check and re-confirm oral consent prior to commencing interview, check: ○

Single Question aimed at inducing narrative:

“Can you please tell me your life story, all the experiences and the events which were important for you, personally, up to now? Start wherever you like, and please take the time you need. I’ll listen first, and I won’t interrupt. Don’t worry if I start writing things down, I’m just taking some notes in case I have any further questions for after you’ve finished telling me about it all. So, can you please tell me your life story, all the experiences and the events which were important for you, personally, up to now?”

First subsession – initial narrative:

- Facilitation without direction or interruption.
- Unspecified narrative probes if necessary.
- Note taking using original wording, in preparation for subsession two.

Second subsession – narrative questions building on participant’s story:

- Questions only regarding topics raised by the participant.
- Questions asked in the order in which topics were raised.
- Questions will only use the original wording of the participant.

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高度人材の移民と高等教育における留学生との関係：
新卒生の個人的志向と成果に関する縦断的研究
第一インタビュー手順

目的：

研究のテーマは高度人材の移民と高等教育における留学との関係です。この研究は卒業している留学生の移民に関する意見や希望を調べることを目的としています。先行研究によると多くの先進国が高齢化社会に対処しようとしています。このことを背景として高度人材の移民は（一つの？）解決策となります。世界中には、流動的な人々の大半は高等教育の留学生ですが、留学生がどのようなときに留学先の国に留まることを考慮するのか、その決断に影響を与える要素は何か、「移民」をどのように考えるのか、要素を考慮するのか、またどのように新しい環境に同化できるのかについてはよく知られていません。これまで、移民に関する縦断的研究（longitudinal study）は限定的にしかみられませんでした。近年、移民研究の分野での縦断的研究や伝記的な研究（ライフヒストリー等）の必要性が高まっています。

これらを踏まえて、第一インタビューでは研究参加者（調査対象者・インタビュイー）の伝記や経歴や志向（将来の展望・自分が移民することをどのように考えるか・外国に住むことをどう考えるのか・移住・定住）を詳しく聞きたいと思っています。できるだけ詳細に参加者を個人として理解できるようになりたいと思っています。その上、伝記や履歴に基づいてどのような移民の要素を考慮するのか、またどういう風に「日本に留まるどうか」について考えるのかを検証したいと思っています。伝記的インタビューをするつもりです。

インタビュー方法：

第一インタビューは二つのパートから構成されます。第一部では SQUIN (Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative) という質問をします。参加者に情報用紙を渡し、承諾を確認して、インタビューを始めると以下の例に基づいて SQUIN を聞きますが、参加者に合わせて言葉遣いを変えることもあります。

「このインタビューの目的は、卒業している留学生の移民に関する意見や希望を調べることを目的としています。ただそれをよく理解できるように、あなたと知り合いになりたいので初めに幅広い質問を聞きたいと思っています。自分の言葉でこれまでの個人的に重視する経験や事件などを詳しく説明していただけますと嬉しいです。たくさんノートを取りすが心配しないでください。私が覚えるためだけです。では、急がず、ゆっくりおねがいします。」

SQUIN を聞いてから、話を遮らずに参加者にできるだけゆっくり詳細に答えるように促しながら黙々と参加者が言った通りにノートをとります。第一部にかかる時間は、参加者によって、大体 5 分から 90 分となります。

第 2 部では参加者と一緒にノートを読み込みながら、参加者の経緯を詳しく理解できるように、より詳細について質問します。第 2 部では、研究者が参加者の話に影響を与える可能性が高いので、（余計な・なるべく）影響を与えないように 3 つのポイントがあります：

1. 質問は参加者が話す話題に限って聞こうとします。
2. 参加者が話題を持ち出した順番を守ろうとします。
3. 質問を聞く時にはできるだけ参加者の言葉遣いに従って聞こうとします。

インタビューの 2 つのパートを合わせることで参加者の伝記や履歴に加えて、移民に関する志向が詳しくわかるようになります。

8.0 Exit interview protocol (template)

“Exit” Interview Protocol STAY template

1. **Current situation and catch-up – First, to help me catch up with you, please take a few minutes to tell me about the past few months. (Narrative SQUIN)**
 - a. Can you give me a bit more detail about what you are doing now? Job/Living situation etc.
 - b. What about the major steps that have taken place since we last spoke? What things happened that led you to be in the position you are in now? (Structure)
 - c. To what extent are you happy with the transition you have made to this point?
 - d. When we last spoke you said that you wanted to QUOTE. Did everything go to plan?
2. **Reflections on study experience – When you think back on your time studying, what stands out as particularly important? Why? (Memory/Narrative)**
 - a. Can you think of any ways in which you might have changed as a person during your studies? What about since your graduation? (Typology of changes)
 - b. Can you tell me about any ways in which your goals have changed since you arrived in !!!? What about since you graduated? QUOTE
 - c. Did your opportunities change while you were studying?
3. **Reflections on decision to stay – After your studies you decided to stay in !!! How do you reflect on that decision now?**
 - a. Have there been any differences between your expectations and the reality of living here?
 - b. You said in the first interview that you always wanted to stay, did you ever question that? OR You said in the first interview that you didn't initially want to stay, what changed your mind? (Changes in agency)
 - c. You said in our previous interview that “!!!” in particular made you want to stay. Does that still strike you as important? If not, why not? What is most important to you now?
 - d. What steps did you take to make the transition? Was this what you expected?
 - e. What are the biggest changes that you have noticed since your graduation? Day-to-day life/self/surroundings (Structure)
 - f. From your experience, do you think your position in society has changed since your graduation? How? (Structure-agency)
 - i. Role in society
 - ii. Interactions with people
 - iii. Relationships
 - iv. Treatment by different groups
 - v. Mutual expectations
 - g. You're not a student any more. How would you describe your position in society now?
 - h. How would you describe the difference between being a student here, vs living here since your graduation? (Structure)
 - i. How satisfied are you with the transition that you been able to make?
4. **Individual section – Would you mind reflecting on a few interesting things that you told me during our first interview?**
 - a. !!!
5. **Projections – When reflecting on everything we have discussed over the two interviews what comes to mind?**
 - a. What do you think of the prospects for international students trying to live in !!! after they graduate? (Structure)
 - i. From your experience, how easy is it to stay here after you graduate?
 - ii. What advice would you give to people graduating soon, who are hoping to stay?
 - b. What are your primary goals moving forward? (Agency)
 - i. Are you confident that you can achieve them?
 - ii. To what extent do you think that your time studying here will help you to achieve those goals?
 - c. To what extent do you think that your goals are compatible or in tension with your context?
 - i. How would you describe the general process of student migration?

JP "Exit" Interview Protocol template

1. 現在の状況-最初に第一インタビューの出来事を簡単に紹介してください。
 - a. ご職業など日常生活も、もうちょっと細かくに教えてください。
 - b. どのような段階を踏んで、今の状況になりましたか？
 - c. 第一インタビューには、卒業後「なにに何をしたい」と言いました。思った通りにやり遂げましたか。
 - d. 卒業後、今までの変化について考えたらどの程度満足していますか。なぜ？
2. 留学生の反省-留学生の時代を考えると特に大事な出来事などを思い浮かびますか。
 - a. 留学生の時代のうちに個人的な変化がございましたか？卒業後は？
 - b. 留学生の医大のうちに自分の目的も変わりましたか？卒業後は？
 - c. あなたの経験を考えて、日本の大学において留学生の機会と成功する可能性についてどのようにお考えですか？
 - d. 日本の大学にどの程度満足しましたか。日本に残りたいことは、その満足感に影響を受けましたか。
3. 残ることの反省-卒業後のこることに決めました。今は、その決定についてどうお考えですか？
 - a. どの程度期待に沿ってできましたか？
 - b. 残るかどうかの決定において重要なものについて教えてください。
 - i. 個人的/家族など？
 - ii. 契約
 - iii. 社会的
 - iv. 出来事
 - v. お好みや優先
 - c. 日本に残りたければ、期待がありましたか？
 - d. 第一インタビューにはずっと残りたかったと言いました。？OR, 第一インタビューには、最初に帰国したかったと言いました。どうやって考え直しました？
 - e. 他の魅力的な選択肢がありましたか？
 - f. 第一インタビューには“！！！”のおかげで残りたと言いました。今の状況にもそれは特に重要だと思いますか？なぜ？今の状況にはあなたにとって特に重要なことを教えてください。
 - g. 今にはあなたは学生ではありません。現在の社会内の立場はどうお考えですか。
 - i. 社会内の役割
 - ii. 人間関係
 - iii. 期待すること・期待されること
 - h. 留学生の生活と今の生活の違いを教えてください。
 - i. あなたにとって、日本（大学）との関係どう考えですか？卒業後その関係が変わりましたか？
4. 個人の引用-第一インタビューの引用に対してちょっと反省してください。
 - a.
5. 内省と投影-僕たちのすべての話を考えるとなにを思い浮かびますか？
 - a. あなたの経験から考えて、日本の大学において日本に住みたい留学生が成功する可能性はどの程度あるとお考えですか。
 - i. あなたの経験から考えて、卒業後の変化はどのように難しいですか。
 - ii. 今年の卒業を控える留学生に、どのようなアドバイスを与えますか。
 - b. 留学の時代の自分の目的と機会は、どの程度両立、もしくは対立するものでしたか。
 - c. 今後の目的はなんですか？
 - i. その目的を遂げる見込みはどのようなものであるとお考えですか？
 - ii. 遂げる可能性は留学の時代の経験に影響を受けますか？

9.0 Full coding tree

Name	Description
Iterational	It refers to the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes, and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time.
Selective reactivation	How actors selectively recognise, locate, and implement such schemas in their ongoing and situated transactions; may take place at a low level of conscious reflection, it still requires attention and engagement on the part of actors in order to narrow the possibilities for action; manoeuvre among repertoires - “while repertoires are limited by individual and collective histories..., they do require a certain degree of manoeuvrability in order to assure the appropriateness of the response”
Anti-iterational	The deliberate decision NOT to reactivate past patterns of thought and action; the attempt to deviate from established normative pathways.
Socio-culturally predefined routes - normative	Evidence of “tendencies” - present experiences being conditioned by past (possible shared or imagined) histories; process of “typification... “analogy” of an emerging experience with those of the past, either within the actor’s direct memory or within a social memory”; not necessarily recognised as such
What inspires move away from iteration	Evidence of moment when participants sought to move away from predefined routes
Status quo - structural reproduction	“the agentic reactivation of schemas inculcated through past experience tends to correspond to (and thus to reproduce) societal patterns”; “Institutional decisions do not develop through rational cost-benefit analysis, but rather are embedded in established routines and become “rationalised” (and thereby legitimated) only through retrospective accounting processes.”
Practical-Evaluative	Entails the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations; that which responds to the demands and contingencies of the present. Even relatively unreflective routine dispositions must be adjusted to the exigencies of changing situations; and newly imagined projects must be brought down to earth within real-world circumstances
Judgment of current social relations	Evidence of practical or normative judgments of the particular contexts in which the decision is being made;

Name	Description
Characterisation of the problem	Problematic circumstances at hand must in turn be related to principles, schemas, or typifications from past experience by which they are characterised in some fashion. (This component most deeply implicates the past).”;
Impossibility of pathways	Recognition of the impossibility of certain imagined pathways; description of (personal/structural) constraints that are preventing the pursuit of desired pathway
Recognition of problem	The logical implication is that of a subject-matter as yet untermiated, unfinished, or not wholly given” (Dewey 1985, p. 15). Something must be done—some practical judgment arrived at—that will render the given situation unproblematic, settled, and resolved;
Reflections on own position	What is the participant’s role position within the problem as understood; how are they implicated within/affected by this problem; how does it constrain/enable
Own decision	Evidence of the various stages of the decision-making process for the post-study transition
Decision	“Decision (or choice), the resolution to act here and now in a particular way. In certain cases, such resolution entails a highly discrete or circumscribed choice: an actor “finally arrives at a decision.” In other cases, it blends indiscriminately into the flow of practical activity, and is only clearly perceived after the fact.”
Deliberation	Plausible choices (imagined pathways) must be weighed in the light of practical perceptions and understandings against the backdrop of broader fields of possibilities and aspirations. (Here the element of projectivity enters into processes of practical evaluation; entails (at least potentially) a conscious searching consideration of how best to respond to situational contingencies in light of broader goals and projects;
Execution	That capacity “to do the things that tend towards the mark that we have set before ourselves” (Aristotle 1985, p. 169).”; with execution or action, the arc of practical evaluation is complete: not only deliberation and judgment, but execution as well is required for the contextualisation of our habits, ends, duties, and projects
Improvisation; opportunities 'on the wing'	Improvisational; “actors can resist and subvert the logics and practices of the established order. Such tactics are “always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing’” (De Certeau 1984, pp. xix–xx).”;
Inability to choose	The inability to yet come to a clear decision on preferred pathway; prolonging of deliberation phase

Name	Description
Keeping options open - delaying decision, temporal strategy	Temporal strategies that enable actors to control intervals between expected ritual transactions—for example, by “holding back or putting off, maintaining suspense or expectation,” or otherwise manipulating the “tempos” of action—allow them to gain significant material and/or symbolic advantages vis-a` -vis their partners in exchange (Bourdieu 1977, p. 71).
Potential to transform social relations	This includes the propensity to exert agentive action on existing social relations and has the greatest capacity for change; Exertions of practical-evaluative agency implies a judgment of the present conditions and an acknowledgement of the potential to “transform the situational contexts of action”
Action against social relations	Evidence of the desire to exert oneself upon the relational context in an attempt to change or subvert
Inability to transform	The recognition of one’s inability to have a significant transformative impact on the relational context
Potential to transform	. This includes the propensity to exert agentive action on existing social relations and has the greatest capacity for change. Exertions of practical-evaluative agency implies a judgment of the present conditions and an acknowledgement of the potential to “transform the situational contexts of action”
Projective	Projectivity encompasses the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears, and desires for the future.
IMAGINATION of possible pathways	The locus of agency here lies in the hypothesisation of experience, as actors attempt to reconfigure received schemas by generating alternative possible responses to the problematic situations they confront in their lives; Evidence of “the work of identifying patterns of possible developments in an often vague and indeterminate future horizon”: Actors playfully insert themselves into variety of possible trajectories... expanding their flexible response”
Contingencies	The imagination of sub-optimal alternatives to the desired pathway
Creation of narrative	Evidence of plotting based on plight, character, and consciousness; “While narratives provide “maps of action” (Ricoeur 1991) and thus help to institutionalise stages in the life course (Meyer 1986), they also, because of their flexible and metaphoric structure, can be used to experimentally posit new resolutions to emerging problems”; the attempt to use narrative plotting devices to frame the imagination of the imagined pathways

Name	Description
Easy - difficult paths	The recognition of the difficulty of various imagined pathways
General search for opportunity	The search for unknown opportunities, the pursuit of non-normative pathways without the knowledge of what precise form they will take
Imagining return	The imagination of various pathways categorized by a return to the home country.
Imagining staying	The imagination of various pathways categorised by staying in the host country.
Lack of projection	The conscious lack of projection to future pathways; the “not yet”
Trajectories of ACTION and hypothetical resolution	Evidence of consideration of “how they can get [where they want to be] from where they are at present.”; “After surveying possible scenarios of action, actors face the task of proposing hypothetical resolutions that will adequately respond to the moral, practical, and emotional concerns arising from lived conflicts... not necessarily present at the outset as clearly articulated goals of action”;
Dipping toe into desired pathway - experiential enactment	“rests on the borderline between imagination and action (and hence between the future and the present); once scenarios have been examined and solutions proposed, these hypothetical resolutions may be put to the test in tentative or exploratory social interactions”
Disillusionment with previous preferred pathways	The reflection on previous desires as being undesirable relative to other new projections
Extent of investment in specific projections	Evidence of the degree to which participants have committed to their desired projection
Recognition of new preferred pathways	The moment of deciding on a particular pathway as the preferred one among the imagined options.