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FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

ASHES COL' DARG LAY DONG: TRINIDADIAN STUDENTS'
RESPONSE TO THE UK

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2010

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

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Doctor of Philosophy

ASHES COL' DARG LAY DONG: TRINIDADIAN STUDENTS' RESPONSE
TO THE UK

('We can only really settle down and relax when a crisis is over')

By Michelle Harricharan

This research investigates how Trinidadian students in the United Kingdom (UK) respond to their new environment. The research explores and conceptualises the participants' experiences in the UK. It investigates Trinidadian student adjustment in the UK from a postcolonial perspective. To acquire data on Trinidadian experiences in the UK I created a private, password-protected group blog (interactive webpage) where eight respondents interacted and shared aspects of their everyday life and experiences over six months. After the blogging period follow-up face-to-face individual interviews were conducted with five of the eight participants. The research design was formulated so that the two methods would work together to paint a vivid, multidimensional and dynamic picture of the participants' experiences. These two techniques together are referred to as the blog-interview method. The experiences of three of the participants were captured as in-depth case studies. Grounded Theory was used to analyze the data and generate a working theory of the participants' experiences. A theory of adjustment, called (dis)juncture, was developed. The theory views the students' adjustment as a continuous process of negotiation among simultaneous connecting and disconnecting forces. This can create a student who is a synergy of global experiences, signifying systems, representations, identities, worldviews and perspectives that are not exclusively in one domain: they are hybrid. Unlike much work in this area, (dis)juncture does not view adjustment in stages nor does it assume that adjustment is something that can be achieved. Adjustment is advanced as a process of continuous transformation as a result of constant contact with multiple signifying systems simultaneously. (Dis)Juncture breaks important ground in the field by reconceptualising and re-imaging the process of international student adjustment. The theory thus makes a significant contribution to research on international student experiences.

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Academic Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

I, MICHELLE HARRICHARAN, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

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TO THE UK

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:

x

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The utterance

A young student stares into her first class at a British university. She's been in the country for one week. Her home and her family are hundreds of kilometres away; seven thousand, one hundred and thirty kilometres, in fact. A figure she'd checked, and rechecked, and checked again, in the mind-tumbling anxiety that led to this moment. Eight hours by plane, across the Atlantic, just south of North America, east of Cuba, north of Venezuela. Zoom in. Zoom in some more. A bit more. Just a little ... There! That's her home. And though it may seem small to other's eyes, the fire and spirit of Gaia herself could fit in there. *Like the Tardis!* she told herself, proud that in her one week she'd already discovered a precious British icon. *I'm learning already!*

One week ago she stood in that airport in Trinidad and Tobago – the Caribbean's wealthiest and most diverse island, by the way – armed with advice and an umbrella. She still didn't know where she got the strength to get on that plane. It all went by like a blur. *It real cold dey eh*, they'd said, *make sure and have yuh coat. Yuh have yuh coat? Good, good.* She smiled in the memory. *Now remember, de people dey kina so so eh, so doh feel ahow if nobody watchin yuh or smiling wit yuh an ting. Dey doh do dem ting dey.* How right they were! On her second morning she forgot that advice and smiled and did the unimaginable. Yes, she said "hello, good morning" to her neighbour -- and de man jes watch she, yes! *It not like America dey, or Canada, de people doh like to talk so much and dey not too open and friendly. Remember de las time yuh was dey? Jes do what yuh have to do*.

Standing in that doorway she thought of the life and the fire and spirit of her island; the world she left behind (for the tenth time that short morning). She called home every day. *Yuh have yuh coat?* But she'd made the decision to get some international experience. Getting all your degrees from the same university is not advisable in a global village. It was her choice and she would sacrifice and be strong. She stepped firmly and resolutely into the classroom, determined to fight the pressure building up inside her chest.

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If I run, or cry, they'd win. It was two hours later. That was the longest class she'd ever had. *You from the Caribbean! 'aye mon'!* ; *Cari ... Where?*; *Why you here? You could be sipping a piña colada, soaking up the sun right now*. But the worst had come from the

middle-aged woman standing in front of the room, an evocation, a remnant, a shocking recollection, of a colonial past and an economic present that she had never experienced: *Women are severely oppressed in these countries*, the speaker started innocently, then, staring directly at the ethnically-confusing brownish, yellowish, reddish girl in the middle of the room, (sympathetically?, uncomfortably?), quickly appended, determined not to offend, *but England was like that too, once*. It offended. It positioned her. She did not belong. She was different. Her presence became an obstruction; a hurdle which the teacher immediately felt she didn't have the training to surmount.

Our girl had faced herself in the eyes of the other and froze; suspended between a reality she instantly recognized and a contorted, twisted reflection which she could only sense was her. Confusion, dislocation, discomfort, sympathy, offence. In an utterance, she had been simultaneously minimised and pixelated; ultimately distorted. The earlier utterances had progressed to this, she saw herself as never before: the post-imperial, exotic other. She just wanted to get away, seven thousand, one hundred and thirty kilometres away, in fact.

1.2 Our Girl – Research Aims and Objectives

The short story above was inspired by an event described by Kelly Coate (2009) in her recent paper exploring the positioning of international students in higher education. In this event, an international student in Coate's class had suddenly and unexpectedly begun to cry: "She had just begun to make the links between her home country's postcolonial ties to England, and her own feelings about making a journey to the place that evoked strong emotions about colonial history, oppression and racism" (Coate 2009: 18). The event filled me with curiosity, a sense of identification with the student who had never seen herself as 'the Other', but also with the 'international teacher' who does not feel properly trained to deal with such sensitive issues in a classroom.

My sympathy was predominantly with the student. That this student had "just begun" to make connections between England and her home country is particularly telling for me. It invokes images of a country where colonialism no longer defines young people's lives. Colonialism may be an important part of students' history but they may not 'feel' colonialism as their parents and grandparents might. Theirs is a country not a colony, and they are nationals not colonials. 'Our Girl's' country was in the process of charting its own course and

future; redirecting the imperial resonances in the country and focusing on national development. Maybe there is regret in this student. Maybe she did acknowledge the history but thought that she, and the world, was beyond it, that she could not be affected by it. Maybe she did not think that a history she did not experience would catch up with her and define her before she had a chance to consider and give expression to her own feelings. Whatever her reasons, she was brought to tears. And I became mesmerised by her tears. I wanted to know why she cried. I wanted to know who she was, why she was here, what happened to her. I wanted to be sure she was okay. I do not know her, so I wrote her.

I wrote her as someone who could have been involved in this study. I set her in a world that physically, emotionally, culturally and mentally reflects the concerns of this thesis. This research aims to discover how Trinidadian students in the United Kingdom (UK) respond to their new international environment. The study approaches Trinidadian student adjustment in the UK from a postcolonial perspective. Postcolonialism is viewed as a condition, as the "political, cultural and economic realities of societies living with the legacies and in the aftermath of colonialism" (McEwan 2009: 21)[1]. These 'realities' significantly impact the postcolonial 'subject's' construction of self. This theoretical perspective is illustrated in the story. 'Our girl's' shock and dismay ensued from her sudden exposure to a complex historical, socio-cultural and politically- and economically-motivated matrix of representations which she had not considered in her own constructions of herself and her country. She was defined according to stereotypes which she believed were rooted in colonisation and perceived economic conditions. This thesis presents the adjustment stories of participants who took part in the research as three individual case studies. The *extent* to which these three stories, as well as the data collected from five other participants, intersect with postcolonial concerns is explored and discussed at length.

The research thus uses postcolonialism openly, acknowledging that while the thesis may construct the students as postcolonial, the participants may not personally identify themselves as postcolonial. Consequently, the research does not force a postcolonial approach onto the study by seeking only data that connects with postcolonial interests, nor does it interpret the data through a strictly postcolonial lens. Rather, the research openly inquires into the students' response to the UK and explores *how far* the experiences and responses that the students shared with me intersect with postcolonial concerns.

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[1] Postcolonialism is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

The central question in this study is: how do Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment? Subsidiary questions are:

1. What kinds of experiences do the participants have in the UK?
2. How do the participants (re)construct the meaning of these experiences?
3. What are the effects of these experiences on the participants?

Articulated in terms of its central objective, this study aims to *trace* how Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment. This tracing element lies at the centre of the research. The study aims to follow, in as much significant detail as possible, Trinidadian students' response to the UK and how these responses change over the course of six months. I decided to study the participants over six months because the available literature indicated that international students' psychological and socio-cultural adaptation problems normally peak during the first six months in the host country[2]. It has been argued that adjustment is a very volatile process, subject to constant flux (Garrod and Davis 1999; Hirsch 1999). The distinguishable tracing characteristic of this research aims to capture and theorize that flux.

The research question uses two deliberately broad terms: 'respond' and 'environment'. 'Respond' is used because it is not a specific or limiting term. The study investigates how international students from Trinidad studying in the UK "react" or "act in reply" (Collins Dictionary: 1026) to their new and continuously changing environment. 'Respond' could refer to reactions in the students' everyday actions, behaviours, attitudes, values, construction of self and others, and ways of thinking. The term is encompassing and does not focus on any particular type of response. 'Environment', as it is used in this thesis, is another inclusive term. The Collins Dictionary defines environment as one's "external conditions or surroundings" (p. 394). However, the conditions of one's surroundings need not be solely external. They may be internal as well. Environment, according to this study, refers to the totality of one's circumstances, the internal and external, physical, emotional, social, cultural, economic, and mental conditions surrounding the individual. When viewed in light of these two broad terms, the breadth and depth of the research begins to take shape. It seeks to discover how Trinidadian students in the UK act, feel and think in response to their

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[2] See, for example, Hechanova-Alampay et al (2002), Lin and Yi (1997), Ward et al (1998) and Ward and Kennedy (1999).

continuously changing physical, emotional, social, cultural, economic, and mental circumstances.

1.3 Rationale

This research aims to add to existing knowledge on international student adjustment in the UK. The study focuses on Trinidadian students, a context which distinguishes it from many other studies in this area. Established research on international student adjustment has, in general, concentrated on students who make up a large portion of the international students in the top 'importing' countries in the world: United States, New Zealand, Australia and United Kingdom[3]. Students from East and South Asian countries make up a sizable portion of the international students abroad and thus a considerable amount of research is focused on the experiences of these students in the UK (Coate 2009; Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2002). Furthermore, the literature tends to be dominated by studies with students whose cultures and teaching systems are perceived to be significantly different from those of the host country. It is widely held that difficulties with adjustment are amplified when differences between the cultures involved are more pronounced[4].

Investigating adjustment among students from countries that possess important similarities with the host country, particularly historical and linguistic connections and shared academic conventions, can provide a complementary perspective on the nature of international student adjustment. This material diversifies what we currently know about international students in the UK. It is an important angle from which to balance current knowledge about international student adjustment. Students from a culturally diverse, once colonial country such as Trinidad, may come to the UK with intercultural experience and postcolonial 'baggage' that may impact their adjustment process and self development in different ways. An approach that acknowledges and considers students' postcolonial connections with the UK, as well as their possible intercultural experience, contributes an important perspective on the international students who live and study in the UK.

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[3] See Coate (2009) and Furnham (2004).

[4] See Abu-Ein (1995), Carey (1956), Redmond and Bunyi (1993), UKCOSA (2004), Ward (2001) and Yeh and Inose (2003).

The value of this approach is articulated in Ward and Kennedy's (1999) study on socio-cultural adaptation among different groups of international sojourners. 'Sojourners' are temporary residents in a country. Ward and Kennedy measured and analysed patterns of psychological and socio-cultural adaptation using their Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) questionnaire. The questionnaire measured respondent adaptation on a five-point rating scale. It identified several areas of adjustment, such as food and climate, and asked international sojourners to indicate the level of difficulty they experienced in each of these areas. One of Ward and Kennedy's (1999) findings is central to this study's rationale. They state that "historical traditions, including former ties with Great Britain, have fostered intercultural awareness and cross-cultural familiarity" in students from Singapore (p. 671). Singapore is multicultural and consequently, "Singaporeans are well equipped with cultural knowledge and intercultural skills to assist them with cross-cultural transitions to both Eastern and Western destinations" (Ward and Kennedy 1999: 671-672). This finding is important since it identifies historical traditions and the demographic make-up of the students' home country as essential variables in the adjustment process. These important variables remain, as far as I know, unexplored in the international student adjustment literature. Combining the intercultural awareness and cross-cultural familiarity encouraged in diverse countries with the 'baggage' and knowledge of (post)colonialism provides an interesting perspective from which to examine the nature and dynamics of international student adjustment.

In addition, Ward and Kennedy's study (1999) was based on questionnaires which were designed to acquire participant responses to researcher-identified adjustment problems. The study represents the bulk of research in this field: quantitative and questionnaire-based. These studies were designed to acquire participant responses (usually on a point scale) to researcher-identified adjustment problems. They concentrate on identifying the range of perceptions and experiences international students have regarding their new environment and *how many* students share, or are likely to share, these perceptions and experiences. They do not usually explore the multiple and dynamic ways in which these experiences are meaningful to the students. What is needed to balance these quantitative studies is an exploration of the meanings the participants construct to describe their experiences, and how these meanings change and fluctuate over time[5]. The present study achieves this. It uses a

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[5] Noteworthy studies here include Gill (2007) and Sovic (2008a, 2008b, 2009).

qualitative, constructivist methodology[6]. The research examines the *meanings* that a specific group of international students in the UK construct about their experience and how these meanings change over time. This is important in balancing the quantitative research in the field. A postcolonial perspective which is rooted in meaning, ambivalence, contestation and contradiction demonstrates the complexity of international student adjustment. Such an approach advances a deeper understanding of the meanings of the international student experience.

This study aims to address an imbalance in the available scholarship and provide a unique perspective from which to understand international student adjustment. It does this by looking at how a small group of Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment. The Trinidadian perspective provides an interesting lens to interpret international student adjustment in an increasingly multiracial, multicultural UK. Trinidad is a country with a history of sustained intercultural interaction. It is also a territory whose history, both (comparatively) distant and recent, has been deeply influenced by Britain. Trinidadian students' response to the UK may therefore be interpenetrated with complexity, ambiguity and contradiction even though there may be surface connections between the two places. Trinidad has a complex history of colonization, slavery and indentureship which shaped its diversity. The genesis and evolution of Trinidadian society and culture, then, have their roots in different colonisation processes. It is important to provide a brief description of Trinidad in order to contextualise this study.

1.4 Trinidad

Trinidad is one part of a twin-island state known as Trinidad and Tobago (see Map 2). Trinidad is the last island along the chain of islands that make up the Caribbean, from the Bahamas just off the Floridian coast in the north to Trinidad in the south. Trinidad lies just seven miles from Venezuela[7], "forming a geographical and political bridge between the US, Latin America and the Caribbean" (Embassy 2009, web resource).

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[6] Chapter 3 discusses this in greater detail.
[7] See Rohter (1997).
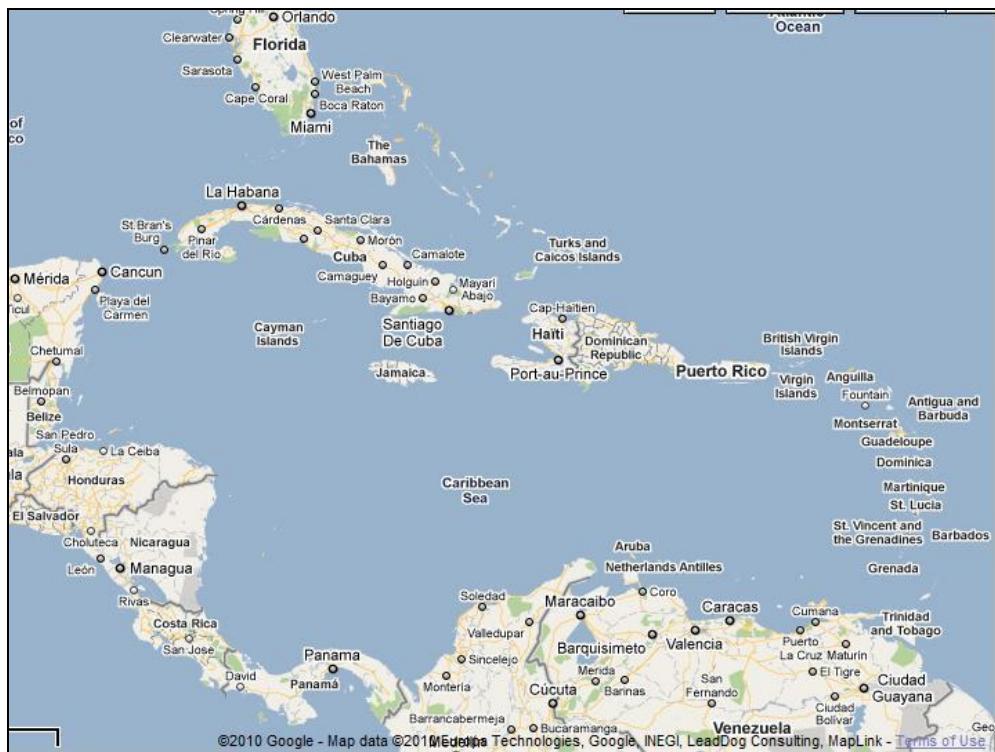
Map 1: Trinidad's location in relation to the United States (US), Latin America and the Caribbean.

Map 2: Map of Trinidad. From Tradewinds Images.

Trinidad's history is different from that of many other Caribbean nations, including its sister isle Tobago. The following brief history of Trinidad is from Besson (2001, 2002), Carmichael (1961) and Brereton (1981). This account concentrates on Trinidad and not Tobago because all of the participants who were involved in this study were from Trinidad.

Many 'British' Caribbean islands were colonized from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the British. Other islands, like Tobago, switched hands several times in its history from repeated invasions and political treaties in Europe. Trinidad was invaded in 1498 by Christopher Columbus and remained under Spanish rule for almost 300 years, until 1797. Until that time Trinidad was inhabited by different Amerindian groups. Unlike many other 'British' Caribbean islands, Trinidad has a very strong Spanish influence. However, during the 300 years of Spanish rule, the crown was unable to set up a viable colony in Trinidad because of small population numbers[8]. In order to prevent the island from falling into non-Catholic, British hands, the Spanish Monarchy passed the Cédula de Población (or cedula of population) in 1783 which provided a land grant to foreign Roman Catholics to settle in Spanish colonies. This brought settlers from France and the French colonies who arrived with their slaves to the island. Some Scots, Irish, Germans and Italians also arrived after the Cédula de Población. Already Trinidad was transforming into a multicultural island. Fourteen years after the Cédula de Población the island's population increased significantly[9].

In 1797 the island was taken over by the British. Spain formally ceded the island to the British in 1802. For these five years Trinidad was under ambiguous jurisdiction which significantly hampered British colonisation on the island. Deeply ingrained Spanish social, administrative and political systems which had been established on the island for almost 300 years also hindered British colonization in Trinidad. The predominantly French-speaking population was also transforming the social and cultural fabric of the island in different ways at the time, sowing the seeds of a Spanish-, African-, and French-infused patois or Creole language which was to overshadow English as the predominant language on the island for the next hundred years. In the early years of British Trinidad, the island comprised a population of predominantly French-speaking peoples, ruled by the British, under Spanish law[10].

Less than 10 years after the island passed into British hands, the slave trade ended. As Besson (2001: 9) explains, "Slavery in Trinidad really started with the Cédula de Población in 1783 ... In 1807, the slave trade was prohibited, and there was a gradual decline in the island's slave population". For an island that did not have a long history of slavery, the end of the slave trade created immense labour shortages in the developing colony. In order to meet

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[8] By 1783 the island comprised just 2,763 inhabitants (126 whites, 295 free coloured persons who had emigrated from other islands, 310 slaves, and 2,032 Amerindians (Augelli and Taylor 1960; W. G. S. 1859).
[9] In 1797, the total population in Trinidad was 18,627, with 2,500 white inhabitants from different ethnic backgrounds, 5000 'free blacks' and 'people of colour', 10,000 slaves and 1,082 Amerindians (Besson 2001).
[10] See Jo-Anne Ferreira's "The Sociolinguistic Situation of Trinidad and Tobago" and Kirk Meighoo's (2008) "Ethnic Mobilisation vs. Ethnic Politics: Understanding Ethnicity in Trinidad and Tobago Politics".

the demand, British planters offered high wages to liberated Africans from other colonies and invested heavily in immigrant labour. These immigration schemes brought people from a number of different backgrounds to the island including Portuguese, Syrians, Lebanese, Chinese and Indians. The last shipment of indentured immigrants to Trinidad came in 1917. The 1800s also saw the rise of the cocoa industry in Trinidad which encouraged the immigration of Venezuelan planters who had experience in cocoa production (Moodie-Kublalsingh 1994).

In 1907 Trinidad's economy began the shift from an agricultural to an industrial energy-based economy with the country's first commercial production of oil[11]. The expansion of oil and gas production in Trinidad over the twentieth century continued to transform Trinidad's social structure, with immigrants tied to multinational oil and gas companies, particularly American and British expatriates, entering the country (Mycoo 2006).

Today, unlike the other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, Roman Catholicism and not Anglicanism, is the country's main religion, followed closely by Hinduism and then by Islam and a number of European, American and African religions. This characteristic reflects the power Spanish (and French) culture possessed in Trinidad, even under British rule. The island's proximity to South America and the uninterrupted immigration of Latin American nationals to the country meant that Spanish culture, particularly language and music, have continued to have a lasting impact on Trinidadian culture throughout its history (Moodie-Kublalsingh 1994). This can be observed especially in the country's Christmas traditions, which, while they have been influenced by modern western commercial interests, are also heavily influenced by the country's cocoa pañols, or Spanish/Latin American descendants, "including the mixed descendants of native Americans" (Moodie-Kublalsingh (1994: xii). Amerindian, African, Indian, Chinese, European, Arab, Latin American and Caribbean descendants have all left their mark in Trinidad in some way, and their rich cultural practices come together in Trinidad in unique ways to produce the country's diverse culture.

Trinidad and Tobago's ethnic make-up is thus profoundly different from that of many other Caribbean islands, which are not as diverse. Table 1 summarises the ethnic distribution of Trinidad and Tobago's population.

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[11] See Coomansingh (2004) and the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce (2007).

Table 1: Population Distribution of Trinidad and Tobago

ETHNIC GROUP	% OF POPULATION
Indian (South Asian)	40%
African	37.5%
Mixed	20.5%
Other (Including indigenous groups)	1.2%
Unspecified	0.8%
TOTAL POPULATION (in numbers)	1, 262 366

Source: Trinidad and Tobago Central Statistical Office, 2000.

Table 1 contains the latest available figures. The next census is scheduled for 2011.

Trinidadian Creole

The different groups that came to Trinidad and Tobago brought their language with them to the small Caribbean island. The vernacular spoken in Trinidad today reflects a combination of elements from several of these languages[12].

The dialect of Creole English that is spoken in Trinidad is called Trinidadian Creole (TC). TC is the vernacular in Trinidad, while Standard Creole English (SCE) is the language of education (Winer 2007). However, more recently there has been increasing adoption of the vernacular in schools and other contexts (Deuber and Youssef 2007; Youssef and Deuber 2007). As Youssef and Deuber (2007: 2) explain, the "language learning situation for young Creole speakers in school is somewhere between a first language and a second language situation" since some elements of the two languages are shared. As Trinidadians learn the two languages, sometimes simultaneously, they develop different levels of competence and fluency in both languages and thus tend "to 'code-mix' according to the demands of any

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[12] As Caribbean linguist Jo-Anne Ferreira (undated) explains, many world languages collided in Trinidad's history, including "Amerindian languages ... and from the fifteenth century onward, Spanish, French, Lesser Antillean French Creole, English, Caribbean English Creole, Yoruba, Ibo, Congo, Urdu, Tamil, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Bengali, Portuguese, Chinese languages (including Hakka), German, Danish, and Italian, *inter alia*, some of which have survived to varying degrees up to the present" (web resource).

particular situation" (ibid: 2). This means that they mix elements of the two languages to differing degrees depending on the situation: automatically balancing the varieties out according to the dynamics of each specific scenario (Youssef 2004). Youssef, in her extensive study of code-mixing in Trinidad (a process she refers to as varilingualism) argues that Trinidadians have increased competence for code-mixing as they develop. Over time, individuals are able to quickly decide, many times unconsciously, on the best combination (Youssef 1996, 2004). TC is a complex mixture of Amerindian, Spanish, French, African and English language varieties, as well as Bhojpuri (a North Indian language). TC is generally accepted as "the language of solidarity, national identity, emotion and humour" in Trinidad, while SCE is reserved for more formal occasions (Youssef 2004: 44).

Trinidadian Diversity

Trinidad has a complex demographic structure. While the culture that exists today reflects a syncretism of elements from different beginnings, these elements are not always in agreement[13]. Tensions naturally surface in such a cultural situation. However, what is unique about Trinidad is that there is an open acknowledgement and awareness of these tensions. Differences and tensions are openly discussed and negotiated. Since gaining Independence in 1962, the different ethnic groups in Trinidad have been involved in sustained intercultural dialogue in efforts to come to terms with their multicultural heritage (Meighoo 2008). Trinidadians live in a space of constant cultural dialogue and negotiation. Symbols of difference, and actively managing difference, are normative.

While in Britain there is a majority group that is still perceived to be the normative, along with a number of minority cultures, in Trinidad diversity is normative. Since the Amerindians, there has never been a dominant culture or group that can be considered the norm in Trinidad. When this idea is transferred to the aims and objectives of the study, the research can be said to investigate how students from a multicultural context such as Trinidad and Tobago, where diversity of the population is taken as normative, adjust to the UK where a different kind of multiculturalism exists.

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[13] See Meighoo (2008), Premdas (1993, 2007) and Ryan (1991).

1.5 The Keystrokes Turn Inward

I am a Trinidadian woman with a broad liberal arts background in Caribbean literature, language, history and culture. My research interests span a number of directions which converge in and around intercultural communication – communication across cultures. My past research in Trinidad aimed to understand what happens when cultures meet. I firmly believe that it is through understanding the complex dynamics of cultural encounters that paths towards improved intercultural communication competence and, by extension, intercultural understanding can be laid.

This study evolved out of that conviction. I wanted to better understand what happens when cultures come together. As a Trinidadian, I naturally gravitated toward wanting to understand how Trinidadians, in particular, responded to cultural and territorial transference. Trinidadians have a rich and diverse history. We have not been a territory where interracial or intercultural peace has always prevailed. We still do not reflect such an idealistic vision. But we have come a long way. We have learnt through time, through discord, through trial and error, through dialogue, but most of all through living together, how to mould multiple and divergent beginnings into a nation. Our language may be one example of that weaving of different beginnings into a multidimensional unit – diversity as normative. Our arts and music are other examples. Looking back at the development of my own country, I felt that in a globalizing twenty-first century environment, it may be bases such as Trinidad which can contribute significantly to effective intercultural communication skills development, rather than larger societies, currently going through the trauma of adjusting to large-scale migration by diverse populations, and ultimately continuing, albeit in the short term, to regard those populations as the 'Other'[14].

I wondered whether the tolerance that is now bred into our multicultural society facilitates a different starting point in valuing and treating diversity. I wondered whether the intercultural knowledge and experience that defines life in modern Trinidad makes Trinidadians better equipped to handle intercultural situations abroad. This study emerged out of a desire to better understand how Trinidadians negotiate culture, identity and territory when confronted by (un)familiar communities in a country that is not their own.

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[14] I have articulated this position elsewhere: see Harricharan et al (forthcoming) and Williams et al (forthcoming).

1.6 Research Summary

This study sought to answer the following research question: How do Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment? Subsidiary questions were:

1. What kinds of experiences do the participants have in the UK?
2. How do the participants (re)construct the meaning of these experiences?
3. What are the effects of these experiences on the participants?

Data was collected from eight mature students who each began a programme of study in the UK in October 2008. I collected data about how these students responded to their internal and external environment over the course of six months.

To collect the data, I created a private, password-protected group blog (interactive webpage) where the respondents interacted and shared bits of their everyday life and experiences in the UK with each other. The participants were encouraged to write blog entries about their experiences in the UK and to talk about their thoughts and feelings regarding these experiences. The blog was available to the participants for six months. After the blogging period, I conducted face-to-face individual interviews with five of the participants. These interviews followed-up on the material that surfaced in the blog and sought to clarify, elaborate, and cross-check the blog data.

This exploratory study aims to discover and conceptualise Trinidadian students' experiences in the UK. Consequently, the study employs a grounded theory approach to data analysis. Grounded theory "is a research strategy whose purpose is to generate theory from data" (Punch 2009: 130). This thesis uses the data to propose a theory of how the students involved in this research respond to the UK.

Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 introduced the main focus of this study.

Chapter 2 describes the theoretical perspective, postcolonialism, in detail and supports its use in this research. The chapter also reviews the current literature on international student adjustment.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the methodology which guided this research and the methods that were used to collect the data.

Chapter 4 explores the study's main findings using three individual case studies: Mikey, Val and Ophelia.

Chapter 5 analyses these findings in light of the research questions and theoretical perspective, and advances a theory of Trinidadian students' response to the UK.

The final chapter summarises the different elements of the thesis, considers the strengths and limitations of the study and proposes areas for further research.

1.7 Terms and Definitions

Chapter 2 will explain and clarify some of the technical and contentious concepts which this study uses. Here, however, I would like to provide an overview of some general terms which will be used in this thesis.

In this thesis, the term 'international student' refers to "students who have chosen to travel to another country for tertiary study" (Ryan and Carroll 2005: 3). The thesis does not distinguish between international students and students from the European Union. The international country which the student is studying in is referred to as the 'host country'. In this study, the host country is the United Kingdom (UK). A more difficult term, 'adjustment', is taken to mean "the change in the norms and behaviour patterns of a group of persons that follows a change in their social environment" (Carey 1956: 5). 'International student adjustment', by extension, refers to the ways in which students who travel to another country for higher education change their norms and behaviour patterns as a result of the shift in their environment. However, this thesis takes the concept further by examining the internal changes that surface in response to the move to a new environment as well as the external changes identified by Carey.

The term which is used for nationals of the host country within the university is 'home student'. It is useful to comment on the role and position of home students in this research. Home students also go through processes of adjusting to higher education. This is acknowledged in the literature (Terenzini et al 1994; Frame et al 2006). Their transition process, however, is considered to be different from that of international students (Frame et al 2006; Sovic 2008a, 2009). As Sovic (2008a) explains, "International students invariably encounter several new situations by coming to study in the United Kingdom, and in comparison with home students they face additional problems which relate to unfamiliar ways of thinking and behaving" (Sovic 2008a: 148). In the literature, university is presented as a continuation of the home student's academic journey. This is observed in the term used

to describe home student 'adjustment' to higher education – 'transition'. The home student thus undergoes an important transformation but he/she is conceived to transition in a different way from international students and as such the two groups are separated in the literature and in university administrative departments so that the specific needs of each group can be adequately understood and met (Frame et al 2006; Sovic 2009). Consequently, while the transition process may be a significant point of academic and psychological departure for home students as well, it is taken that the nature of their transformation is different and thus does not fall into the area covered by this study.

Trinidad and Tobago, the students' home country, is referred to variously as the 'home country' or 'originating country' in this thesis. A common affectionate term for Trinidadians which is used throughout this thesis is 'Trini'. 'Trini' can refer to Trinidad the country, nationals of Trinidad and Trinidadian culture and language. It is necessary to place the use of 'Trini' in context where it appears. Within the new territory, there may be other students or individuals who share the international student's nationality, these are referred to as 'co-nationals'. Ashes Col' Darg Lay Dong, the study's title, is a Trinidadian proverb which means that 'we can only really settle down and relax when a crisis is over'. Here the crisis results from moving to a different country.

1.8 Conclusion

This research seeks to understand how Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their continuously changing environment. It takes a postcolonial approach to adjustment. In so doing it transforms the research question into a study about how a group of students from a country that was once a UK colony adjust to studying in the UK almost fifty years after Independence. The study positions Trinidad and Tobago as a country with a diversity of cultures as a result of the colonial experience and one that has come a long way in defining and locating itself in the years following Independence. It is interesting to inquire into whether the participants' multicultural experience facilitated adjustment in any way. The study acknowledges that while it may construct the students as postcolonial, the participants may not personally identify as postcolonial. As a result, the research does not force a postcolonial approach on the participants by seeking only data that connects with postcolonial interests, nor does it interpret the data only through a strictly postcolonial lens. Rather, the thesis explores how far the students' experiences and responses intersect with postcolonial concerns.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

International student adjustment is a topic which extends across a number of intertwined and complementary fields. Many studies in this field concentrate solely on the process of student adjustment. This gives the illusion that adjusting to new and very different social and cultural conditions can be effectively and flawlessly removed from the complex and dynamic personal and environmental circumstances that continuously shape and influence adjustment. These approaches seek to understand international student adjustment itself, and devise 'widely-applicable' explanations and models to describe what is essentially a deeply personal and contextual process. This thesis takes a different view. It aims to understand international student adjustment in its multidimensionality, complexity, individualism and dynamism. It does so by concentrating on a small group of Trinidadian students in the UK whose experiences are captured through a perspective that appreciates the wide variety of social and personal forces impacting the process. This thesis does not contend that the findings and analyses put forward are in any way 'widely-applicable'. However, it formulates an approach infused with openness, flexibility and contextual sensitivity so that a variety of human experiences can be represented (Chapter 5).

This review will develop the theoretical foundations anchoring the study. After describing the theoretical perspective, the review will focus on the literature on international student adjustment. This section will put the study into perspective by critically reviewing some of the past and current research in international student adjustment and identifying gaps in the literature. The research intends to build on previous work in the field and show how complementary approaches can illumine and develop what is already known about student adjustment. In other words, it offers a fresh perspective on the adjustment literature by studying an unconventional group of students[15] whose experiences contribute important knowledge to conceptualizations of international student adjustment.

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[15] 'Unconventional' here refers to the fact that examining how students from postcolonial backgrounds respond and adjust to being in the once colonising country has, as far as I know, not been addressed in the literature on adjustment. The Introductory chapter to this thesis discussed this distinguishing feature of the study in some detail.

2.2. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCES AS POSTCOLONIAL

2.2.1 Why Postcolonialism?

This study takes a postcolonial approach to international student adjustment. Postcolonialism is an eclectic, interdisciplinary theoretical perspective which emerged out of, and in response to, European colonialism (the following sub-sections explain the central concerns of postcolonialism). Postcolonialism has been chosen as the theoretical perspective for this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, research in international student adjustment has suggested that the cultural situation facilitated by colonialism and its aftermath have put students from some countries in a better position to deal with new and different social and cultural environments. This is because culturally diverse societies have a history of managing social and cultural tensions. This position is observed in Ward and Kennedy's (1999) study on international students' psychological and socio-cultural adaptation to host countries[16]. They noticed that international students from Singapore (once colonised by Britain) encountered far less socio-cultural difficulties in their host countries than students from other nations. This led them to the following conclusion:

> Singapore's geographical position and historical traditions, including former ties with Great Britain, have fostered intercultural awareness and cross-cultural familiarity. In short, Singaporeans are well equipped with cultural knowledge and intercultural skills to assist them with cross-cultural transitions to both Eastern and Western destinations. Certainly on an anecdotal basis Singaporeans appear more familiar with American culture and customs than vice versa. (Ward and Kennedy 1999: 671-672).

They also assert that "broad exposure to Eastern and Western media, values, language and culture" also played a significant role in the ease with which Singaporeans were able to make cross cultural transitions (ibid: 671). Ward and Kennedy's statement suggests that it is the cultural elements of postcolonialism, cultural diversity, intercultural awareness and cross-cultural familiarity, which assist Singaporeans with cross-cultural transitions. Researching students from a country with a history of imperialism, colonisation and intercultural diversity studying in the territory of a previous coloniser, and treating the data specifically as postcolonial will complement Ward and Kennedy's (1999) study.

I recognise that the students involved in this study may not construct themselves as postcolonial. My use of postcolonialism thus remains very open. It does not force a

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[16] Ward and Kennedy's (1999) study drew from a large cross-section of international samples which included samples from students originating from **and** studying in North America, Philippines, Japan, China, Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand and Britain.

postcolonial approach upon the study by seeking only data that connects with postcolonial interests, nor does it interpret the data through a strictly postcolonial lens. Rather, it takes an open approach and explores the extent to which the participants' responses intersect with postcolonial concerns.

2.2.2 Theoretical Perspective: Postcolonialism

The features, trajectories, strategies and approaches of postcolonialism have been contested since the term's earliest usage. They have been subject to much controversy (McLeod 2000, 2007; Slemon 1994). Much of the disagreement surrounding postcolonialism lies in its definition (Childs and Williams 1997; Strongman 1996). There has been considerable debate over the past two decades about what postcolonialism actually means and how it is distinguished from other similar approaches[17]. This is because, as an eclectic approach, it incorporates concepts from several critical practices and draws from the experiences of critics, theorists and literatures from a diverse set of countries and cultures (McLeod 2000). What began as 'commonwealth literature' during colonialism and in the period immediately following colonialism became 'post-colonial literature' in the late 1980s with the publishing of *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft et al 1989). As the title of this text shows, postcolonialism was an attempt to redefine and re-present the literatures of countries that were once European colonies (Childs and Williams 1997; Gruesser 2005). In this early work, Childs and Williams (1997) argue, postcolonialism was treated in a purely temporal sense – the period after colonization[18]. The term was widely used in the early 1990s as a reflection or an example of the postcolonial (re)claiming his/her identity and the power to construct his/her own self. However, as critics began to discuss, dismantle and renegotiate the meanings of this new term and carve out its particular terrain, it became apparent that 'post-colonial' and 'post-colonialism' were being interpreted and employed in different ways (Childs and Williams 1997; Larsen 2000; McLeod 2000; Gruesser 2005; McEwan 2009).

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[17] See, for example, Hutcheon's (1991) "Circling the Downspout of Empire", During's (1995) "Postmodernism or Post-colonialism Today", Appiah's (1995) "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern", Ato Quayson's (2000) *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* and Helen Tiffin's (1991) Introduction to *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*.

[18] See also McLeod's (2000) *Beginning Postcolonialism*, Rajan and Park's (2000) "Postcolonial Feminism/Postcolonialism and Feminism", Lazarus' (2004) "Introducing Postcolonial Studies", Bahri's (2004) "Feminism in/and Postcolonialism" and McEwan's (2009) *Postcolonialism and Development*.

This section will review the primary ways in which postcolonialism has been interpreted and treated in the literature. The position which this thesis takes regarding postcolonialism will be described along with some associated concepts and concerns. These concerns will then be drawn together and discussed in the light of the study's central objective.

In questioning early 'post-colonialism' critics ask: when was/is postcolonialism? Is postcolonialism a process that we are currently charting? Is it a place we have arrived at and can now look back on? Who is postcolonial? What does it mean to be postcolonial? What are the concerns of postcolonialism and how are they different from what other people are doing or have done in other fields? Persistent interrogation of these and other questions have not generated final answers. Instead, these dialogues have illumined the dense and complicated trajectories of postcolonial existence. Postcolonialism has been defined in historical, administrative, political, geographical (and geopolitical), economic, cultural and even social terms (Bhabha 1994; Gandhi 1998; Gikandi 2001; Rajan and Park 2000; Said 1978; Slemon 1994; Spivak 1994). All of these dimensions overlap and intersect in different ways to give a picture of the aftermath of colonialism. A connecting thread runs through all of these arguments: even though colonialism has ended, the impact of the system on countries which were affected by it continues long after its conclusion. Postcolonialism has been interpreted as work concerned with the cultures affected by European imperialism and these cultures' changing preoccupations (Childs and Williams 1997). Postcolonialism has also been interpreted as anti-colonial discourse or as a resistance to colonisation and other forms of oppression (McEwan 2009; Slemon 1994). Another approach defines the postcolonial as an achieved state, and postcolonialism as a point from which one can comment on colonialism and oppression (Childs and Williams 1997). In other constructions, postcolonialism is viewed as the process of moving beyond, or forgetting, colonialism (Childs and Williams 1997).

This thesis views postcolonialism as a condition, as the "political, cultural and economic realities of societies living with the legacies and in the aftermath of colonialism" (McEwan 2009: 21). These realities can be significantly dissimilar in different territories and among different groups or segments of a population within a given territory. The goal of postcolonial studies in this approach is to explore the different ways in which individuals, groups and territories experience/move beyond postcolonialism. This goal is based on the argument that the consequences of colonialism "continue to impact on the way in which we, in our different positions, experience the world and its relative opportunities; they also impact on how we *regard* and *represent* the world" (McLeod 2007: 4, emphasis in original).

Consequently, this thesis refers to the term in its non-hyphenated form, 'postcolonialism' which is generally used when conceptualising the term as a condition. In its hyphenated form, 'post-colonialism', the term refers primarily to the period of time after colonialism (McLeod 2007).

Postcolonialism can thus be defined as a condition that surfaces out of a complex and interconnected historical, socio-cultural and politically- and economically-motivated matrix of representations that have their roots in colonization. This study draws on Ward and Kennedy's (1999) assertion that the cultural diversity encouraged by colonialism assisted Singaporeans with cross-cultural transitions. Consequently, the research begins by locating the postcolonial within a cultural framework. From this cultural framework extends the complex matrix of representations that comprise the postcolonial experience since representations of culture cannot be easily disentangled from other societal structures such as politics and economics.

While different countries have different experiences of postcolonialism, several key themes surface across the field, notwithstanding geographical or national background (Venn 2006). These themes are significant to this thesis. They include issues of power and representation, language, racism, hybridity, otherness, identity, ethnicity and displacement (Gruesser 2005; Loomba 1998; Sharp 2009; Venn 2006). These dimensions are discussed below.

2.2.3 Trajectories of Postcolonialism

Power and Representation

Postcolonialism can be elaborated as anti-systemic in nature and interested in dismantling the authority of the centred West which dominated during colonialism and whose power continues today (Childs and Williams 1997). Correspondingly, postcolonialism moves from the centre to the periphery addressing the imbalances and injustices of the dominant system. In doing so, it challenges the canonical assumptions of western civilization. Central to postcolonial studies, and as is observed in the reception to *The Empire Writes Back*, reclaiming the power of self-representation and identification from the colonising master is central to postcolonial studies (Lazarus 2004; Sharp 2009). During colonialism, as shown by Said (1978) and Fanon (1967), the power of representation was held by the colonial masters. These representative powers were used in "[c]olonial indoctrination", (Selvon 1989: 211), or

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the socialising of others into believing/accepting their inferiority. Colonial indoctrination was central to colonial domination as it was a means through which the colonisers were able to hold and justify their elevated positions and their oppressive and humiliating treatment of others. As McLeod (2000) explains,

> Colonialism is perpetuated in part by ... getting colonised people to accept their lower ranking in the colonial order of things – a process we can call 'colonising the mind' ... it operates by persuading people to internalise its logic and speak its language; to perpetuate the values and assumptions of the colonisers as regards the ways they perceive and represent the world (p. 18).

In this way, colonial masters had the power to influence how colonised peoples interpreted (and valued) themselves (Bryan 2000). (Re)claiming that power to represent oneself and one's identity is thus significant to postcolonial studies. It is articulated in the definitive and empowering rejection of the imperially-loaded term, "Commonwealth", in favour of a self-designated term, 'post-colonial'. In challenging and contesting colonial constructions of colonised peoples, postcolonialism becomes involved in that empowering process of decolonising the mind: "negotiating new ways of seeing that both contested the dominant mode and gave voice and expression to colonised and once-colonised peoples" (McLeod 2000: 25). It is about becoming the active subject and not the passive object of one's own history/story. The power of representation also comes with the power to carve one's own identity, and postcolonialism explores how/whether the legacy of colonialism influences individual/group identities.

Eurocentrism

Questioning, challenging and contesting the dominant group's construction and interpretation of the subjected is just one means of dismantling the centre – conceived as Europe or, more specifically, Western Europe. Depending on the work, the 'centre' may also refer to North America)[19]. The idea of 'Europe as centre' is referred to as Eurocentrism and it surfaces in the construction of non- (Western) European territories and cultures through the sole perspective of European thought, philosophy and experience[20]. By approaching the issue

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[19] See for example Lewis' (1975) "A View from the Top: United States Perspectives and Attribution of Roles in the Global System 1945-1968" and McLeod's (2000) *Beginning Postcolonialism*.

[20] See for example, Franz Fanon's (1961) critique of Africans who valorise and express French culture while viewing their own as inferior in *The Wretched of the Earth* and Edwards Said's consistent efforts to show how

from the periphery, postcolonial critics can interrogate and illuminate Eurocentric forms of representation. Irony, contradiction and ambiguity are important tools used in postcolonial discourses. These tools allow critics to expose the inherent instability of prevailing Eurocentric forms of representation, thereby destabilising and dismantling them. Postcolonialism, as it is defined here, is not about replacing the centre with the periphery but about illuminating and righting injustices which remain to this day.

Language

Language also became an essential element in the process of decolonisation. European languages were privileged over local languages during colonisation. Ancestral languages are alternatively empowered in postcolonial thought (Rassool 2000). Western tongues and accepted western writing techniques are many times refashioned to better convey the 'feel' and 'spirit' of the local (Gruesser 2005; Ramchand 1970; Sharp 2009; Wa Thiong'o 1986). The difficulties involved in communicating and expressing meaning in a foreign language is articulated best by Raja Rao (1938: vii): "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language". It is difficult to convey one's meaning and express one's self adequately in a language that is one's own, to do so in a language that is not further distances meaning and opportunities for mutual understanding. Postcolonialism thus empowers local voices, accents, languages, art forms, styles and other forms of expression.

Culture

Culture is significant in postcolonial studies. During colonisation, European culture was considered, and presented as, more evolved than the cultures of colonised peoples. Put succinctly, culture was used by the colonisers to construct, civilise and control colonised peoples (Gandhi 1998; Bryan 2000). This established the perceived superiority of the colonisers. The positive construction of some European/American cultures at the expense of

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non-Western countries have been, and continue to be, constructed and interpreted as exotic and inferior to Europe (for example, *Orientalism*).

other cultures, some postcolonial critics argue, continues today (Gandhi 1998). Postcolonialism resists, questions, challenges and aims to dismantle these assumptions (Hall 1997; McEwan 2009).

This study views culture as the continuous production of shared meaning. Like many sociologists, postcolonial critics view culture as a "socially established code" (Geertz 1973: 6) which members of a community construct to organise social life. This 'code' is embodied as a set of signifying systems or meaningful systems that community members use to interpret the world and act within that community. In this way, every component of a culture becomes a sign (code), similar to a word. As a word carries a meaning that is shared (denotatively but not always connotatively) by a culture's members, so too do aspects of a culture represent something to its people. This approach to culture emerged during what Hall (1997: 2) calls the 'cultural turn' which "tended to emphasize the importance of meaning to the definition of culture ... Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings – the 'giving and taking of meaning' – between the members of a society or group". There is a strong emphasis on 'production' in this approach since "[i]t is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them ... that we *give them a meaning*" (Hall 1997: 3, emphasis in original). Meanings are therefore profoundly subjective. They are based on personal interpretations of social and natural phenomena. However, these meanings are influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by the system of meanings (codes) that surround the individual and help him/her to (re)produce personal interpretations.

Culture is thus about representation and the meanings human beings give to the world. As a result of a group's shared experience and interaction, members of a community may develop similar ways of understanding or making sense of the world around them: "(t)o say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other" (Hall 1997: 2). This position is held by Cohen (1985: 17) as well who asserts that human "interpretations are not random. They tend to be made within the terms characteristic of a given society, and influenced by its language, ecology, its traditions of belief and ideology, and so forth". Interpretations are thus guided by an individual's personal circumstances as well as the 'webs of significance', or 'socially established codes', surrounding him/her (Bauman 1988; Geertz 1973; Hall 1997). These are cultural signifiers. Cultural signifiers, confronted by other meaning systems both within and outside the society, are always in the process of (re)construction, (re)production and

(re)negotiation (Bhabha 1994; Williams 1961). In negotiating multiple meaning systems, interpretations can become ambiguous, uncertain and even contradictory. This *process* of (re)producing and (ex)changing meanings is central to understanding and analysing the cultural web.

In this study, cultural practices are taken as signifying practices (Grossberg 1996). Culture is viewed as a system of signification that helps to organise society and which helps individuals make sense of their environment. This system is constantly being (re)constructed and (re)interpreted by individuals in the face of alternative meaning systems. This is particularly relevant to international students who may be confronted with multiple meaning systems simultaneously with which they are forced to reconcile. Such an approach to culture is always a struggle, a process of negotiating ambiguous, ambivalent and/or contradictory meanings. This struggle to reconcile among multiple cultural systems can prove to be a significant burden on international students – as the next section outlines.

The present study can be viewed as one which investigates what happens when members of one culture migrate to another culture and come into contact with alternative meaning systems. It is about understanding how the individual adjusts to the different cultural environment, which may be similar or acutely different from what he/she is accustomed to. The cultures involved in this study are significant because the host country held a powerful, colonising role in the students' home country for much of its history. The impact of that history, particularly the cultural clashes it encouraged, has been advanced as a likely determinant in student adjustment. This study explores how students from a country with a colonial history, infused with multiple cultural meaning systems, respond to the UK. It explores whether this history of negotiation and navigation among different cultural systems makes Trinidadian students "well equipped with cultural knowledge and intercultural skills to assist them with cross-cultural transitions" (Ward and Kennedy 1999: 672).

Racism

Prior to the twentieth century, race was conceptualized purely in biological terms: human beings were divided into different races based on perceived phenotypical differences among them (Alleyne 2002). As race was considered to be biological, "race explained not simply people's skin colour, but also their civilisational and cultural attributes" (Loomba 1998: 63).

Being black correlated with a small brain and savagery. Colonising and enslaving ventures were performed under the cover of civilising and Christianising barbaric races (Bryan 2000). In the colonies, these perceived "racial differences were transformed into very real inequalities by colonialist and/or racist regimes and ideologies" (ibid: 123). Race impacted rights, opportunity, class and treatment. As with culture, postcolonial theorists are concerned with challenging and dismantling negative constructions of colonised races with a view to righting persisting injustices against them.

Race can best be understood as a constructed ideology. It is produced out of the prevailing contexts of its articulation and driven by the aims and objectives of power authorities that play an adjudicative role in determining racial significations. These significations, as social constructions, are fluid and based primarily on needs and perceptions (Jacobson 1999). As Winant (1994: 59) articulates, "race, a pre-eminently social construct, is inherently subject to contestation; its meaning is intrinsically unstable ... From a *racial formation* perspective ... race is understood as a fluid, unstable, and "decentered" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political conflict." The construction of race and its impact on other social forces is thus in constant flux, historically and contemporarily. Its meaning is deeply subjective and may be influenced by dominant perspectives or by personal positions and/or experiences[21]. The key to disentangling race is in identifying the complex ways in which the concept is constructed by different individuals, and how it is acted upon and treated. As it is a constructed phenomenon, however, its meaning will always be in the process of negotiation. This thesis recognises the inherent constructedness of 'race'. As such, it addresses issues of 'race' under the broader term, 'ethnicity' which is discussed later. Loomba (1998: 123) holds that "the analysis of race must take cognisance of both the reality of racial discriminations and oppressions, as well as call attention to the constructedness of the construct itself". She argues that while race is produced and always under revision, the impacts or inequalities of racial productions are tangible and must be included in any assessment of it. Analyses of race must include both people's perceptions of how they and others are racially constructed and how these constructions translate into actions and behaviour. In this way, issues of 'racism' remain in the thesis.

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[21] See Omi and Winant's (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* and (2004) "On the Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race" and Winant's (1994) *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*.

Otherness

The concept of Otherness is central to postcolonial thought. Individuals and communities, through interaction, construct their defining characteristics and symbols in relation to what they are not. This helps to distinguish them from surrounding groups, or from groups or individuals within the larger group. As Balibar (1991: 49) notes, when people form communities they institute "their imagined unity *against* other possible unities". The Other refers to that which is excluded from the community in its general construction: that which it is not. It is the existence of the Other that helps selves, and by extension, communities construct, refine and redefine their characteristics. Ultimately, the Other is excluded from the group because of its very difference[22]. Others are individuals within the group who do not conform to the community's accepted self definition and those existing on the boundaries, fringes or outside of the community.

Groups become aware of themselves, their features and their symbols upon contact with the Other, either within the group or as they move towards the periphery. When one group is more powerful than the other, or when the Other is constructed as a minority within the majority group, this exclusion takes on additional features, including subordination and devaluation, where the controlling group produces and manages the image of the Other[23] (Gruesser 2005; Loomba 1998; Said 1978; Sharp 2009). The group in control maintains its authority through, according to Said (1978), the exotification of the Other and all aspects of its identity, and by generating rigid binaries (or differences) which validate the Other's inferiority (and by extension the dominating group's superiority). In other cases, images of the Other as "barbarians or monsters who are imagined to imperil community" (Cohen 2006: 12), are produced to justify and/or perpetuate negative interpretations of surrounding groups and actions performed against them. In these instances, it is the superior group that speaks for and on behalf of the Other who is silenced and whose history and constructions of themselves goes unrecorded, or represented through the biased eyes of the producers.

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[22] See Fredrik Barth's (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Zygmunt Bauman's (2001) *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* and Stuart Hall's (1996) "Who Needs Identity."

[23] A large corpus exists which addresses the nature and characteristics of the Other. For further information see for instance Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* and (1986) *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, Stephen Slemon's (1987) "Monuments of Empire:Allegory/Counterdiscourse/Postcolonial Writing" and Gayatri Spivak's (1994) "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Othering, as (re)constructed and rooted in representation, is concentrated among those who hold the power of representation. Othered groups within a community may be both minority and majority populations. Once individuals do not hold the power to represent themselves, and articulate that representation, they can become marginalised by more socially accepted constructions. In this way, representations are (re)constructed "within the play of power and exclusion" (Hall 1996: 5). Power and agency, the ability to act in a community, are thus central to processes of Othering (Barth 1969; Grossberg 1996; Hall 1996; Jenkins 1997).

During colonisation, the accepted culture was European. All aspects of the Other were constructed as inferior to Europe and undervalued. The Other was constructed in stereotypical and exotic forms, romanticised and orientalised in ways that confirmed Western superiority and dominance (Said 1978). During colonisation, the Other was also imaged as barbaric and was demonised to confirm the civility and divinity of the European colonisers (Cohen 2006). This occurred, for example, with the native populations of North, Central and South America and Australia, as well as with the different groups inhabiting parts of Africa. In addressing the condition of the marginalized and oppressed, postcolonial writers have vested interests in re-thinking the construction of the Other thereby transferring power or forms of power, particularly that of representation, from the European 'centre' to the periphery.

When groups move from one community to another, they come face to face with difference. Minority groups and individuals respond differently when confronted with difference - cultural, linguistic, racial, social, political, geographical or ethnic. Conceived in this way, this study looks at how individual students from Trinidad and Tobago, confronted with difference, respond to the United Kingdom; how they construct their experience when interpreted as culturally and racially exotic, the Caribbean Other.

Displacement: Where/What is Home?

The fundamental experience of colonisation in the colonies was displacement (Gilroy 1991, 1993; Hill and Wilson 2003). The impact of colonisation was the political, cultural, geographical and personal displacement of native and immigrant groups in the colonies (Gruesser 2005). Movement or relocation is connected, in postcolonial studies, with themes

of dislocation, home/homelessness, fragmentation and exile; of a fracture from one's roots because of the routes of movement (Clifford 1994; Gilroy 1994; Hall 1993; Walcott 1992). All groups involved in the colonial experience felt the trauma of the loss (or transformation) of home. Home is the space of safety and security. It is the comforting and supportive space that orients our view of the world (McLeod 2000). Moving or being forced from that space can engender insecurity and grief; a sense of displacement and borderlessness in migrant communities. This is what Said calls "the crippling sorrow of estrangement ... [where] exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past ... [and] feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives" (Said 2000: 173-77).

Reconstitution is sometimes associated with an idealisation of the homeland, the imagined unity of 'home'. It is also associated with attempts to replicate the constructs of 'home' in the new space, to mould the new space into a reflection of home (Walcott 1992). Sharp (2009: 66) argues that colonisation required immigrant groups to "domesticate the unfamiliar ... [or] create home in distant and foreign places". Attempts were made in the colonies to replicate elements of home as far as possible. Yet this is never straight-forward. The new space is not the same as 'home'. It is a negotiated, continuously emerging space with its own complex webs of existence within new and dynamic boundaries. Instead of becoming a replication or a reproduction of roots, the new space, becomes a reconfigured, in-between space that negotiates between roots and routes (Fortier 2000). It is an interpretation of roots from, and as a result of, routes. Further, the ability to (re)create home had to be negotiated against the power relationships in the colony: how far home was allowed to be replicated by the governing order (Sharp 2009). Postcolonial studies explore these complex imbrications of roots and routes and how they construct new places and spaces out of colonialism (Bhabha 1990, 1994, 1996; Gilroy 1991, 1993, 1994).

An important element of this research is to discover student constructions of 'home' – what it is, what it means to them, and how student constructions of home have been renegotiated and reconstructed as a result of their experiences in the UK. The study engages with discourses surrounding human movement and the resultant bending, stretching and/or shifting of cultural, racial, national and ethnic boundaries. These can have a significant impact on the student's identity.

Identity: Reconciling Belonging

Colonial displacement can lead to the continuous (re)negotiation of one's identity within traditional and contemporary power discourses. Identity is the construction of an individual's sense of self. It involves individuals answering the philosophical, sociological and profoundly psychological question, 'who am I'? Identity can be conceptualised as a boundary, this time, a boundary marking the limits of the self. Inside are the characteristics, traits, collectives, qualities and other markers which the individual constructs as representative of himself or herself. Outside the boundary are those markers which the individual perceives are not representative of his/her self. In the process of construction, the individual confronts different symbols, signifying collectives, traits and representations and makes strategic decisions about those which describe him/her best. Identities then are also relative, built upon and even constituted by that which it is not. These defining and contrasting markers are continuously (re)negotiated and (re)formulated in the face of continuously changing circumstances (Castells 1997). Consequently, the 'real' self or boundary between the inside and outside, which the subject posits as its identity, is elusive and always under construction. Identity boundaries are thus malleable or elastic enough to accommodate multiple, even contradictory, identities. This is why Hall (1996: 8) refers to identity as the "subject-in-process". Further, as identity is both personal and collective, in the process of constructing identity-boundaries both social and psychological processes are involved (Hall 1996; Howard 2000; Jenkins 1996). By locating oneself within a boundary, individuals develop a sense of security in belonging to the group, in not being isolated.

Critically, identity is also influenced by issues of power and agency (Grossberg 1996; Hall 1993, 1996). Powerful individuals, groups, events or other circumstances influence how others perceive and represent themselves, and how they are perceived and represented by others (Hall 1993). Identity consequently involves issues of self-image and by extension self-esteem. Identity construction is thus a deeply political and in some cases, politicised process (Hill and Wilson 1996; Howard 2000). The power and politics involved in identification reflect socio-historical contexts and can be sustained over time. This is why Othering can have such negative effects. One community's monsterization and denigration of the characteristics of other less powerful individuals can have a profound impact on how the latter perceive themselves or attempts to resist Othering. Understanding this, as Hall explains, "we can properly understand the traumatic character of 'the colonial experience' ... They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other'" (1993: 225). This is

significant for the present research because it then becomes important to understand how postcolonial students studying in a previous colonising country negotiate their identities within the residual discourses of power and Othering that characterised colonialism. Further, new forces have since entered the playing-field of power and politics in identity construction and it is important to understand how Trinidadian students in the UK (re)construct and (re)negotiate their identities out of old power struggles and within the new or emerging ones.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity overlaps with a number of other social concepts including language, culture, identity and nationality as well as historical, regional and geographical origins. Like these terms, ethnicity is also socially and subjectively constructed and interpreted. Ethnicity, Chandra (2006: 397) explains, is best described as a subset of identity, "categories in which membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent". People construct their ethnicity based on attributes which they deem central to their construction or interpretation of their heritage. One's ethnicity is therefore a subjective construction of one's heritage, a personal and eclectic combination of possible racial, national, cultural, linguistic, historic and geographical constructions of belonging (Pieterse 1996; Verkuyten 2005). Ethnicity is rooted in perceptions and constructions of commonality with others, as well as perceptions of shared origins and cultural products (Zagefka 2009).

Because an individual has so many possible 'origins', ethnic constructions are profoundly unstable. They are rife with inconsistency, ambiguity and contradiction (Pieterse 1996). In developing ethnic identities out of instability and the desire to identify with numerous origins simultaneously, individuals formulate compound terms to define their ethnicity. Examples of these can be found in Trinidad, including Indo-Trinidadian and Afro-Trinidadian which merge racial, geographical, cultural and national identities simultaneously. These are referred to as hyphenated ethnicities or hyphenated identities (Ledohowski 2007; Verkuyten 2005). In terms of ethnic construction, people may belong to ethnic groups in two ways: they can self-identify with a particular group or they can be constructed or categorised as belonging to a particular group based on one or another attribute, or a combination of attributes, by an external party (Jenkins 1996, 1997, 2002; Rex 2002). These two constructions, however, do not always coincide (Pieterse 1996). Consequently, the way(s) in which one person constructs his/her ethnicity may not be accepted by another who may opt to

interpret him/her differently. In a power relationship this discord may be articulated in terms of Othering or attempts to reject processes of Othering.

Further, an individual's ethnic identity is constantly in a state of flux, being changed and negotiated, produced and reproduced, as circumstances change (Pieterse 1996). They are thus constantly in process. However, ethnic categories that are placed on persons by others are conceived as observable and fixed. In this way, ethnic identities may constantly be in the process of renegotiation and flux but the terminology or labels used to refer to a group may be considerably static (Pieterse 1996). Because meaning is largely subjective (connotative) and constantly shifting, the term/s which an individual elects to identify with (denotative) may not have *the same meaning* for others who identify with the same social label. The label assumes a shared meaning that in actuality is not present. The term, however, is used to share one's identity with others (Hall 1997). Ethnic constructions, while they are inherently subjective, are also shaped by the signifying systems available in one's environment which influence them to differing degrees. This depends on the individual.

This study explores the multi-layered and even ambiguous and contradictory ways the participants construct, negotiate and perform their identities in the UK. It also explores how the students perceive they are constructed by other groups in the UK and how these perceptions impact on their sense of self. The data additionally investigates how the students re-imagine and reformulate their identity boundaries confronted with other meaning systems and identities, and how their interpretations of the ways they have been and continue to be constructed by others impacts their developing identities. Linked to this is a better understanding of whether, and how, the ways the participants constructed others' identities have changed as a result of their simultaneous exposure to multiple and very different signifying systems.

Hybridity

Hybridity, also referred to as liminality or creolization, is a pivotal concern in postcolonial studies (Bhabha 1994; Brathwaite 1974a, 1974b, 1977; Gruesser 2005; Venn 2006). Postcolonial studies invoke the image of the hybrid to describe the racial, cultural, ideological and ethnic synergies that emerged out of colonialism. The image conveys the mutuality of the colonial experience as both the coloniser and the colonised were inevitably

affected (Brathwaite 1974a, 1974b, 1977; Gruesser 2005; Hulme 1994; Loomba 1998). Once there are a number of different communities existing and mixing in a given area, there will be the penetration of 'alien' signifiers from one group into another. Communities "may [thus] be grasped as porous, constantly changing and borrowing" from 'foreign' groups that come into contact with them (Werbner 2001: 134). This is hybridity. It involves the mutation of a group's webs of signification due to contact with another. In many cases both systems involved in the 'act' are affected by hybridization. The hybrid has strains of both/all of its 'parent symbols' but is, at the same time, separate from them through its very difference. Mikhail Bakhtin, who coined the term, describes this process in linguistic terms but the essential meaning remains the same:

> It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor (Bakhtin 1982: 358).

According to Bakhtin such hybridization can only occur in a new space, a space achieved when one and the Other transcend the boundaries created within and between cultures and approach each other as equals, bare, without social constrictions (Kostogriz 2004: 5-6). When the two approach each other from this new space "a new understanding of cultural differences through the critical reconstruction of self" is encouraged (Kostogriz 2004: 6). From this new space then, there is the illumination of both languages, both ethnicities and both selves. This is what Bhabha (1994) refers to as a liminal or in-between space[24]. Hybridity then "is not just the bringing together of two cultures, but is also the creation of something new out of difference" (Sharp 2009: 132).

Bakhtin identifies two types of hybridity which are both essential to this study. The first is unintentional hybridity, which pertains to unconscious hybridization. It happens continuously, naturally and is symbolically productive, "pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world" (Bakhtin 1982: 60). It occurs when two groups come into contact and through sustained interaction each is able to learn and demonstrate aspects of the other's signification systems. Over time each culture integrates meaningful elements of the foreign culture into its own cultural systems. The

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[24] See Homi Bhabha's (1994) Introduction to *The Location of Culture* and (1996) "Culture's In-Between", Shalini Puri's (1999) "Canonized Hybridities, Resistant Hybridities: Chutney Soca, Carnival, and the Politics of Nationalism" and (2004) *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post-Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity* and Robert Young's (1995) *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*.

second type of hybridity is intentional hybridity. Young (1995) explains that intentional hybrids represent the collision of two different signification systems. This collision places the two systems in a dialogic relationship, where the elements of one system are illuminated though their presence in another. The presence of one within the other places the two systems in contestation. There is a resultant clash of conflicting world views that results in turbulence but also a greater understanding of the two signification systems that produced it. Hybridity thus allows for synchronous contestation and illumination, division and fusion, turbulence and production.

An additional 'ideological' dimension of hybridity is hinted at in Bakhtin's discussion of framing perspectives (p. 359). If every culture has its own agencies for understanding or making sense of the world, as a person begins to live in and/or experience another culture, he/she may begin to absorb aspects of that culture's point of view. This new frame of reference, however, is not that of the foreign culture, nor is it equivalent to the person's original point of view (informed by his/her own culture). It is a new perspective, one born out of the collective experience of the two cultures. Once there is that interaction, there is the possibility for shared meaning and the creation of hybrid perspectives. Loomba (1998: 174) refers to this process as "mental miscegenation". This terminology, however, overlooks the potential of hybrid perspectives. It neglects the new, productive worldviews that surface out of the merging of elements from different meaning systems.

Colonial displacement thus resulted in a hybrid double-vision and in uncertainty and ambivalence (Bhabha 1994). Relevant to these concepts are the issues of mimicry and mockery. A key feature of adaptation is varying degrees of mimicry where members of different cultures copy beneficial elements of each other's culture. Many times this 'borrowing' is one-way as those in lower positions copy the cultural signifiers of those in power to gain acceptance or status (Loomba 1998). Alternatively, oppressed Others may mimic elements of the prestige culture to deride and unmask the cultural systems of their oppressor, re-presenting and re-inscribing these systems while simultaneously empowering and affirming themselves (Young 1995). Mimicry exists in unstable terrain in the Caribbean as, historically, copying the colonisers was viewed as pretentiousness or "playing white" (Walcott 1998: 9) to gain power.

The hybrid occupies a special space among the community of symbols. It is neither one nor the other. It reflects "the marriage of consonance and dissonance" that occurs when

distinct symbols come into contact with each other (Harris 1999: 44). Hybridity can be both a bridge (consonance) and a divide (dissonance). This is best observed in the ethnic hybrid. Ethnic hybrids can become "a form of self-deceptive division even as it harbour[s] within itself a potential for the renascence of community" (Harris 1999: 24). Torn between contesting polarities, the ethnic hybrid straddles different racial and cultural constructions. These constructions can encourage isolation, and the evolution of a persona that is lost within his/her self, a schizophrenic, whose multiple identities are constantly battling with each other (Loomba 1998; Puri 1999, 2004; Walcott 1987, 1992, 1998). The hybrid individual can thus be ambiguous, representing dualities and multiplicity. Further, while ethnic hybrids represent multiple groups/perspectives they are also outside of these groups because of their very difference. The hybrid experience is thus both inclusive (consonance) and alienating (dissonance).

The description of hybrid identities described above, resembles significantly the preceding discussion on identity in general. This exposes a glaring problem with hybridity theory, particularly within constructivist discourse. It has been argued that hybridity undermines and destabilizes the very foundations of constructivism (Bauman 2002; Loomba 1998). This is because, conceived as the fusion of two different systems, hybridity assumes the coming together of two originally fixed, totalised and complete bodies. This undermines the constructivist perspective that social systems are constructed out of an individual's subjective interaction with, and continuous reflection on, his/her environment. In constructivist philosophy, there are no total, fixed and unchanging systems from which a hybrid system can emerge. The irony of hybridity is that it warns against "interpreting cultural difference in absolute or reductive terms" (ibid: 178) but it is integrally rooted in essentialist discourse. Hybridity and constructivism, it is argued, cannot coexist (Bauman 2002; Gunew 1997; Werbner 2001).

Many cultural theorists, however, have emphatically defended hybridity against this 'anti-hybridity backlash' Pieterse (2001)[25]. Many social constructivists deny that social classifications such as culture, identity and ethnicity exist in essentialised forms, but they admit that the impacts of human constructions are tangible (Anderson 1991; Barth 1969; Bauman 2001; Hall 1996; Jenkins 1996). If social systems are constructed and, ultimately, symbolic and imagined, it does not mean that they are not perceived and treated as real by

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[25] See, for instance, Bhabha (1994), Hall (1995, 1996), Loomba (1998) and Pieterse (2001).

individuals and society (Anderson 1991; Berger and Luckmann 1967; Cohen 1985; Hall 1990, 1996; Jenkins 1997, 2002; Lee Cuba 1993; Rex 2002). Human beings make sense of themselves and others through boundaries, even though those boundaries are fluid and permeable and individuals may adopt multiple identifications simultaneously (Hall 1996; Pieterse 2001). Classification boundaries define everyday existence (Pieterse 2001). If groups are grounded on 'symbolically meaningful', porous boundaries, they are meaningful primarily in context - interpretations are guided by an individual's personal circumstances and the 'webs of significance', or 'socially established codes', surrounding him/her (Bauman 1988; Geertz 1973; Hall 1997). Different symbolic systems may be guided by different local, historical and symbolic contexts. Social constructivists continue to use terms such as 'identity' and 'culture' because these continue to be relevant in the worlds they study. Therefore, it is important to continue to use such terms but to approach and address them "in their detotalized or deconstructed forms" (Hall 1996: 1) in analysis. For example, cultures are perceived in this thesis as communities that construct the world in *roughly* similar ways. Hybridity, then, can be convincingly said to result from a clash of different interpretive systems, not fixed/totalised ones.

Hybridity, conceived as a 'third space', has been used to theorise international student adjustment in the past (Burnapp 2006). Burnapp's study examined international student constructions of themselves as learners in a new environment and how they adapted their learning styles to suit alternative approaches to learning. His research concluded that students do not adapt fully to new modes of learning but instead merged elements from different approaches to develop a synergised, hybrid epistemology or, in my terms, a hybrid perspective to learning. Further, as Koehne (2005) notes, many international students faced with difference and multiple signification systems in the host country negotiate their identities in creative and synergised ways; merging ideas, concepts and cultural products from their home country with meaning systems from the host country in re(producing) their identities. It is interesting to investigate the extent to which a similar pattern of merging and mixing emerges among postcolonial Trinidadian students in the UK.

Disjuncture in Postcolonial Theory

This thesis advances a theory called (Dis)Juncture to describe the participants' experiences in the UK. The terms disjuncture is widely used in cultural, postcolonial and

globalisation theories. It is useful, then, to discuss the use of disjuncture in postcolonial/globalisation theory. The term disjuncture is most often associated with Appadurai's (1990) essay on the impacts of global economic, technological, ethnic, financial, media and ideological flows. The theory argues that these global flows extend/spread in an uncertain, irregular and unpredictable manner. The result is a very chaotic, volatile (disjunctive) global system that a based on a complex and constant interplay among global and local actors/agencies. This interplay itself is often slippery. Globalization, which suggests mutuality, is thus actually characterised by different levels of disjuncture.

This disjuncture can be observed within each of the five areas Appadurai discusses: in the spread of technology, global economy, in ethnic movements, media constructions and political state ideologies. Social and cultural politics are built upon these global disjunctures. Appaduri's disjuncture can best be described as a fracture within a perceived straight line, where globalisation exists at the fracture. I will return to this later in Chapter 5 when I discuss my own conception of (dis)juncture as it relates to Appaduri's work.

2.3. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADJUSTMENT

2.3.1 Past Research on International Student Adjustment

Ward et al (2001) trace the beginnings of research into international student adjustment to the 1950s when large numbers of researchers sought to better understand and describe the problems faced by international students. Since then, the number of international students worldwide has grown substantially, with more than a million students estimated to be studying higher education abroad (Hayes 1998; Taylor 2005). In the UK alone, international students comprise 16% of the total student population (Brown and Holloway 2008). This growth in the number of international students worldwide, combined with universities' growing dependency on income from international students (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Macleod 2006; Ward et al 2001) have led to increased attention being placed on understanding and facilitating international students' adjustment in the host country. The literature in this area is wide and continues to grow, heightened by the adoption of internationalization policies in many universities. The substantial revenue that accompanies international students in foreign universities has boosted research on international student experiences on the grounds that positive student experiences can substantially increase

revenue to the host country[26]. As Coate (2009) explains, in much of the literature, international students are described in terms of their export value and compared with other exports such as alcohol and wool. Decreasing numbers of international students in the UK can drastically impact universities' incomes (Maslen 2005).

The majority of studies in this area seek to uncover the problems which international students face in their new environment. The field emerged from early research into mental health among international migrants and, consequently, research in the area has been dominated by psychological approaches (Bochner et al 2001; Furnham 1981). Researchers frequently employ quantitative methodologies (see Chapter 3), often using questionnaires, to acquire data from large numbers of international students and perform statistical tests on the data[27]. These studies have helped to identify a number of problems that international students face when studying in a different country from their own, and have isolated different ways of dealing/coping with these problems.

The majority of studies in this area have concentrated on identifying the problems South and East Asian students face in English-speaking countries. This is "because these students constitute one of the largest groups of international students from a non-Western culture who study in Anglophone countries" (Louie 2005: 17-18)[28]. A growing number of studies also focus on the experiences of Arab students in English-speaking countries[29]. As

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[26] Long-time researcher and writer in international student adjustment, psychologist Adrian Furnham, overviews the student population and revenue figures in Britain as follows: "Britain has about 17 per cent of the world's total overseas student population. The fees from fully funded overseas students totalled £310 million for 1992/3, but in addition the expenditure on UK-based goods and services was at least £405 million. In the same period about 5 per cent of the income of the universities was based on foreign students' fees ... this had risen to 6 per cent of a total income of £13.5 billion in 2001" (Furnham 2004, 16). A commonly-sited volume in the field, *The Psychology of Culture Shock* (Bochner et al 2001), also identifies the revenues accrued by foreign students as important grounds for studying the social-psychological impact of studying abroad on international students. See also Naidoo's (2007) "Research on the Flow of International Students to UK Universities: Determinants and Implications" and Hough's (2008) "The Discursive Negotiation of International Student Identities".

[27] See Abe et al (1998), Constantine et al (2004), Hechanova-Alampay et al (2002), Henya Kagan (1990), Leong and Ward (2000), Toyokawa and Tokokawa (2002), Ward and Chang (1997), Ward and Kennedy (1999) and Ward et al (1998).

[28] Useful charts showing what Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin (2002) call the "international trade in educational services" (10) can be found in their (2002) paper "International Trade in Educational Services: Good or Bad".

[29] See for instance, Meleis' (1982) early work on Arab students' experiences in the United States "Arab Students in Western Universities: Social Properties and Dilemmas"; Alreshoud and Koeske's (1997) "Arab Students' Attitudes Toward and Amount of Social Contact With Americans: A Causal Process Analysis of

Furnham (2004) explains, the bulk of past research focused on international students in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the UK because the majority of international students were bound for these countries. However, this trend has changed over time and studies increasingly investigate the experiences of international English-speaking students in both English and non-English-speaking environments as well[30]. The lack of early research on the experiences of English-speaking students in non-English-speaking environments suggests that reverse movement was not particularly high during the 1970s and 1980s. However in the 1990s and into the 2000s research on students from English-speaking countries studying in non-English-speaking countries has surfaced[31]. Such studies, however, are small when compared to the bulk of research conducted on Asian students. It has been difficult to locate studies on Central and South American students studying abroad – either at Spanish-speaking or English-speaking universities [32]. Latin America and the Caribbean are underrepresented in the research on international student adjustment.

Many of the findings from different studies corroborate each other, and when compiled, identify a number of crucial factors which have been found to affect student adjustment. As many of the studies which advanced these findings have been quantitative in nature, there has been little interrogation of the complex dimensions and interconnections among the factors and problems influencing student adjustment. Arguably, it may be because so many of these studies are anchored in quantitative methodologies that the same issues keep recurring. This is because surveys and questionnaires ask questions in and around the dominant issues. What many of these studies do is inquire into whether or not these dominant problems affect different student populations instead of working out the complex and changing dynamics of the international student experience. While different student

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Cross-Sectional Data"; Mehdizadeh and Scott's (2005) "Adjustment Problems of Iranian International Students in Scotland."

[30] See Ward and Kennedy (1999) "The Measurement of Sociocultural Adaptation".

[31] See for instance, Lewthwaite's (1996) work on new Zealand students in his "A Study of International Students' Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Adaptation"; Ward and Chang's (1997) analyses of 139 Americans in Singapore in "Cultural Fit": A New Perspective on Personality and Sojourner Adjustment".

[32] In many instances, where I was able to locate research on these students, the research was focused on students from several different nationalities and not solely on the experiences of Latin American students. See for example, "At a Foreign University: An International Study of Adaptation and Coping" (Klineberg and Hull 1979) and "Self-Concealment, Social Self-Efficacy, Acculturative Stress, and Depression in African, Asian, and Latin American International College Students" (Constantine et al 2004).

communities may experience language difficulties in a new academic environment, for example, they may experience these difficulties in significantly different ways. It is this 'teasing out' of the issues that is now needed in the research in the field. This is what the present study intends to do.

2.3.2. Problems International Students face in New Academic Environments

Language Difficulties

One of the main issues affecting international students in English-speaking countries is language or communication difficulties[33]. Language contributes important academic and social barriers to student adjustment among students whose first language is not the primary language of the host country. Problems understanding lectures (lecturers), course material and academic language conventions can cause some students to trail behind home students in classes which can be detrimental to their educational experience (Jochems 1996; Ryan and Carroll 2005). Language problems are also linked with issues of self-confidence and self-esteem (Constantine et al 2004; Luzio-Lockett 1998). Students who perform well below their expectations in classes can lose confidence in their capabilities and in the UK educational system. Low self-confidence can also influence whether and how the student communicates in lectures and among other students. It may cause some students to withdraw from communicating in the second language almost entirely, isolating them from their peers. Language can thus have a severe impact on students' construction of their identities and on how they perceive they are constructed by others.

Many studies show that where there is a large group of co-nationals within the academic community, small ethnic communities can develop within the university "to buffer international students from problems associated with a lack of assimilation" (Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998, Abstract)[34]. By associating mainly with co-nationals, students are able to communicate and interpret their new environment in their own language. The UK Council for

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[33] See, for instance, Furnham (1993), Henya Kagan (1993), Jochems et al (1996), Lin (1997), Littlemore (2001), Luzio-Lockett (1998), Masahiko and Ovando (2003), Perrucci and Hu (1995) and Slovic (2008).

[34] Refer to the UK Council for International Student Affairs – UKCOSA's (2004) report on international students' satisfaction with their experience, *Broadening our Horizons*, Gill (2007), Sovic (2008a and b) and Ye (2006) for more information.

International Student Affairs (UKCISA – formerly UKCOSA), in a report on international student satisfaction, found that student satisfaction, integration with UK students and perceptions on value for money correlate with the students' language competence (UKCOSA 2004). Language also causes communication difficulties among international students whose first language is the primary language of the host country. This is because much social and academic communication draws from community-specific socio-cultural resources which international students do not share and which hinder mutual understanding (Harrison and Peacock 2007; Littlemore 2001). In cases where verbal and nonverbal symbols such as puns, word plays, slang, metaphors and the use of culturally-specific ambiguous gestures and body movements, such as rubbing the tips of one's fingers to indicate 'money', dominate social interaction, international students are many times excluded. Harrison and Peacock (2007) state that international students' inability to understand culturally-specific symbols of social communication have led to their being deliberately excluded by home students.

Difficulty Adjusting to Different Learning Styles

International students also face other academic problems (Bochner 1979; Burnapp 2006; Jochems 1996; Luzio-Lockett 1998). The host culture may adopt different approaches to learning which may conflict with those used in the student's home country (Chalmers and Volet 1997; Lee and Rice 2007; Littlewood 2001; Sovic 2008b). In this way the student must adapt his/her learning styles and modes of learning to suit that expected in the host country. Expectations of the student within the classroom also differ from country to country, for example, whether the student is expected to be outspoken or to take the role of listener, and these conflicting expectations need to be reconciled before performance can be improved (Ryan and Carroll 2005). Some students also face difficulties adjusting to the self-directed independent learning model used in the UK and other Western universities, and may need to be informed about what is expected of them, as well as of the role(s) and purpose(s) of lectures, before they begin classes (Ryan and Carroll 2005; Warring 2009). As Ryan and Carroll (2005) argue, for some students, visas may be revoked for academic failure and this adds considerable pressure on the students to perform well in spite of mounting difficulties.

Financial Difficulties

Financial problems are also a great concern for many students who self-fund their academic programmes (Forbes-Mewett et al 2009; Jenkins and Galloway 2009; Lin and Yi 1997; Ward et al 2001). Even students who receive funding from scholarship programmes have stated that it is difficult to manage on scholarship funds alone given the high cost of accommodation and living expenses and depend on part-time work to meet their financial requirements (Harman 2003). A UKCISA report (UKCOSA 2004) on student satisfaction in the UK indicated that the majority of the students surveyed, 71 percent, were paying their own fees either wholly or in part. In the UK international students are allowed to work up to 20 hours per week on their student visa. Managing paid work along with studying can prove an added stress for many students, but many other unexpected problems can come alongside paid work. As Deumert et al (2005: 341) explain, international students face "exploitative rates of pay, excessive hours or other unreasonable demands, difficulties in performing the expected functions without proper training, and/or instances of sexual or other forms of harassment". The majority of students in Deumert et al's (2005) study indicated that during a financial crisis they were unlikely to seek help or talk about their difficulties. They were more likely to 'tough it out' until things got better.

Difficulties Socializing

Added to academic and financial stress are the social problems that international students face when living in a country that is not their own. For students with language difficulties or those who may have difficulties communicating in social situations, problems such as social isolation can surface[35]. The stresses involved in studies, work and social life must also be managed without the students' usual support networks which can become an added burden and contribute to loneliness and depression (Deumert et al 2005).

As discussed earlier, it is usually when one comes into contact with the Other that he/she understands or perceives his/her own culture[36]. Many international students recognise the contrasting ways in which they produce meanings, compared to other communities, when

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[35] See, for instance, Brumfiel (2005), Furnham (2004), Lewthwaite (1996), Lin (1997), Persaud (1993), Rajapaksa and Dundes (2003), Schram and Lauver (1988) and Stone-Feinstein and Ward (1990).

[36] Refer to section 2.2.4 above for more information on community formation and communities in contact.

they come into contact with a different culture. Behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs may be very different in the new country and these may become overwhelming for some students and may cause them to feel dislocated from themselves and the environment (Brein and David 1971; Haines 2007). This process, referred to as culture shock, is discussed in greater detail in the following section. Accompanying 'culture shock' may be problems such as homesickness (Lin 1997; Lu 1990; Rajapaksa and Dundes 2003) and perceived discrimination from members of the host culture (Bochner 1979; Furnham 2004; Leong 2000; Perrucci and Hu 1995; Ye 2006), who then becomes the Other. This isolation, homesickness and culture shock encourage international students to seek out members of their own culture for social support (Al Sharideh and Goe 1998; Harrison and Peacock 2007; Ye 2006). This can help students to gain the confidence they need to operate in a new environment, reduce stress and share experiences with others in a similar situation (Sovic 2008a and b; Ye 2006). According to the UKCISA (UKCOSA 2004), international students in their study were much more integrated with co-nationals and other international students than home students. As one Danish student in the study explained:

> I have experienced a "Berlin" wall of prejudices from UK students - something that everyone knows about but no one dares to talk about because it is sort of a taboo - which in turn results in tacit compliance and a minimum of (social) interaction between UK and international students (UKCOSA 2004: 70).

Interaction with home students in the UK is therefore usually limited. The UKCISA expressed concern that very few international students form bonds with British students, and where bonds did form, they were usually with students from North America, Sub-Saharan Africa and the EU (except Greece). This supports the recurring position in the literature that "students mix more easily when there is a perceived closeness of culture (e.g. between British and other Western cultures) or where the number of incomers is small, and therefore less likely to be perceived as threatening" to home students (UKCOSA 2004: 67).

Difficulties Negotiating Identity

Identity also surfaces as an important component of the adjustment process for international students[37]. The international student experience places students in a new,

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[37] See Burnapp (2006), Constantine et al (2004), Haines (2007), Leong (2000), Luzio-Lockett (1998) and Yeh (1996).

transformative situation where they are forced to construct themselves in the light of new experiences and in the face of a different cultural experience. These identities are constantly under construction and negotiation as the student gains new international and educational experiences and adopts new positionalities both within the classroom and outside (Koehne 2005, 2006; Naoko 2004). These shifting identities become complicated when students consider their home countries and the ways in which they have changed over time and negotiate who they are in relation to their home country. Studies on group identities have also sought to investigate the role of group identities on the international student experience. As students band together under national, cultural, racial, economic or political banners for security, bonding and to share ideas with like-minded people, their identities are moulded by the meaning systems of the different groups to which they belong. Schmitt et al (2002), for example, sought to show how international students developed a shared group identity out of perceived rejection or discrimination from members of the host culture. Being part of this group helps to shape the group members' individual construction of themselves over time. The experience encourages "the development of new ways of talking and thinking about oneself, the opening up of spaces in relation to subjectivity" (Koehne 2005: 109). Identity is therefore subject to flows and changes as the student interacts with others and gains new experiences. As such, qualitative work in international student adjustment should seek to understand and, at times, conceptualise these intricate flows and changes.

Emerging Trends

An interesting turn in the literature on adjustment is research on how international students are constructed by members of the host country. Ward's (2001) bibliography of the research in this emerging terrain provokes much interest, as does Harrison and Peacock's (2007) investigation into how UK students construct and bond with international students culturally, socially and academically on university campuses. However it is Ryan and Carroll's (2005) contribution to how international students are constructed by university lecturers that draws the most concern. Ryan and Carroll argue that international students are constructed as lacking in the right skills rather than as having different skills than those expected in the host country. The role of culture in academic performance, they argue, is not always interrogated by lecturers who judge all students by UK standards. Ryan and Carroll (2005) argue that encouraging international students and impacting student performance is

not about lowering standards as lecturers seem to think. It is about lecturers widening their vision to become more open-minded and culturally sensitive, rather than developing negative evaluations based on their interpretation of what is expected in higher education. As Coate (2009) rightly states,

> international students in general are perceived as having more economic than academic capital in English higher education, and this tendency to treat them as economically important but academically deficient has become perhaps the defining characteristic of their journey through higher education (p. 13).

Students can be moulded to get to where they need to be, Ryan and Carroll (2005) argue, but lecturers have to understand the roots of the problem rather than immediately constructing negative impressions of students. These pessimistic constructions may negatively impact student confidence and performance.

2.3.3 Problems Faced by Caribbean Students in the UK

Compared to Japan, China and India, Caribbean nations do not send large cohorts of students to universities in any single international country[38]. As such, they are often neglected in the research on international student adjustment. This is one of the factors that make this study unique. It focuses on the experiences of a group of students that has not been studied in the current adjustment literature. To the best of my knowledge, material on this specific group is confined to an early work that explored social adaptation among colonial students in London when Trinidad and Tobago was still a British colony (Carey 1956), and a collection of essays published in 1965 (Tajfel and Dawson 1965) just after Trinidad and Tobago gained Independence (1962). The latter is a collection of essays from international students at Oxford University. With just nine years separating these two works, from two different periods of Trinidad and Tobago's history, the findings from both works are similar. However, the first person narratives of Mervyn Morris and Kenneth Ramchand (in Tajfel and Dawson 1965) help to better understand the complexities of the experience for the Caribbean student in the UK than the third person account of a white researcher studying black students during

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[38] This can be noted in Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin's (2002) "International Trade in Educational Services: Good or Bad" which contains several charts showing the number of students 'imported' by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, as well as the top 30 nations of origin for OECD countries. It is interesting to note that Brazil and Mexico are the only Latin American countries to make the top 30 list (at 25 and 27 respectively). No Caribbean country made the list.

colonialism. It is important to review some of the key points made in these two volumes because they help to build a foundation for what is already known about Caribbean (postcolonial) student adjustment in the UK.

Caribbean students are unique, Carey (1956: 42) states, because they are "citizens of a community historically and politically linked with the British people" and thus have less problems adapting to London compared to many other international students. The present research will investigate whether this is still the case. The West Indian students Carey interviewed did not indicate that they experienced any academic problems during their stay in the UK. Further, as the academic language in their home countries was English, language problems were also not an issue for this group of students. In addition, Carey states that "most West Indians have been in close contact with Europeans from an early age, and many have gone to school with whites" (p. 133) thereby making adjustment to a different ethnic groups easier for West Indian students compared to students from other, less ethnically diverse, backgrounds. However, the *constructions of* ethnicity in the colonies and in the metropolitan western city diverged tremendously, and students admitted difficulty coming to terms with the way their ethnic background was interpreted and judged in London. As Carey (1956: 134, my emphasis) states, "*shades of colour* that matter so much in the colonies are non existent here – there is only white and not white here and West Indian students in particular had a hard time grappling with this". Differences in construction and prestige that accompanied being Black, mulatto and 'almost white' (Fanon 1967) were nonexistent in Britain, and West Indians had to come to terms with new constructions and treatment in a white-black Britain.

Carey (1956) insisted that the problems faced by Caribbean students were rooted in their expectations of their experience in London: "this system of **expectations** is important; for it seems reasonable to assume that it will to a greater or lesser extent effect the students' interpretation of their subsequent experiences" (p. 37). One of the greatest difficulties faced by colonial Caribbean students in London at that time was the inability to access housing as many landladies refused to accept Blacks because it lowered their face value with neighbours. Further, Black men continuously raised the problems faced when finding the right type of British girl to date in London. University girls, the students argued, were not willing to date them and thus they mainly had relationships with shop girls who were not university educated. If white women dated them, the perception was that they did it out of curiosity and stereotypes of virility associated with Black men rather than genuine affection. White

partners, respondents felt, would also normally keep the relationship a secret to protect their prestige.

Carey (1956) indicated that West Indian students were able to develop bonds with other international students but not with British students. Recent studies on different groups of international students have advanced similar findings (UKCOSA 2004; Sovic 2008b). Further, as with other international groups today, Carey (1956) found that having large numbers of co-nationals in London, "tends to increase confidence, and thus to facilitate adaptation" (pp. 108-109). Further, he argues, smaller numbers of co-nationals encourage West Indian students to mix with British students which leads to increased assimilation into British culture (see also Ward 2001).

The expression of religion in the UK caused some discontent among West Indian students as well (Carey 1956). Religion was an important means of social control in the West Indies during colonisation (Bryan 2000). It was one of the ideological tools used by the colonisers to justify their colonial practices, legitimate their authority and keep the colonised masses under control (ibid). Religion, which was encouraged extensively in the Caribbean by the British who constructed themselves as moral, civilized and religious was not practiced to the same degree in the UK. This shocked a large number of Carey's respondents. That the English wore routine casual clothes to church further stunned many of Carey's respondents who were accustomed to wearing 'their Sunday best' to church.

Mervyn Morris' (1965) and Kenneth Ramchand's (1965) personal accounts of their experiences in Oxford confirms some of Carey's findings. Morris explained early in his personal account that his contributions may seem contradictory at times, but these contradictions are "complexities and ambiguities of which I have been aware" (p. 6). This is in line with arguments advanced earlier about identity being rooted in the continuous negotiation of plural, contradictory and ambiguous meanings that are constantly shifting and being (re)produced. Both Morris and Ramchand admit that they came to the UK armed with advice on what to expect from the culture and the people, for example, perceptions about British ignorance about life in the colonies, interracial violence, relationships with women and constructions of ethnicity. Ramchand also supports Carey's (1956) findings regarding romantic relationships between Blacks and Whites in the UK. However he explains the university context as one where there was a scarcity of West Indian or Black women from which to choose. Therefore, if a student wished to date someone with their academic

background they had no choice but to 'court' white women. An issue that Carey (1956) describes with some indignation (that Black men wanted to date White women), Ramchand takes on defensively. It is important, too, that Ramchand was located in Oxford which would have been a sub-urban, predominantly white location; whereas Carey's study was concentrated in London which, though predominantly white at the time (Carey 1956), may have had comparably more Black students, therefore the contexts may have been different.

English subtlety was another problem which caused distress and discomfort for these two men. This is because, Morris argues, in communicating with others, the British person's real meanings are hidden and it is difficult to understand what he/she means: "So much happens below the surface; as the English have cultivated the art, and the virtue, of surface politeness, it is very often distressing to find contempt, distrust, or dislike lurking beneath civility" (p. 8). This 'surface politeness' (variously described as 'smugness' and 'superiority' by several contemporary international students – UKCOSA 2004, 70; or even 'coldness' – Sovic 2008b) made it difficult to communicate with the British and to develop friendships with them. This also affected Morris' ability to trust the British nationals around him. The British, Morris argues, are also slow to develop friendships and this caused him much discomfort. He spent much time, he admits, negotiating and deliberating whether or not he was too friendly for them and/or how friendly he should be in social situations. Ramchand, however, was more firm in his response as he tended to avoid social relationships altogether. He admits that his reaction reflects the defensive response of "a mind which has been, or at least, thinks it has been antagonised, by the suspicion of an unspoken attitude" (p. 33). Perceived subtlety in the British culture, then, seems to have engendered distrust in Ramchand so that he withdrew from bonding with home students.

Morris (1965) insists that his (re)construction of identity in Britain "was a process towards a more assertive West Indianness. Paradoxically, the more integrated I became, the more aware I was of not belonging" (Morris 1965: 13). Ramchand (1965) dealt with his social isolation by immersing himself in 'West Indianness'; surrounding himself with West Indians and socialising primarily with West Indians. However, Morris argues against this kind of response since the lack of interaction with other cultures only leads to the "exchanging crude prejudices" (p. 24) and not genuine knowledge of the peoples and cultures sharing one's environment.

2.3.4 Modelling adjustment

While many studies have focused on identifying the factors which affect adjustment or the problems international students face, others have concentrated on modelling adjustment in some way. One of the earliest models of cultural adjustment is Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve model of international student adjustment, based on interviews he conducted with 200 Norwegian Fulbright students in the United States. Lysgaard's U-Curve model describes a process that begins with positive, generative feelings towards the new culture which progressively deteriorates as the student experiences the new culture. This phase of negative feelings, acculturative stress and maladjustment eventually nadirs. It is followed by an upward phase where students interact with their new environment, problems decrease and adjustment is gradually achieved.

Kalervo Oberg (1960), who is credited with devising the term 'culture shock', developed a model that is also still widely used today and which reflects Lysgaard's trough-shaped model in its stages of culture shock. Culture shock, according to Oberg:

> is brought on by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse ... When an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of good will he may be, a series of props has been knocked out from under him (p. 177).

Many writers on adjustment use culture shock models to describe the adjustment process, conceptualising adjustment as synonymous with the process of dealing with culture shock. This thesis does not view 'shock' as the best term to describe the response to foreign environments and thus does not use the term apart from establishing its place in the adjustment literature. The preferred term in this thesis is 'adjustment'.

Oberg's culture shock model was not devised with students particularly in mind but migrants as a whole. The honeymoon phase is the first stage of culture shock. This is where the newcomer experiences excitement and fascination with the host country and all in it. There is the sense of newness and exoticism associated with the host country. The next stage is the crisis stage. This is where the individual begins to experience anxiety and disorientation that Oberg described as key to culture shock. The third stage is the recovery stage. This is the stage where the 'newcomer' begins to learn the skills necessary to function effectively in the foreign environment. He/she begins to learn the signs and symbols that regulate social

intercourse in the new environment and begins to feel progressively more confident and relaxed. This is a very volatile stage. Here the individual may have an experience or a series of experiences that emphasize the real difficulty in learning the new culture, and these experiences, depending on their intensity, may cause the individual to regress to the crisis stage (called recurrent crises). Finally, Oberg identified the adjustment stage where the individual adapts to the host country. He/she feels comfortable and competent in the new environment and is able to function successfully in it. Though dated, Oberg's model takes a pragmatic and user-friendly approach to culture shock.

The models that have surfaced in response to Oberg in the decades since it was devised have, in many ways, simply replicated the original model with minor changes. Examples of such models include humanistic psychologist Peter Adler's (1975) five phases of culture shock (contact, disintegration, reintegration – conceived as a deep crisis, autonomy and independence), Brown's (1980) adjustment model based on second language learners in a foreign environment (excitement, culture shock, culture stress, adaptation) and Torbiorn's (1994) model of cross-cultural communication (again five stages beginning with fascination and ending with adjustment being achieved). It is Mohamed's (1997) model that really contributes something significantly different to the discourse on modelling adjustment. His approach incorporates issues of identity and ambivalence into the central argument and establishes them as critical features of adjustment. Mohamed also avoids the connection with the other 'U-type' models which begin with a state of euphoria or excitement. His model tackles adjustment as a movement from individuals handling less to more complex psychological and socio-cultural issues in the new environment. Mohamed's model begins with what is for others the third stage of adjustment, that is, orientation and autonomy. In this stage the individual learns the skills and symbols of the new culture. This is followed by considerations and negotiations of self-worth where the individual undergoes stress and ambivalence in deciding between and resisting new demands. Following this there is the consolidation of role identities where the individual becomes aware of different symbolic systems, webs of signification, and negotiates his/her role and place among these. Finally, the individual achieves competence and integrative maturity where he/she develops confidence in his/her ability to take on different roles and manage in different contexts.

This last model complicates adjustment somewhat by highlighting the deeply personal and subjective aspects of the process and injecting dynamism and creativity into the process. It suggests personal engagement with the new environment as opposed to clearly defined and

unrelated stages. Each of Mohamed's stages seems to build on what came previously, demonstrating that the characteristics of each stage are intimately related to those that came before. Where the previous models refer to individual stages as if they were unrelated and disconnected from each other, Mohamed builds connections, complexity and ambivalence into the very frame of the model. While each of the models end with adjustment, however defined, being achieved, what is important in Mohamed's interpretation is that the final stage is characterised by individuals achieving confidence to navigate and negotiate new and unfolding circumstances. His final stage suggests that adjustment is never 'final', never 'reached', but is always in process, always continuing. Yet while it takes the issue of modelling adjustment further, Mohamed's approach still falls into the category of many other models, that of limiting a very subjective experience, characterised by individuals experiencing complex, multidimensional and even contradictory emotions simultaneously, into a predefined and ordered system. Human experience is too uncertain, in a state of too much flux, to be conceptualised prescriptively without significant qualification.

However, process-based models are not the only available conceptual representations of adjustment. Studies on migrant adjustment began in mental health disciplines and have since moved into psychology and social psychology where much work in the area is concentrated (Ward et al 2001). Researchers coming from this position aim to better understand migrant and sojourner problems (Ward and Rana-Deuba 2000) and to frame useful intervention methods to deal with these problems (Ward et al 2001). The field then is dominated by positivist approaches to the issue and is framed from the perspective of psychologists and counsellors aiming to help students deal with the psychological impact of transition.

Stephen Bochner, Colleen Ward and Adrian Furnham are three notable researchers and writers on international student adjustment. All three are psychologists. Their ABC model of culture shock (Ward et al 2001) is a contemporary model that has been praised for being "comprehensive, longitudinal, dynamic, systemic and pragmatic" (Zhou et al 2008: 68). The ABC model fits well with psychological approaches to traveller adjustment. The ABCs of culture shock are the Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive responses migrants and sojourners undergo when they enter a new territory, that is, changes in their emotions, actions and thoughts. For example, affective or emotional responses to culture shock surface in the confusion, trepidation, irritability and/or excitement some students feel in their new environment. Behavioural changes may manifest in withdrawal or increased or decreased

food consumption among international students. Immersion in a new and different culture may also result in students thinking differently, questioning and developing ideas and beliefs that they had previously taken for granted in their home country. This questioning and developing of previous ideas from a new perspective demonstrates cognitive (mental processes such as thinking or reasoning) responses to culture shock (Bochner 2003).

The ABC model is not a closed system that assumes the migrant eventually reaches some predefined state of adjustment. The sense that there is a hierarchy of responses, and that achieving adjustment is the ideal end to the experience is not present here as in the previous process models. This model acknowledges a variety of responses to culture shock as valid and natural by simply categorising the responses migrants/travellers undergo in response to new environments into one of three response types. The ABC approach is thus flexible enough to accommodate many different and even contradictory responses to travel abroad and thus facilities subjective responses. It also recognises socio-cultural aspects of adjustment as impacting on each of these three categories. The ABC model is flexible, accommodative and, for a practitioner aiming to deal with psychological problems students may face, easy to work with.

From a sociological point of view however, the model lacks the significant depth needed to genuinely understand the complex issues associated with adjustment. Also, the model does not facilitate the tracing of changing responses over time. In this way it seems to ignore integral process elements of the experience. The model also allows for some interrelationships among the possible responses but the real dynamism and complexity of the experience is not captured. The model is mainly about categorising responses rather than interrogating them for nuances and depth. As a model arising from positivist discourse there is very little interrogation of the ambivalences, contradictions, nuances and ambiguity of the issues under scrutiny. For example, ethnicity is an important element in adjustment, as identified above. Using the ABC model to conceptualise the experience, one can say that the individual is having a cognitive response. The influence of the cognitive dimension on the affective and the behavioural dimensions may be discussed but the real depth and complexity of interpreting and expressing ethnicity is not; the deep socio-historical and even contemporary influences on ethnicity as well as its intricate and multi-layered connections with other issues are also difficult to explore within this perspective. To fit the needs of psychology the model has clearly defined characteristics; the issues are not problematised nor are social forces interrogated in the way that they are in sociology. With its sociological,

postcolonial, (de)constructivist standpoint, this study makes an important contribution to problematising and (re)conceptualising the dynamics of international student adjustment.

2.4 CONCLUSION

My main aim in this review was to identify and explain the theoretical foundations guiding this study. International student adjustment is a topic which extends across a number of intertwined and complementary fields. This thesis approaches the field from a postcolonial perspective. The intellectual context grounding this study therefore surrounds discourses such as power and representation, language, culture, otherness, displacement, identity, ethnicity and hybridity. With its emphasis on irony, ambivalence, ambiguity and contradiction, postcolonialism facilitates the investigation of international student adjustment in its complexity and dynamism. This review also sought to locate the research by considering some of the work that has been conducted in international student adjustment. This study intends to build on the literature by focusing on a group of students who are relatively unique to the field. These students, one observer argued, are "citizens of a community historically and politically linked with the British people" (Carey 1956: 42). The problems they face may be different from those identified in the prevailing literature. Furthermore, as the students originate from a country that is historically culturally diverse, their experiences in the UK contribute an interesting and complementary perspective to the adjustment process.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology and the methods of the study. The **methodology** sections of this chapter present perspectives about the nature of the world - what it is and how it can be studied (Jupp 2006; Scott and Morrison 2006). These perspectives influenced how the research was interpreted and carried out. The **methods** sections which follow describe the specific techniques and instruments that I used to collect, interpret and present the data (Creswell 2009). The chapter begins by describing the research paradigm on which this study is based, qualitative research. The research strategy, grounded theory, will be then be described. This research combined blogs and interviews to collect data, a design referred to as the blog-interview. The blog was devised to function as an online research diary. In practice, the blog did not function as a diary and can best be described as a blog. However, since the blog was built to mimic a traditional research diary and capitalise on its advantages, it is useful to build the discussion of the design on an explanation of research diaries. A description of blogs and interviews and their usefulness for this research follows. Next, the procedures and considerations involved in sampling, acquiring access and gaining consent will be described. The implementation of the design is also explained. It was crucial that all aspects of this study were ethical, responsible and respected the rights and persons of those involved in the research at all times. The ethical considerations and decisions that were made to protect participants and their rights during this research will also be explored in this chapter. The procedures involved in data analysis will conclude the chapter.

The central question in this study is: how do Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment? Subsidiary questions are:

1. What kinds of experiences do the participants have in the UK?
2. How do the participants (re)construct the meaning of these experiences?
3. What are the effects of these experiences on the participants?

The research design for this study emerged out of my core aim to *trace* student responses to the UK over time. An important element in this tracing objective is capturing the intricate flux and flow of the participants' experiences, thoughts and emotions in the UK. It is about being able to follow the multifaceted and dynamic ways the participants interpreted their experiences over time; how meanings were constructed, dismantled, negotiated and reconstructed during their stay in the UK. I decided to collect data during the participants'

first six months in their new environment. This was because the available literature indicates that these initial months determine the kind of experience that international students are likely to have in the host country. It is during this period that students undergo the greatest adjustment difficulties[39]. The research design I formulated was based on the need to systematically and continuously track student responses during these pivotal and decisive six months.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

3.2.1 Constructivism and Qualitative Research

As Chapters One and Two emphasised, the bulk of work in international student adjustment has been written from a positivist perspective. Positivism views social reality as characterised according to external and predictable patterns and rules that can be objectively and empirically studied (Cohen et al 2007; Robson 2002). This position regards reality as tangible, with changes and flux in the social world attributed to patterned, quantifiable and predictable sequences of events which can be traced and their components measured, understood, classified and manipulated according to rules, formulae or universal theories (Cohen et al 2007; Gall et al 2007, Trochim, 2006). Since human reality can be tested and the results measured, positivists normally utilise numeric forms of data, called quantitative data, which can be analysed using statistical methods and probability.

To return to international student adjustment, the quantitative studies that dominate the field identify the range of perceptions and experiences international students have regarding their new environment and *how many* students share, or are likely to share, these experiences. They are unable to delve into the multiple and dynamic ways in which these experiences are meaningful to students. This study adopts a constructivist worldview and employs a qualitative approach to explore and better understand the complex contextual and perceptual meaningfulness of studying in a different country.

For constructivists, social phenomena are not patterned, tangible and 'out there' to be objectively experienced and understood. Rather, reality is a deeply subjective concept that

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[39] See Hechanova-Alampay et al (2002), Lin and Yi (1997), Ward and Kennedy (1996), Ward et al (1998) and Ward and Kennedy (1999).

surfaces out of an individual's interaction with, and reflection on, his/her environment. As an individual's circumstances change, so too do his/her conception of reality. Our knowledge and perceptions of the world are intensely subjective; they are constructed out of our own conceptual and perceptual framework(s), which are themselves influenced by a number of social and natural phenomena (von Glasersfeld 1996). The natural world may be real but our knowledge of it, and what can be known about it, will always be subjective, based on individual schemata or personal cognitive structures that organise and process our knowledge about the world. Schemata guide interpretation and are amenable to change as circumstances change (Anderson 1977; McVee et al 2005; Piaget 1926). Meanings and interpretations are thus constantly under revision (Bryman 2008). Meaning, and by extension knowledge, is thus context-bound[40]. It is difficult to take the meaning of an utterance out of the physical, temporal, cultural and psychological contexts in which it was uttered.

Researchers who view the world as constructed/interpreted aim to capture the varied and multiple meanings which individuals have for phenomena and explore them in their complexity (Creswell 2009; della Porta and Keating 2008). This requires the researcher to learn the deep and varied ways in which participants construct meanings and how these meanings intersect, diverge and change over time. Studies that focus on discovering the complex tapestry of meaning that phenomena have for actors in a given situation are called qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, 2008; Flick 2002; LeCompte et al 1993; Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Qualitative researchers aim to explore the complex fabric of contextual meaning that emerges from a situation or phenomenon in rich detail.

Social science research involves dialogue between two people who each have a personal and constantly evolving system of meaning from which they interpret the world (Howe and Berv 2000). Both work together to construct the field[41]. As a result, researchers tend to write themselves into qualitative research, describing the system of meaning he/she brought to the research experience and the role he/she played at different intervals[42]. Acknowledging and reflecting on the role the researcher plays in the research is a major

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[40] See Cohen (1985), Dattilio and Freeman (2007), Hall (1997) and Howe and Berv (2000) for more information on the contextual nature of reality.

[41] See Briggs (1986, 2003), Charmaz (2003, 2008), Dingwall (1997) and Holstein and Gubrium (2002).

[42] For more information on the instrumental role the researcher plays in qualitative research refer to Bryman (2008), Charmaz (2003, 2008), Cohen et al (2007), Cooper (2008), Corbin and Strauss (2008), Hall and Callery (2001) and Marshall and Rossman (2006).

strength of qualitative research. In this way, the research becomes contextualised as the researcher's own account of the phenomena under study (Bryman 2008). Further, reflection allows readers to understand the systems of meaning guiding the researcher's interpretation of events and data (Briggs 1986; Burgess 1984; Guba 1990; Oakley 1981). By reflecting on their role in the research process researchers can also better understand the impact they have on the study. The researcher is thus a significant tool in the research process. The current research problem and questions have been conceived and articulated in the way that they have because of my personal, subjective and critical positioning. The dynamic and changing ways in which I (re)construct, (re)interpret, (re)produce and (re)negotiate my Self and environment influence the research in different ways (Nightingale and Cromby 1999). Consequently, details about my Self and reflections on my role in the research surface throughout this thesis.

As it is rooted in subjectivity, qualitative research has been criticised as unsystematic, lacking in scientific rigor, biased, ungeneralisable and unreliable (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Silverman 2001, 2005). The next section addresses these issues and explains how validity is interpreted and achieved in qualitative research.

3.2.2 Trusting Qualitative Research

Validity is crucial to all research. Validity refers to the trustworthiness of a research project and its findings (Brewer 2000; Flick 2002; Merriam and Associates 2002; Silverman 2005). This trustworthiness makes a study's findings credible as a representation of reality and other researchers can feel confident in applying or building on its findings. Validity should be built into all elements of research: the decision-making process, research design, procedures and reporting. Triangulation has traditionally been accepted as a strategy for assisting in the generation of valid findings (Merriam and Associates, 2002). Triangulation refers to the interrogation of raw data and analytical findings from a number of different angles (Brewer 2000; LeCompte et al 1993; Merriam and Associates 2002). To Denzin and Lincoln (2008), triangulation acts as an alternative to validation, "a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (p. 7). Triangulation, however, does more than demonstrate complexity and multidimensionality. Triangulation facilitates cross-examination of the data, increasing the validity of the findings.

Triangulation can be accomplished by combining different methods, where one method cross-checks and validates the data acquired from the other (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). The selection of methods should be strategic and allow the researcher to capitalise on the strengths of different methods while minimising their combined limitations. Further, when analysing raw data, it is important to view and question the data from a number of conceptual directions (ibid). Through recurrent dismantling and systematic reconstruction of the data from different angles the researcher intensifies the breadth and depth of the data. The ways in which triangulation was built into this research is discussed later (see section 3.4.2 below).

Concomitant with issues of validity is reliability. Reliability refers to the replicability of a study (Golafshani 2003; Marriam and Associates 2002). In qualitative research, replicability is impossible because "reality in qualitative inquiry assumes that there are multiple, changing realities and that individuals have their own unique constructions of reality" (Marriam and Associates 2002: 25). Further, with the passage of time, subjective realities can change, making absolute replicability impossible. Nevertheless, there are several methods of incorporating reliability into a qualitative study. Triangulation is one means of addressing reliability. Another method is by constructing an audit trail (Guba and Lincoln 1981). An audit trail describes all aspects of the research process including the factors that affected the researcher's decision-making. This audit trail allows the reader to replicate the stages of the study by reading the researcher's account(s) of the research. Further, incorporating reflexivity in all aspects of the research process also enhances reliability since reflexivity helps readers of the research to reconstruct the fieldwork from the perspective of the researcher. Triangulation, audit trails and reflexivity were all used to facilitate reliability in this study.

3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY: GROUNDED THEORY

This study traces the complex and dynamic ways in which Trinidadian students in the UK (re)constructed meanings and negotiated their identities under constantly changing circumstances. At its core, the study is explorative, aiming to discover and conceptualise these students' experiences in the UK. Consequently, the study utilised grounded theory. Grounded theory "is a research strategy whose purpose is to generate theory from data" (Punch 2009: 130). The theory that is developed from this approach is located firmly in the

data generated from the field. Ultimately, through grounded and systematic data collection and analysis, this study seeks to propose a theory of how the Trinidadian students who participated in this study adjusted to the UK during the data collection period.

Grounded theory was developed in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who both went on to found different 'schools' of practicing grounded theory (Glaser 1992, 1999; Corbin and Strauss 2008). Grounded theory represents Glaser and Strauss's (and, later, Juliet Corbin's) committed efforts to develop systematic methods for collecting and analysing qualitative data (Charmaz 2003). During the 1960s qualitative research was still struggling within academic circles for legitimisation (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Authentic and valid research, it was felt, could only be conducted by researchers within the positivistic paradigm since it relied on objective, systematic, rigorous and quantitative methods that could be measured, replicated and thus trusted. The 'soft', contextual and flexible methods used by qualitative researchers were not bound by objectivity and rigour. They could not be tested or replicated and hence they were not considered to be real research (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). In response, Glaser and Strauss introduced the grounded theory method which worked within the dominant academic position at the time (Charmaz 2003; Coyne 1997). It advanced methods to conduct qualitative research that reflected the fundamentals of 'hard' positivistic science, aiming to authenticate qualitative research as an equally valid means of conceptualising social reality (Patton 2002; Thomas 2007).

To Glaser (1992, 1999), Strauss and Corbin (2008), the roadmap to 'discovering' a theory relies on the data steering all aspects of the research process. Data is conceived to hold objective, tangible knowledge that can be discovered by researchers. Glaser and Strauss firmly believed that this real knowledge, theory, should emerge from the data without deliberate subjective input from the researcher. To prevent the researcher from forcing predetermined ideas unto the data the authors devised very specific guidelines for qualitative researchers (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Glaser 1992, 1999). These methods were consistent elements of the strategy even as it evolved into different 'schools' (Charmaz 2003, 2006; Thomas 2007).

To ensure that the emergent theory is a just reflection of the field, grounded theory advocates a form of sampling called theoretical sampling. As a theory begins to emerge from the data, the researcher may find conceptual gaps in the theory. To address this problem and create a more comprehensive theory that reflects the true nature of the field, the researcher

constantly returns to the field to collect material that is focused on filling the gaps in the developing theory (Charmaz 2003). This is referred to as theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling continues until theoretical saturation is achieved, that is, until there are no gaps in the categories and the emergent theory (Glaser 2002; Charmaz 2003, 2006). This research utilised theoretical sampling flexibly as advocated by Charmaz (2003, 2006) given the time restrictions placed on it. This is described later (see sections 3.4.2 and 3.7.5).

The rigid rules guiding the development of a grounded theory emerge particularly in the analysis stages of the research. Here both 'schools' advance different levels of data analysis which work together to develop the theory. The three levels of coding in grounded theory are open coding, axial coding and selective coding[43]. The following description of the processes involved in analysing grounded theory data is derived from Glaser (1992) and Charmaz (2006). Open coding is the first level of coding. It is here that the issues involved are identified and themes and patters emerge from the data. From these categories the researcher identifies individual, and connected, ideas or concepts that appear to be running through the data. The analysis gradually becomes more focused on these central categories/concepts. The next stage of analysis, axial coding, occurs when these categories and lower-order concepts are developed and connected to each other in increasingly abstract ways. Eventually, a central idea or core variable is identified from the abstracted data. Once this core idea is discovered, the data is re-coded with this core element directing the coding. This is referred to as selective coding. Irrelevant codes and categories are dismissed at this time or merged with the main variable or its sub-categories if possible. The researcher keeps memos containing significant ideas, questions, concerns and/or emerging content throughout the analysis which he/she uses to constantly compare and conceptualise the data (Glaser 1998).

Kathy Charmaz (2003, 2006) took grounded theory out of the original discourse of objectivism and placed it firmly within a constructivist framework. Her approach institutes a third 'school' of grounded theory (Punch 2009) that appears to best fit the needs of qualitative research – generating theory without sacrificing subjectivity. Charmaz (2003, 2006) admits that her interpretation of grounded theory is simplified, but better reflects qualitative epistemologies. Her reconstruction of grounded theory makes it more contextual, situational, flexible, and, ultimately, user friendly. For Charmaz, "(d)ata are reconstructions

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[43] See Charmaz (2003, 2006), Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Glaser (1992, 1999).

of experience; they are not the original experience itself" (Charmaz 2003: 258). The data may speak but researchers must be clear about the complex contextual dimensions surrounding that data, particularly who is/are the data speaking on behalf of, why and in what circumstances. Further, the researcher must be mindful that data are amenable to change. Data is about meaning, and meaning is contextualised, multilayered and dynamic.

Charmaz agrees with other grounded theory authors on the processes involved in collecting and analysing qualitative data: theoretical sampling, open coding, axial coding and selective coding. However, she indicates that these methods may be used flexibly, depending on individual research needs. Data analysis, Charmaz argues, is about continuously asking questions of the data and aiming to view it afresh so as to capture the multiplicity of meaning embedded within it (Charmaz 2006). Charmaz argues that the complex analytical processes advanced by Glaser, Strauss and Corbin tend to mask the participants' world in jargon, models, power and architecture. For Charmaz, research is about doing what is necessary to capture the myriad ways the participants construct, or are constructed by, their social world. She supports making the analysis reflect the dynamic reality of participants' lives, staying faithful to that experience as close as possible.

Instead of separating the researcher from the research process, aiming for objective and reliable procedures, Charmaz (2003, 2006) argues that reliability and validity in qualitative research lies in the researcher's acknowledgment of his/her role in the research process. In thinking of the social world as constructed and in a constant state of flux, the job of grounded theorists is to construct "a picture that draws from, reassembles, and renders subjects' lives" (Charmaz 2003: 270). The product is not a true and faithful replica of the participants' social worlds, but rather the researcher "seeks to construct analyses that show how respondents and the social scientists who study them construct those realities" (Charmaz 2003: 272). This perspective on data is very different from Glaser and Strauss's positions.

This study, rooted in constructivist philosophy, naturally aligns with Kathy Charmaz's constructivist approach to grounded theory which combines inductive reasoning with methodological flexibility, subjectivity and reflexivity (2003, 2006). The research aims to propose a theory of Trinidadian student adjustment to the UK. However, it does so by recognising that research on human beings is riddled with slippage and subjectivity, power and meaning. It recognises the contextual nature of data and thus aims to question it from different directions and explore the possibilities of meaning embedded within it. The research

prioritises considerations about who the data and analysis speak on behalf of and in what context(s). The aim, ultimately, is to stay faithful to the participants' experiences while acknowledging the power the researcher holds in interpreting and reconstructing those experiences.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.4.1 Introduction to the Research Design

I used two techniques to collect the data for this study, a blog and interviews. These are referred to collectively as the blog-interview method. The blog was originally devised to mimic a traditional research diary and capitalise on its advantages. The blog operated for six months. During this time it collected continuous data about the participants' experiences in, and thoughts and emotions about, the UK. Analysis started when the blog went live. The blog was complemented by face-to-face individual interviews which cross-checked, clarified, redefined and elaborated the blog data in a physical space. The interviews thus facilitated triangulation and theoretical sampling.

3.4.2 Methods

Any method that I used to collect data needed to meet the tracing requirement of this study. It had to facilitate continuous data collection over the course of six months and across several geographical locations simultaneously. It also needed to be able to capture changes in the way respondents constructed their experiences, emotions, attitudes and perceptions over time. Research diaries accommodated the study's needs considerably but its significant limitations meant that the method had to be modified before it could be employed.

Research Diaries

Reflective research diaries keep the personal records, often chronologically, of the diary holder. As they are written in over a period of time, diaries "provide a record of an ever-changing present" (Elliott 1997, section 2.4). Diaries also encourage respondents, and

give them adequate time, to think and reflect on their thoughts and emotions as they write[44]. Further, diaries "provide greater insight into how individuals interpret situations and ascribe meanings to actions and events" (Alaszewski 2006: 37). The reflection permitted by dairies also offers participants the chance to analyse their own behaviour and gives them the opportunity to better articulate their changing perspectives (Johnson and Bytheway 2001). Diaries also permit respondent control over when, and in what form, participants provide data, and how much data is supplied. Respondents can also view and keep track of past writings which they may edit or reflect on in later entries. The capacity to review and edit information allows participants to validate their own data. It also distributes important power to the participant who gains some control in managing how he/she is represented in the study. Further, as diaries are continuously available, the interruption between an occurrence and the recording of that occurrence can be significantly reduced (Johnson and Bytheway 2001). Finally, with diaries, researchers are able to collect information over a number of geographical locations simultaneously.

A consistent problem with research diaries, however, is incompletion since they can become monotonous and respondents are likely to forget about them (Alaszewski 2006; Corti 1993; Toms and Duff 2002). Consequently, it is generally recommended that diaries not be conducted over a long period of time (Elliott 1997; Lewis et al 2005; Scott and Morrison 2006). Two weeks is generally acceptable for the collection of diary evidence (Scott and Morrison 2006). Further, since researchers are not present when diarists construct their reflections, they cannot confirm that diary entries were written when participants indicated they were written. Multiple diary entries can be constructed in advance or during the final day of an investigation (Johnson and Bytheway 2001). Additionally, as the students involved in this study were from multiple geographical locations, it would have been difficult to remain in constant contact with them while they wrote in their diaries. This meant that I would not have been able to develop a relationship with them and learn about the different ways they constructed meaning, nor would I have been able to question the data and participants' representation of themselves for accuracy or depth of meaning during data collection. These issues significantly impacted the validity of the diary method (Meth 2003). Diaries appeared suitable to the research but their limitations were substantial. I believed that if could monitor

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[44] See Alaszewski (2006), Elliott (1997), Lewis et al (2005) and Scott and Morrison (2006).

the process I would be able to minimise the technique's limitations. This led me to using the internet, specifically, blogs.

Research Blogs

A **blog**, a contraction of 'web log', is an interactive and personalised web page that can be instantly and chronologically updated with text, imagery, audio, video and hyperlinks via any internet connection[45]. Interactivity in blogs is facilitated through comments which readers leave at the end of individual page updates, referred to as 'blog posts'. Web pages are flexible and can be designed to fulfil different user functions. A blog can thus be built to function as an interactive research diary. The research blog allowed me to collect continuous documentary data similar to a diary but the process was an interactive one which I participated in and monitored. This interactiveness transformed the method. The blog, as a socially-constructed space, acquired a life of its own and evolved into a community shaped by the needs and constructions of the participants (Massey 1994, 2005; Tuan 1977). This happens naturally in internet spaces as they evolve (Chesher 1993; Mansell 2002; Preece 2000; Rheingold 2001; Turkle 2001). The blog became an interactive space where the participants shared their problems and experiences and helped each other; it became an interactive online community[46]. For this reason I refer to the method as a blog and not a diary. It was interesting and fulfilling for me to watch as the space I built for the participants to chronicle their experiences was transformed into a community by the participants' own interactions and personal interpretations of the space.

Advantages of Blogs

The blog was selected as the primary data collection tool for this study because it capitalised on many of the advantages of traditional diaries while minimising their

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[45] See Martindale and Wiley 2004; Newson et al 2009; Richardson 2006; Warlick 2007.

[46] This phenomenon is well-researched by online social researchers. For more research on how community develops, functions and is maintained online, as well as the impact of these online communities on individuals see: Chesher (1993), Denzin (1999), Etzioni (2000a, 2000b), Etzioni and Etzioni (1999), Howard (2004), Kendall (1999), Laurel (2001), Mansell (2002), McKenna and Bargh (1998), Nakamura (2001), Preece (2000), Rheingold (2001), Sassen (2004), Turkle (1995, 2001, 2003) and Weinrich (1997). Since this research I have become acutely interested in the ways online communities are transforming human bonding.

limitations. Like diaries, blogs facilitate and encourage reflection since the participants must put their thoughts into writing. Blogs also facilitate the collection of data across several geographical locations simultaneously. Like diaries they can be considered only minimally intrusive on participants' lives since users can access the blog whenever they wish. Blogs also provide a high level of respondent control over the data collection process. This is because, in theory, once the blog members are familiar with each other, the researcher can withdraw from the process and allow the participants to interact as they wish. Further, participants can decide what and how much information they wish to share and can feel less pressure to please the researcher or to answer uncomfortable questions as the researcher is not physically present in the situation (Riddell 1989).

Blogs are also multimodal. A blog, thoughtfully created, can honour participants' voices and the individual ways in which they may find their voices. On blogs users can express themselves using several forms of text including, but not limited to, narratives, comments and poetry (Preece 2000; Newson et al 2009). Further, the medium allows users to upload or post links to pictures, art, video and music which participants may have taken or developed themselves, or that are meaningful to the participants in some way (Newson at al 2009). This potential may be limited by the type of software and/or hardware that the participant owns. For example, to upload artwork the participant would need access to a scanner to create a digital copy of the piece. However, during the research one participant used a digital camera in place of a scanner to share his artwork, demonstrating his ability to work around the blog's limitations.

Fundamentally, blogs are interactive (Boulos et al 2006; Hodkinson 2007; Nardi et al 2004; Williams and Jacobs 2004). This feature, I believed, would help to hold the participants' interest and allow data collection to progress where traditional diaries have been shown to become monotonous. A group of co-nationals continuously sharing their experiences on an open, interactive space can bolster user contributions and help keep participants interested in the process.

Blogs are also accessible for my research population and particularly suited to them. As university students the participants have access to the internet. Further, computers are a necessary component of students' lives. A university student's constant companion is the computer, whether personal or public, where he/she does research, writes papers, accesses his/her university email, manages everyday student administrative needs, contacts lecturers

and gets involved in classes. The method was thus relevant and accessible for my research population. The procedure for using a blog as a research participant is very similar to logging into any general internet service, creating and then sending an email, and could be easily taught to interested participants (Boulos et al 2006; Newson et al 2009).

With internet technology, the researcher also has immediate access to any diary entry that the respondent produces. Once a participant posts an update to the website, the researcher and other participants have immediate access to it. This way, data analysis can start as soon as the data is collected, a process that is supported by many qualitative researchers, particularly grounded theorists (Brewer 2000; Flick, 2002; LeCompte et al 1993; Marriam and Associates 2002). This immediacy also allows researchers to respond quickly to participant entries. Further, respondents can view and edit their entries any number of times, giving them increased control over the information they provide. Researchers, however, as blog administrators, can see when an entry has been edited (although they may not have access to the original, unedited post) and can respond to these edits if need be. With permission from the participant to analyse different versions of an entry, the researcher is able to track significant levels of change which a participant undergoes during adjustment, a valuable addition to the study. Having access to the data production process in this way allows researchers to be more confident in the authenticity of diary data[47].

A consistent and significant problem that many researchers have faced when conducting research online is anonymity, particularly acquiring informed consent from unknown participants (Ess 2002; Eysenbach and Till 2001; Keller 2003; King 1996; Parry and Mauthner 2004; Markham 2008, forthcoming). However, for researchers using the internet as a research tool, where informed consent has already been sought in a face-to-face meeting, this anonymity becomes an asset. Mann and Stuart (2000) found that anonymous online reflections have the potential to spur richer and deeper thought than face-to-face conversations. Online anonymity has also been shown to reduce users' fears about being judged and can increase self-disclosure (Bargh et al 2002; Joinson 2001; Tidwell and Walther 2002). This phenomenon has been extensively investigated (House 2004; Huffaker and Calvert 2005; Stefanone and Jang 2007; Qian and Scott 2007). Blogs specifically have been

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[47] I am referring to 'authenticity' in terms of when the entry was produced not in terms of the truthfulness of the content.

shown to promote a community atmosphere, increasing comfort levels and encouraging self-disclose (Gumbrecht, 2004; Hookway, 2008).

Limitations of Blogs: A Hyphenated Design Takes Shape

When I selected the method I was concerned that the technological element of the design would prevent some participants from taking part in the research. Some people gravitate to online communication and some do not. However, as Patton (2002) explains, this occurs with all qualitative research techniques. Participants will naturally gravitate to some techniques more than others. Part of purposeful sampling, he argues, is finding the right participants for the research, individuals who are inclined to the technique and are therefore more likely to participate and provide useful data. I speculated, based on Patton's argument, that the students who felt more inclined to online communication and comfortable with learning the technology, would consent to be involved and provide the kind of data the research was seeking. The majority of the students who took part in the study did not have experience of using blogs but were confident users of computers and were willing to learn to use new technology. Only two of the eight students who took part in the study, Ophelia and Val, had previous experience of using online blogs.

Although blogs are multimodal and have been shown to encourage self-disclosure they, like diaries, largely prevent face-to-face bonding with participants[48]. Diary researchers who face this problem usually combine diaries with interviews (called the diary-interview method) which are conducted after the diary has been completed (Lewis et al 2005; Zimmerman and Wieder 1977). Interviews are conducted to accommodate different response modes, "check the internal consistency of informants' accounts, to fill in omissions and move beyond events recorded into more general experience and attitudes" (Elliott 1997, section 4.13). Further, using the methods together provides "access to a naturally occurring sequence of activity, as well as the opportunity to question the meaning and significance of the process itself" (Lewis et al 2005: 222). Face-to-face interviews were thus conducted in conjunction with blogs to facilitate a more personal relationship with the respondents and to acquire a wider and varied picture of the depth and diversity of meaning through which participants

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[48] See Johnson and Bytheway (2001), Elliott (1997), Meth (2003), Lewis et al (2005) and Scott and Morrison (2006).

constructed their experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

Interviews

Interviews are coordinated conversations that seek to obtain information on a desired topic from an informant[49]. During interviews, the interviewer poses a series of questions to the informant to learn more about how he/she constructs his/her reality (Punch 2009). Face-to-face individual interviews are multimodal, voice and text are treated as data but also messages sent through nonverbal channels such as body movement and eye contact (Thomas 2007). The face-to-face, one-on-one interview gives the researcher the opportunity to learn about the participant and begin to understand the different ways he/she constructs meaning. The researcher can immediately probe the participant's verbal and nonverbal messages to gain clarity on the participants' meaning. Face-to-face interviews allow the observant researcher to gain multilayered data about the participant and the way he/she constructs his/her social world in a way that may other methods do not (Gubrium and Holstein 2003b; Punch 2009).

Like the blog, I viewed the interviews as another means of retrospectively (re)constructing the adjustment experience. Both online and offline communication are deeply determined by role playing activities, context, participant and researcher expectations of the context and the participant's and the researcher's construction, negotiation and presentation of self (Briggs 1986, 2002; Riddell 1989; Dingwall 1997; Holstein and Gubrium, 2002). Face-to-face interviews are conceptualised in this research as another means of understanding how participants produce their reality. Interviews and blogs can provide different and complementary data from which to understand the adjustment experience. By triangulating the methods and data I hoped to add breadth and depth to my understanding of the participant's experience (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). Combining both online and offline interactions is supported by Orgad (2005), March and Fleuriot (2006) and Sade-Beck (2004).

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[49] See Holstein and Gubrium (2002), Gubrium and Holstein (2003a, 2003b) and Punch (2009).

3.4.3 Case Studies

This thesis presents the data as three individual case studies. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008: 406), a case study is "research that provides a detailed account and analysis of one or more cases". It is a complex, deeply contextual and in-depth look at a 'bounded system'. Case studies present the components of the system, the intricate and multilayered (inter)relationships between and among different components and provide an analysis of how that system operates (Gall et al 2007; Johnson and Christensen 2008; Punch 2009). Cases are naturally occurring real world systems "in which variables are not, or cannot be controlled" and out of which researchers can view the everyday functioning of the system (Scott and Morrison 2006: 17). The central emphasis of case studies, Scott and Morrison (2006) argue, is to give the each component of a single bounded system consideration, that is, a voice, albeit a voice that is interpreted and presented by the researcher. This is a complicated issue in case study research and many proponents of the strategy advocate the incorporation of reflexivity into the design to help understand the researcher's role in the process.

A case, therefore, "is a case of something" (Punch 2009: 120). This research does not investigate a single case. 'Trinidadian students in the UK' is too broad a context to constitute a single bounded system. However, the research is comprised of Trinidadian students in the UK who each have individual experiences which provide *cases of* the phenomenon under scrutiny, and whose individual stories will be presented in Chapter 4. I chose to present the data as cases because of my objective to *trace* students' responses to the UK. Cases facilitate an in-depth look into the complex changes participants underwent during the six-month data collection period. The cases allow us to understand the participants' experiences in context and as part of an ongoing journey.

3.4.4 Data collection

The data collection phase of the research had four planned phases:

(1) Access Trinidadian students in the UK

(2) Meet face-to-face with students who were interested in taking part in the research and gain informed consent

(3) Collect data on the blog for six months

(4) Conduct face-to-face individual interviews.

I did not find any published academic research that used blogs in the way that I intended to collect data. Blogs have been studied in various ways in the past, but in most cases blogs are studied as an entity or phenomenon in itself or in relation to how the technology influences or impacts aspects everyday life[50]. As a data collection tool for doctoral research unconnected with the internet, research blogs have been significantly less influential and transformative[51]. Group blogs have been promoted as a useful replacement to traditional research notebooks or field journals[52] but I found little that helped me to build and maintain a research blog to collect data. As Fielding et al (2008), in their editorial introduction to *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods* comment, the use of blogs in research, "remains at this stage speculative ... the research uses of blogs remain relatively novel. Hopefully, the blogosphere will continue to be the site of further exploration and experimentation" (p. 14). This research takes research *using* blogs out of speculation and into 'exploration and experimentation'.

Documentation on using blogs to collect information on entirely offline endeavours was therefore not easily available. I had to rely on my knowledge and experience of the technology and, as encouraged by Ess (2002), I had to create analogies where necessary between my research and the available literature to guide my decision-making. Most of the decisions I made throughout the planning and implementation stages of data collection were guided by my deep commitment to conducting ethical research, protecting the participants and preserving their human rights and anonymity. Therefore it is important to explain my approach to research ethics, out of which emerged the ethical protocol used in this research.

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[50] For some examples of these, see Dickey's (2004) "The Impact of Web-Logs (Blogs) on Student Perceptions of Isolation and Alienation in a Web-Based Distance-Learning Environment"; Huffaker and Calvert (2005) "Gender, Identity, and Language use in Teenage Blogs"; Boulos et al (2006)'s Wikis, Blogs and Podcasts: A New Generation of Web-Based Tools for Virtual Collaborative Clinical Practice and Education; Chau and Xu's (2007) "Mining Communities and their Relationships in Blogs: A Study of Online Hate Groups"; Arben et al (2008) "Sharing Knowledge with Conversational Technologies: Web Logs Versus Discussion Boards"; and Baker and Moore's (2008) "Distress, Coping, and Blogging: Comparing New Myspace Users by Their Intention to Blog".

[51] Suzuki (2004) and Wakeford and Cohen (2008) observe the potential of public blogs to facilitate interaction with participants but do not go into detail on how this might function.

[52] See Todoriki et al (2006), Suzuki (2004), Bianco and Carr-Chellman (2007) and Wakeford and Cohen (2008).

3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

3.5.1 Research Ethics

Ethics is a very broad term which refers to principles, codes or systems used for understanding and differentiating between right and wrong. Individuals use these principles to judge whether an action, for example, is right or wrong. Codes of ethics are deeply subjective. They are influenced, to varying degrees, by various social and socializing forces such as an individual's educational and cultural background; his/her personal experiences and familial upbringing; it may also may be influenced by politics and geographical location (Alderson and Morrow 2004; Bulmer 1982; Burgess 1989; Denzin and Erikson 1982). Ethical decisions involve making value judgements (May 1997) and "finding a balance between unwanted extremes" (Alderson and Morrow 2004: 62). They emerge from thinking critically and reflexively about the intricate and changing dynamics of a situation and responding in the best possible way (ibid).

Research ethics requires flexibility and open reflection. It is not about finding *the* final solution; it is about negotiating among several possibilities. The core to conducting ethical research is *a commitment* to thinking and acting ethically. Researchers should be committed to performing responsible and ethical research that respects the rights, property, security and persons of participants at all times[53]. While in naturalistic research much occurs that is unplanned, it is important to assess possible risks in advance and devise a protocol to prevent or deal with problems that may surface in the field (Ess 2002). This section explains the ethical protocol I designed to protect the participants and create an atmosphere of "trust, collaboration and equality ... within an environment that is non-evaluative and safe" (Schrum 1997: 120).

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[53] See the British Sociological Association (2002), Bulmer (1982), Burgess (1989), Riddell (1989), Sammons (1989) and Warwick (1982) for more information on social researchers' ethical responsibilities.

3.5.2 Power

The role(s), expression(s) and consequence(s) of different kinds of power relationships in research are recurring themes in qualitative research literature[54]. The literature exploring how power appears and operates in qualitative research converges on two fundamental ideas: (1) that power is inherent in the research process and, (2) that issues related to power are immensely difficult to reconcile. The expression of power in social research is directly associated with matters of ethics and with making decisions that are in the best interest of those involved in, and affected by, a research project (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005). While power is a palpable element of our everyday existence, it is profoundly difficult to reconcile. Like all ethical issues, "it often is more important to remain *open* to the dilemmas, ambivalences, and conflicts that are bound to arise" than to attempt final and determinative statements about power (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 69).

In research, the researcher decides on the research questions, the data collection methods to be employed, the analytical procedures that are to be followed and holds almost exclusive powers of representation and voice - whose story is being told, by whom, and for what purpose[55]. To combat this, many qualitative researchers commit themselves "to the redistribution of power between researchers and participants" (Hoskins and Stoltz 2005: 280). One of the central problems involved in exploring issues of power in qualitative research is that researchers become entangled in the tensions and ambivalences involved in finding "a meaningful balance of collaboration" (Hoskins and Stoltz 2005: 101). For example, while I wished to empower participants' to take a greater role in how they were represented in the research, that power to had to be tempered for the sake of validity (see section 3.4.2). The researcher therefore has to negotiate the tensions and ambivalences involved in prioritising the participants' voices against his/her own needs and the needs of the study. What he/she has to do is find 'a *meaningful balance* of collaboration'. The next section describes how my ethical protocol sought to encourage a meaningful balance of collaboration in this research.

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[54] See for instance: Bravo-Moreno (2003), Briggs (1986, 2003), Brinkmann and Kvale (2005), Fontana (2003, 2008), Gubrium and Holstein (2003), Holstein and Gubrium (2002), Karnieli-Miller et al (2009), Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), Ribbens (1989) and Riddell (1989).

[55] For more detailed information see Fontana (2003), Brinkmann and Kvale (2005), Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), and Karnieli-Miller et al (2009).

Further, power shifts. Participants also bring their own kinds of power into the research relationship. Participants can withhold information, respond indirectly to questions, question the interviewer, protest about questions and the researcher's understanding of his/her contributions and even withdraw from the interview in response to a dominant interviewer (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Since power changes and shifts "(t)he task becomes one of assessing the different kinds of power brought to the research relationship by both the participant and the researcher" (Hoskins and Stoltz 2005: 106-07). Throughout the research I remained conscious of the fact that I did not want to deliberately misuse the power I possessed as a researcher, and this spurred continuous reflection on the ways I navigated issues of power in the research. Parts of this thesis reflect on the different kinds of power that the participants and I brought to the research. The reflections are, ultimately, my own. I have, however, tried to be open and flexible in my assessment of the way power was handled in the research.

During the research I acted in ways I felt would encourage a meaningful balance of collaboration between myself and the participants. I hoped to encourage them to display their own power in ways that were positive for themselves and the research. However, it was only when I was writing the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis that I began to comprehend the complex dynamics and nuances of power. This knowledge complicated, rather than enlightened, my understanding of power in the research. The complexities of the role(s) I had played in the data collection process, of my own self-consciousness and discomfort with the 'authority' that came with this role, of the participants' communication with me and the nature of the data they had provided, only surfaced when I was writing the cases and the analysis sections of this thesis. I realised that the research was based on my interpretation of information that the participants had selectively shared with me. I initially viewed my role as an insider because of my nationality and student status. However, these characteristics only made me a partial-insider. I worked hard to gain the students' trust, but that trust only extended to a certain point, and this point was different for different participants. I realised that while I consciously made decisions to share power with the participants, they may not have interpreted these behaviours and actions as attempts at power-sharing. While writing the analysis chapter I felt the weight of my responsibility for interpreting and representing the students' experiences using data that had been selectively supplied. I went over the data and the data collection process continuously to align my interpretations as close as possible with

the students' intended meanings. The ways the students and I used power in this research and the nuanced ways in which power impacted the research continue to be issues I think about.

3.5.3 Ethical Protocol

Full effort was made to respect the rights of all the participants at all times. The details of the study and my plans for collecting data were revealed in full to all potential respondents (see Appendix B). This way the participants were able to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study. Ownership of the data emerged as an important concern in this study. All material posted on the internet is the intellectual property of the individual poster and is copyrighted to them (Eysenbach and Till 2001; Ess 2002; Walther 2002; Markham 2002, 2008 and forthcoming). The blog administrator (researcher) does not own nor does he/she have the permission to replicate any of the author's contributions. Consequently, I treated the data as official copyrighted content and ensured that I acquired permission to use the participant's contributions in different contexts (please refer to Appendix C). Since I viewed all the participants' contributions as their legal intellectual property, I requested further permissions to use emailed content for the research. Participants were also informed of how and where the data would be used (Appendix C). Permission was sought to use the data in different contexts. Informed consent was sought in a private face-to-face meeting before data collection began in a space that was determined by the participant.

I aimed to give the participants as many options as I could regarding their participation. All participants were able to choose whether they wished to participate in a private and interactive group blog or an individual blog where they would only be able to interact with me. All of the participants elected to be a part of the group blog and not the private blog. However, some participants expressed the desire to take part in both procedures. This was later adopted, with the 'default' strategy being the blog, and private email messages to me remaining available if it was required. There was also an open opt-out policy in place. Participants were free to withdraw from the research at any point if they no longer wished to be involved.

The participants were also able to choose their own identity for the research (LeCompte et al 1993). When they first registered for the blog the participants chose a log-in

ID or pseudonym. This was a name that each participant selected to identify him/her self for the research. This, I hoped, would empower the participants and help shape proactive individuals who had a say in how they were constructed in the research. I only requested that the pseudonym they chose not be one that they used elsewhere on the web reducing the possibility for contributions to be traced back to them.

My approach to online security was to restrict permissions and access down to the smallest possible level, not only regarding participants but also with external servers and applications. The aim was to restrict access and minimise internet visibility. With the internet, privacy is an important concern because all the material that the respondents provided could be publicly available. To facilitate privacy and to protect the participant's identities, the data was collected via a password-protected private group blog. No one outside of the research group was able to view the blog unless participants shared their passwords or viewed the blog with their friends (which were both discouraged).

No one but I had access to the participants' actual personal details. These personal details were securely stored in an encrypted, password protected document. I used a strong 128 bit Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) to encode all personal data[56].

3.5.4 Deciding on a Provider

Deciding on a secure blog provider was an important stage in the research. Even though the blog was password-protected, the data would be held on a server that did not belong to me and I wanted to ensure I selected a provider whose privacy policy coincided with my ethical protocol. The provider I eventually decided to use was Blogger™ which is a free blogging platform offered by Google™ Inc (hereafter referred to simply as Google). Blogger is easy to operate since the user only needs to fill in required fields and the software does the work of creating the live blog post (see Picture 1 below). In addition, I was an advanced user of Blogger. I knew how the software operated and how to adjust the settings to

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[56] This encryption strength is the standard recommended by the American National Security Agency (NSA) in The National Policy on the Use of the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) to Protect National Security Systems and National Security Information. The official policy document describing these standards is available at <http://www.cnss.gov/Assets/pdf/cnssp_15_fs.pdf>

suit my individual and security needs, which is important for an administrator concerned about privacy and confidentiality.

Picture 1: Processes Involved in Composing and Publishing a Blog Post

A. Composing a Blog Post

B. Post as Viewed on the Blog
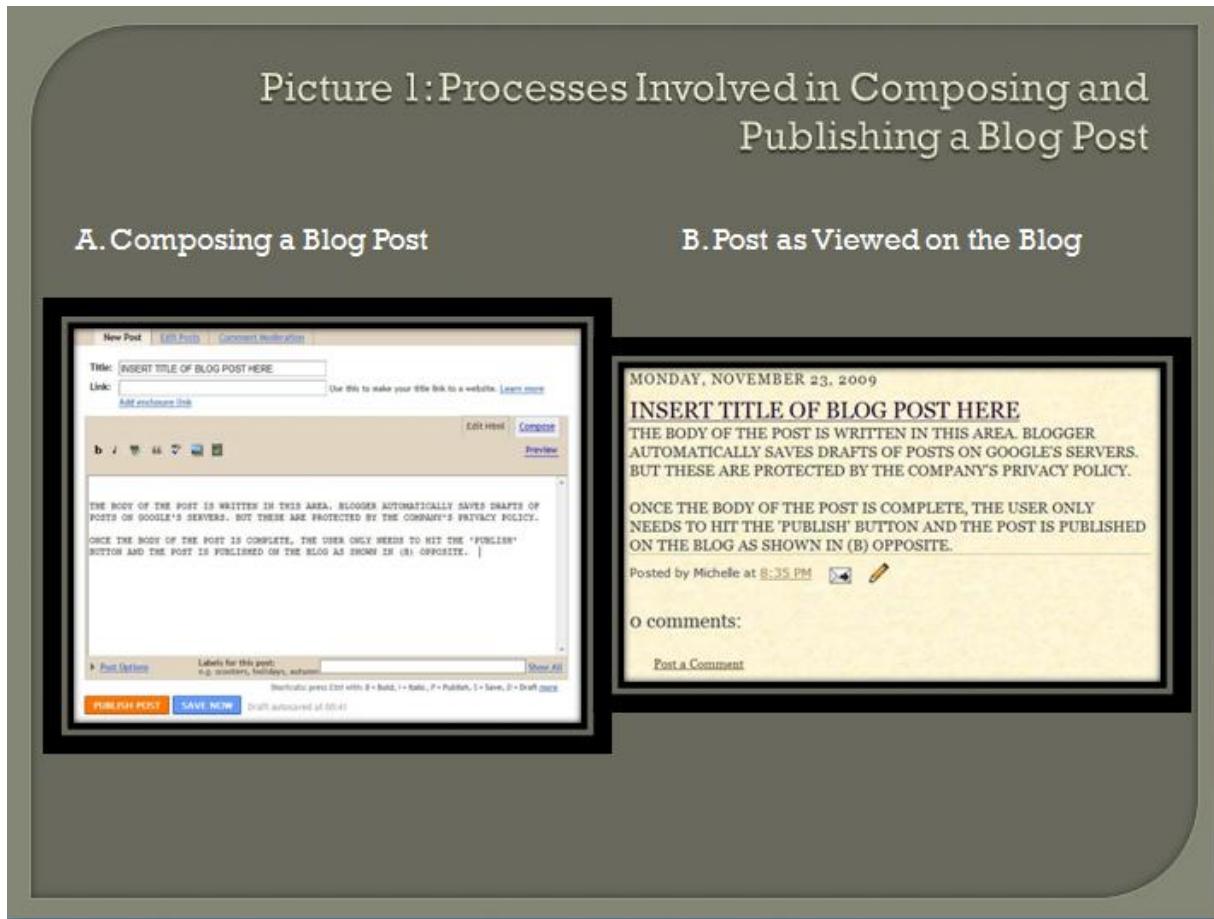
Google's Privacy Policy[57] and practices confirmed that all material hosted on their servers are owned and copyrighted by the users and not are not held as Google's property. They also confirmed that all material held on the servers are protected and all personnel coming into contact with servers are bound by the company's policies. In addition, Blogger does not require a name to set up an account. To use the software only a Display Name (pseudonym) is required, as well as an email address and a password. This email address was considered personal information and would not be sold nor provided to third parties. This provided reliable protection for the real identities of the participants. The user's personal information could not be traced back to him/her and the material placed on blogs remained private as long as the user's settings indicated explicitly which information should be

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[57] This can be accessed at Google's Privacy Centre which can be found at
<http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en/privacy.html>

restricted and private. Google had no authority to alter private content in any way. This made it a good provider to use for this particular research.

3.6 PILOT

I was encouraged to pilot the method on Blogger for two weeks. The aim of the pilot was to test the blog to ascertain whether the pilot participants would use it, to understand better how the blog might be used for research, and to assess and deal with any faults in the design.

I piloted the procedure among first year full-time Research Training Programme (RTP) students in the School of Education at the University of Southampton. I sent an email to the full-time year one students in my RTP class explaining my research and requested permission to pilot the method with them. The class is made up of nine international students. I explained that during the two-week period the members involved in the research would share their experiences as international students and comment on each other's posts. I also made myself available to demonstrate the technology to those members who wished to take part but were unfamiliar with the technology. I encouraged the pilot group to express themselves using any written genre they were most comfortable, narratives, reflections, poetry, written skits/drama, or even a combination of some or all of these. I wanted to observe different styles and how they functioned on a blog. I requested that the pilot group use only text-based communication as I was not confident I could manage multimodal analysis. Out of the nine students who were approached, three students responded affirmatively. I asked those who elected to take part not to share their passwords with anyone or view the blog with others present.

The security procedures that were in place ensured that the website was undetectable to the public (I describe these procedures later with respect to the main data collection procedures – see section 3.7.4). Anyone outside the pilot group who attempted to access the blog received a 'Permissions' page requesting the user's pseudonym and password to access the website (see Picture 2 below). Technically, the blog was secure. However there were some small security risks which I overlooked. While the blog could not be viewed by the public, material on the blog could be printed and distributed. Further, screen shots of the webpage could be created and shared both online and offline. Neither of these compromised

the participants' identities because the participants were writing under pseudonyms, but they could make the blog's content public. Several methods, including focus groups, entail similar risks. I decided that I would ask the participants not to engage in these activities. I trusted that the participants would not share the blog or blog material with others. No research is possible without some degree of trust. My research is no exception.

Picture 2: A screenshot of the 'permissions' page which the public encountered if they came across the website.
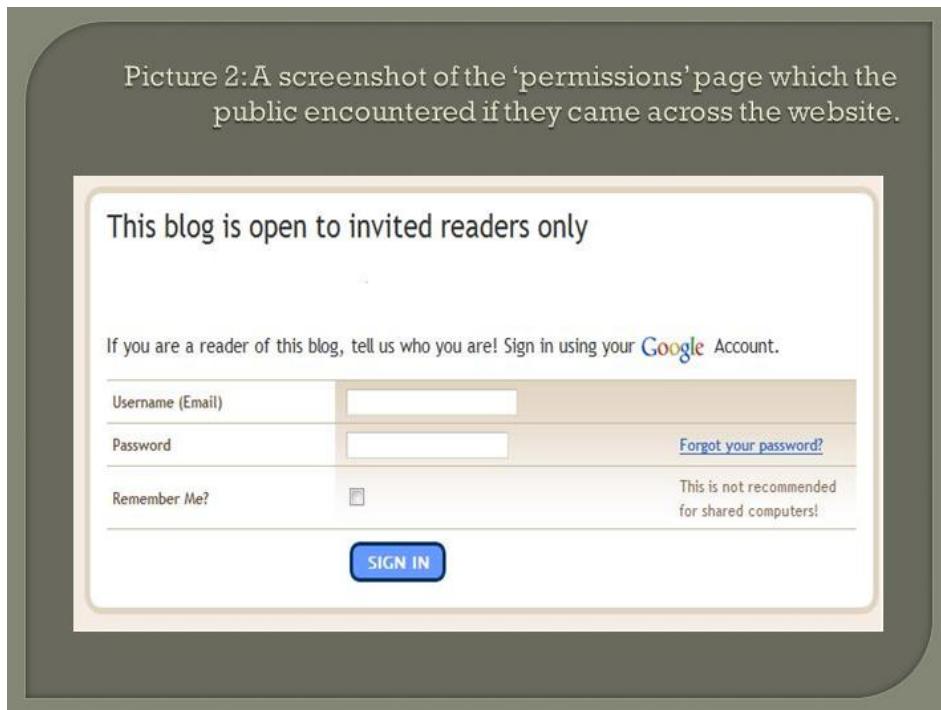
Further, in observing how the participants used the blog I realised that it would be useful to allow both text-based and non-text-based entries on the blog. Substantial data emerges out of visual and auditory messages and I limited expression and the possibilities of the pilot blog by only allowing textual posts. I decided that I would allow any mode of expression that the technology facilitated for the data collection. However, I still felt uneasy about analysing different modes of 'text'. Therefore, I decided that non-text-based posts would be used to stimulate written exploration and discussion about the meaning of the visual or auditory message for the participant/s. I would ask questions to probe the impact of the piece for the participant and not analyse the visual/auditory piece itself.

The pilot also drew attention to the fact that there were no rules underlying group interaction on the blog. There were no rules guiding social interaction on the blog, particularly how comments could be used to further discussion and how to express and handle conflict. Rules about politeness were also not included in my preparation for the pilot. I took it for granted that the participants would use everyday conversational norms and

implement them online. After analysing the pilot data I realised that the blog was a group and therefore it needed management/guidance to be successful. I approached the literature on facilitating focus groups to deal with this problem (Krueger 1998; Flick 2002; Hennink 2007). Focus groups are a type of group interviews (Cohen et al 2007; Johnson and Christensen 2008). Focus group moderators facilitate discussions; manage interaction so that redundancy is reduced; encourage the development of a warm and collegial atmosphere so that the participants feel safe and comfortable sharing their perspectives with others; ensure that participants are not left out and individuals are not allowed to dominate the discussion; and mediate and manage any conflict situations that surface during the proceedings (Krueger 1998; Flick 2002; Hennink 2007). In short, facilitators have good interpersonal and conflict management skills (Johnson and Burke 2008). I tried to apply these skills in the research blog to facilitate participant interaction.

I merged these skills with some principles that are unique to the internet context. Through experience, online communities devise norms, rules, structures and guidelines for interaction which are articulated in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of their websites (Denzin 1999; Sharf 1999; Turkle 1995). In managing the main research blog I devised and published community-specific internet codes of conduct and used them in tandem with the facilitating skills I acquired from the focus group literature to manage the discussion and interaction. These were adapted from the FAQ sections of several popular blogs (I discuss these later in section 3.7.3).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

3.7.1 Projected Sample

I sought to acquire data from both traditional and mature-entry students. Traditional students in this study are defined as students under the age of 21 and mature students are defined as students 21 and over on the day that they begin their academic programme (Trueman and Hartley 1996). I also wished to balance different participant characteristics, primarily age, ethnicity and gender. This, I felt, would allow me to explore if/how these three key variables of the study impacted on adjustment. Ideally, I wanted the respondents to reflect the varied ethnic composition of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly Indo-Trinidadians, Afro-Trinidadians, Chinese, Syrians/Lebanese, Caucasians and mixed groups. I hoped to

have at least one participant from each of the categories I wished to represent in the study. This gave me a sample target of 24 participants from the six ethnic groups I hoped to research (12 mature-entry students and 12 traditional-entry students – 6 male and 6 female from each student group). This, I concluded, would help to provide data which manifest the depth of variation in the subject matter (Patton 2002).

A comparison between this projected sampled and the information provided in table one (introductory chapter) shows that the representation I sought in the study was not proportional to Trinidad and Tobago's demography. This was deliberate. Given the scope of the study, if a proportional approach was embraced some groups would not have been represented, or their voices would have been drowned in the voices of other, larger, ethnic groups. Further, as I did not have the total number of Trinidadian students in the UK (due to privacy laws) it was difficult to know what would constitute a representative sample of Trinidadian students in the UK. Thus the choice was made in favour of equal numbers from each ethnic group. I used a stratified purposeful sample. The sample is purposeful because participant characteristics were chosen "according to the purpose and rationale of the study" (Patton 2002: 245) as well as its research questions. It is also stratified because I sought to target specific characteristics of the overall population to compare my findings.

3.7.2 Gaining Access

I had planned to contact participants in Trinidad and Tobago via a local government agency between July and August 2008. This would have enabled me to meet the participants face-to-face in Trinidad before they left to start their course in the UK. The aim was to get a sense of the students' expectations before arriving in the UK and to trace their response to the UK on the blog upon their arrival. However, repeated attempts to get this agency to co-operate with me failed and I returned to the UK in September 2008 without access to potential participants. This forced me to utilize a new and continuously evolving procedure for accessing participants.

In September 2008 I randomly selected universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and requested their help in connecting with Trinidadian students at their university. I contacted 33 universities and received a response (either positive or negative) from 22 universities in England and Wales. The institutions who agreed to help me were able

to forward a piece of prepared communication from me to students from Trinidad and Tobago registered at their university. The prepared communication provided the students with information about me, my study's aims and objectives, a brief note about my ethical policy and a contact email for me (see Appendix A).

Sixteen students emailed their interest to learn more about the study. My response described what the participants would be expected to do for the research. Eleven of the sixteen students showed continued interest in taking part in the study. I was unable to meet with three students from the North and the Midlands who showed interest in the research as I could not finance travel to meet them. Ultimately, I conducted the study with eight participants from the South of England and Wales; five females and three males.

Five of the eleven students had prior experience in the UK when the study began but were entering a new programme in October 2008. I initially intended to treat these students as unsuitable. However, their presence and continued willingness to help encouraged me to review my selection criteria and explore dimensions of the adjustment process which I had not yet considered. These students, I felt, would allow me to view the adjustment process over a longer time period than I had initially thought possible. They would be able to provide a very valuable contrast with the other participants and show how students who have been in the UK for a long time respond to changing circumstances. Their presence, inevitably, added substantial variety to the data and contributed to a broader and deeper understanding of the range and complexity of emotions that accompany adjustment over a longer period of time.

The table below provides a brief profile of each of the eight students involved in the research.

NAME	AGE	GENDER	PROGRAMME	LENGTH OF TIME IN THE UK	ETHNICITY (SELF DEFINED)
Chants	20	Female	Undergraduate	1 year	Black Caribbean
Naitian	24	Male	Undergraduate	3 years	Indo-Trinidadian
Liz	27	Female	Masters	1 month	Mixed Caribbean
Val	28	Male	Masters	1 month	Black Caribbean
Ophelia	23	Female	Masters	3 years	Mixed-Race Other
Sabine	23	Female	Masters	1 month	Indo-Trinidadian
Radia	25	Female	PhD	4 years	Caucasian-Trinidadian
Mikey	26	Male	PhD	3 years	Black Caribbean

Table 2: Profiles of the eight participants.

As Table 2 shows, all the participants were mature-entry students. Five of the participants had been in the UK for between one to four years before the study commenced. The other three participants were new to the UK, having arrived about one month before the study began. The participants ranged between 21 and 27 years of age. Radia was working on her PhD in the London-based university where she completed her undergraduate and Masters degrees. Ophelia, like Radia, was enrolled for postgraduate work at the same university in the south-east of England where she completed her undergraduate work. Mikey had previously studied in Barbados and Scotland and had just begun a postgraduate programme in Wales when the study commenced. Chants had studied in London for one year prior to moving to the South-east to begin a new undergraduate programme. Naitian had been in Wales for three years when the study began. Liz, Val and Sabine each entered the UK one month before the study commenced and were expected to leave at the end of their one-year programmes.

The final sample was thus biased towards students who were proud to be Trinidadian as they opted to share their nationality with their university. They were also willing to be contacted for research based on their nationality which suggests an open personality and willingness to share information with others. The study, as indicated above, utilised purposeful sampling. The students who opted to take part in the study were comfortable with sharing and reflecting on their thoughts. They were also comfortable with online technology or willing to learn online technology for the data collection. They are not representative of all Trinidadian students in the UK.

3.7.3 Meeting the Participants

I arranged to meet the participants between 22 to 31 October 2008 to discuss the study and to formally acquire informed consent. I went to the students' universities to meet them. One participant chose to meet me in Southampton because she was planning to travel to the city. Although I went to the sites to meet participants, I capitalised on the opportunity to learn more about the participants' towns/cities. In most cases, I spent the day at each site, observing the natural and social environment and trying to capture 'the feel' of each location in my fieldwork journal.

The Presentation of Self

I was conscious that the way I presented myself during the face-to-face meetings would impact the students' construction of me and nature of our communication and relationship (Goffman 1959). I aimed, in all my meetings, to interact with the participants and not promote a one-directional flow of information. From my casual conversations with the participants I was able to learn where in Trinidad the participants originated, their likes/dislikes, some of their life experiences, how long they had been in the UK, how they were responding to the UK so far, how much they had travelled in the past, what they were studying in the UK, their hopes for the future, how they viewed their stay in the UK, their attitude towards home and the things they valued in life. I also shared information about my academic background, my past work experience, my perspective as a researcher, my family, and my beliefs, likes and dislikes. In sharing my position, I hoped to encourage the participants to trust me. The only question I did not ask the participants which was related to the study's main themes was how they constructed their ethnic background. It was better, I felt, to observe and record how the participants constructed ethnicity on the blog rather than interpret their contributions through an answer to a limiting category I asked them to place on themselves in our very first meeting.

I interpret(ed) my position as a student 'learning the ropes' in this research and I projected my student status several times to the participants. This, I hoped, would bring participants' representations of me closer to my own. I also disclosed the trial nature of the research method and explained that it was flexible and developmental. I encouraged each participant to be open about his/her thoughts and feelings about the technique. I emphasised

"we" throughout this and other communication with the participants, hoping that they would begin to view the research as a collaborative endeavour. Being a learner within a similar age range as the participants (21-28), I believe, helped the participants to construct me in less powerful terms.

Being a Trinidadian national in the UK also assisted in reducing the power distance between the participants and me (Hofstede 2001). As Bravo-Moreno (2003) experienced, national solidarity in a foreign nation, where one may feel distanced from one's home, builds a powerful bridge of understanding between the researcher and the participant. In fact, some participants admitted that they originally agreed to help me because they wanted to 'help out another Trini'. As Liz wrote in an email to me, "I'm very interested to help you with your research - besides the fact that it's interesting, you're a trini and we trinis help fellow trinis :-)" (Personal Correspondence 2008). My knowledge about my target group further helped me to be successful at this phase of the research. Trinis are very open, casual and conversational people. However, they enjoy engaging conversation with equal sharing (Mendes 1986). Code-mixing, mixing Standard English with Trinidadian Creole, also helped me to get on familiar ground with the participants and gain their trust (Youssef 1994, 2004). As Youssef (2004) stated, Creole is the language of national solidarity, identity, humour and emotion in Trinidad and by using elements of Creole in our conversations, I hoped to break down the formality between the participants and I. Code-mixing merges elements from the professional Standard English with elements from the more casual and relaxed Trinidadian Creole, creating an atmosphere that is relaxed and conversational but which is also professional (Youssef 1996). The code-mixing thus muffled some of the professionalism, making the meeting more casual and the participants more responsive.

I sought to make it clear that I was entering this research as a Trinidadian PhD student in the UK as well as a researcher who was interested in documenting their experiences. I wished to balance my professionalism as a researcher and student with the fact that I was also a Trinidadian student undergoing similar processes which the participants were experiencing. This strategy surfaced from my desire to start the process of establishing trust, building rapport and reducing perceived power imbalances early in the relationship. Throughout the research process I had to negotiate these roles carefully and consistently because I was both a 'Trini' student and a researcher. While I wanted the students to feel comfortable with me, it was also important that they remembered that they were involved in research. This, I believed, would reduce the likelihood of them feeling victimised or exploited when their

thoughts and emotions were treated, inevitably, as data. The conflicts I faced in negotiating among these different roles are discussed later (section 3.7.5).

Gaining Consent

Towards the end of each meeting, I presented each participant with an information sheet which described the study in greater detail and explained what the participants would be expected to do over the data collection period (see Appendix B). The sheet also contained information on my ethical protocol. I went over the document with each participant and ensured that they were comfortable with the material that it contained, particularly the security measures I put in place to protect them and how far these extended (British Sociological Association 2004). I also explained how the blog would function, what the participants would be able to do, and not do, on the blog as well as my role in the online group. I requested that they not print, scan, copy or distribute blog posts, that they kept the blog as private as they could. None of the students objected to the use of the blog to collect data.

Regarding my role in the blog, I emphasised that I was not taking part in the blog primarily as a censor or a moderator; I believe that people should feel free to talk about their experiences, feelings, thoughts, and emotions and that they should be able to do this with confidence and comfort. However, I did add that I believed adults should practice some form of self-censorship and consider others, their environment, and also look inside when expressing themselves. I stated this in the interest of building the foundations for politeness and mutual respect on the blog even before the blog began. My role was to encourage open, honest, reflective and interactive dialogue. I also stated that I would try to continuously involve them in the research process and that they should feel free to provide feedback anytime they wished. I added that I would try to keep the interaction on the blog on track with the group's objectives[58]. I would only take on the role of a moderator if the participants abused the rules of the community by embedding or linking to disrespectful content or

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[58] These roles were accumulated from relevant work on managing and facilitating face-to-face focus groups (Krueger 1998; Flick 2002; Scott and Morrison 2006; Hennink 2007; Cohen et al 2007; Johnson and Burke 2008).

engaging in personal disputes that did not encourage open discussion and dialogue. If a participant breached the rules of the community I explained that I would remove the offending post/s and warn the participant/s involved. If a participant continued to disrupt dialogue or offend others the participant would be banned from the blog. Ethically, I had to negotiate whether I should silence a participant for, in effect, silencing others. I would ultimately be performing the same action, muffling free speech. I recognized, however, that my duty was to the welfare and well-being of the other participants and I could not refuse to act if such a case surfaced. In practice, such a case did not surface.

During the meeting I also talked the participants through the process of accepting an invitation to contribute to a blog until they were comfortable with it. The participants were encouraged to 'hide' their profile from the other participants but I left it up to the individual to make the final decision about whether or not he/she wished to share details about him/herself with others on the blog. This way, I acknowledged the adult participant as the final authority and voice on his/her actions.

3.7.4 Building the Blog: Construction, Design and Layout

The blog's design aimed to complement the context of the research and allow participants to feel in control of the instrument and how they used it. I also wanted the design to facilitate freedom of expression and informality to encourage reflection and participation (Corti 1993; Alaszewski 2006). The design decisions I made were deeply subjective, based on characteristics I believed would establish these conditions.

I started work on planning, building and testing the blog two weeks before data collection began. The first of these two weeks was devoted entirely to planning: deciding on a name and subtitle for the blog, deciding on a template, making layout decisions and writing the introductory post.

I used a blog template called 'Charcoal' developed by kranthi of bloggertricks.com for the study. I decided to name the blog "De Back Porch". A porch is a covered area adjacent to the entrance and/or exit of a house. In Trinidad much small group interaction happens in the back porch of a house. People get together to relax, talk, lime, and enjoy themselves but also to have serious interaction. 'Lime' is Trinidadian Creole for hanging out, exchanging humorous innuendo and engaging in casual banter (Miller and Slater 2000). The

front porch of a house facilitates liming as well but this space places individuals in closer contact with the street and the public, making it a more 'public' liming area than a space for deeper discussion. I decided that the symbolism of the back porch made this a perfect name for the blog. Code-mixing in the name of the blog ("De") encouraged Trinidadian atmosphere. In addition, I developed a descriptive subtitle for the blog to help situate the purpose and aims of the space. The full title read, "De Back Porch: a space for Trinidadian students in the UK to talk about their experiences" (see Picture 3 below).

The final element of the planning stage was drafting my first blog post, which was published on the blog as soon as it was built. In this post I described the aims and objectives of the blog and stated the dates during which the blog would be operational. Further, I reminded the participants about the rules of the community and kindly requested that they adhere to the rules. I advised the participants not to post personal photos or identifying materials on the blog to protect their identity. To further protect the participants I included a warning in the blog about revealing personal information to others in the group, which is standard administrative internet community procedure (Preece 2000). However, if the participants decided to provide personal information to others in the group after considering my advice, I did not intrude because they were adults and I felt they had the right to make these decisions on their own.

I aimed to protect individual rights and free speech on the blog as much as possible and to allow the community to grow as naturally as possible. The 'Welcome Note' explained that respondents were allowed to revisit and edit their posts. The process of editing posts was instrumental in documenting that flux and changeability that characterises adjustment. In such cases, I sought permission from the respondents to use material that was subsequently edited. I reminded the participants to disable the 'Share my Profile' function on their account and to change their Display Name to a pseudonym if they had not done so already. I provided instructions on how to do this in the 'Welcome' post as well. I asked the participants to keep me informed of their thoughts and feelings regarding the blog and to provide suggestions for changes. I believed that incorporating them in these processes would help the participants to view the blog as their space and not a space created by me for them, which, when it was originally launched, was what it was.

After preparing all these tasks I commenced the second phase of planning which was creating the blog. As I had already put everything in place and made all of the design and

layout decisions beforehand, this stage became primarily an implementation stage: registering with Google for a blog and then changing the settings to suit my needs. Regarding the settings, I changed the permissions to make the blog a private one where only the participants and I were able to view the blog. I also disabled the following Blogger options to maximise privacy:

- Add blog to our listings
- Let search engines find your blog
- Allow Blog Feeds

With all of these functions disabled, 'De Back Porch' became a fully private blog with no external applications having permission to access, 'read' or index the blog. The appearance of the blog after this second phase was completed is shown in Picture 4. The coming week (week 2) took the blog into its third phase before going live to the participants – the testing phase.
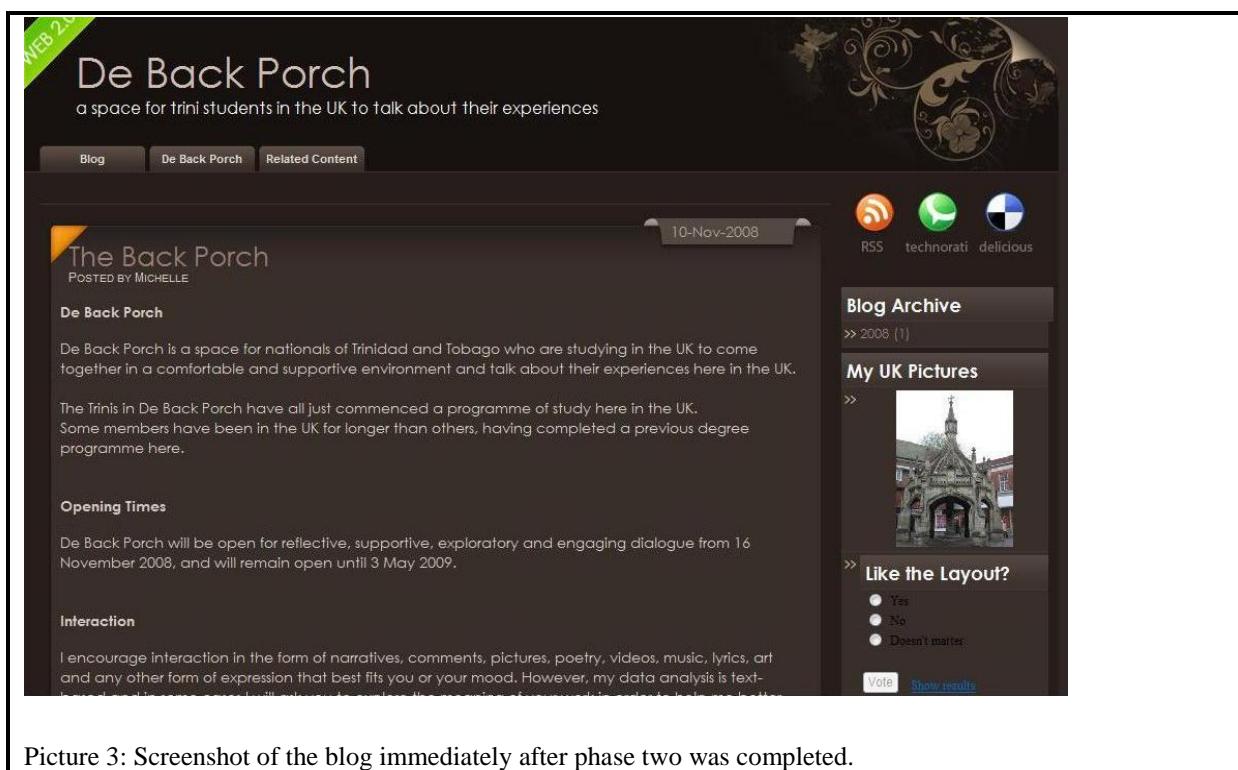
Picture 3: Screenshot of the blog immediately after phase two was completed.

To begin the testing phase of the blog, I sent an invitation to contribute to the blog to my University of Southampton email account. This way I became a test participant and could try out the features which the participants had access to ensure they were functioning properly. The coming days also allowed me to ensure that the blog was not being crawled by search engines, the password-protection function was operating properly and De Back Porch

was not appearing on public blog lists. The testing phase was 100% successful. I realised that there were other websites called "De Back Porch" on the internet but the research blog was not appearing in any search result. On the night of Saturday 15 November 2008, as planned, I sent an invitation to each of the eight participants to take part in the blog. I included a visual step by step guide to accepting blog invitations to remind participants about the process. Everything was in place for the scheduled 16 November 2008 commencement.

3.7.5 Maintaining the Blog: Data Collection

The blog did not function as smoothly as expected. When the blog commenced in November 2008 the participants showed much enthusiasm for the process. They were active in sharing their thoughts and ideas and learning about each other. After the first month of data collection, contributions and enthusiasm began to dwindle. Participants emailed me explaining that they were busy with examinations and research papers and could not participate as frequently as before. After the exam period, before the Christmas holiday, interaction and participation rose considerably for two weeks, but dwindled again during and after Christmas and into the New Year.

In January 2009, when the new Semester was about to begin, I sent an email to the participants welcoming them to the New Semester. I hoped this would remind the students about the study and encourage activity. However, activity remained low, stopping completely in one week. In order to increase activity I implemented a 'Question Feature' on the blog. This was a regular weekly post in which I posed questions to the blog participants based on my analysis of the data I had so far accumulated. In this way I could let the participants know what my research was finding and they would have the chance to clarify or add to the data. The main aim of this feature was to generate and stimulate further discussion. However, it became a valuable method of theoretical sampling.

This feature was enabled on 5 February 2009. Participation increased considerably after this change. However, one week later it began to dwindle again as students faced the growing pressures of exams and papers. After Mid-March 2009, the blog gathered momentum once again and this time there were no peaks or troughs in the contributions. Contributions continued, slow but steadily, until 03 May 2009 when the blog was scheduled to end. While I did not receive the enthusiasm of the first month at any later point, the

participants were constantly supportive and continued to contribute until the end of the blogging period despite their study and work commitments and I did eventually receive a substantial amount of useful data. Appendix F contains screen shots of the Question Features as they appeared on the blog.

Observations about the Blog Method

The data collection process did not proceed as anticipated. A data collection period of six months requires constant stimulation from the researcher to keep respondents active. While I wished to withdraw from participating in the blog over time, in practice, activity was too sporadic for me to withdraw completely. In addition, because the group was so small it was difficult to sustain high levels of activity. I had to step forward and take a more active role on the blog than I had previously anticipated. I continued to perceive my role as that of a facilitator, but I commented on students' posts, and published my own posts to stimulate conversations, far more than I anticipated.

Another major limitation of the method was the lack of face-to-face interaction, particularly regarding feedback. Reflecting on the blog, I suspect that I missed significant data because I could not see the participants' initial reactions to posts. Their comments to blog posts are carefully constructed and published. While this gave participants control over how they were presented in the research and how they presented their thoughts, the participants' immediate and unscripted reactions to posts could not be caught on the blog. The lack of face-to-face interaction on the blog, then, was a limitation in the research.

Another issue which surfaced while maintaining the blog connected to the participant's ability to edit their information. As Markham (2004: 106) explains, "the ability to edit affords a higher degree of control over the meaning of the message and the presentation of self". This, I hoped, would encourage the participants to feel comfortable and confident participating in the research. While participant control over the communication process is heightened with editing, this power held drawbacks as well. Blog technology allows participants to, in effect, stop time in their communication and re-think their ideas before hitting the 'Publish' button (Markham 2004, forthcoming). As administrator, I was only able to view changes that were made to a previously published post. I was unable to observe the production process of individual posts, and the editing that occurred there, which

was a significant drawback for the study. However, this characteristic was positive in terms of the control it yielded to participants. Further, presentation of the self and presentation management are natural elements in human behaviour and communication (Goffman 1959). Understanding how the participants managed and presented their selves online, from their point of view, and how these impacted on their posts, would have contributed fascinating elements to this study. There could have been a number of different issues that influenced a participant's presentation of self online. While it would have been desirable to capture these deeply personal and changeable decision-making processes, it was difficult to inquire about these issues *on the blog* since it could undermine the participants' performances. However, it was possible to inquire about these issues privately and retrospectively during the subsequent interviews.

While my aim in managing the blog was to facilitate and encourage the expression of the contributors' own power, being the blog administrator provided me with significant power. I had the power to create and manage the space, to delete posts that were offensive and to add/remove participants. While I had these tools at my disposal, I continuously invited feedback from the participants to distribute this power. I initially created the online space but I encouraged the participants to shape the space (visually and in content) according to their preferences. Moderating posts filled me with discomfort. I felt that participants had a right to express themselves, but I also recognised that part of my duty as a responsible researcher was to look after the members of the group. Moderating, deleting offensive/disruptive posts and comments and warning participants about unacceptable behaviour, was not a role that I took to empower myself but one that was necessary to manage discussions and protect the participants. Further, the knowledge that I would intervene if something went wrong, I believe, encouraged the participants to share their experiences more openly and confidently on the blog. Importantly, I never had occasion to intervene in discussions that were disruptive or offensive on the blog.

3.7.6 Interviews

The interviews took place in June 2009, one month after the blog closed. These interviews were based on the material collected on the blog. The one-month interval between the end of the blog and the start of the interviews afforded time to complete my early analysis of the blog data and to construct the interview topics. I used Holstein and Gubrium's (2002)

approach to interviewing when planning for, and conducting the interviews. Holstein and Gubrium's (2002) approach, called active interviewing, regards the interview as a process that is co-constructed by both the interviewer and the interviewee (Holstein and Gubrium 2002; Gubrium and Holstein 2003b; Fontana 2003; Fontana and Frey 2008). The participant is encouraged and empowered to take an active role in the construction of the interview and the information that emerges from it. In this way, the participant becomes an active collaborator in the construction of knowledge that centres on him/her. Such an approach seeks to redistribute power in the interview and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue(s) being discussed. The interviewer is conceived as another active participant in the interview, one who shapes the form and content of the knowledge that surface in the interview. This approach thus acknowledges the interviewer's power in the co-construction of interview knowledge.

The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured (Punch 2009). Instead of creating specialised, predetermined questions, the interviews were guided by topics that emerged from the blog posts. I created a list of topics that surfaced from the data and asked questions around these topics (see Appendix E). I followed-up on the participants' responses to take the conversation forward and to help me acquire a deeper understanding of the participant's construction of his/her situation. I tried to allow the conversation to develop based on the interviewee's specific context and responses (Punch 2009). When a topic was exhausted, I moved on to a different topic on the list. I tried to determine whether there were connections between topics and asked questions about possible connections between responses when I suspected such.

Of the eight participants, five took part in the follow-up interviews. These students were not deliberately selected. The five students who were interviewed were willing to continue to this stage of the research. The sixth consented but he had to return to Trinidad before the interview could be conducted. Two participants elected not to take part in this phase of the research. No reason was provided for their refusal. The interviews took place at the participants' university or in the city in which the participants' lived. The interviewees determined the location of the interview.

Four of the five students who took part in the interview were graduate students. Many of them were familiar with qualitative research and the procedures involved in interviews by the time I met them this second time because they had been studying it. It was interesting to

see how the students' own perceptions and expectations of the process influenced their interaction with me during the interview. Briggs (1986, 2003) argued that respondents possess images of what the interview is about and how it should work, and that interview data are often constructed to coincide with these expectations. In my case, I realised that some participants had, over time, interpreted the research process in light of what they were currently learning at university. They seemed to have understood that the research was qualitative and appeared to have a deeper understanding of what I wanted to learn about, and from, them. Three of the students (Liz, Val and Ophelia) took me out and showed me their city/campus. They talked to me about what they normally did in the city/campus, where they would usually go, how they felt about various spaces in the city/campus and revealed special experiences they had in different locations. Liz invited me to a significant social space to meet with her group of friends and learn about them. This way I was able to observe their everyday interaction in their own special space and experience them myself. Val and Liz introduced me to persons they knew who passed us while we walked, and invited me into their conversations. These actions demonstrated a high level of comfort with me and confidence in introducing me to others. With Chants, what appeared interesting were not all the places that she was familiar with on her campus but, rather, the places that she did not know. She was not familiar with the library, the student union building, or communal areas within the general surroundings which I inquired into. Interestingly, the students' expectations and interpretations of what I required from the research helped me to acquire a significant amount of unexpected data from the interviews.

I quote some samples from these interviews in the upcoming chapter. These quotes have been included as evidence to support my findings and to bring the data to life (Pitney and Parker 2009). The interview quotes I selected were those that summarised the participants' perspective on a particular issue. I also quoted examples of the participants' experiences where these were relatively brief so as not to present only a third person account of the students' experiences. Some quotes also 'replaced' my own third person description of the data because I felt the participants described their thoughts/experiences better than my rephrasing of their words could.

3.7.7 The Blog-Interview Method: A Brief Assessment

Together the blog and the interview complemented each other well. The blog was able to capture continuity in the process of adjustment while the interviews were able to take the blog posts out of text and into experience. The dimensions, meanings and depth of the blog posts were illuminated by my being in the participant's world and being able to interact and share in that world for a brief time. When I re-entered the physical field for the interviews and experienced it from the participants' perspectives, the blog material exploded into a number of possibilities. The real complexity of the written material I had collected slowly became clear as the denotative meanings on the blog were transformed into participant-centred connotative ones. The multiple levels and dimensions of meaning on the blog slowly began to shine through the words on the screen and on paper. The blog provided the reflective and continuous material I was seeking, while the interviews provided the key to unlocking the variety and complexity of meaning encoded within these reflections. It was only after both techniques were completed, and I reflected on what I had acquired from each process, that I began to realise and really appreciate the data. Data is about meaning and meaning is contextualised, multilayered and dynamic. Viewing data and experiences from different angles unquestionably exposes the depth, complexity and dynamism of human experience.

Without the blog I believe the interview may have been a conversation confined by time. While I would have been able to ask questions about the students' past experiences, responses would have been limited by what the participant was able to remember at that time and what he/she was willing to share with a stranger. Responses would also have been rooted in what the participant felt about experiences looking back on them after considerable time. How the participant felt immediately after the experience would not have been documented. How these feelings changed over time also may not have been documented.

Further, the blog brought us closer as a group. When we met for the interview Ophelia hugged me and stated, "I feel like I really know you now after the blog" (Fieldwork Journal). Ophelia, Val and Liz expressed this sentiment in their interviews as well. Over the time spent on the blog we grew to understand and trust each other. The participants trusted me with their experiences and were comfortable sharing parts of their lives with me during the interview because they had grown to trust me over time on the blog. The fact that I am a Trinidadian did play an important role in building that trust, particularly at the beginning. However, the

blog helped the participants to learn more about me over time. I recognise that the participants did not share all of their experiences with me during the research. They selected what they wished to share with me based on their interpretation of me, their level of trust in me, and the nature of our relationship: researcher/participant.

Consequently, the blog and the interviews were a good combination of techniques, each one counterbalancing the limitations of the other. Each method supported the strengths in the other, helped to promote the possibilities of the other and to extend its limits. The use of the blog technique may have been limited by the number of participants who were involved. In her work on designing and maintaining online communities Preece (2000: 91) argues that "the size of a community can strongly influence its activities. Too few people generate too little communication, making the community unattractive". It is possible to speculate, based on this assertion and my own experience using a blog, that if the research had more participants, some of the deep, connotative meanings that were rendered through the interviews could have been generated on the blog since more users could have translated into increased variety, activity and breadth of perspectives on the blog. Alternatively, too large a group might also have inhibited intimacy and the ability to build trust among participants. Subsequent uses of this method should aim for a larger sample to ascertain whether this is a reasonable conclusion.

The nature of the sample however caused gaps in the data: the students who were in the UK for a longer period of time reflected on their initial process of adjustment but focused on the issues that concerned them while the research was in-progress. The students who were in the UK for only a few months concentrated on the issues that affected them as newcomers to the UK. The students who were here for a longer period of time concentrated more on issues of identity than those who were here for a shorter period of time. Issues such as homesickness, conflicting interpretations of 'home' and adjusting to UK Higher Education were dealt with differently by the two groups of students. However, financial issues were dealt with similarly by both groups. Further, the irregular nature of the blog entries left a number of gaps in the data particularly during exam periods. In this way the students' experiences could not be followed in the data.

3.8 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS: TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

I analysed the data according to the guidelines advanced by Kathy Charmaz (2003, 2006) on performing grounded theory analysis. Open coding for this study was performed on the blog data while the blog was in progress and later after the interviews were completed. This was because the interviews had provided material which helped to (re)contextualise the blog data and illumine complex connotative meanings with great depth and dimension within them. The data was constantly compared with each other to excavate patterns and trends connecting them. Patterns and trends naturally emerged from the data (Glaser 1992, 1999) but they emerged out of my subjective interpretation and experience of the data. This supports Charmaz's assertion that "a constructivist approach recognises that the categories, concepts, and theoretical level of an analysis emerge from the researcher's interactions within the field and questions about the data" (2003: 271). My subjective perspective is rooted in my background in postcolonial thought as well as my own life and international (Trinidadian) student experiences (see Chapter 1, section 1.5). This experience was my first as an international student. I brought all of these into my analysis of the data. I have tried to be open and flexible in my interpretation and to construct a picture that remains faithful to the data and the participants lives but, ultimately, the research reflects my interpretation and representation of the data. Grounded theorists usually continue to collect data until theoretical saturation is reached: until the data brings no change to the theory. I used open, preliminary analysis to inform the blog and the interviews. However, I did not continue collecting data until theoretical saturation because of time constraints.

Open coding was followed by axial coding where I continuously coded, recoded and compared the data. At this point, more abstract concepts such as hybridity, fragmentation, (re)discovering home, otherness and transformation slowly emerged from the patterns and themes I had identified, each of which could be 'diluted' to reveal the raw data hidden within. Without really noticing it, the data was becoming concentrated and condensed. These abstractions were also connected to each other but I was not sure yet how to articulate their connection. It is difficult to describe how I 'discovered' the theory, the central or core idea connecting the concepts, themes and, at the most diluted level, the raw data. After submerging myself in the data for five months the connecting element in the data emerged. This theory, along with its accompanying concepts and selections from the raw data, is revealed and unravelled in Chapter 5. This theory can be conceptualised as "a picture that draws from, reassembles, and renders subjects' lives" (Charmaz 2003: 270). It is not

conceived as a true and faithful replica of the participants' experiences in the UK, but rather my attempt to "show how respondents and the social scientists who study them construct [their] realities" (Charmaz 2003: 272).

3.9 SELECTING CASES

Chapter 4 presents a selection of the findings as three individual case studies: Mikey, Val and Ophelia. I selected these three for the thesis because they demonstrate the variety of the data. Mikey (male) and Ophelia (female) have both been in the UK for more than three years and their experience in, and knowledge of, the UK shows in the data provided. They both however, have very different experiences of the UK and their cases demonstrate this difference. Val (male) was in his first year in the UK at the time of the study. The process(es) and perceptions which he came to terms with in his environment during the research are different from those of Mikey and Ophelia. The cases represent the variety of ways in which the students involved in the study responded to their environment. There are, however, interesting connections in their stories and those of the other participants in the research. These connections are discussed and analysed in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, as stated in the previous section only five of the eight participants took part in the follow-up interviews. These five were: Mikey, Val, Ophelia, Liz and Chants. As they participated in both parts of the data collection, their data were cross-checked, broadened and deepened (triangulated) through the follow-up interviews. There remain a number of gaps in my understanding of Radia, Sabine and Naitian's journey in the UK. The former group's experiences were useful for full case development as their journey could be better traced over time. Liz and Chants' experiences overlapped considerably with the data provided by Mikey, Val and Ophelia's. The latter group thus demonstrate the variety of the data and contain significant connections with the other cases, allowing patterns to be identified. Consequently, Chapter four presents Mikey, Val and Ophelia's experiences as full case studies. The experiences of the remaining participants are presented as mini-cases. These mini-cases give a glimpse into these participants' experiences; they do not trace the journey.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The research design for this study emerged from my core aim to *trace* student responses to the UK over time. An important element in this tracing objective is capturing the multifaceted and dynamic ways the participants interpreted their experiences over time, how meanings were constructed, dismantled, negotiated and reconstructed during the data collection period. The data for this study was collected using a blog-interview design. The blog was live for six months. During these six months the participants shared their experiences in the UK and their thoughts and feelings about these experiences. Subsequent to the blog I conducted individual interviews with the participants. The interviews complemented the data on the blog and allowed me to view the participant's construction of his/her situation and self from a different perspective, which added texture and breadth to my understanding of the participants' contexts and experiences. They also helped me to fill the gaps in the stories I was constructing out of the blog data. The blog-interview data were analysed using a grounded theory approach. The theory which I devised to describe Trinidadian students' experiences in the UK, as well as the concepts and themes associated with this theory, are discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 4 will describe three of the participants' experiences in-depth as well as their perspectives as three unique individuals. Mini-cases of the remaining participants will also be presented.

CHAPTER 4: STORIES OF ADJUSTMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data as case studies and mini-cases. The case studies present the participants' responses to the UK as a single bounded unit – as a story of each participant's adjustment process (Gall et al 2007; Johnson and Christensen 2008; Punch 2009). In reality, the data is not as clear and sequential as these cases suggest. Although these case studies try to capture the contradictions, nuances, ambiguities and depth of meaning in the data, they are based on my interpretation of the data. I am deeply conscious of the fact that these cases are a representation of the participants' experiences, based on my knowledge of the participants and the information they chose to share with me. I am committed to representing the participants and their experiences as closely as possible. Consequently, the participants' actual contributions to the blog and their responses during the interview are presented extensively in these cases to support the statements I make about the participants and to give readers a chance to form their own interpretations of the participants' experiences. The concepts, themes and patterns that emerge from the data will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2 CASE STUDY 1: MIKEY

Mikey was 26 years old and had just commenced a PhD programme at a university in Wales when the research began. Mikey's life experience has taken him to different countries across the globe and has nourished an international and open perspective about life and cultures. Mikey views himself as a Trinidadian and emphasises that he is very proud of his Caribbean heritage. Mikey spent the first five years of his life in the United States (US). Then his family returned to Trinidad. At 18, Mikey enrolled for a Science-based Bachelor's degree programme (BSc) in the Caribbean. After a year he was granted a scholarship to complete his Bachelor's degree in a Scottish university. This was a cultural scholarship and in return for financial sponsorship, Mikey was expected to be a cultural ambassador for his country and to share his way of life with awardees from different countries. The programme also provided him with opportunities to learn about Scottish culture and way of life, "they had lots of dinners, social events, dancing, dey introduce us to Scottish dancing, English dancing, all that traditional sort of stuff" (Interview). Mikey was thus exposed to Scottish life. After

completing his BSc, Mikey enrolled for a Masters programme (MSc) at the same Scottish university. Mikey enjoys travelling and while in Scotland he visited several cities across the UK to sightsee and learn about the different cultures. Immediately after completing his MSc, Mikey enrolled for a PhD at a university in Wales, where I met him one month into his course. Mikey drew on his international experience and worldview to understand his situation. He also used his knowledge to guide others on the blog when they were having problems adjusting to the UK.

Ethnicity

Mikey constructs his ethnicity differently depending on the situation. He admits that he is bothered by the collection of ethnic data about people in Britain. As he explains:

> sometimes I just want to know why they want to know that information? Is that even important? ... to me, it's really silly that somebody has to satisfy a certain requirement by having a certain number of people from African or British Black background within the institution. To me it's nonsensical. It should be based on the worth of the person (Interview).

When asked how he constructs himself ethnically Mikey first uses a category that is used by the UK census bureau and in most official UK documents: Black Caribbean. However, he quickly elaborated on this, as if this category does not really cohere with his own construction of himself. Mikey's construction of himself is one that is rooted in Trinidadian forms of identity construction: "my grandmother was actually Indian. First generation Indian in Trinidad. And my grandfather's mother was actually Scottish, and his father was mixed, from Barbados. So technically, technically, I'm a what they does call a Mulatto, what, a Dougla-Mulatto. So [laughs]" (Interview). The term 'Dougla' was originally a derogatory Bhojpuri (North Indian language) term for children of Indian and African sexual unions in Trinidad (Puri 2004). Over time, as Mikey shows, the term has shed much of its derogatory meanings and has been embraced as a legitimate ethnic identity by many (Puri 2004). The Trinidadian sense in which Mikey uses the term 'Mulatto' is as an offspring of a European and African sexual union. Mikey thus defines himself as a hybrid of two hybrids. This is 'authentically Trinidadian' because the country has "such a mix" of people (Interview). Mikey admits that he is confused by the UK's ethnic 'categories' and is not sure what the categories actually mean: "I think by Black Caribbean they mean 'Mixed'. What we would call 'Mixed' ... I've asked somebody about it and they said, 'that [Black Caribbean] could be anything'"

(Interview). Mikey thus constructs his ethnic identity in very Trinidadian terms, however, in the UK, given the different terminologies and ambiguous meanings he is offered, he is unsure about where he fits in.

Academic and work experiences

Meeting everyday financial requirements is the most difficult problem Mikey has to contend with in the UK. Finding the time to meet Mikey was always difficult because he was usually either studying or working. On 'De Back Porch', Mikey mentioned his financial situation numerous times and during the interviews I sought to explore the issues he raised in greater depth. According to Mikey, he does whatever he can "to make a lil extra cash" (Interview). The cost of living in the UK is so high that it is difficult to make ends meet with the small stipend that his university scholarship offers. I asked Mikey how he was managing during the interview and his tone and response revealed that things were still difficult: "Aaaaah, tryin' to as much as is possible. [laughs] Much as is – some months better than others [laughs again]" (Interview).

The problem, from Mikey's perspective, is the position his department takes regarding student jobs. PhD students are discouraged from working outside the department. Mikey's professor is especially alert, he "kicks up ah big fuss if he sees you working in uni like in the library or anything like that. He prefers to give you a second project in [department], get you double the work in [department], than to have you work outside" (Interview). Wages offered in the department, however, are "unrealistic" (Interview), according to Mikey, and students need to find jobs outside to make ends meet[59]. Home students, he argues, qualify for full stipends because their tuition is small compared to that of international students. However, university personnel do not check on home students as they do international students, and thus the former can take advantage of opportunities to work outside the university while those on half-stipends "are the ones who are always in uni, Saturday and Sundays, whole week, from early in the morning to late in de night. Yuh know? And afraid to go find ah job because the professor kicks up" (Interview). The system, he argues, unfairly privileges home students. "It not right, but yuh know when yuh coming from outside they would tend to look at you a bit more closely than a home student who's been

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[59] Mikey did not indicate what these wages were.

there for a while ... people not really paying so much close attention to what they doin"
(Interview).

To make matters worse, while he was in Scotland working on his Masters, Mikey
"had almost no finances whatsoever" (Interview). This was because his sponsor did not send
his funds to him. In fact, when he started his PhD his previous university was still waiting for
funds from his sponsorship company. Mikey had to work for everything. The problem, Mikey
explains, is exacerbated by a business community that takes advantage of international
students. The business community, he says, knows how disadvantaged many international
students are and how much they depend on work to complement their funds. This community
can sometimes take advantage of international students precisely because they know that the
students need the work. Mikey admitted that he had to work on his days off and was forced to
work extra hours (without pay) at one of his jobs in Scotland. At one point during his
Master's Mikey was working up to 40 hours a week at a local restaurant, but was only getting
paid for 20 of those hours because international students are only allowed to work 20 hours a
week. As he owned a catering business in Trinidad and demonstrated that he could manage
higher-level tasks, Mikey was trusted with higher-level responsibilities in the restaurant:

> they would ask me to come in and do prep on a Thursday [day off] or to come in on a
> Sunday [day off] to help with just preparing all de meals and den go home. And
> usually what happens, the chef who used to come in on a Sunday would be feeling ill
> or have something to do and then she would leave me there and go, and have me run
> the whole show. So thas what was happening. And I was very annoyed because they
> not giving you more money for doing that (Interview).

Mikey explained how the pressure and demands of his job affected his academic work, "At
the end of the day I just didn't have time to study, ah didn't have time to, you know, ah miss
real classes because ah was so tired [laughs] from the night before in work, so, yuh know,
thas how it is" (Interview).

Cultural differences

Mikey admits that the UK culture is very different from Trinidad's culture and
difficult to get used to. He also explains that the culture is not the same everywhere you go in
the UK. For example, he describes Brighton as "friendly and different" from much of the UK
(Blog comment). This is contrasted with his previous city in Scotland, where

people are somewhat reserved as most Scots are and it is safe to say they may have difficulties expressing [their] emotions. People there do make eye contact but their words always sound rather cold/flat ... monotonic when in deep discussion though when they greet you the voice is rather colourful at first. Then you realise it is not a generally honest happiness to see or hear from you but just the way it is done (Blog comment).

He compares his "neighboury" (Interview) city in Wales with his close knit community in Trinidad. He admits that

Over here in (city) people look rather removed but they are quite nice generally. It seems as if you should not be asking them questions or making jokes etc but when you do the response is helpful and polite ... even if they say "what are you on about now" lol. I quickly realised to just by-pass that (would merit a proper cussing in Trinindad) and let them help the way they know best (Blog comment, *sic*).

Mikey continues, "One thing I always do is make eye contact. I think you will find that people will make eye contact every time after the first few times you do it" (Blog comment). In his Welsh city Mikey has found that, unlike other areas in the UK, and similar to Trinidad, "people actually tellin yuh 'Mornin' when yuh walking outside ... which is very different" (Interview). The Welsh seem to him to have similar value systems to what he is used to: "at least where I am it seems more like if yuh back home kinda thing. The older folks have similar types of value systems and stuff to what we have. It actually does remind me a bit more like Barbados than Trinidad actually" (Interview).

Food, Mikey says, plays an important social role in the UK. Food brings people together and allows them to share their time with others: "I have learned that food is like a social glue in this country" (Blog comment). When I talked about food with Mikey during the interview I learned that he does not eat many UK foods. Mikey is a vegetarian and much of the local British food, he says, does not cater for vegetarians. Upon probing, I learnt that he is also 'turned off' by some British ways of preparing food:

In the morning time, I cannot see myself eating a bap, yuh know, what we would call a 'hops bread' back home, or a 'burger bun' in the States, but they have it slightly different, and then yuh put in that, yuh put a piece of pudding in that, and then they put bacon, and then they put a sausage, so pork, sausages, bacon AND pudding in it and then they put some ketchup and then they put a runny egg? I cah- Oh my Lord! No. (Interview)

He also described a misunderstanding he had in a cafeteria when he asked for his egg to be re-fried because the centre was runny which probed quizzical looks from the server who felt

that there was nothing wrong with the egg. Mainly, he says, he cooks Trinidadian food in the UK and tries to source the right ingredients from London whenever he can.

Home(sickness)

After four years in the UK, Mikey admitted he missed Trinidad Carnival but was afraid that he no longer remembered the feel of it. In describing what he missed about Trinidad Carnival to the other participants, Mikey again sourced food as defining the Carnival experience for him: "bake and shark in line after mass, and a red shandy, then corn soup! :)" (Blog post). Food seems to have a central place in the Trinidadian experience for Mikey; it is something that connects him to his country and the experiences he misses. Carnival is also about family for Mikey and in missing the Carnival he admitted to missing his family as well.

During the interview I realised that Mikey hardly ever used the word 'home'. He would, rather, use the name of the UK city he is referring to. The only time he used the word 'home' was in reference to Trinidad. I probed this by asking what he thinks of when he hears the word 'home'. In response, Mikey provided his full address in Trinidad. I explained my observation about his use of the word and asked what he thought about it. Mikey agreed with my observation, "in terms of referring to yuh real home, I always think of it as Trinidad. At home with my parents and brother and sister and, yuh know, that sorts of thing ... usually when I say 'home' I mean Trinidad" (Interview). Intrigued by his response and determined to better clarify how he constructed and negotiated the concept of 'home', I inquired whether home was the place or the people. Mikey's response was telling: "Is not, is not, it is Trinidad yes the place, I miss the place I miss the place cuz, yuh know, cuz the place is lovely and the people and things I can do and yuh know, the freedom. But at the same time, I think it's more the family than the place" (Interview). For Mikey, then, home was with his family. This was in line with much that I had learnt about Mikey during the research. I remembered he had told me in our first meeting that he was the 'backbone' of his family and that when he left for the UK his family had a difficult time dealing with not having him around. At the same time, he worried about them a lot while he was in the UK. It seemed perfectly natural that Mikey connected home with his family. Mikey admits that he travels home about twice a year to see his family, usually at Easter and at Christmas. He also tries to go to London whenever he can to experience a bit of the Caribbean culture.

Religion

Religion and spirituality are important aspects of Mikey's life. In discussing whether Mikey was able to practice his religion freely in the UK some very poignant observations about spiritual tolerance in Britain surfaced:

> Spirituality yes, but religion, no. One, because I'm a Spiritual Baptist and there are no Spiritual Baptist churches in [city] or in [previous city] ... But spirituality, yes, definitely. Because there are a lot of people here who are open to a lot of things, a lot of Pagan and Wiccan communities in the UK and even some of the people in Christian communities are not really fundamentalist Christians they are more, they have a more, how to put this, movable attitude towards things. And that's because of course, because Britain has a very folklorish, mythological heritage about them. And Britain and the British Isles in any case so is part of dey culture as well. (Interview).

Spiritual Baptist is a Christian religion that originated in Trinidad and Tobago which combines elements of Protestant Christian beliefs and various African doctrines and rituals (Henry 2003). Mikey's comments about religion in Britain contain interesting observations about subtle, diverse and very tolerant aspects of British culture. Because Mikey follows a religion that is different from the mainstream and conventional religions in Britain, he is able to see a spiritual open-mindedness and flexibility in beliefs in his community. Mikey admits that he is looking forward to meeting with a friend in London who promised to take him to Spiritual Baptist church there. These networks of friends who can connect him in the UK with the cultural practices that are significant to him are important to his adjustment.

Social bonds

Mikey argues that socialising is different in the UK than in Trinidad. The difference is so significant that Mikey avoids many social situations altogether. As Mikey explains:

> for the vast majority of home students, all you have to know how to do is drink on Friday evenings, and that's it. If you could go out and get drunk and as they say, 'have a laugh', that's one of those things you have to do, 'have a laugh', then that's it, you fit in fine. It doesn't matter what yuh like as a person in work, or what yuh intelligence level is, those types of things ... people not, they not clinging to you for those sorts of qualities. Yuh could go out and drink and have a laugh and that's fine. They not interested in your personal life details (Interview).

Mikey argues that the only way to get a British student to change their attitude about you is through drinking. For Mikey, British drinking is not about casual social drinking to learn about another person but a "drink to get drunk" (Interview) event. This is not something he is

interested in: "Friday evening, I need to say my prayers for Sabbath and I don't want to know about allyuh and allyuh drinking scenes all de time" (Interview).

The problem, for Mikey, is that the students do not know when to stop. Trinidadians drink and party a lot, he admits, but they know when to stop. He adds that some of his Asian and Arab peers find the situation more difficult to deal with because they are not accustomed to seeing that kind of drinking, and in that way he has adjusted better to this aspect of British culture than people from other cultures: "Fuh dem, it even harder fuh dem dan it is fuh me. So they all stick amongst deyself more or less because a lot of the things people here do they not going to do. They not accustomed" (Interview). He emphasises that he goes out with British students but "I really don't have anything to do, you know, I'll hang out with them, you know? I probably won't drink as much as them but I'll hang out with them, or I'll have a meal or at least, as we say in Trinidad, 'show yuh face for ah little while'" (Interview). For Mikey, if he has work or studying, socialising has to wait until he finds the time. For him, socialising is not a priority.

Further, for Mikey, British conversational styles are different from those in Trinidad and he's found it hard adjusting to them. When the British get together to talk and 'have a laugh', his experience is that they do it differently from the ways to which he is accustomed. He admits that he is still trying to understand British humour, "still trying to figure out exactly what 'have a laugh' means [laughs]" (Interview). As he explains:

> Yuh know when we [Trinis] go out to lime and we say 'lime and talk nonsense', but we have other terms for it, I wouldn't put on record ... We know what the terms are. [laughs] Yuh 'ole talk' as dey say. Thas another one, 'ole talk'. That could go on the record, 'ole talk'. But, it's [have a laugh] not the same (Interview)[60].

Mikey decided it was difficult because he did not understand the humour: "I mean maybe I just don't get the [British] humour" (Interview). For Mikey, British social conversation does not resemble Trinidad's conversational conventions. This has also made it difficult for him to bond with British people.

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[60] 'Ole talk' is best described as light, teasing banter. Entire conversations in Trinidad can evolve around playful teasing, especially accompanied by puns, words plays and double entendres that can last for hours as participants build and add to a story or a humorous characterisation of a member of the group (Miller and Slater 2000; Lam 2008). 'Lime' is Trini Creole for hanging out, having fun exchanging innuendo and banter (Miller and Slater 2000). It is also used in the verb form, as in 'liming' or 'to lime'.

With regards to the other international students at his university, Mikey says that they have all been very friendly and open with him. Within the international student community, there are smaller communities of co-nationals. He says he is included within these smaller communities and within the larger group of international students as a whole. He is able to move among the boundaries *within* the international student community because he has some similarities with everyone in different ways. As he explains, "I think they [different international communities] more friendly with me than the other people because I am like the in-between, in-between British Caucasian and South Indian slash Pakistani slash Arab slash everything else" (Interview). As one who is constructed out of a number of different histories, cultures and voices, Mikey moves easily among groups. However, while he gets along well with different groups of international students, he admits that the other international students "are still reserved because obviously I come from a different culture from them that they don't know ... dey not going to come to meh house every day of the week kinda thing, and hang out and that sorta thing" (Interview). Among his international peers, then, Mikey also experiences being an outsider. He is both significantly similar enough to be included, but also significantly different enough to be excluded, from the communities of co-nationals that constitute the international student community.

Taking him out of the international student community and placing him as a member of the wider student community, Mikey says he is again an in-between figure. At his university, Mikey explains, the international students and the home students are "always kinda segregated from one another. I mean they talk and interact but like one group goes for lunch together, the other group goes for lunch together" (Interview). Mikey, however, as both an international student as well as someone who speaks English and who understands British (western) culture, is able to move between the two groups easily and interact with everyone: "I am in-between the two groups at the moment. Because there's only one of me really, I'm the only Caribbean person in the group" (Interview).

As the 'only Trinidadian' Mikey does not have a group of co-nationals with whom to socialise and develop deep relationships. When asked if he has had difficulty making friendships in the UK Mikey responded, "I have not had problems with acquaintances, make that dime a dozen. Especially because I have the Caribbean thing[61] going for me ... but ... a

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[61] I have agonised over not clarifying with Mikey what he means by 'the Caribbean thing'. After reviewing the transcript several times I have narrowed the meaning to two possibilities – based on what was said in the interview: (1) the Caribbean person is constructed out of a number of different backgrounds and cultures and

real friend kinda thing is a bit different. No. Haven't made very many. I've made a few good ones but not very many" (Interview). He went on to explain how he constructed friendship and what he was searching for in a friend: "in terms of your daily life in terms of having the type of friends that I've had in the past like when I was in Barbados and stuff, people who yuh could really interact with and who yuh know, yuh share yuh life story with and and yuh really get to know that person very well" (Interview). It is important to be able to "spend enough time with one group to get in really in-depth" (Interview) and Mikey is only included 'so far' into the co-national groups around him which makes it difficult for him to develop deep bonds. Further, Mikey explained he is not interested in many essentially British things, and this has made it difficult for him to build deep friendships among home students as well. In cases where he has been able to develop close bonds, they have been with people who are older than himself. When asked whether he feels lonely as a result of his exclusion from deep interaction, Mikey responded that he was too busy to be lonely. He was swift to add, however, that socially, he has had better experiences in Wales than in Scotland.

Mikey's Perception on how he is Constructed by Others

Mikey's 'Caribbeanness' has been interpreted and constructed in different ways by the British people he has met in the UK. He admits that he has faced the 'Caribbean stereotype' here more than once but he has not let it affect his ability to work. For example, he explains, "when people see me, my very cool, relaxed, island style, it's a bit odd. [laughs] It's a bit odd, until dey start to hear de [science], then dey say 'oh yeah, this guy knows his [science]'" (Interview). Then there are others who see the Caribbean only as a postcard image: 'sipping piña coladas on long white beaches'. This stereotype frustrates Mikey, presumably because it reduces his sense of self to a postcard image that does not represent reality:

> ah mean most people I meet here have that stereotype, [takes British accent again] 'Why are you here? It's so beautiful down there. It have beaches you could be on right now'. And they forget that people still have to work 9-5 jobs and in most cases 9 to 6, or 9 to 7 these days, yuh know, still have a family to care for, still have society to run. Is not all lying down in de beach (Interview).

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this makes it easier to find similarities with others and provides useful experience in knowing how to move among different groups and (2) Caribbeanness as something of a 'cool factor' among British young people and that this helps Mikey get in with them in the first instance. Mikey could very well be referring to both of these.

On the other end of the spectrum, he finds that older lecturers and professors have a different opinion of Caribbean students. These lecturers,

> *expect* people from the Caribbean to have a higher calibre of work because they accustomed to that over the years, yuh know? Like when ah was in Scotland, a lot of people commented that the brighter students that they've met always came from the Caribbean. And they attributed that to having a better education system. And some of them say is because we still use the whip [laughs] (Interview).

Mikey's perception of how he has been constructed and interpreted by others thus moves across a spectrum of stereotypes both positive and negative.

Future Prospects

Mikey thinks a lot about the future and where he will work after finishing his PhD. He admits that he "really would like to do something back home ... I see a lot of avenues to help and do other things there" (Interview). However, he is very concerned about completing a PhD in a ground-breaking area in the UK and returning home to perform clerical work for very low wages, as there are no opportunities available for his level of specialisation in Trinidad. When asked whether he was interested in working in the UK for a while after he completes his degree, his response demonstrated how deeply he had considered his options and where he would like to take his academic journey:

> financially, the UK is not really the best place to be [laughs] ... Ah mean, ah doh really see it happening here ah mean because the salary versus the cost of living [makes a '**nnnn**' sound] it doesn't measure ... you just going to be, still going to be living day-to-day after having done 6, 7 years and have a PhD and doing world class, ground-breaking research and yuh still can't pay yuh bills [laughs] (Interview).

He is seriously considering the United States as an option because he believes that it is 'a lot easier' to make a life and excel in the US compared to the UK:

> academically, the US is really a place where yuh could excel and there's a lot of money floating around in science over there, a lot more than here at the moment. And even in the recession they will continue to have more money floating around in science there than here. And it's also easier to basically set up a life I think in the US. I think it's a lot easier, especially if yuh coming educated with a degree, well a proper degree, like a PhD or something, it's a lot easier than here. And it's faster as well ... in the US now, it's all about what's in yuh head, it's all about what's in yuh brain really. Yuh brain works, yuh hand works, yuh healthy enough, come along fuh de ride (Interview).

To make it in academia in the UK, he argued, you have to "meet the right people ... is about look, yuh have to look de part, act de part, be de part, all ah dat ... change de accent slightly,

slow it down a bit and take off a bit of the colloquialism and stuff like that" (Interview). He suggested that with his "Laid back, very cool, very relaxed [personality], and of course the hairstyle and de dress down all the time" it would be difficult for him to prove himself here. He would have to adopt the local academic style to be successful in Britain.

Asked whether he felt he had changed his language while he has been here, his response was decidedly patriotic, "Ah, not too well actually. Ah mean once in a while it would come out here and there but not usually. Not- cuz I'm very proud of meh heritage and my accent and the way we speak" (Interview). It was interesting to hear him say this because on the blog Mikey was one of the more 'English' speakers. In one of his blog posts he typed (in Trini fashion) "me and my cousins". After re-reading what he had written Mikey immediately commented on his own post: "I can't believe I typed me and my cousins. Real trini styling here (my cousins and I..hahaha..what would my mother say to this)" (Blog comment)?

Mikey seemed aware that he had changed his ways of doing things because of his time in the UK. In a blog comment to Ophelia, who wrote a post about her fears of returning home after not visiting for two years, Mikey stated, "people tend to notice the changes more than you do personally. If anybody say "like she gone british or wha" just ignore them and say when in Rome I learned from the Romans to survive" (Blog comment). Change is inherent in the adjustment process and Mikey acknowledges that he may have changed during his time in the UK to better fit the context. He also recognises that he may not be consciously aware of many of the changes he has undergone.

Summary

Mikey is a 26 year old PhD student who has much international experience and a global perspective on life. This global perspective influences how Mikey interprets his experiences in the UK. Many of his experiences are constructed and clarified through comparison with experiences he has had in other countries. He is a focused student who marginalises social activities in favour of his work and family. His experiences in the UK have helped him to identify a number of differences between Trinidadian culture and the cultures of the UK. Over time, he has developed several ways of responding to these differences and the problems or misunderstandings they may pose. His solution to these problems has been to live a Trinidadian existence in the UK. He views this as a transitory period in his life and does not seem to want to build any close 'permanent' social relationships while he is here. He is proud of his Trinidadian heritage and wishes to go back

to Trinidad and contribute to the development of his home country. However, he is realistic in his expectations and fears that there may be no place for his work in Trinidad once he has completed his PhD. This fear drives his thinking and planning for the future.

4.3 CASE STUDY 2: VAL

At the time of the study Val was 28 years old. I met Val during his second month in the UK. He had just commenced a Masters programme at a university in the south-east of England. Val completed his undergraduate degree at a university in the Caribbean. After that he worked full-time in an information technology-related field. He also worked part-time at his alma mater, tutoring undergraduate students part-time. Val, like Mikey, travelled abroad frequently before entering the UK. His work took him to several countries in Latin America where he worked with company liaisons and experienced the local culture. These past experiences travelling, Val says, impacted his adjustment to the UK. Further, Val's younger brother also studied in Britain which provided him with much second-hand knowledge of the UK and the difficulties and joys of being an international student here (Fieldwork journal, Interview). Val also has family in the UK, both in London and in the north. From his family he was able to acquire valuable advice about living in the UK (Fieldwork journal). Having family in the UK also meant that Val, though he does not travel home frequently, can feel/have a sense of home and family while in the UK. In fact, his very first days in the UK were spent with family (Val Blog post). This was an important conditioning for him as he did not plunge directly into the UK on his own but was helped into it in the first instance by family. Further, when things get stressful and difficult, Val has a space to go for family, comfort and security.

Coping with adjustment as a mature student

Val admits that he had been planning to come to the UK to pursue graduate work since 2005. He explained that one of his main reasons for coming to the UK was to push and challenge himself personally and academically:

> ... where I was working, I kept getting the, I kept getting the impression, both implicit and through direct compliments that I was doing really good work and to me, it wasn't **that** great. It was good, but it wasn't like yuh know fantastic and yuh know. So I was like 'Nah, I sure I could do better than this, ah need to try and push mehself

ah lil bit more, be ah lil bit more rigorous in meh approach, do something outside ah meh scope that I had shied away from or hadn't really worked in before'. So I wanted to do that and to experience that here (Interview).

As a result of this, he says he welcomes criticism from his lecturers as it helps to push him to achieve more and to think differently.

Val feels that because he had been preparing since 2005 he was in a better position to manage the difficulties that confronted him, and continue to confront him, in the UK. He explains:

since then ah started to put meh mind in the frame, yuh know, of eventually wanting to come out here and as ah said, having the benefit of having meh younger brother be out here for a while and hearing some of de highs and some of de ridiculously low lows of this kina ting and jus, yuh know, arrivin at a point of maturity where ah was able to handle life in de wider sense better dan ah was at a younger age (Interview).

Val believes the seeds of his current process of change were sowed and nurtured while he was still in Trinidad and thus the person he is now, and is developing into, is a direct result of the thorough planning that he underwent while in Trinidad. Some elements of his current process of change, he admits, did arise out of his experiences in the UK.

Val anticipated that adjusting to student life after working for a number of years would have been difficult. Val admits that he felt the surprise of not having the luxuries he had when he worked. He was, however, able to overcome these feelings fairly quickly by focusing on why he came to the UK and what he hoped to achieve while he was here:

The goal which was not just getting the piece of paper, which was the Masters ... but really getting ah real innate understanding of meh subject area. Yuh know, being able to speak intelligently on it and to be able to use it effectively and ah keep dat as the central purpose. Because ah really want to be able to impact the way things are back home, or just the way things are generally by making use of meh experiences ... I does look at it, for me, is just ah period (Interview).

Val therefore copes by focusing on the long-term gains of the 'period'. During the interview, Val never referred to the life he left behind in Trinidad as a sacrifice he had to make for the future. I do not believe Val sees his difficulties as a 'sacrifice' as much as they are part of the road to the future. Val expects that the task will not be easy. Part of achieving his goal is learning from his experiences in the UK.

In addition, when Val thinks about how difficult it is being a student, instead of concentrating on the difficulties, he focuses on the alternatives; where he would be if he was

at home. In his words: "when ah consider de alternative, yeah ah could be home, ah could still be working in de same place ... pretty much the same job ... liming with the same people, going in the same places and to me, dat would have been a shame. Dat would be me missing out on all de rest of de world has to offer" (Interview). It is this perspective which has helped him to cope with the challenges he faced and continues to face in the UK.

Newness

Val admits that he had difficulty adjusting to the 'newness' of his present social situation. Everything had changed, everything was new, and everything that was Val in the UK had to be constructed from the beginning. At home, he says, a new job just meant a new job, a new building or a new environment. It meant that one had to build new relationships there, in that environment, but at the end of the day, he would come home, he had that familiarity that he would eventually go back to. In the UK everything was new; "Home was ah new home, new class, new limin areas, new yuh know, new horizons, new places to visit, so everything was new" (Interview). Familiarity, relationships, personal spaces had to be built from nothing: "it has still been somewhat of a challenge ... To really relate to people in a totally different way ... both superficially in terms of how ah speak to them and also more, in - at a deeper level, in terms of really having to forge and build and nurture friendships and relationships from nothing" (Interview). Getting used to that newness was, and continues to be, very difficult for Val. He is building and searching for familiarity. He has to discover his own ways to live and interact in this newness. While he planned and anticipated change, this shock of newness and the need to negotiate newness using new and different techniques overwhelmed Val.

Academic adjustment

Val admitted that the first semester in the UK was difficult for him academically. Readjusting to academic work, classes, lecturers' expectations, assignments and readings was difficult for him at first. When I met him in October 2008 he was certain that he wished to make the most of his year in Britain. He wished to work hard, travel, meet new people and learn about the cultures of his peers. He stressed that he was about balance and not focussing primarily on work. However, towards the middle of the first semester Val was being overrun

with work. The expectations he placed on himself, combined with the implications of failure produced tremendous pressure to succeed. That pressure mounted daily, as did the possible repercussions of failure. Val explains his feelings during those early months thus:

> ah tink ah was very much conscious here of bein ah student an not wantin to fail. Because failure wud den mean, or ... could mean havin to drop out ah de course, losin de scholarship, havin to go back home empty-handed and all of dose, dat, dat, domino effect of ... so ah tink ah kept dat in meh mind ah lil bit too much which is why, in de early months ah focused so much on work, and jus work, and makin sure ah got *dat right*. Ah tink is because ah was out ah de academic system fuh ah while. So ah wasn't sure if meh mind was in gear properly to do it and to do it well so ah really *pushed* [pause] **hard** [pause] during the early stages (Interview).

It is interesting to view how Val is able to reconstruct the academic experience in retrospect and compare how he acted in the situation in the past and in the present. It seems that the fear of failure forced him to push himself beyond measure. On the blog Val admitted to having difficulties "sliding back into the campus lifestyle" (Blog post). Over time, those academic pressures mounted and were met by financial pressure of a similar degree.

Val acknowledged that he felt it was easier for Trinidadian students to understand the British academic system than other students. The teaching systems and the kinds of critical work expected from students are the same in both Trinidad and Tobago and his UK University. Once he had "gotten back into gear" with academic work, Val admits that he found it was easier for him to work within the British educational system than for other international students. As he explains:

> jus havin English as yuh firs language, ah didn't realise jus how much of ah difference *it wud make* ... yuh become accustomed with British and American pop culture and what certain terms mean and, yuh know, different types ah humour and dat kina ting. So because I understood all *that* coming in it was like ah breeze fuh certain tings (Interview).

He described situations during classes where non-English-speaking students became lost or confused during lectures because they could not identify with the context or the connotations of what the lecturer was saying. Lecturers build on shared cultural resources to communicate their thoughts with a class. Val admitted to having some familiarity with these cultural resources as opposed to other international students who many times had none. This opened Val's eyes to the "definite advantage" he had as a Trinidadian student in the UK (Interview).

Cultural differences

Being a mature student, Val feels, has helped him to adjust to the UK. He argues that,

> because I came here at a later age in life ... I had spent a certain amount of time working and through that I was able to travel and interact with different cultures and different types of people. I was able to better appreciate what it would be like living in a culture totally different to mine. So it wasn't so much of a shock to me because I expected things to be not what I was accustomed to (Interview).

There were a lot of cultural differences, however, that Val admits he had to get used to upon arrival. This was particularly apparent when communicating with the British, he contends, whose communication styles stand in stark contrast to Trinidadians';

> The British tend to be generally a lot more subtle and a lot more witty and more, ah doh wanna say it, but more refined in the way they interface with each other and with other people. At least, at the start, at least, ah shouldn't even say the British, *some of* the British, because of course they are not all like that but yuh know compared to home as we say, yuh know, in a lot of cases we tend to talk straight yuh know, more pecong not necessarily with malice in mind but that's just how we relate and is ah totally different way that people relate here (Interview).

Pecong refers to a Trinidadian communication technique where participants hurl abuses and insults back and forth at each other. The practice is meant to be taken in good spirit, as humorous repartee, and is not meant in malice. This is not something that Val feels is acceptable in the UK.

The subtlety and politeness that generally defines British communication can cause misunderstanding and social discomfort. As Val explains, "what I've picked up here is that a lotta times ... either yuh get open indifference or yuh get a lot of open, yuh know, apparent friendliness." (Interview). Val refers to this as "the circus friendliness" of the British (Blog comment). As the term suggests, English politeness and subtlety come across to Val as a performance. Coming from a culture that expects directness this performance seems to encourage distrust and misunderstanding.

Another example of the *general* 'refined' nature of the British which Val refers to, is queuing, which Val treats mirthfully:

> an yuh know, they will wait in line to do anything. Yuh know. There's always a queue somewhere. Ah queue to go on de bus, ah queue to – or **or or** you would go to a counter and let's say there's nobody behind the counter at the time ... they [customer] will stand up dere patiently, quietly waiting till someone sees them. Yuh know, instead ah knocking ah desk or calling ... the first time I saw that I thought it might've

been just that person but then ah realise it happen with different people in different circumstances, an ah say, 'Well Jeez boy!' Yuh know we ah lil bit different (Interview).

From previous reading I knew that this was a characteristic of British culture which new students adjust to quickly. When asked if he had learned any of that behaviour, Val's response was not surprising:

> depending on the circumstance. Ah mean, push come to shove if I in ah hurry to get somewhere to do something and I have to face it I gonna call, I gonna raise ah hand, I gonna say something but there are some other circumstances where I have found myself calling in and yuh know acting ah lil bit closer to the way they do. If only to, just blend in ah lil bit easier. (Interview).

Balancing, or negotiating, his Trinidadian culture in the face of British expectations becomes a "bit of a juggling act" (Interview) for Val as he struggles to come to terms with difference and devise mechanisms for coping with it. He does not submit to British expectations in all instances, but he interprets situations in terms of where it would be more or less appropriate to use British conventions.

Interestingly, when he attends British festivals and cultural programmes, while he tries to understand them as a representation of British life, at times he interprets them through Trinidadian symbols. For example, Val posted four videos he had taken of Bonfire Night in his town on De Back Porch. In describing how he interpreted aspects of the festival he drew on his experience of Trinidadian festivals, particularly Carnival, for reference: "I swear one of the bonfire societies that passed sounded like a riddim section (you'll see for yourself)" (Blog post). Val did not elaborate on which of the bands sounded like a riddim section, drum and base patterns in percussion instruments, but the other bloggers were able to identify and comment on it.

It is also interesting that since the beginning of Val's study in Britain he has started to attend church. He admits he grew up attending church but stopped as an adult. In the UK, however, he resumed attending church services. This demonstrates the importance of religion to Val in his new environment. It provides solace, comfort and security in the midst of the newness surrounding him. What surprised him in the UK was how the British dress at church. As I noted in my fieldwork journal, "Val admits that he is surprised that the British wear 'jeans and jumpers' to church" (Fieldwork journal). In the Caribbean, he says, we wear our best clothes to church whereas the British wear casual clothing, which surprises him.

Financial difficulties

Val admitted that even though he was receiving funding it was still difficult to manage his finances in the UK. His funding organisation provides maintenance on a quarterly basis. The money he receives at the beginning of the quarter must last throughout the four months. Val admits that he has no complaints about his funding body. However, because he has to work with a given amount of funding for a length of time, Val is always cautious about money and how he spends his finances. He believes the key to making it through a quarter is by budgeting and keeping to his budget. Budgeting, "planning out exactly what ah want to spend on and that kina thing" (Interview), is something that Val is quite familiar with because he has had to do it consistently since he was about 15 years old:

> even from long, long time ago from since when ah first started to work and ah not even mean when ah first started to work ah mean, I have been working over the holidays ever since I was like in form five or something. Since then I've been in the habit of budgeting and I still do that, that is still part ah meh monthly regimen (Interview).

However, he is aware that part of the problem is "sticking to it" (Interview). Sometimes unexpected expenses surface, such as illness, meeting warm clothing needs, or unplanned academic spending, such as books, folders, printing and other supplies, and these can significantly affect his budget. The solution, he argues, is to budget and re-budget if the plan begins to go off course. This way, Val argues, he is always prepared for the end of the quarter and can curb a "financial crisis" which many students receiving quarterly-paid maintenance experience (Interview).

Val also says that it is important to stay out of debt. He argues that once a student is in debt, it tends to spiral out of control so he focuses on preventing a situation where could be in any kind of debt. For example, "on the off occasion when I did use my credit card ah paid it back. So right now I eh tryin to have no credit card debt hiding up on meh" (Interview). It is also important, he says, to "get yuh mind not to tink in TT Dollars and just think solely in pounds" (Interview). This is because his funding is in Great Britain Pounds (GBP) and not Trinidad and Tobago Dollars (TTD).

Tight financial constraints have meant that Val avoids doing anything that is not in his budget or which may significantly hamper his budget. Val feels tremendous guilt, regret and self-resentment when he goes off-budget: "So yuh might go out there and spend and afterwards at the end of the day be like 'well ah really shouldn't have spent 80 pounds today

yuh know, Ah really shouldn't have, yuh know?" (Interview). Even if the money was spent on required items Val still feels guilt about spending. The accumulated and rising costs of rent, food, bills, travel and academic expenses as well as unanticipated clothing and other expenses make it difficult to get involved in social activities. Travelling and experiencing different cultures, which were important to Val when he arrived, are sidelined because of his financial situation: "If there's one thing I regret a lil bit is not being able to travel as much, but yuh know is just the circumstance ... when ah watch de cost ah de visa, de cost ah dat Euro lines pass, horse ah say, 'What? leh me cool mehself an jus, yuh know'" (Interview). 'Horse' is an affectionate term for 'friend' in Trinidad.

There is also a cultural difference between how money is viewed and what money means in Trinidad and Tobago and the UK. For Val, in the UK it is considered normal to overdraft, use credit cards and spend money that an individual does not have. It is part of the spending culture. This, Val feels, may be a significant problem for younger Trinidadian students who come to the UK and who may be pressured to keep up with their UK and European friends. Based on that, he argues, "It easy to spree out here if yuh eh have yuh head on. And if yuh young and yuh jus tryin to have fun and keep up with dese people who out here, wedder dey British or dey European an ting, yuh know in terms ah money to dem and debt to dem means a whole different ting dan it means to us" (Interview). Young Trinidadians abroad, he continues, "especially if they haven't had experience working before, they come abroad to study, may not have that experience doing dey own budgeting and juggling and understanding credit card *debt*, understanding well debt in general, and assets and liabilities and the importance of saving and investing and dat kinda ting" (Interview). It is "dat kind financial discipline" that is needed to make it as an Trinidadian student in the UK Val argues.

Val spent a lot of time searching for job in the UK to complement his maintenance allowance. He encountered significant rejection and disappointment in his attempts to find jobs in the UK and this contributed additional psychological and financial stress. Because of his experience and qualifications Val tried to find jobs in mid-level positions in different companies. His applications were never responded to. As his financial strains became more difficult, Val progressively began seeking lower-level positions. With this, his confidence dwindled and his fear that he would not be able to make it through quarter after quarter grew. For the six months of data collection Val had been searching for a job and over that time I watched as his optimism slowly deteriorated as he was rejected for numerous job offers. This stress, combined with his financial burdens and the academic pressures he faced, weighed

heavily on Val. On the blog he was always polite, respectful, easy-going and helpful, but inside he was battling and enduring significant stress, fears and mounting disappointment. This was only revealed in a private correspondence sent to me, which I received permission to use as data, after Val felt he had to explain his absence from the blog.

During the interview Val described how he went from applying for mid-range jobs to applying for bottom-tier positions. It was a tremendous blow, he stated, to be rejected for a bottom-tier job because at this point, there was no lower to go. His hopes became crushed. He explained that he found encouragement and help from his university's career advisory services which walked him through some of the things he had been doing wrong. He was advised to cut down his CV to basic achievements in each category which would help him to qualify for a bottom-tier position such as a shop assistant (Fieldwork journal).

Social bonding

When asked whether he was able to build close friendships while in the UK Val responded quite positively: "I've built friendships with one ah meh flatmates, he's from Sri Lanka, da is meh meh real horse as we say, yuh know, a couple ah de Indian students I do very well with" (Interview). However, he admits, he has not been able to develop relationships "with West Indians or Trinis because there aren't that many in [university] at all" (Interview). In fact, on his first blog post Val admitted that "[t]he one down side of my experience has been the lack of fellow Trini, or even West Indian, students to link with, so on that front, I'm looking forward to this blog experience" (Blog post). Despite the "circus friendliness" that he indicated he experienced from the British Val did become good friends with one British student, James [not his real name]. This friendship originated out of a mutual interest in cricket and "well, beyond that, yuh know, he is jus ah cool fella so we were able to link" (Interview). Val adds that a lot of people in his town are interested in Caribbean culture and that made it easier to connect with British people at his university: "he [James] is very receptive to some aspects of West Indian culture, so like reggae and this kinda thing and a lot of people, a group of people who feel that kinda vibe and he is one ah those people so ... that's made it easier" (Interview).

Val admits that he is quite introverted, "I'm not necessarily the most, yuh know, open, welcoming with open arms kinda person (Interview). He has had to make a conscious effort

to include others and become more outspoken in his interactions with persons in the UK. This, he indicates, is because he realised people were not going to come to him. If he wanted to build bonds with others he would have to make deliberate efforts to connect with them: "It's something that I encountered actually coming down to the end of the first term, early in the second term, it was like yuh really need to reach out and embrace people and I have done that and it has paid off" (Interview). While he admits that his first semester was dominated by academic work and the stress that accompanied it, Val confessed that over time he was able to better balance his work and his social life: "I really strongly came to the realization that as important as it is to do well academically and so on, to do that in the absence of other balancing elements in yuh life could lead into madness fuh real. So yeah, definitely as time has progressed, more so from second term and definitely in this term [I tried] to balance it all out" (Interview).

However, Val concedes, he feels that the British socialise and bond with each other in ways that are very different from what he is used to. Not being able to express himself and socialise in the way that he is accustomed means that even when he socialises with other cultures, while he enjoys himself and is relaxed, he is not completely at ease; he is not able to 'release' as when he is with Trinidadians. As he explains:

> Ah tink too, an as we had kina touched on earlier, de interpersonal relations like pecong an ting. Like when ah, when we, Trini students an we lime in London an dat kina ting, yuh know, *das like therapy*. To release and to jes be able to, yuh know, to [ole] talk and and to give an get back an dat kina way. That people here **don't get**. So, yuh know ... das what ah actually *meant*, wen ah said de way we do it home is different to de way dey do it here (Interview).

These limes with Trinidadian students in London allow Val to really let go and be himself. While he is open and enjoys meeting and developing close bonds with students from other cultures, it is the time that he spends with Trinis that allows him to 'release'.

Socialising, and its related feelings of friendliness and unfriendliness, seems to be dependent on one's locale. As Val explained in a blog comment, "I also think that your actual locale within the UK has something to do with it, because people here in [city] seem generally more pleasant than those I've come across in London, for example". His city, as he explained in another blog post, is "always jumpin'" and there is always something to do or see which helps to keep him occupied.

Home

When asked whether he felt homesick at all, Val replied that he did not: "Not a lot. Nothing ah could really put meh foot on. I keep in contact with family and some friends regularly. Read the local papers a lot. Ever so often ah might tune in to one ah de radio stations online. So ah pretty much keep track ah what is going on" (Interview). He knows other Trini students miss Trinidadian food when they are in the UK but says he does not. On the blog Val did indicate that he felt homesick on occasions, one night being particularly bad: "I eh go lie, one night last week I really felt the urge to pack up and ride straight outta here" (Blog post). However, the post continued, that was "just one night out of several, so I figure my odds of sticking with it are pretty good" (Blog post). Further, there were also times when Val needed Trini company and admitted to missing Trini food. This happened particularly during Christmas when all the bloggers felt particularly lonely: "I was sitting here in the midst of reading and felt a sudden urge for a pastelle and a glass of sorrel. Who dey wit meh" (Blog post)? Pastelle and sorrel are traditional Christmas food and drink in Trinidad. Food again surfaces as important in 'feeling' or experiencing home.

While he generally does not miss Trinidadian food, Val admits that he cherishes and tries to hold on to his language. It deeply bothers him when people try to "play dong de fact that [dey] is ah Trini" by changing the way they speak and interact with others (Interview). While he understands that he is "not in an environment where yuh allowed or able to say it and be understood" (Interview) he is making a significant effort not to lose his language while in the UK. The pride he takes in his language and his passion for the issue comes across clearly when he says,

> To *me, I love my accent. I love my accent. I love my dialect. I love talking de way we does talk.* **Yuh understan?** And is jus a matter, to me, of balancing it, and knowin wen is appropriate, wen is useful even, to make use of one as opposed to Standard English. And [long pause] *dere is nutin wrong wit Trini.* Talking Trini. Feelin Trini. Expressin yuhself like ah Trini. There's actually nutin wrong wit it (Interview, his emphasis).

For Val, however, language becomes a problem among foreign-based nationals, not when they change the way they speak, but when their attitude to where they came from changes negatively: "I tink de real issue will come about if yuh stop being able to ***understand*** other Trinis. Not jes de actual words dey sayin, buh really understand how **we do what we do**" (Interview, his emphasis).

When asked whether he sees Trini differently since he has been in the UK, Val responds quite reflectively, as if this is something he has been thinking about. He says that "when yuh home, yuh know, yuh ah Trini by default" (Interview) but in the UK, surrounded by people who do not know very much about Trinidad, he has to explain and describe Trinidad for others. He admits that,

> Having to do *that*, it really then allows yuh to examine yuhself and examine Trinidad and Tobago from ah different perspective because before, all de tings yuh does naturally take fuh granted yuh know, now dat yuh not in dat context an yuh have to explain it and try to deliver it to other people who might be **totally** unfamiliar with it, is am, is interesting. (Interview, his emphasis).

Being in a different environment surrounded by people who do not have an experience of Trinidad, Val argues, "allows yuh to reflect, and yuh know, yuh smile at certain things, and yuh glad about the way we are and certain things and de way we do certain things" (Interview). He admits that this is challenging at times because such reflection forces him to come to terms with the reality of Trinidad, both the good and the bad; to become balanced in his understanding of the country.

Drawing on this, I asked Val what he feels it means to be a 'Trini'. His response was less of an answer and more of an inquiry into what it might mean. For example, "Is like wha we was talkin about earlier. Like wit de food ting. At least fuh *me personally*, the absence of Trini food everywhere **isn't that big of ah deal**. Yuh know? But food might be one ah de metrics yuh might use tuh define wat ah Trini is" (Interview, his emphasis). Further, Carnival is a big part of trini culture, "But does dat make me less of ah Trini because I aint – or, or if I, if ah doh play mas" (Interview). 'Play mas' refers to wearing masquerades during Carnival. For Val, it is difficult to isolate what a Trini is because people are so different. However, this raises many contradictions because while Val tried to avoid generalising throughout his interview, there are issues that he treats as quintessentially Trini or British, for example, picong, ole talk, and "how we relate to people, say like, yuh know, yuh might find that the way we might talk to somebody in ah store an ting, wouldn't be de same cutesy polite way that some British would do yuh know? We go jus come straight out and say so" (Interview). Val seems to be negotiating between perceived similarities and a deep desire to not generalise and stereotype groups of people.

Returning Home

A large portion of our conversation concentrated on returning home and the ambivalences and difficulties that foreign-based nationals face upon returning home. There is a fear among foreign-based nationals that, because they have spent some time abroad, they would inevitably return home with a different worldview and perspective on both their lives and on Trinidad. Val says he expects to be different when he returns home after he finishes his programme, "[p]ossibly speaking differently wen ah go back and approaching things differently. I expect that. And I yuh know, I take it as part ah de whole ting" (Interview). To Val, however, this only becomes an issue, as he said before, "if you stop bein able tuh understand Trini people ... that to me speaks to ah bigger problem" (Interview). Foreign-based nationals, Val adds, can return to Trinidad and become critical about the way things are done in Trinidad and this can cause offence and generate a lot of anger. Val believes that it is okay to judge and talk about one's feelings about the system in Trinidad, once the speaker is interested in assisting in change, "[i]f all you wanna do is criticise when you go back and talk bout elsewhere being better and we so backward and we so dis and we so dat and you not interested in helping to improve, then, to me, then you will probably be entitled to all de backlash that yuh will get" (Interview).

Like others, Val is concerned about his job prospects when he returns to Trinidad. Higher levels of specialisation, Val argues, in fields and sectors that Trinidad and Tobago is not involved in, means that foreign-based nationals will return to a country where there are no jobs for them. For Val, the Trinidad and Tobago government overlooks their internationally-educated workforce. He feels that the government needs to devote attention to integrating its internationally-educated workforce so that they can gain the most from the latter's knowledge and expertise. As he passionately explains,

> fuh those who *want* to go back home [the government needs to] really make ah effort to integrate people back into the working world or into society in Trinidad ah lil better. Like as we were talking earlier, to come back wit ah Master's or a Doctorate or whatever and be sehhin dong behind ah desk doin some clerk work ... ah mean. Is not, is not - it's untenable, is unfeasible, ah mean wha is de point, if we really serious talking about development and dat kina ting **what is exactly de point of doin dat**? (Interview, his emphasis).

The view is dismal for international students who are not studying an area that Trinidad and Tobago specialises in, Val contends. "Unless you know somebody, somewhere, and you able to pull some strings, something, is crapaud smoke yuh pipe wen yuh go back! **And dat really**

nuh good enough" (Interview, his emphasis). 'Crapaud smoke yuh pipe' is another Trinidad and Tobago idiom. A 'Crapaud' is a large toad which emits a dangerous poison. 'Crapaud smoke yuh pipe' means, roughly, 'you're in big trouble'. These problems students face when re-entering their home country after having studied abroad are well-documented in the literature[62].

Summary

Val is a 28 year old male who is studying at a university in south-east England. Val had been planning to come to the UK to study since 2005. He believes that his work and life experience, his age and the fact that he had been planning for three years helped to make his transition to the UK easier. While he holds that transition was easier for him in certain instances, he admits that he faced a number of difficulties as well. Having to readjust to academic life as a mature student became an early and heavy burden, which was compounded by the difficulties he faced in managing his finances. Val admits that it was difficult to get used to some elements of British culture. However, he came to the UK with a lot of advice about the culture which prepared him somewhat for what he faced. Socially, Val says he is not the most open and expressive person but he has had to make a conscious effort to become more welcoming so that he could form bonds and relationships in the UK. Val talks passionately about Trinidad and Trini culture. He genuinely loves his language and the way Trinidadians express themselves, and is committed to not losing his language while he is here. However, he is concerned about the difficulties that foreign-based nationals face on returning home after an educational sojourn abroad.

4.4 CASE STUDY 3: OPHELIA

Ophelia was 23 years old and in her fourth year in the UK when the first meeting took place. Ophelia has a natural inner inquisitiveness and a reflective personality. Her interest and background in the liberal arts has nurtured this personality and produced an individual who is

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[62] Research on 're-entry shock' or 'reverse culture shock' have documented and discussed the difficulties students face upon returning home after studying abroad. See Adler (1981), Barletta and Kobayashi (2007), Brabant et al (1990), Butcher (2002), Chur-Hansen (2004), Kato (1998), Sussman (1986) and Thompson and Christofi (2006).

analytical of her life experiences and desirous of sharing her thoughts with others. Ophelia has had a very different UK experience from the other participants in the study. She admits that she has always felt that she did not 'fit in' in Trinidad. She quickly welcomed the freedom and diversity of experiences available in the UK and consciously adapted her behaviours and values to fit in with the British lifestyle. Her language demonstrates this well. It is dominated by English terminologies and accent, punctuated with elements of Trini Creole. At the same time, however, Ophelia feels deeply connected to, and affected by, Trinidadian life and history in a way she cannot explain. Consequently, Ophelia feels and articulates a deep tension between her experiences of Trinidad and Britain. During the research Ophelia got engaged to her British partner and this encouraged even greater reflection on her identity. In fact, Ophelia admits that her most resonating problem is negotiating between her Trinidadian and British identities, which she has come to reconcile by accepting the ambivalences *as* her experience.

When the study commenced Ophelia was beginning a one-year Master's programme at the university in the south-east of England where she completed her Bachelor's degree. Ophelia's younger brother was also attending a university in the south-east when the study took place. He lived and attended university in a city relatively close to Ophelia (two hours by car). Ophelia tends to compare her experience with her brother's, which is starkly different from her own. Ophelia's openly reflective and expressive personality eventually placed her as the unofficial 'leader' on the blog. She posted considerably, often in great depth, and her contributions encouraged others to post in a similar reflective style. Her reflection on issues of identity inspired others to explore their own experiences reconciling their changing selves in the UK and comment on their thoughts and feelings about the process.

Fitting-in

For Ophelia, the process of fitting-in in the UK was a very conscious and deliberate one. Ophelia's parents attended university in England. Before Ophelia was set to begin university, her parents accompanied her to the UK to help her with her initial adjustment. When her parents left the UK after two weeks, Ophelia lived with some of their British friends who continued her initiation into British culture. As she explains:

because I was left on my own I decided very quickly that I was going to make sure that I was able to fit in. And so I think it was a conscious change. So whenever I heard someone use a slang that I didn't know I would quickly try to place it in my head and to repeat it at some other point (Interview).

She admits that fitting-in is important to her and as a result, "I pick up all the pop culture references, I've learnt about British politics very easily, I use the slang that they use and I don't use Trini slang at all" (Interview). Over time, the process of change became less conscious/deliberate and Ophelia found that she was naturally changing and reflecting British ideas/behaviour:

> I know that I have taken on a lot of British values since I've been here as well. Like I'm a lot less touchy feely than I was. I think I'm a lot more touchy feely than most British people are, yeah (laughs), but I've become a lot more reserved in certain respects. I'm a lot more em, eh, I like my space a lot more. So that's a lot more important to me. I'm a lot less inclined to talk to strangers than I was, and that kind of thing (Interview).

She continuously compares her experience with her brother's in this regard, as he maintains his Trinidadian behaviours and attitudes with the British people he encounters and befriends in the UK. As she explains, "He has not made an effort to assimilate. He has not really, he does not see his life as here. In a lot of ways he's mentally living in Trinidad still ... He also encourages his British friends to learn and use Trinidadian slang ... he's always been a lot more, a lot firmer in his Trini identity" (Interview). Her brother's experience contrasts so much with Ophelia's experiences that she tends to question her Trinidadian identity on many occasions.

Obstacles to Adjustment

Self-Pity

Ophelia admits that when she first came to the UK she experienced a number of difficulties. During her first year, Ophelia explained, she did not think too much about her situation in the UK. She was busy, enjoying her new environment and 'learning the ropes'. After that initial 'honeymoon' period, Ophelia experienced much academic disappointment. The UK university system did not meet her initial expectations and, as a result, she felt quite depressed in her second year. As she explained during the interview:

> I kind of found it really, really hard, and got really depressed about it for a while ... I felt quite lost quite a lot of the time. For a whole year ... in my second year when it was time to buckle down and work and realising that I had- coming to terms with the fact that I had no structure, yeah I just got really, really quite- I think I just lost my motivation in general for everything (Interview).

Once the activity of the first year ended, then, Ophelia began to think about the loneliness of her situation. She began to feel an enormous sense of self-pity and depression. Ophelia says that this self-pity resulted from the combined influences of homesickness, lack of support, motivation and structure at her university, and loneliness. She stated that the self-pity was so significant that she would not get out of bed. She would miss classes and avoid social events because of the building self-pity. As she summarized in the interview: "self-pity is a dangerous, dangerous thing" (Interview).

Ophelia says that she sees herself as lucky because she lived with tremendous people who were determined to help her out of her depression: "I was blessed to have friends who I was living with who noticed and got me back on track ... they were like 'ok well, we're going to class now, and even though you don't have a class, you're coming with us'" (Interview). Being outside and getting involved in activities and going to classes helped Ophelia to refocus her energy and become more positive about her situation.

Four years later, even though she is comfortable and even happy in the UK, Ophelia still experiences bouts of homesickness at times, especially when she is sick. As she stated on the blog, "You suddenly hate England when it's freezing, you're at your physical weakest and you don't have you mum to give you a rub down with Vicks, ent?" (Blog comment). To cope with homesickness, Ophelia busies herself with different activities which help to alleviate the sadness. She also tries to connect with her family and friends on the internet: through the voice and video calling application, Skype, or through social networking websites and emails. When we conducted the interview, Ophelia was experiencing a different kind of homesickness than she did as a student. This was because she was preparing for another transition, marriage. She knew that she would be marrying a British man and she was trying to come to terms with the idea of permanently leaving her past behind. As she explains,

> I still get a kind of, sort of a 'I'm going to be living here, like probably for the rest of my life, and am I sure, and it seems so disconnected from my whole past, and I should move back' and all of these different things. But it's never going to be the same because I'm marrying somebody from here (Interview).

Ophelia believes that as she begins to build a new family in the UK these feelings of homesickness will disappear: "I think the huge part of why I still feel it (homesickness) is because my parents still live there, so. But I think as we arrange our new relationship, it'll change I'll become more centred here, more based here" (Interview).

Response to British University System

Ophelia expressed dissatisfaction with her University education in the UK which, she says, did not challenge her enough. As she stated on the blog:

> I have felt frustrated for the most part. I feel like you don't get pushed quite enough and I've learnt that it's not worth trying that hard because you can do well on just doing the bare minimum. In other words, you can get a first by just doing the coursework and none of the day to day reading. Even at MA level, though I am apt to complain about how hard it is, I really don't think it gets hard until there's a deadline (Blog comment).

She affirmed this position in the interview when I examined the issue: "I actually find that A' levels was harder than my degree. [laughs]. Which is probably not a very good [laughing]. Well I think I had to work a lot harder for A' levels than I did for my degree. I was able to doss about for a lot of my degree" (Interview). The entire university experience, she says, did not meet her original expectations. University life, she explains, requires self-motivation because there is so little support. This lack of support was discomforting for her at first. As she explains, "I didn't realise what it was going to be like, I didn't realise how disconnected and how alone you are going to be in things ... you could just not show up for lots and lots of stuff and nobody would really notice" (Interview). While she admits to being frustrated 'for the most part' Ophelia accepts some "really great bits about studying here (as well) – freedom to explore and express" (Blog comment). The open, even critical, perspective that university offers is one that Ophelia appreciates. She is encouraged to broaden her experience and mind and to explore different possibilities and she appreciates this aspect of studying in the UK.

No Familial Support

Most of Ophelia's friends are UK students. Being around British students, Ophelia says, made her feel disadvantaged as an international student at times. As she explains,

> all my friends have their parents relatively close by to rely on so and so I've kind of

felt a little bit at a disadvantage. In terms of when things go wrong, my parents can't sort it out, I've gotta sort it out. So and they can sort of give me some support over the phone but that's about it (Interview).

Ophelia's only support system through her undergraduate years were her new friends who did not know her for every long and who did not always understand the unique problems she faced as an international student. For Ophelia, "not really having the kind of support system that others have" (Interview) caused her to experience herself as "a foreigner" (Interview) and as different from her friends.

Finance

Ophelia acknowledges that finance has been a consistent problem for her during her four years in the UK. Funded by her parents, Ophelia worked part-time throughout her undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes to meet her every day requirements:

> I have had part-time jobs most of the time that I've been here, I don't have one at the moment ... when I don't have a part-time job, like right now, you get towards the middle of the month and it's like "*oooo* right, I need to be quite careful for the rest of the month." And to be honest it's actually emotionally distressing. It's like the worst thing, to be worrying about money (Interview).

Ophelia admits that she does not buy anything that is not a necessity. These necessities are also prioritised so that only the most important commodities are purchased. Like Val, Ophelia feels tremendous guilt when she thinks about her spending. Even when she buys a necessity she agonises about whether it was actually a priority. It usually is, she says, but it is difficult to shake the guilt that she could have saved that money. As she is funded by her parents, the situation takes a different dimension for her. Ophelia views herself as a burden on her parents and this becomes a source of additional stress for her: "I feel like I'm not a good person because I'm squandering this money when I could be home where it's so much cheaper and not putting my parents through all of this" (Interview).

Cultural differences

While Ophelia admits that she made a conscious effort to "assimilate" (Interview) to British culture early in her stay, that process was not easy. In the beginning, Ophelia faced several problems adjusting to British culture, particularly British politeness. Learning what a British person means when he/she speaks is a skill that Ophelia has had to learn: "I think

that's just because I've sort of trained myself to sort of observe people and observe body language and that kind of thing, and try to figure out whether they really mean what they say" (Interview). Even though Ophelia tries to understand what people really mean when they say something, she concedes that it is still a problem for her, "it can be really confusing. And even now I don't feel like I'm completely culturally comfortable here. I feel a lot of times like, 'Why don't you just say what you mean?'" (Interview). However, she also finds that she is becoming increasingly polite over time: "And now I find that I often don't say what I mean either and I've become really polite and you know, I'm apologising about things I'm not really sorry about" (Interview). This is difficult for her because with this change comes the fear that she "might be losing something that's supposed to be a part of me" (Interview).

In addition to being polite, Ophelia believes that the British are very reserved in their communication with others and slow to friendship. This caused difficulty for her at the start because she was uncertain about whether she was being 'too friendly' or 'too invasive' in her communication with others. This made her reserved in some early interactions because she was afraid of offending others. As she explains, "Sometimes I didn't really understand what the social limits were. Am I saying something that's rude, am I doing something that is not socially acceptable? I was really nervous about doing the wrong thing" (Interview). She knows that she made mistakes early on but she maintains that she learnt from those mistakes and became more reserved in her communication style with the British.

Further, Trinidadian culture, to Ophelia, is very community-oriented. Trinidadians are "always going round to each other's houses" (Interview), everything happens in groups, and the community and extended family are always involved in each other's lives. Ophelia's experience of the UK is the complete opposite. The UK lacks large, interactive communities and this is something Ophelia misses, particularly during Christmastime. As she explains:

> it doesn't feel like *Christmas*, Christmas, like the kind of Christmas I grew up with, like with parang and pastelles and, *that's* Christmas, and ham and ... having the whole family over and then like 50 people in one house and that kinda thing ... more often English people tend to, each family has their own Christmas and you probably get together for Boxing Day or something. So, or it's just the grandparents come over, not as big as it is at home. It's not as crowded (Interview)[63].

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[63] 'Parang' derives from the Spanish word "parranda" which describes a group of people who come together to sing and have fun. The traditional Trinidadian Christmas was influenced a great deal by the Spanish inhabitants of the island (Moodie-Kublalsingh 1994). Parang is the lively, boisterous and joyful music which these 'parranderos' (parang singers) sing during Christmastime in Trinidad. Traditionally, parranderos would go from house to house playing for the community and would receive food and sweets from each house they visit. This exemplified and encouraged that Christmas community spirit which Ophelia says she misses in the UK.

The gatherings that happen during Christmas in the UK, she says, are usually in public spaces rather than intimate, private ones and this has a significant impact on her. Without the community, Christmas loses much of its warmth and joy for Ophelia.

In addition, the Christmas carols that are sung in the UK, Ophelia argues, are sung much more solemnly in Britain than in Trinidad where they "are a lot more joyful and celebratory" (Interview). The sombre singing builds on the quiet, solitary, Christmas vibe she feels in the UK. In fact, without the lively Trinidadian parang music that is played at Christmas, the season ceases to feel like Christmas: "The parang is a huge thing for me, it just doesn't feel like Christmas because there's no parang going on all over the place" (Interview).

Bonfire Night is another festival that produces mixed-feelings for Ophelia. In her town, the people dress up in costumes and parade through the streets to mark the event. For Ophelia, even though she attends the festival annually, she cannot really understand it: "even though England's religious reformations are a huge part of my studies, I still can't get my head around them marching to the streets with burning crosses and signs castigating 'Popery'. Fun though, but confirmation that there is a cultural barrier to be bridged" (Blog comment). Ophelia is a devout Christian. The cross is a very important, significant symbol for her, and seeing it being burnt is very difficult for her. Furthermore, that these open and subversive expressions are coming from quiet townspeople who are usually extremely reserved and polite is even more difficult for her to understand.

Like Mikey, Ophelia has not adjusted to the taste of British food. She admits that she brings ingredients from Trinidad when she can and cooks Trinidadian food here. She finds ingredients that she needs in Caribbean stores in her town. She also cooks Trinidadian food for others, "This weekend ... we had a fundraiser and ... I cooked for 30 people, and it was paratha and potato and channa [chick peas] and chicken and bodi and that kind of thing" (Interview). Cooking was something Ophelia learnt to do when she came to the UK. Cooking, she says, is a healthier and cheaper option than eating out for students.

Weather

Adjusting to a temperate climate also proved difficult for Ophelia in the beginning. During her first four months in the UK, Ophelia was ill because of the change in weather conditions: "in my first year here, I got fresher's flu and then a chest infection that stayed

from October until January and the doctor told me it was because my body wasn't used to the weather" (Blog comment). She also stated that this was because she did not know how to dress for colder temperatures. Her housemates, Ophelia stated, took an active role in teaching her how to dress for colder weather. The layers, she says, were a source of discomfort early on but she got used to them over time: "I just felt so constricted in those layers (for a while I felt constantly frustrated not knowing why but realised that this was a big part of it!)" (Blog comment). After four years Ophelia admits that she has adjusted to the cold and it does not bother her. However, while she can get used to the cold and wet wintry conditions in the UK, the long nights continue to be a source of sadness for Ophelia: "It (the darkness) just gets me so down ... I really can't stand the darkness. I actually hate that more than the cold. The cold I can get used to, if it wasn't the cold combined with the darkness. It's just depressing" (Interview).

Ophelia's Assimilation

These challenges and obstacles which Ophelia faced, and continues to face, have not significantly impeded her adjustment to the UK. For her, these problems are transient difficulties that do not compare with the overall comfort she has developed in the UK over time. She states that she noticed some clear differences between the UK and Trinidad when she first arrived. These differences excited her: "I noticed it [the 'hippie vibe' of her university town] and I *welcomed* it. With open arms" (Interview). Her determination to fit in and make the most of the experience has been rewarding for her on social and deeply personal levels.

Ophelia has managed to build a community of close friends and associates in the UK. Students, she says, arrive in the UK alone and have to deliberately and proactively seek and build new relationships: "because I'm living on my own here, I've had to kind of build up a kind of community here. A kind of a support system. That's what people do as you branch out. So I've come to depend on my community here" (Interview). Ophelia stresses that she found it relatively easy to socialise with British people and become friends with them once she had learnt the socialising culture. Her UK community consists of people who are part of her church, peers and friends who she studied with, and people she met in passing who she happened to form close bonds with. Her church community holds an important place in her heart, however. Christianity and the church have allowed Ophelia to develop close and very deep relationships with people, regardless of their nationality:

We are part of something similar even though we're from different places. Because you talk about things that are deeper anyway, that kind of translates into being able to share other deep parts of your life. So I think that has been ... something that has helped me out in a lot of ways ... faith and a faith community is quite an easy way to connect with people and if you don't have that then you have to find other ways of doing it (Interview).

These communities have helped Ophelia to build and strengthen roots in the UK over time (Interview). They are a source of comfort and support for her.

Ophelia also speaks in an English accent, which was punctuated with Creole the more she interacted with me. This is reflective of the strides she has made in adjusting to the UK. The accent initially helped her to be understood by others and over time it came naturally to her. The fact that she actively sought to identify and use British slang also helped her to connect with others: "I can express myself colloquially here so it's [forming friendships] not really a problem" (Interview). Her willingness to learn and use different cultural references, which form the basis of conversations, also helped her to form close bonds with British people. Also, when Ophelia first arrived in the UK her conversations were dominated by experiences which she had 'back home'. Her references to Trinidad, however, diminished progressively as she experienced more of the UK: "I more talk about general things and I more talk about life here than life at home. But I think because life at home has become more of a distant thing" (Interview). She is able to use her experiences here to initiate and ground her conversations with others. Her values and behaviour also changed over time as the British culture slowly caught on and modified her thinking, for example, by becoming more reserved.

Ophelia desired to make the most of her experience in Britain and got involved in many extra-curricular activities to complement her academic work. One of her main pursuits is political activism: "I'm very politically active here, I do a lot of protests and that kinda thing. Like I go and actually go on demonstrations in London" (Interview). Ophelia also became socially conscious in the UK. She exposes herself to international events and social issues that impact local people. She has also become food conscious and tries to purchase food that it does not harm the environment and benefits food producers fairly. The UK thus exposed Ophelia to issues and concerns that she feels she would not have encountered in Trinidad.

Going home

Ophelia's activism has disconnected her tremendously from her friends in Trinidad. As Ophelia explains: "I think at home, at least in the circles that I run in, there's a lot of apathy, particularly amongst the young. And so in that respect I sort of feel as if my vision has got a bit bigger than it was back home, and a lot bigger than a lot of my friends'. And so that makes me feel like I don't quite fit" (Interview). Ophelia has changed significantly in the past four years, and so have her friends in Trinidad. The life she had in Trinidad, and the person she was then, no longer exists, even the country is not the same, and the thought of returning to Trinidad fills Ophelia with fear. She first articulated this fear on the blog where she received a lot of feedback and support from other participants who have been in the UK for some time.

During the blog period, Ophelia returned to Trinidad for the first time in two years. She was tremendously anxious about the trip and used the blog to share her fears. The blog posts she produced relating to this trip were deeply introspective. They explored the contradictory feelings she was experiencing and articulated her thoughts on the source(s) of those feelings. Essentially, Ophelia's fears manifested as questions which she could not answer:

> I began to feel scared ... I never really fit very well to begin with but what if I absolutely didn't fit anymore? What if it was weird with my friends when we tried to bounce up [meet]? What if I couldn't get along with my parents in their house though we had got along well all the times they've been up here? What if I just didn't recognise places anymore, didn't get my accent back, didn't feel safe anywhere? A lot of what ifs (Blog post).

As her vulnerability, fear and anxiety multiplied, Ophelia turned to resentment to protect herself. Ophelia began to resent herself and her island's culture: "I had time to sit on the plane and get anxious, mumbling in my mind something about the 'small island mentality'. But all any of it meant was that I was scared. I don't like change. I had got used to not going home" (Blog post). Ophelia admitted that she also felt guilty about feeling fear and not joy about returning home and questioned her identity and where she belonged at every available moment: "On the plane, I began to resent the fact that I felt like I didn't have roots anywhere" (Blog post). The trip was ultimately a successful, happy one. Ophelia was able to (re)adjust to Trinidadian life and connect with her friends in a meaningful way. Her accent even returned which thrilled her immensely. Ophelia concluded that her anxieties about change were not unfounded, but the problems they brought were not striking or insurmountable.

Ophelia argues that because she did not transition into a young adult in Trinidad, she does not know what role to adopt when she returns home. She explains that "When I go back, I think I become a teenager all over again ... I become quite happy for my mom to just cook for me. You know? And if I stay there for too long we do get into all of the old arguments. But on the other hand, when they come to stay with me ... we have a much more adult relationship" (Interview). As this (teenager) was the last role she held in Trinidad, Ophelia adopts that teenage self when she returns, and continues the life she had there. The independent person that she is in the UK becomes effectively suppressed. This younger, less mature, self is nurtured by her situation in Trinidad as she depends on her parents to provide for her and take her where she wishes to go.

When she goes home Ophelia admits that she feels alienated at times. The country and her friends have changed considerably. The conversations and interests her friends have she does not always share and this makes her feel excluded at times. Many friends also treat her like a visitor when she returns home and this adds to her feelings of alienation. She emphasises that no one deliberately sets out to alienate her; everyone is very friendly and supportive. However the circumstances have changed between them and she feels this distance: "I don't feel very deeply connected there anymore" (Interview).

When we met for the interview 'home' was foremost on Ophelia's mind. As she was preparing to get married, she was coming to terms with where she was going to live and the life she was leaving behind. Although she feels guilty, she admits that she does not want to move back to Trinidad. This is because she feels that she understands "this place [UK] and I can get about quite easily and do what I have to do" (Interview). She concedes that if she returns home she will do it mostly for her parents. However, there are some personal goals she can meet if she returns home as well: "I also feel like I wanna spend some time relating to my parents on an adult level. I've never really had a chance to do that. It would be quite nice to be living closer so we could build that new relationship we're now supposed to have" (Interview). But again, she thinks, home should be a place where "you understand how things work and you can make things happen ... home also has to be a place where you feel deeply, deeply connected to people" (Interview) and Ophelia no longer feels this in Trinidad. For Ophelia, her parents are home, but the place they live no longer feels like home (Interview).

Identity

Home and self are intertwined for Ophelia. Ophelia feels that her maturing stage in life occurred between 18 and 23 while she lived in the UK. It was here that she discovered her adult identity and formed ideas about her life goals. The UK has, consequently, become very important to her self-concept and identity. She fears that if she returns to Trinidad she would have to make sense of herself and her roles all over again:

> I've really established myself quite a lot more. I **know** who I am a lot more. And who I am now is not just a mixture of my childhood experiences, it now involves a lot of England and a lot of the experiences that I've had here. So I kind of feel that if I go back, that I'm trying to figure out myself all over again back there when I've already figured myself out over here. I'm comfortable with me in England. But um, I have to spend more time in Trinidad to figure out what I'm supposed to be like there (Interview).

This tension between Ophelia's life in the UK and her life in Trinidad figured centrally in her discussions on the blog and with me. For her, it is now all about identity. She has adjusted to the UK and settled into a life here, and now her central concern surrounds understanding and navigating the different, often contradictory, components that comprise her being. Her goal, ultimately, is for these pieces to align perfectly into a complete puzzle, but she suspects that this might not happen. Consequently, her statements are dominated by ambiguity and contradiction which she acknowledges[64].

One of the main problems is that Ophelia does not feel 'at home' anywhere. This is a sentiment that crept up on her the more she lived in the UK and progressively began to see it as another home and, ultimately, as her home. While she feels connected to the UK, she also feels alienated by her cultural and national difference from the UK in many respects. As she stated on the blog, while she loves England and is happy here, "that was always there, that feeling of not culturally belonging (in the UK) ... I definitely don't feel like I fit here either" (Blog comment). Correspondingly, while she no longer sees Trinidad as home, she feels deeply touched when she hears steel pan ("I hear some piece of steelpan and it hits me so deep I realise I am Trini to de bone" - Blog comment), eats local food, and thinks about the traditional Trinidadian Christmas. Trinidad's community-oriented culture also fills her with warmth. Ophelia's real or perceived difference makes her feel alienated in the UK, but her

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[64] These tensions and ambiguities are an important part of the participants' construction of their identities. They contribute to the construction of very fragile identities, identities that are on the inside and outside of several boundaries simultaneously. This fragility is demonstrated in this section. The following section on hybridity also returns to this issue. An analysis of this fragility follows in Chapter 5.

personal transformation in the UK makes her feel excluded in Trinidad as well.

Along with feeling simultaneously included and excluded in both the UK and Trinidad, Ophelia also talks about related feelings of insiderness and outsiderness. As she battled with the competing identities inside her Ophelia expressed that she felt like an outsider in both Trinidad and the UK in different ways. Feeling like an outsider in Trinidad is even more discomforting because Trinidad should be hers: "even though I fit in a lot of ways (in the UK), I am an immigrant. And that's okay because I am literally not from here. **But when I go back**, I feel like an outsider, and that's *not okay*. Because I shouldn't feel like an outsider there, I am **from** there" (Interview, her emphasis). Val, Mikey, Liz, Chants and Naitian all uttered similar sentiments about returning home at one point or another. There is the emotion of feeling torn, like 'the grass is always greener on the other side' no matter which side one is in (Chants, Blog post). What is interesting in Ophelia's experience is that no one, she believes, makes her feel like an outsider. Her feelings of outsiderness originate in her: "I don't think that anyone actually makes me feel that way. But it happens, like, I feel really sensitive, a little bit overly sensitive, about things sometimes ... I have maintained this sense of outsiderness, I do feel like I'm an outsider. Without anyone making me feel that way" (Interview).

Hybridity

I felt compelled to ask Ophelia whether she had begun to come to terms with these contradictions and ambivalences in her construction of her identity. Ophelia commented that her reading of Salman Rushdie had helped her to reconcile her anxieties and hurt of non-belonging considerably:

> Yeah, I think I have actually [reconciled with this], from reading Salman Rushdie ... he talks a lot about the space in-between, and being willing to just live in that space in-between ... he's quite okay with that. I don't know if he's actually okay with that. I'm not actually okay with that but I do feel that at least I do have a kind of identity of in-betweenness (Interview).

Rushdie's concept of living in and accepting the in-between has helped Ophelia negotiate the simultaneous experiences of insiderness-outsiderness/ inclusion-exclusion that she feels. Ophelia characterizes hers as a hybrid identity. She desperately wants the different parts of her self to coincide but she feels that, ultimately, they will remain separate, with her being the liminal, overlapping point between the two – neither fully inside nor outside of the different spaces or 'homes' she acknowledges.

Ophelia feels that hybridity is something many Trinidadians can identify with. Trinidadians, she says, are hybrid:

> I think all Trinidadians gravitate towards them [hybridity theories] because we have a hybrid existence. Because it's one place, a really small place, where so many different cultures are mixing together and forming one culture. We understand hybridity probably better than anybody else does" (Interview).

Unlike other participants, Ophelia held that Trinidad does, in fact, have one culture: "Yes, I do think we have one culture. I think our culture is the ability to adapt, and I think its the ability to draw on a lot of things and make it one thing" (Interview). My understanding of Ophelia's statement is that the underlying, connective element grounding cultural difference in Trinidad is flexibility; the 'ability to adapt' and combine cultural symbols to create something new.

Ophelia justifies her statement by explaining that all the Trinidadians she knew in the UK were able to integrate and mix successfully with different groups of people and connect them in different ways. In her words: "they [Trini students] seem to have that thing where they belong to a lot of different places. They take in a lot of different things and they make it theirs. They seem to adapt better than a lot of other international students that I've met" (Interview). This is in line with Val's and Mikey's comments on where they fit in at their universities as well.

In Trinidad, too, ethnic hybridity is not new or different. Ophelia identifies as 'Mixed Race Other'. To expand, Ophelia explains that she is, "Indian, Chinese, African, French and Scottish" (Interview). Ethnically, then, she is also hybrid[65]. While her ethnic background is not something that causes confusion in Trinidad, in the UK, many people have problems placing her. She has experienced racism in different ways in the UK, from being called 'Paki' in south-east England to being called 'coloured' by an elderly person she was caring for at one of her jobs. While she understands that the elderly woman may have been using a politically correct term from her generation, Ophelia admits that she still felt offended:

> I did feel a bit offended but I did try to kind of not be offended because she's, you know, I think when you reach that age ... other people need to let things go ... [I felt] why are you even pointing out my race? That was the thing. I've come to do a job, it doesn't matter what I look like (Interview).

Ophelia admits that there have only been a few small incidents in her four years in the UK.

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[65] Insiderness and outsiderness, and the hybrid existences that these experiences encourage, are discussed and analysed in deeper detail in Chapter 5.

Ophelia compares her experience in the south-east with her aunt's in the north where the latter is the only non-white person in the village: "her house has been egged and she's had racist comments written on her walls" (Interview). Ophelia shared an experience when she visited her aunt and a passer-by on the street made a racist comment about her curly hair. When asked whether she has received negative comments regarding her relationship with a white British male, Ophelia says that her ethnicity "has not really been an issue" (Interview). His parents and hers are comfortable with the relationship, although she believes his grandmother thinks about her ethnic background.

Summary

At 23, Ophelia has been in the UK for four years and has a wealth of UK experience. Ophelia has always struggled with issues of identity and these problems resurface in complicated forms as a result of her UK experience. Unlike the other participants, Ophelia always felt as if she did not fit in Trinidad although she carries a deep, instinctive love for aspects of the country that she cannot explain. At the same time, while she feels she fits in very well in the UK and is comfortable here, she also does not see herself as belonging in Britain. She feels simultaneously inside and outside in both countries/cultures. This has led her to unwillingly embrace a hybrid identity for herself. Ophelia's experience is not unique to the group, all the participants expressed that they felt transformed by their UK experience and were anxious about how their transformation will be interpreted at home. The difference is one of degree. Ophelia expresses deeper and more complex conflicts with her identity. This may be because of the length of time she has been in the UK and the levels of adjustment she has managed to achieve here; the fact that she is marrying a British national and is now reconceptualising home and her place in it; or because her comfort here forces her to confront an older struggle of not feeling like she 'fitted-in' in the place she should have called 'home'. Whatever its roots, Ophelia's ambivalent hybrid identity forms the cornerstone of her present experience in the UK.

4.5 MINI-CASES

This section provides short overviews of the remaining five participants' experiences in the UK. This section is not extensive. It is meant as an introduction to the participants. The next chapter discusses these students' experiences in light of the themes that surfaced in the

analysis. The section, in general, does not include quotes from the participants. These can be found, in context, in the upcoming chapter and in Appendix G.

4.5.1 Naitian

Naitian is a first year Science student at a university in Wales. This is his second Bachelor's. His first degree was completed at the same institution in which he is completing his second. Naitian has been in the UK for 3 years. Naitian's sister is also in the UK. He has never visited her because, he says, it is too cold. Naitian has travelled widely in the UK as his club activities allow him to travel throughout the country to share his skills with others. Naitian spends his free time playing video games in his dorm and getting involved in club activities. He is proud of the academic successes of his university. These successes, he believes, validate his degrees and the work that he is doing here. When the study took place Naitian was 24 years old. He identifies as Indo-Trinidadian.

When asked about how he feels about the UK Naitian admits that the country is fine but it is not a place he wishes to stay because it is too cold. The people, too, he says are distant and cold. Naitian says he has grown accustomed to the weather and has never had problems managing it.

Naitian admits that he loves his country and wants to return home after finishing his studies. He tries to visit Trinidad at least twice a year. This gives him a chance to spend time with his loved ones and to reconnect with his friends. He admits that he also likes to return home to act in the ways that he is most comfortable and reconnect with his culture. Being home also allows Naitain to be around his usual support networks – people who understand him and can relate best to him. He admits that he has found it difficult to make these kinds of essential connections in the UK. He visits his friends in London frequently to re-establish these crucial connections in his life.

4.5.2 Sabine

Sabine was 23 years old and enrolled for a One-year masters' programme in London when I first met her. Sabine identifies as Indo-Trinidadian. Sabine admitted when we first met that she was comfortable in London and was looking forward to meeting new people and

learning about different cultures. Sabine stated that she did not have too much difficulty adjusting to her Master's programme. She felt that the volume of work was much more than her undergraduate degree but she had expected this.

Sabine enjoys travelling and wanted to use this experience in the UK to travel through Europe. Sabine has travelled extensively and interprets her experiences in the UK through her experiences in other countries. She says she feels comfortable in new environments and looks forward to new, exciting experiences, but admits that going at it alone without support and help from family members proves difficult at times. Sabine had difficulties adjusting to London's public transport system. The transport network is confusing for her and she admits that she regularly misses her buses and gets lost on the underground.

Sabine admits that her biggest frustration is the weather. She argues that she constantly feels cold. To add to her frustration, Sabine admits that she does not know how to dress for the cold weather. As it is not something she is used to, and without family or friends to help or validate her, she feels uncomfortable. She feels everyone is looking at her and ridiculing her because she perceives she is dressed absurdly.

Sabine admitted that she was a lonely when she first arrived in London but within a few weeks she was able to make new friends. She said this was easy for her as she was in London and there were a lot of Trinidadians in London. She stated that meeting and interacting with Trinidadians allowed her to find her comfort zone in the new environment.

Sabine did not admit to missing Trinidad. She speaks to her family regularly on Skype and shares her experiences with them. The internet helps her to find and connect with her previous support networks. Sabine is expected to serve three years in Trinidad after completing her degree. She does not mind returning to Trinidad to serve however, she fears that in Trinidad she will be unable to use the new skills she learns here.

Sabine admitted that surviving on a budget makes things difficult for her but it is something she is willing to manage. When asked whether she is trying to find work to meet additional expenses, Sabine argues that as it is just one year she has no problem sticking it out. Her social life consists of dinners and card games with friends which is affordable for everyone.

4.5.3 Chants

Chants was 20 years old and had been in the UK for one year when the study began. The previous year Chants read for a one-year social science diploma in London. After this course Chants decided to continue her university education in the UK. She enrolled for a Bachelor's programme at a university in the south-east of England which is when I met her. Chants' experiences in London and her expectations of university framed her experiences in her new university.

Chants admits to being largely disappointed by her academic experience. It is not the programme , she holds, but her interest in the area which has waned. She lost this interest as soon as she started her new programme. Consequently, she feels unmotivated and unfulfilled by her academic experience. I got the sense throughout our conversations and her posts on the blog that Chants was still searching for a career that suited her. She stated that the liberal arts base that students are required to have in the US gave students the opportunity to try different things and discover what they enjoyed. The choices, she felt, were more diverse. Whereas in the UK, students are expected to enter university with a specialisation in mind which, she feels, does no suit her. One of the most difficult parts of her degree programme, Chants admits, was the freedom it offered. The flexibility in classes, the lack of supervision from lecturers and the reduced intensity affected her negatively.

Chants does not like cold weather and particularly dislikes the darkness and gloom of winter days. She says she was unprepared for dressing for cold weather when she first came to the UK but learnt, through observation, and asking questions how to layer properly.

Most of Chants' acquaintances in the UK are British. She admits that her British friends are "really polite . . . (and) afraid to offend" (Interview). However, she believes that the people are much more open-minded than Trinidadians in general.

Chants misses Trinidad a great deal. When she is in the UK she counts the days until she is in Trinidad. For the time she is in the UK Chants feels her life is 'on pause' until she returns home. However, when she returns she also realises that Trinidad is not what she imagined it to be. We talked a lot about this in the interview. What disturbs her is that she seems to be two different people, an outgoing, open person in Trinidad and a shy, quiet girl in the UK. She feels that if she could be herself in the UK she would have a better overall experience.

4.5.4 Radia

Radia had been in the UK for 4 years when the study commenced. She was beginning a PhD programme at the London university where she completed her Bachelors and Masters degrees in the social sciences. Reflecting on her experiences in the UK Radia says she sees herself as a Trinidadian with British traits. This, she says, is because of her time in the UK but also because her family has roots in England and Scotland. She visited the UK twice before coming to the country to study. She holds, however, that coming alone and having to live as an adult for the first time in a country that is very far from her home is difficult. In the beginning, Radia says she had a very difficult time being separated from her family, friends and culture, but over time, as she made British friends and entered into a relationship with a British person her outlook became more positive.

Like Chants and Ophelia, Radia explained that she had a difficult time adjusting to the flexibility of UK higher education. She says she enjoys working hard and continuously. However, Radia enjoys the freedom to express that UK higher education permits. She also enjoys the diversity of fields she can study here. In Trinidad, she says, doctors, lawyers, and engineers are valued. Other fields are largely undervalued. She appreciates the value placed on social sciences and humanities in the UK.

She admits that she does not know what to do with free time. As a result (and combined with financial problems) Radia took up several part-time jobs in London to fill her schedule. She describes herself as "Trini to my bone. I work hard but I also play hard" (meeting). She enjoys experiencing London's varied night life and culture. She explains that in Trinidad there are only so many places to go, but in London, there is always something new to experience.

Radia gets very animated when she talks about the weather. She says she does not like the cold and misses her shorts and T-shirts. She says that if she could take anything from Trinidad with her to the UK it would be the warm sea which she loves. Radia also enjoyed taking part in Carnival celebrations in Trinidad and during her first three years in the UK she missed it tremendously. Now, she says, she plans on visiting the island every Carnival.

Radia visits Trinidad twice a year. She says the way she perceives her visits to Trinidad have changed over the years. In her first years going home Radia explained that she viewed it as going to the warmth of her family, friends and the familiar. Now, she says, when

she thinks of going home, she sees it as a vacation. She has taken many of her British and international friends with her to Trinidad to experience the culture. However, she is concerned about the raising crime rate in the country which makes her nervous to take her friends there in the future.

4.5.5 Liz

Liz was 27 years old and studying an MSc at a university in south-east England when the study took place. Liz's academic interests include sustainable development and empowerment. Liz has travelled extensively in North America, Canada and the Caribbean region. She also has experience adjusting to different environments as she had to move to a different Caribbean island for her work. For the past three years Liz has been living independently. Liz chose her field because of her passion for culture. She also sought to make the most of her one year in the UK. She decided to come to the UK because she wanted international experience and knowledge from which to further her work in the Caribbean. European travel was also important for Liz in achieving this aim. Liz identifies as Mixed Caribbean.

Liz adjusted quickly to the academic environment in the UK. She admits that her knowledge of English and her experience with a similar higher education system helped her to adjust better than her international friends. The coursework, however, was very demanding, and Liz did not have much time to do the kind of international travel that she wanted. Further, Liz emphasized that she had difficulty coming to terms with her financial situation. As she had been working for the past three years Liz had been financially independent and comfortable. Having to adjust to a new style of living proved difficult for her.

Liz bonded well with the international students around her. She was able to develop very close relationships with the European people she met on her course. This, she says, was the best part of her stay in the UK, "the international component" (Interview). She says she did not develop bonds with British people but that was because she had only met about three British people during her ten months in the UK. Her lecturers, tutors and colleagues are mostly from other countries. The few British students on her course do not linger on campus for any length of time and it is difficult to connect with them. Liz also travelled and took advantage of London's social life during her stay.

In general, Liz says that her exposure to adjustment and her passion for different cultures helped her to adjust to the UK. She admits that there were times when she missed her family and friends in Trinidad, particularly during difficult days, but she managed to overcome the difficulties by thinking about how lucky she was to be able to have this experience and the fact that it was just for one year. She admits that she spoke to her parents every day on the telephone and that helped her significantly. Her partner also joined her in the UK twice during her stay which she says was important for her. Liz also has family and friends in London who she visited regularly. By and large, she says, she has been able to live a Caribbean existence in the UK so that the shock was not too much for her.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the stories of three participants' response to the UK. Mikey, Val and Ophelia have each been in the UK for differing lengths of time and have had different experiences in the UK. Their adjustment was affected by their expectations of the UK, their primary motivation for studying abroad and by who they were when they came to the UK. All three admitted that their initial adjustment to the UK had been difficult but also acknowledged that they thought they had an easier process adjusting to the UK than other international students. They all also saw themselves as 'in-between' figures in the worlds they inhabited, moving easily between and among the national and ethnic boundaries surrounding them, however feeling significantly on the outside of these boundaries because they straddled different groups. From these stories that span one to four years of experience in the UK, one recognises that the *nature* of the problems the participants face as sojourners in the UK change over time. This suggests that adjustment is not a process that has a clear beginning and end; it is a continuous process of negotiating and coming to terms with difference. The theoretical components and possibilities of this statement are explored at length in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCE: (DIS)JUNCTURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to trace the complex and dynamic ways in which Trinidadian students in the UK (re)constructed meanings and negotiated their identities under constantly changing circumstances. In 'tracing' the students' adjustment to the UK the study sought to capture the dynamic ways that the participants interpreted their experiences over time; how meanings were (re)constructed, dismantled and negotiated over the course of the data collection period. The study was explorative and aimed to discover and conceptualise eight students' experiences in the UK over the course of six months. Chapter 3 explained how I used blogs and interviews to collect data from eight mature students who had just begun a program of study in the UK. These students had been in the UK for a period of between one month to four years (refer to Table 2 on page 85). This data was analysed using the grounded theory approach described in Chapter 3 which aims to inductively formulate a theory out of data[66]. In this chapter I will present the theoretical analysis of the study. The chapter will analyse the themes and concepts that consistently appeared in the blog entries and the interviews. It will then examine these themes from a postcolonial perspective, highlighting how far the participants' responses reflected the study's theoretical perspective (Chapter 2). The following section presents a theory of adjustment that reflects the experiences of the students. This theory will be compared with other approaches to demonstrate the contribution of this research to the fields of adjustment, postcoloniality and identity.

The findings and analyses advanced in this thesis are not considered 'widely-applicable'. They describe the experiences of the eight students involved in this study. The study, however, formulated an approach infused with openness, flexibility and contextual sensitivity so that a variety of human experiences can be represented by the theory. The extent to which the theory can be applied to different contexts depends on its subsequent use and interrogation.

The central research question guiding this study was: how do Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment? Subsidiary questions were:

- What kinds of experiences do the participants have in the UK?

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[66] See Charmaz (2003, 2006), Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Glaser (1992, 1999).

- How do the participants (re)construct the meaning of these experiences?
- What are the effects of these experiences on the participants?

The research took a postcolonial approach to international student adjustment. This perspective was motivated by a finding by Ward and Kennedy (1999) which suggested that students from postcolonial, culturally diverse countries, may find it easier to adjust to new environments. This was because the context "fostered intercultural awareness and cross-cultural familiarity ... (which) equipped (students) with cultural knowledge and intercultural skills to assist them with cross-cultural transitions" (pp. 671 - 672). The *cultural* impact of colonialism, they indicate, furnished students with the skills they needed for adjustment. This study set out to investigate this suggestion. Subsequent sections analyse the data in light of the research questions and theoretical perspective.

5.2 TRAJECTORIES OF PARTICIPANT ADJUSTMENT

This section presents the themes and concepts that consistently appeared in the blog entries and interviews. The way that these themes are presented can suggest that the students' experiences in the UK, and their attitudes, thoughts and emotions regarding these experiences are systematically structured, with precise boundaries and limits. This is far from the truth. These abstract themes exist within an intricate, multilayered and deeply subjective matrix of experiences and emotions that overlap and influence each other considerably. These complex interrelationships have been abstracted and neatly packaged for comprehensive reportage. I have, however, presented some of the significant linkages and interrelationships where possible to stay close to the students' experiences. The theory that emerges out of, and connects, these themes brings the concepts together and demonstrate these interconnections with greater clarity.

5.2.1 NAVIGATING STUDENT LIFE
Navigating Academic Life

One of the primary concerns for the students involved in this study was understanding and adjusting to the demands and pressures of the UK Higher Education (HE) system. The individuals involved in the research responded differently to this problem based on their

specific contexts. For Mikey, since he entered British HE initially to continue his undergraduate degree, the process was much easier as he had already begun his degree in the Caribbean and had an understanding of what was expected of him. This suggests that the learning styles and expectations of students in HE in the UK are similar to those in the Caribbean. This is not surprising since the underlying structure of his Caribbean university was put in place by the British during colonialism and as the institution changed over time it did so with regard to British, and more recently, American academic conventions (Stockwell 2008). As Mikey had already made that transition of adjusting to the expectations of HE it was easier for him to adjust to HE in the UK. For Val, who had been away from academic life for some time, the process took more time. It is arguable, however, that the process took as long as it did because of the tremendous pressure Val placed on himself to succeed. The transition process, for Val, was accompanied by persistent fear of failure, which was bound to his expectations of the sojourn as well as his personality. Val, however, also agreed that the academic conventions in the UK were similar to the Caribbean and once he was able to 'slip back' into being a student the process was much easier for him.

Liz agreed that the foundation she acquired in the Caribbean academically prepared her for the demands of her Masters programme here. As she explained in a blog post: "Compared to the other countries, Caribbean students appear to be at an advantage since our education system is very similar to the British system". What was challenging for her was the differing *emphases* of her courses. In the Caribbean her course material referenced global perspectives but remained focused on 'regional' (Caribbean, Latin American, North American and, more broadly, Canadian) initiatives. In the UK her courses concentrated primarily on the European Union (EU) and she had to 'catch up' with her colleagues from the EU community who were aware of the regulations and directives in her field. Thus, academic adjustment to UK HE is bound to one's field as well as one's expectations, personality and academic background.

Ophelia and Naitian argued that, academically, they expected UK HE to provide a bigger challenge for them. As they entered the UK straight out of Secondary School, they facilitate a comparison between Secondary level education in Trinidad and Tobago and the UK. When Naitian and Ophelia entered HE the Cambridge A' level examinations were the primary entry qualification for HE in Trinidad and Tobago as it was instituted in many British colonies during colonisation[67]. Ophelia and Naitian entered the UK ready to transition

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[67] This examination was recently replaced with a Caribbean equivalent of A' Levels – the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination or CAPE.

with their UK colleagues into HE. As international students they were prepared in a *similar manner* as UK students were for HE at least academically (British Council 2006). This is unlike many other international students surveyed in the literature who come from countries with different academic conventions and learning styles and who face significant problems adjusting to the criticality and student-lecturer dialogue expected in UK HE[68].

For many other international students academic success is connected with language issues[69] (see Chapter 2). Many international students suffer academic and psychological difficulties because their first language is not English[70]. For this reason the adjustment literature is dominated by studies about students whose first language is not English. For Trinidadian students whose formal academic language is English, adjustment to HE comes relatively easily. In fact, all eight participants insisted that they believed adjustment had been easier for them compared with their international colleagues because their 'first language' was English.

For many of the students the UK educational experience offered an exciting chance to receive a new, broader vision. Liz and Naitian spoke with excitement when they talked about the world-renowned lecturers at their universities and the opportunity they got to meet leading figures in their field. These are opportunities that they did not have in Trinidad. Val, Radia and Mikey uttered similar sentiments. The UK offered them opportunities to explore aspects of their field which they did not have access to in Trinidad and to take their studies into new and different territories, which they enjoyed immensely. For Ophelia, "the freedom to explore and express" proved to be one of the "great bits" about studying in the UK (blog comment). In their blogs both Liz and Val were considering continuing on and doing their PhD in the UK however the financial strains of student life prevented Liz from doing so.

Navigating Finances

For the students involved in this study student life was intricately bound to their financial status. The main problem the students involved in the study admitted they faced in the UK was financial strain. This corresponds with findings in much of the adjustment literature

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[68] See Chalmers and Volet (1997), Littlewood (2001), Lee and Rice (2007), Ryan and Carroll (2005).

[69] See, for instance, Furnham (1993), Henya Kagan (1993), Jochems et al (1996), Lin (1997), Littlemore (2001), Luzio-Lockett (1998), Masahiko and Ovando (2003) and Perrucci and Hu (1995).

[70] See Constantine et al (2004), Jochems (1996), Luzio-Lockett (1998), Ryan and Carroll (2005) and Volet and Ang (1998).

where financial problems usually follow language difficulties as obstacles to adjustment[71]. The cost of living in the UK and the requirements of student life were usually higher than scholarship maintenance allowances. Students who funded their studies themselves also faced considerable pressure to find additional sources of finance. Financial difficulties impacted the students' sense of self and contributed considerable stress and profound feelings of guilt, regret and self-resentment. Many of the students avoided socialising as a result of their financial situations which made it difficult for them to develop support networks in the UK. As Val argues, students need financial discipline, combined with hard work, if they are to succeed in the UK.

Five of the students involved in the study depended on part-time jobs to meet their basic financial requirements. Of the three remaining students who did not depend on work, two students (Sabine and Liz) stated that they were only in the UK for one year and even though they faced tremendous financial difficulty, they were willing to sacrifice and 'rough it' since it was only one year. Liz described the situation best in a blog comment: "I honestly can't do the meagre student existance for another 3 years. One year is fine to "ban yuh belly" but three is ridiculous" (*sic*). Work may be a crucial element of both international and home students' lives. However the former face more stringent rules on their work activity. The international student in the UK is only allowed to work 20 hours a week. There is no limit to how many hours the home student can work, allowing him/her more flexibility. International students may also face unscrupulous business practices that take advantage of international students' needs and vulnerability. Home students are perceived as less vulnerable against unscrupulous business practices. Trinidadian students who have faced such practices feel that there is nothing they can do about them. They feel like outsiders, and very much alone, when it comes to such issues; they feel they have no course of legal redress. Their financial situation is so pressing that they usually do not consider questioning employers.

To an extent, the way the students approached their finances depended on their previous experiences with money. This can be observed through Val and Liz who both had experience of having full-time jobs prior to their Masters programmes. Both had continued and reliable access to money through their jobs in recent years. It can be a considerable transition from this existence to that of the "meagre student" (Liz, Blog comment). For Liz, "Moving from an apartment to a very modest room and sharing communal spaces was quite

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[71] See Forbes-Mewett et al (2009), Harman (2003), Jenkins and Galloway (2009), Lin and Yi (1997) and UKCOSA (2004).

different from what I've grown accustomed ... little luxuries of shopping, eating out, entertainment ... almost put me through guilt trips" (Blog post). Liz experienced and constructed money in a certain way before coming to the UK. Upon arrival she is forced to reconstruct her understanding and experience of money and finance in a manner which she is unaccustomed, and this transition proves difficult. Val faced similar problems: "ah don't have as much money as ah used to have ... and, yeah, it gonna be a lil bit of a pain" – Interview. His attitude to the transition was to focus on the goal of the experience and to remind himself that it "is just ah period" (Interview). Further, Val admits that his experience with money has always been linked to budgeting. Even when he had his job he carefully planned how he would spend his income. This helped his transition into international student living. Also, Val expected his finances to be difficult when he arrived in the UK and therefore prepared himself mentally for the transition. This helped him to buffer the 'shock' of having to deal with financial matters in a different way. Therefore students must negotiate among past and evolving experiences with money and finances as part of their adjustment process.

Lack of support

Both of these academic issues are connected to perceptions of having little social and familial support in the UK. For Ophelia, who did her undergraduate students in the UK, at 18 after having left secondary school, transitioning to the independent study model of HE proved difficult. She felt that there should have been more support at the academic level for students. Students who had previous experience with HE did not expect greater academic support. Both Val and Liz who entered the UK after previous HE experience in Trinidad stated that the academic support they received from university staff was more than adequate.

The lack of social and familial support, however, was a problem for all the participants, though to differing degrees. All the students felt disadvantaged by the fact that their trusted support systems were not with them. This led to homesickness in many instances. Navigating academic life in the UK can be stressful, and in most cases the students had to cope with this alone. Friendships provide important social support during the adjustment process (Sovic 2009; Terenzini et al 1994). While new friends were available, all the students felt that these new friends could not understand and relate to them the way their trusted support systems were able. Ophelia's feelings regarding this changed over time as she developed strong community ties in the UK. The differences between the two kinds of care and support were so stark that Mikey, Naitian and Chants insisted that they did not have friends in their universities, only acquaintances.

5.2.2 (RE)DISCOVERING THE HOST CULTURE: NAVIGATING 'NEWNESS'

Throughout their stay in the UK the students were constantly interacting with and (re)interpreting their new cultural environment. In the beginning, the newness of the UK proved to be overwhelming for all the participants. The students were asked to start over, to build a temporary life in a new and different environment using social tools and equipment which were unfamiliar and which were unfamiliar to some of the people around them as well. They were searching for and building familiarity, making sense of things in the way they were accustomed, using interpretative frameworks (schemata) that they had developed from their past experience[72]. They had to learn how things worked in their new environment. They had to discover and experiment with new ways of living and interacting with others (Gill 2007). They used advice and knowledge gained about the UK from others at home and in the UK to help them navigate their new environment. While some of the participants planned and anticipated this change, the shock of newness and the need to negotiate newness with unfamiliar techniques/tools overwhelmed all of them in different ways.

For the participants this newness surfaced in every element of the new environment: the festivals, the food, the way religion was expressed, the communication styles and the rules of social interaction and behaviour. As discussed in Chapter 2, culture is interpreted as the *roughly similar* ways people interpret the world (and behave in it)[73]. This arises out of shared symbols, or socially established codes in their community. Cultural signifiers are not clear-cut, they are constantly in the process of (re)production/(re)construction in light of other possible signifiers. The students in this study have experienced cultural diversity in their own country but they are unfamiliar with the cultural symbols of the UK and they needed to learn and interpret these symbols in light of their own schemata, and, if necessary, integrate them into their evolving interpretive framework.

The communicative differences between the UK and Trinidad and Tobago caused many problems for the students. The perceived subtlety of UK communication versus the sensed straight talk of Trinidad and Tobago, the politeness versus the pecong, the eye avoidance versus the eye contact, the differences in the humour, all of these differences were communicative differences that the students stated they had to come to terms with when they arrived in the UK. The participants agreed that the communication practices in the UK,

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[72] See section 3.2.1 in Chapter 3 for more information.

[73] See Bauman (1988), Bhabha (1994), Cohen (1985), Geertz (1973), Hall (1997) and Williams (1961).

particularly politeness and subtlety, came across as a performance to them and made it difficult for them to trust the British. Together they describe what Val considers the "circus friendliness" of the British (Blog comment). This perception was found in a number of other studies as well (Sovic 2009; UKCOSA 2004). All of the students stated that they had heard about these communicative patterns before, from family and friends in Trinidad who had visited the UK. Their initial ideas about the UK were therefore shaped before arrival. This pre-acquired knowledge may have influenced their interpretation of their early experiences in the UK considerably. It is possible that the force of this pre-acquired knowledge diminished over time as the students accumulated personal experiences from which to interpret their environment.

Ophelia, Liz, Sabine, Chants and Radia all admitted that they had problems learning how to dress for the cold weather; what to wear and how to wear it. Sabine argued that issues which many British people take for granted such as what fabric to wear in what season, and how to wear it, become crucial for new 'tropical' students in the UK. Sabine was advised to layer her clothing but it was only when she got to the UK that her flatmate taught her how to layer properly to keep warm. Radia said she was sent to the UK with a scarf but she did not know how to tie it or when to use it until she watched others. Not knowing how to layer or use the different types of clothing properly initially made Sabine feel very self-conscious in public. The heavy layers of clothing, Liz and Ophelia hold, contribute to feelings of frustration and suffocation during the winter months. The students also had to come to terms with the meanings associated with different cultural practices in the UK. Practices such as those that occur during Easter, Christmas and Guy Fawkes Day are interpreted and assessed according to the student's prior knowledge, experience and schemata as well as their new cultural knowledge of the UK. Their interpretations thus surface out of an emerging hybrid perspective (see section 2.2.3).

None of the students submit completely to British conventions but use them differently depending on the situation. As the students struggle to come to terms with difference, and to devise mechanisms for coping with it, they engage in processes of balancing or negotiating their expectations, interpretations and behaviour between their Trinidadian culture and perceived British expectations. Even Ophelia, who has adjusted so well to British culture, continues to think in terms of her Trinidadian signification systems when navigating aspects of the UK environment.

The newness of the UK was both terrifying and exhilarating for most of the participants. Terrifying because they felt lost and confused in difference but also exhilarating

because of that very difference. The UK offered much that the students were not exposed to in Trinidad and Tobago. For Liz, the buzz and activity of London, the variety of entertainment it offered, the theatre culture, the park-life and the underground music sub-culture widened her vision and made the stay exhilarating for her. For Ophelia, the social and environmental consciousness that pervades many messages in the UK broadened her scope and changed the way she interpreted and interacted with her environment. The 'hippie vibe' of her town and the drama of Guy Fawkes Day thrill her even as the latter disturbs her. Val, Liz, Naitian and Mikey enjoyed the international cultures and the different foods and personalities they were exposed to in their different cities and through their friendships. While Ophelia and Sabine admit to feeling suffocated and frustrated by the layers of clothing they have to wear, they also admit that they enjoy the variety and being able to change and be creative and different with their wardrobe at different times of the year. In the UK the students' perspective became much more global than it had been in Trinidad and this global perspective encouraged the participants to continually (re)construct their interpretations of the UK and themselves. These new constructions helped them to interpret the UK, particularly the education system and culture, within a global arena: as compared to the US, Canada, New Zealand and the rest of the EU.

5.2.3 NAVIGATING HUMAN LIVES: SOCIAL BONDING

For many of the students in the study the cultural differences they perceived between themselves and the British prevented them from developing close bonds with British people. Ophelia was the only student who managed to develop close bonds with British people. These were people she went to university with in the first instance and, over time, included people she met through different circumstances, particularly through church. Val was also able to form a close relationship with a British male, but this was primarily because the latter was interested in Caribbean culture; it was a less British-oriented relationship. Academic and social communication, the data showed, depend on cultural referents to transmit meaning. People draw on shared cultural resources to inform, entertain and persuade others. Where these cultural resources are not shared significant miscommunication can occur. Studies have found that this is a major reason home students do not form friendships with international students, they perceive that they will not be able to communicate easily (Harrison and Peacock 2007; UKCOSA 2004; Sovic 2009). For Ophelia, because she consciously accumulated a set of cultural references to draw from to ground her interaction, and since she

consciously learnt to express herself colloquially in the UK, social relationships came more easily. This was not the case for many of the other participants.

The other students generally cited communicative differences as the main reason why they did not form close relationships with British students. Understanding British cultural references and humour created a noticeable gap between the two groups. As the British seemed very reserved and polite in their communication, the students sometimes felt discomfort when interacting with them. All the participants admitted that there were times when they became very conscious of their communication styles with British people. There was particular concern about whether they were being too friendly, too touchy-feely, too forward, or generally too invasive (spatially and personally) with members of the host culture[74]. Liz, Val, Chants, Naitian and Ophelia all expressed surprise, and even frustration and amusement, by the UK's drinking culture but stated that this did not significantly prevent them from developing relationships with British colleagues. For Mikey, however, the fact that most social events for students revolved around excessive drinking seemed to bother him. He indicated that he would attend parties whenever possible but did not stay long and usually would not drink significantly.

Most of the participants formed relationships with other international students. This finding is supported in the literature (Sovic 2009; UKCOSA 2004). While Mikey and Val were able to form relationships with other international students they admitted they were only able to develop their relationships to a limited degree. Most of their international colleagues developed deeper relationships with co-nationals. However, because the participants were usually the only Trinidadian in their course, they were unable to develop such bonds with other co-nationals. These co-national bonds are important because they have been shown to help to buffer students by providing important social support during adjustment[75].

Most of the students involved in the study found that they were able to move among national boundaries and interact with different groups of people easily. These students attributed the ease with which they were able to move through different boundaries to Trinidad's cultural diversity (see Chapter 4). Their experience with cultural diversity – their experience of difference and navigating difference (intercultural awareness, intercultural knowledge, openness, flexibility and cultural sensitivity), helped many of them to move and

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[74] Mervyn Morris (1965) a West Indian student in the UK in the years immediately following independence acknowledged having similar concerns (see chapter 2, section 2.3.3) .

[75] See Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998), Chalmers and Volet (1997), Littlewood (2000, 2001) and Ye (2006).

interact with different groups of people. At the same time several of the participants felt excluded from each of the groups they interacted with because they were so mobile, because they did not completely belong. Their perceived difference also meant that some participants could not develop as close a relationship as they would have liked with other international groups.

In the university many participants therefore felt simultaneously inside and significantly outside of the groups they interacted with. All the students, except Ophelia, actively sought interaction with other co-nationals. Most students travel to London where they meet with other co-nationals and experience being Trinidadian to some extent in the UK. These trips give the participants the opportunity to express themselves in their local Creole and socialise in ways in which they are accustomed. For Val, these trips provide a 'release'. They give him a chance to relax in ways that he is unable to with his British and international friends. They give him a chance to feel 'at home'.

Val and Ophelia argue that in a situation where you have left everything behind and are forced to (re)build connections from the beginning, relationship formation becomes a conscious effort. Students have to make deliberate, often uncomfortable, attempts to forge relationships even if they are not open by nature. They have to be willing to change, to learn about the new culture, to share themselves with others and be willing to express themselves using new cultural symbols. According to Gill (2007) international students need to actively explore the new environment, mediate over issues of difference and similarity and try out or pioneer different forms of expression and roles. For Val, however, this process is about learning a new culture and using new cultural signifiers only *when necessary*. It is not about changing who he is, or significantly altering the things that he feels make him Trinidadian. He prefers to actively and consciously negotiate and shift between Trinidad and British forms. Ophelia is willing to symbolically become British, a process that is not without its contradictions and ambivalences, to fit in and build communities in the UK.

Being in an environment where there were so many international students allowed the participants to experience the UK in a unique way. They were not only able to learn about the UK but also about the cultures of the different people around them. This 'international' dimension of the student experience was especially thrilling for the participants. They were able to form relationships with new and different people and learn about different countries and cultures even though they did not leave the UK. Liz captured this well during her interview: "like especially the international component. Like that's fantastic as far as I'm concerned. Like I literally have friends all over the world, I have an invitation to visit at least

twenty countries, yuh know? Yeah, so that is really, really cool". While not all the students were able to form such deep relationships with international students during the study, the international dimension of the postgraduate programmes specifically, proved especially exciting for many participants. This international perspective changed the way the participants understood and interpreted their own culture as well as the UK. The different ways these international circles conceived and (re)presented the world often clashed and out of these clashes the participants' own ways of interpreting/constructing the world was transformed. The students thus admitted to skilfully traversing different national and ethnic boundaries in the UK. This process of moving among groups and learning from different communities emerges as immensely exciting and ultimately transformative for the students.

5.2.4 NAVIGATING REPRESENTATIONS: CONFRONTING OTHERNESS

In coming to terms with these two crucial elements of collective existence, navigating newness and negotiating other human lives, the students became more aware of the symbols of their own culture: the symbols that to some extent influenced their conception of the world and their behaviours as a member of a community[76]. Confronted by other meaning systems the students were able to consciously perceive the differences between their cultural practices (symbols for articulating the world and acting within it) and those of the UK. For many students, these differences highlighted that they were outsiders in the UK.

An important contributor to this feeling of outsiderness is how the participants perceive they are constructed by members of the host culture specifically, and, to a lesser extent, by other international students. All of the participants admitted that they felt some of their colleagues and lecturers did not respect them fully initially because of how they were constructed as Caribbean citizens. They all felt that they had to work hard to prove themselves because many of their peers perceived them in stereotypical terms. As Liz explained:

> yuh get this impression sometimes, that people are like 'Oh, you all from the Caribbean and duh duh duh' ... and then is like, we've been doing quite well in school, we're actually the top end of the class and it kind of puts us, because people assume that we're from the Caribbean it's all parties, it's all hanging out, that kinda thing. And it

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[76] Cultural symbols as discussed in Chapter 2 are guided by an individual's personal circumstances as well as the 'webs of significance', or 'socially established codes', surrounding him/her. See also Bauman (1988), Bhabha (1994), Cohen (1985), Geertz (1973), Grossberg (1996), Hall (1997) and Williams (1961).

changes their whole perspective on what we're like. So that's pretty cool too (Interview).

Chants agreed that many British people had 'exotic', devalued, images of the Caribbean. For students who were unfamiliar with the Caribbean other images surface: "you could be watching like a program about some rural village in like Africa and where there's like thatched huts and everybody is all in the same room being taught and stuff and they're like 'Is that what your school is like?' I'm like 'No'. [laughs]" (Interview). The participants did not think that they were compared with British-born or raised African Caribbean students by their counterparts. They felt that they were constructed as the culturally exotic Caribbean Other. All the students involved in the study felt that it was important for them to do well in their courses to prove their academic worth to others and help break that stereotype of the Caribbean. They also felt that part of breaking the stereotype was teaching others about the Caribbean and sharing parts of their culture with others, which they actively did.

In his work on the construction of the colonial subject Bhabha (1994) concentrated on similar stereotypes and how they facilitated colonial power and dominance. The stereotypes which the participants faced in the UK may be perceived as colonial remnants (representations) that were disseminated to control and dominate subject groups in the Caribbean. They may also be viewed as 'contemporary' stereotypes (re)constructed and perpetuated by commercial groups to imagine the Caribbean for people within Europe[77]. Ultimately, however, these stereotypes exist within a discourse where powerful groups manage and produce the image of less powerful groups in a manner that supports the influence of the dominant group and defends the less powerful image of the Other (Bhabha 1994; Said 1978; Slemon 1994; Spivak 1994). Chants, Ophelia, Liz and Val stressed that they did not believe that their peers (both from the home country and abroad) deliberately adopted these constructions to offend or hurt them. They strongly held that these stereotypes existed in the public realm and they had no power or agency to contest or challenge them on a level playing field. This is in line with much of the literature on the role of power in representation (Bhabha 1994; Hall 1996; Grossberg 1996; Said 1978; Spivak 1994). The students, however, were content with changing the way they were perceived by the people who impacted them most, their peers and lecturers.

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[77] I use 'contemporary' here within inverted commas because these stereotypes may have their roots in older, colonial stereotypes which have been reimagined for contemporary power groups.

As these stereotypes exist in the public realm, they may be the only references many home students and lecturers have to help them construct Trinidadians early in a relationship. Human beings normally utilise what they already know about an individual to help them to interact and interpret him/her (Baumeister and Bushman 2008). When meeting someone new many people normally use stereotypes to initiate interactions. Relationships can move away from stereotypes as they get deeper. In this way, stereotypes may be conceived as strategies that home students and lecturers use to construct and interpret Trinidadians early in a relationship, before moving on to deeper and more specific constructions over time. These stereotypes, though unfortunately hurtful and offensive to the students, may have been genuine attempts by colleagues and lecturers to relate to Trinidadian students, which the students may have recognised.

Bhabha (1994) argued that the construction of the colonial subject in power discourses often depends on overt expressions of racial and (related) sexual difference. While the students encountered overt constructions and expressions of cultural difference in the UK, very few admitted to personally facing subversive or exotic constructions of racial difference. Ophelia felt deeply uncomfortable and even irrevocably affected when an elderly patient she was tending to referred to her as 'coloured' but she was not able to identify any overtly negative ethnic expressions directed at her during her stay. Most people she came across, she held, regarded her with ethnic uncertainty and curiosity which she interpreted with humour and enjoyment. Mikey was able to identify a situation where overt ethnic violence was taking place around him but which he was able to distance himself from. His experiences with racism were mostly subtle and ethnic in origin. Many participants were able to talk about the experiences of people they knew in different parts of the UK who experienced overt expressions of racism. Mikey, Liz and Ophelia stated they experienced a few subtle, uncertain, expressions of racism which they could not confirm were racist in origin. All three were content to find other explanations for negative experiences than racism.

In Trinidad, ethnicity is generally spoken about openly (see Chapter 1) and this is something that Chants does not experience in the UK. Chants finds that ethnic issues are not openly discussed in the UK:

> I think in Trinidad people talk about it more freely and it's not really something to feel uncomfortable about. Whereas here if it comes up it's like, 'Am I allowed to say this?' You know? So yeah. I think that's a big difference, but I think it's just that they don't wanna be seen as racist or whatever (Interview).

This, for her, is understandable because, "a lot of people never really have to think about it. I mean for some of my flatmates and stuff, I'm like the only black person they know, so, yeah, it's never really come up for them before" (Interview). For Chants, her flatmates do not speak openly about ethnicity because they do not have experience interacting with different ethnic groups and because "they just really don't wanna offend anybody" (Interview).

The students were thus faced with different signifying systems when (1) navigating the newness of their environment and (2) managing their interactions with others. Many of the students engaged in multiple worlds simultaneously. They traversed the UK and various international arenas simultaneously though their friendships. They were thus faced with navigating numerous signifying systems simultaneously, while at the same time trying to come to terms with new and different constructions of their persons. On reflection, six of the eight students believed that navigating these different worlds was difficult but also exciting. These six students held that they were able to open their minds and learn a lot about the world around them from their international colleagues. Their personal signifying systems were significantly transformed from the encounters and relationships they made in the UK. The process made Liz and Val feel more confident about acting in diverse settings. The students' own personal and cultural signifiers, confronted by all these meaning systems, were thus constantly under (re)construction, (re)production and (re)negotiation during their time in the UK (Bhabha 1994; Williams 1961). In negotiating multiple meaning systems, Bhabha (1994) argues, interpretations can become ambiguous, uncertain and even contradictory. The next two sections will address the ambiguity, uncertainty and contradiction that emerged out of this constant process of negotiating among numerous signifying systems simultaneously.

5.2.5 (RE)DISCOVERING HOME: INTERSECTIONS OF 'HOME'

In traversing and engaging with new and different symbolic systems the participants' own symbolic systems became transformed. Ophelia referred to this change as the 'widened vision' she acquired out of her stay. Chants, at 21, referred to it as maturity and independence. Liz interpreted it as her new international vision. Val, Naitian and Mikey interpreted their change in terms of personal progress and intellectual growth, what they can now accomplish out of their international development. However they interpreted it or expressed it, each of the participants acknowledged that they had changed considerably during their stay and continued to do so as they interacted with, and (re)interpreted, different

features of their new environment. Out of this change emerge renewed and constantly changing constructions of home.

One of the first experiences the participants had of home upon arrival in the UK was of 'home as lost'. Upon interacting with the new environment and facing different and constantly changing signifying systems the students immediately felt the impact of the loss of the familiar. Uncertain about how to act and behave in the new environment, faced with different belief systems and values, home became interpreted in certain terms, as surety, as a space where everything made sense and everything worked better. Home became idealised for the students because, interpreted in light of their present circumstances, they understood it. In response to this fracture between home and 'foreign', many students engaged in processes of domesticating the unfamiliar, moulding unacceptable elements of the new culture (for example food) into a reflection of home, however they interpreted it. This corresponds with much of Walcott's (1992, 1998) writings on the 'fragments of exile'; on reconstituting whatever fragments of home one possesses to feel safety and security in a new environment (McLeod 2000; Said 2000).

This sentiment of experiencing fracture in a new environment is in line with Oberg's (1960) early assessment of culture shock (see Chapter 2). However this fracture is not solely one of 'shock' as Oberg describes it. Even as they experience the loss of home, and the need to reconstitute it in different ways, the students admit that this is not their singular experience of the UK. The students have good days and not-so-good days. Some days they experience difference and feel homesick. This is particularly so when they feel ill or long for companionship and support from familiar, understanding faces or experiences, such as during Christmas. On other days, they long for the thrill of discovering something new about their environment: "It's been rife with excitement about learning new things ... and at times, feeling dreadfully homesick" (Ophelia Blog post). For Mikey, Val, Sabine, Liz, Radia and Ophelia the good days outnumbered the not-so-good days on reflection. Adjustment is thus an ambivalent and contradictory experience where feelings of home as ideal, lost and fragmented commingle to differing degrees, depending on circumstances, with experiences of excitement and expectation from the new environment. This is the double-experience of (re)discovery.

Language surfaced as a pivotal experience of home that significantly impacted the student's ability to adjust to the UK. Even though the students had strong knowledge of English, their primary language of socialising in Trinidad was some version of Trinidadian Creole (Youssef 1996). As Youssef explains, in Trinidad "Only the most formal political

scenarios and church services preserve unmixed Standard English, and within these, any shift towards informality or humour engenders a switch" (p. 11). With the exception of Ophelia, all the students admitted that the inability to communicate in the Creole inhibited their forms of expression, and "gets a lil tiring" (Chants Blog post), in the UK. Ophelia admits, though, that while she does not miss speaking Creole, she is deeply affected when she hears it spoken. This highlights a deep connection with Creole even though she does not personally use the language. All the students admitted that they were looking forward to the blog as it would allow them to express and experience themselves in Creole, the means through which they were most comfortable. Val viewed the moments he spent with Trinidadians in London 'talking Trini' as therapy for him (see Chapter 4). This suggests that while he enjoys interacting with other cultural groups, his expression and style are sometimes inhibited because he has to use English, which does not always transmit exactly what he wants to say.

Tied to this elevated position of language in the adjustment experience is the fear of language, particularly its loss. Language is immensely powerful. It holds identity and expressions of identification within it (Coupland 2001; Rassool 2000, 2004). Language illuminates one's identity. But this illumination is very powerful and not easily controllable. This is because language exposes and unmasks the user. It speaks, often without the user's permission, of the user's background and reveals the groups he or she identifies with. So while there was a profound love for Trinidadian Creole on the blog, there was also a deep fear about it. This fear surfaced among students who had been in the UK the longest. It was the fear of losing language, of losing the ability to speak Creole. Losing one's language may signify new forms of identification. This fear crowned Ophelia's anxiety about returning home after two years. Ophelia was aware that her accent had changed as a result of her stay in the UK. If her accent did not return at home, she felt, she would be exposed as having adopted a different identity, or worse, be accused of *pretending* to have adopted a different identity. This fear is rooted in (post)colonial thought. During colonisation language was used as a social control mechanism for centuries, a means of distinguishing the civilized from the barbarians on the colonies (see Chapter 2). In the process of decolonisation Creole progressively gained power and prestige in Trinidad (Youssef 1996). As Fanon (1967) described, in Martinique during colonisation family and friends of a person who had lived abroad would wait for him/her to speak before making a decision about how he/she had changed. Whether he/she had remained 'home grown' or had begun to accept Eurocentric thought would be revealed through his/her language, whether he/she used local or foreign accents. Their allegiances would become unmasked. This process had much to do with

prestige and power relations in the Caribbean. More than 40 years later, Ophelia (as well as Mikey, Val, Naitian and Chants) acknowledges that the remnants of this power/identification struggle associated with the prestige and prejudices of language continue (Coupland 2001; Myers-Scotton 1993; Ryan and Giles 1985). Val, Chants, Naitian and Mikey's determination to elevate and defend Creole is linked to their determination to perform and maintain their identity in the UK and at home (Coupland 2001; Hall 1996; Rassool 2000, 2004).

The process of continually (re)interpreting the UK changes the students' perspectives and interpretive frameworks. Over time 'home' begins to be (re)interpreted from the students' growing international vision. Images of home, then, are also constantly being (re)discovered/(re)interpreted/(re)produced from within the UK (see Chapter 4). While home is idealised in the process of coming to grips with the new environment, it is also recognised as flawed. Reflection on Trinidad, *from inside the UK*, forces the students' to come to terms with the reality of their homeland. The students confront these ambivalent and changing images, oscillating between degrees of ideal and flawed, directly when they return home and these images collide with the signifying systems at home. They are then forced to interpret these systems through a different, transformed, lens. The impact of this collision, the sheer weight of the students' transformed vision and the *recognition* of that transformation, can make many students feel like outsiders *at home*. This can be very painful to students who had negotiated their outsiderness in the UK against a perceived insiderness in Trinidad – 'it is okay if I don't fit in here in the UK because I have a place at home' – because they now confront a sense of outsiderness both in the UK *and* at home. As Ophelia articulated in a blog post, some "times I don't feel like I belong there [Trinidad] anymore and as if the Trinidad I remember doesn't exist". Chants uttered similar sentiments when she returned home for Christmas: "it seems everytime I come back things are a bit different ... being back here reminds me that its not all sunshine and beauty ... Sometimes the grass can seem alot greener when your not actually here" (Blog post). For Ophelia and Chants, the collision makes them feel alienated in Trinidad even as they feel accepted by their family and friends, and even as they feel both accepted and alienated in the UK. For Val, Naitian and Mikey this collision only alienates and isolates if individuals cease to understand Trinidadians; if they become excessively critical of home and unwilling to change things, if they become Eurocentric in their vision. These complex intersections in the (re)construction of home and abroad significantly impact the students transforming sense of self and belonging. The next two sections deal with this issue.

5.2.6 NAVIGATING IDENTITY: (RE)DISCOVERING SELF

Adjustment for the students involved in the study required:

(1) coming to terms with and navigating student life with all its academic, financial and social obstacles

(2) navigating different kinds and levels of newness in their cultural and physical environment

(3) building new bonds and social support mechanisms in the UK in new, unfamiliar ways

(4) varying degrees of confrontation and overlap (often simultaneously) between the self and Other both in the UK and at home.

This transformative situation, this ambiguous fracture between familiarity and unfamiliarity, coerces considerations about identity. As Val explained, "when yuh home, yuh know, yuh ah Trini by default" (Interview) so he was not encouraged to think openly and critically about who he was and where he belonged. Upon entry into the UK, confronted by difference on so many levels, the students admitted they were forced to think consciously and critically about who they were and where they fit within this multitude of difference. Confronted with difference the students became more self-aware and more active in their construction of their selves.

Upon entry into the UK most of the students immediately adopted the identity that they were most familiar with and which best distinguished them in this environment: a Trinidadian. As Chants explains: "you only really like realise your identity when you're not where you're from so I never really thought of myself as very Trinidadian. And when I came here and recognised some differences, like I felt more patriotic here. But yeah now I identify myself as a Trinidadian" (Interview). Each student interpreted, constructed and performed this identity in different ways in the UK, based on their previous experience of being and acting Trinidadian in the past. Part of the performance of being and identifying as 'Trini' was displaying Trinidadian symbols in their physical and virtual spaces and persons and by acting 'Trini', for example, displaying the Trinidadian flag in dorm rooms, displaying photos of the country on their computer desktop and by their dress or appearance, for example, "Laid back, very cool, very relaxed, and of course the hairstyle and de dress down all the time" (Mikey Interview). Another element of performing their Trinidadian identity abroad was sharing elements of their culture with other groups in the UK, for example the food, language and music. Constructions about what it means to be Trini changed from participant to participant

depending on the students' frame of reference. Upon probing different participants about what it means to be Trini the students admitted that there was no conclusive definition about what it means to be 'Trini', the identity means different things for different people. At the same time, however, the students continued to refer to elements of their construction of 'Trininess' as general patterns. Even Val who tries not to generalise about people fell into this trap several times. This signifies that while the students acknowledge that 'Trininess' is not a clear concept, it is comfortable to refer to it in idealised, generalised, terms. For the students, this identity is about finding a secure, comfortable, place to belong and express belonging in the UK (Bauman 1988). It is comforting to think, in the abstract sense, that there is a space where people think and act in similar ways as they do.

At the same time, this identity boundary (Trinidadian) that each student constructs is malleable and elastic enough to accommodate several other identities that the participants acknowledge as individuals. The students shared some of these additional identities in their interviews and on the blog (there may be many others that the students did not share) including daughter/son, international student, mature student as well as different ethnic identities. Many of the students adopted hyphenated ethnicities because of their mixed heritage. Liz for example, identifies as, "Indian, Chinese, French, Spanish, Carib, that's it. That's basically what I am" (Interview). Carib is an indigenous group in the Caribbean. Liz actively shifts among different ethnic identities based on the context (Interview). In the UK this ethnic familiarity, shared knowledge and experiences, with different groups allows her to easily move among different identity boundaries. This was the experience of other participants of mixed ethnic heritage as well such as Ophelia and Mikey (see Chapter 4).

As the students navigated their new environment some also began developing unique regional UK identities that intercepted their Trinidadian identity to differing degrees. The transformative situation in the UK, then, causes the students to adopt, and shift among, new and changing identities. For example, Ophelia and Mikey, as they were in the UK for such a long period of time, began to identify with the cities and towns where they resided. With Mikey this process developed as he began to know and understand his Scottish city and feel some degree of comfort and safety there. When I met him for the interview he was still learning about his Welsh city and had not developed close identifications there. He felt greater acceptance and community in Wales than he had in Scotland but he had not yet discovered where he belonged. Even though Mikey had grown to associate himself with his Scottish city, he did not feel that this compromised his 'Trinidadianness'. It became another identity that he shifted into and out of depending on the situation.

Further, their experiences in the UK impacted the ways the students (re)constructed and performed other identities as well. Ophelia's widened vision, for example, refashioned her into identifying herself as socially conscious and environmentally aware. Liz interpreted herself as more international, more culturally aware, as a result of her changed vision in the UK and deliberately sought to extend her cultural knowledge as a result of this changed self-concept. Unfortunately, Chants believes that her experiences in the UK had a negative impact on her self-concept and her self-esteem. At home, Chants says, she is "a lot more sociable and stuff and I'm always tryin' to get everybody going" (Interview) but in the UK she became "more accustomed to being alone" (Interview). She did not actively socialise with others and she became very inhibited and introverted. She admits that she misses her old self ("here I'm not like that at all and I think I miss that" – Interview) but she allows her circumstances to determine who she becomes in the UK. This identity shifts when she returns home, where she is surrounded with familiarity. The inhibited Chants disappears and she behaves like her old, active self. Chants' experience is unique in this study. She is the only participant who identified two starkly contrasting selves in the UK and at home. If others had similar experiences they chose not to share them.

When the students return to Trinidad and begin to reconstruct it through their changing perspectives (section 5.2.5 above), their identities are again impacted. Returning home the students are once again confronted with difference - their own. In experiencing and interacting with their environment the students come to experience how they have changed as a result of their time in the UK, their roots are constructed differently as a result of the routes of movement[78]. The impact of this confrontation differs from person to person. Mikey expects that he has changed and enters Trinidad ready to face and deal with these changes. This way, the impact of the confrontation on his identity is not too difficult to come to terms with. For others, the process invokes discomfort. Trinidad is the place where Chants grounds her identity in the UK. It is her place of comfort. When Chants returns home and finds that it is not as she imagined her identity compass reels. On the occasions when she faces difference in Trinidad she feels like she does not belong anywhere. Her place of comfort and security, the place where she felt she belonged, is taken from her. Her construction of her existence becomes shaky, ambiguous, uncertain. This difference can depress her as she expressed in a blog post when she returned home for Christmas. Difference, however, is not Chants' only experience of home, Chants also finds familiarity, happiness and friendship at home. This

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[78] See Clifford (1994), Gilroy (1994), Hall (1993) and Walcott (1992).

simultaneous contradictory experience of seeing herself as both insider and outsider becomes a recurring element in Chants' construction of herself both in the UK and at home. Ophelia's response to the UK reflects this to some extent (Chapter 4). Ophelia's admits that she has not been able to reconcile her contradictory feelings of simultaneous insiderness and outsiderness in both Trinidad and the UK and has resigned herself to embracing an identity of in-betweenness, of being both inside and outside of the different identities she acknowledges. She explains that she is not particularly happy with this identity but it is the identity that best reflects her position.

5.2.7 NAVIGATING INSIDERNESS/OUTSIDERNESS: TRAVERSING BOUNDARIES

A key pattern that surfaced throughout the students' varying responses to the UK was that of in-betweenness. The students consistently admitted that they saw their existence in the UK as one of mobility, as moving among different national, cultural, social and identity boundaries. At university the students saw themselves, and were interpreted, as international students but did not always feel like they fit perfectly into the broad group of international students because their first language was English. They admitted that they did not share similar academic experiences, and many times felt that they had an advantage over many other international students because of their language status and their knowledge of some British cultural references[79]. In socialising, most of the students found themselves moving among different cultural groups that they shared knowledge of, and experiences with, rather than finding a comfortable socio-cultural niche. This was often because there were no other Trinidadians at the students' universities. In interacting with their environment over time, the students found that they were consciously or unconsciously adapting their behaviours in ways that reflected their local UK culture. They were also going through ideological changes that reflected the merging of their own belief systems with those that they encountered and accepted in the UK. Many of these changes did not surface until the students arrived home and saw and experienced themselves as different, as changed. This confrontation plunged the students into confusion, discomfort about who they were and where they belonged. They

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[79] Interestingly, none of the students said that they had international peers whose first language was also English. There are a number of Canadian, American and Australian students in the UK all of whom speak English but none of the students mentioned peers from countries that have English as their first language.

were not two different selves – one in the UK and one in Trinidad, but a figure moulded out of the experience of the two worlds (Sharp 2009). They were hybrid (Bhabha 1994, 1996).

As Chapter 2 (2.2.3) explained, hybridity can surface in two ways, consciously and unconsciously (Puri 1999; Young 1995). For the majority of the students involved in the study this new, burgeoning self that evolved out of their dual experience of difference emerged unconsciously. The UK immersed the students in different worlds – the UK and the international. Through sustained interaction with these different worlds the students were able to unconsciously learn (or catch) aspects of other signification systems and integrate meaningful elements of these systems into their own webs of signification, producing something new out of difference. The students also consciously engaged in processes of reproducing themselves to suit their new environment whether it was to fit in, or to make new bonds. Consciously mimicking elements of the host culture played an important part in integrating new symbolic systems with previous ones. For example, Sabine, Radia and Chants watched how the people around them dressed and copied the behaviours to keep warm and fit in. Ophelia consciously sought, learnt and expressed aspects of British culture, social life and politics and integrated them with her own signification systems to fit in. Once she was comfortable with these signification systems and the people around her, Ophelia also mimicked certain British behaviours to deride and unmask those behaviours that clashed with Trinidadian signification patterns that remained meaningful to her[80]. For example, she admits that she mimics (mocks) her friends when they are being subtle or excessively polite. Her mockery illuminates the instability of these behaviours according to Ophelia and demonstrates a contestation within her, a duality between the two signifying systems within her. At the same time, Val admits that his new international vision has made him "examine Trinidad and Tobago from ah different perspective" (Interview). Now that he is no longer in that context he can view the country from afar and 'examine' it in different ways. This examination illuminates and unmasks aspects of his home country that he had taken for granted at home. His new, hybrid double-vision allows him to critically examine, illumine and unmask both signifying systems. All the students thus engaged in both conscious and unconscious hybridity but to differing degrees. Mikey, Val, Liz and Ophelia take great pride in their ability to move among groups and fit into different places. They see this movement as something that is unique to them, something that provides them with a unique vision.

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[80] This ability to illuminate through irony and mimicry is in line with much of the hybridity literature. See Bhabha (1994), Loomba (1998), Walcott (1998) and Young (1995).

The students' experience in the UK also facilitated the development of ideological 'synergies' among the signifying systems that they were exposed to (Loomba 1998). Several students admitted that Trinidad nurtured hybridity and the development of hybrid perspectives out of the diversity of cultures in the country. As Ophelia expressed "I think our culture is the ability to adapt, and I think it's the ability to draw a lot of things and make it one thing" (Interview). In this way, it can be argued, the students have some experience and confidence with hybridity. Several students admitted that they are proud to promote this characteristic as something quintessentially Trinidadian and are proud to share their diversity of knowledge and experiences with others. Promoting Trinidadian hybridity makes Liz, Chants, Ophelia and Val feel very patriotic. The students, then, arrive in the UK with the tools and skills necessary to mediate among contesting ideological perspectives and merge these, even contradictory perspectives, into something new. Ophelia, Liz, Val, Mikey, and Sabine are all open to discovering new ideas and merging these with their previous assumptions in new and evolving ways. The different kinds of local and global knowledge that the students gain from their courses, their interactions with others, and their experiences meet and reconcile, albeit precariously, in the mind.

Liz finds connections between traditional Trinidadian and Serbian belief systems and integrates these connections into her evolving worldview (Fieldwork journal). Mikey recognises Barbados in old Welsh behaviour and thinking and integrates these with his developing frame of reference. Val admits that some of the British beliefs such as the importance of being polite and the definitions they have for 'polite' and acting polite have become meaningful to him and he has merged these beliefs with his own Trinidadian understanding of what it means to be polite and has created something new out of this. Ophelia admits, too, that she has adopted some British beliefs during her time in the UK, first consciously, then unconsciously, and these are now both part of her. These perspectives are not fused clearly and precisely. They often exist in contestation and turbulence. While Ophelia and Val admit that they have adopted British values on politeness, they are also torn between these values and their Trinidadian ones which also remain dominant in their evolving signifying systems. The extent to which they agree with, and practice, these beliefs and values, depends on the context, which voice in their double-voicedness best fits the context. The battleground for this continuous contestation, the mind, becomes a fertile space for the production of new worldviews.

Out of this totality of UK and global experiences emerge a continuous and critical reconstruction of the self. Liminality is never definite; it does not come with direct answers, it is the space of constant negotiation of polarities, it is a dialogic, turbulent yet productive space (Loomba 1998; Puri 1999, 2004; Walcott 1987, 1992, 1998). This turbulence takes place within the self that expresses the hybrid double-vision. As the term suggests, this double-vision is marked by uncertainty and ambivalence. This is observed in many of the students who return home to find that home is not what they envisioned it; to face themselves as outside in the one place where they should feel on the inside (Ophelia Interview). Ophelia, Val, Mikey and Chants admit that while as a hybrid they feel included in the different boundaries they are able to traverse, their very ability to move among boundaries makes them feel simultaneously on the outside of many experiences. Chants and Ophelia articulated these thoughts most profoundly. Ophelia openly acknowledges that she feels alienated and isolated because she is torn between contesting identities. She represents multiplicity, the consonance of differing worldviews and signifying systems, but this multiplicity denies her definition. She is caught in-between the worlds that clash within her.

5.3 THE STUDENTS' RESPONSES AS POSTCOLONIAL

The previous section discussed the study findings. It analysed Trinidadian students' response to the UK by examining the kinds of experiences the participants had in the UK, the effects of these experiences on the participants and how the participants (re)constructed the meaning of these experiences over time. This section will explore how far the students' responses can be considered postcolonial.

The findings from this study support Ward and Kennedy (1999) assertion that students from culturally diverse countries that have been historically linked to the UK are better prepared to handle the adjustment process. All the students interviewed felt that they adjusted better to the UK HE system, culture and social life than many of their international peers. This, they held, was because their 'first' language was English and they came from a British-based education system. These are two key remnants of colonisation in Trinidad. Further, because they were accustomed to living in a culturally diverse setting, they did not feel shock or surprise upon meeting people from different cultures nor did they have difficulties interacting with people from a different culture. As Carey (1956: 42) articulated, because they are "citizens of a community historically and politically linked with the British" they

have less problems adapting compared with other international students. Several participants demonstrated openness, willingness and confidence in approaching people of different cultures.

Living in a diverse cultural setting, the students came to the UK with broad cultural knowledge and were sensitive and responsive to cultural differences. The impact of colonisation and independence is not easy to overcome. It takes continuous dialogue and communication among different groups, and individuals within groups, to help a society function as a whole unit as opposed to several units forming a whole. This process of dialogue requires much knowledge and skill which many Trinidadians have over time accepted as part of their way of life. Some students in the study admitted that they display this characteristic of Trinidad with great pride to other students. Some participants then, are, whether they are conscious of this or not, familiar with navigating among numerous signifying systems and reconciling (or not) among them. Ophelia, Liz, Mikey and Val stated that they expected to face problems adjusting to different symbolic systems and made conscious decisions to facilitate their adjustment in the way(s) they wished. These decisions were made prior to and after entering the UK. The cultural impact of colonisation in Trinidad, cultural diversity, helped these students to gain knowledge, tools and skills that helped them adjust to the UK.

Since the UK and Trinidad have such close postcolonial ties many of the students have family and friends who have been to, and continue to reside in, the UK (British Council 2006). These family members help shape the students' expectations of the UK before they enter. These prior expectations of the UK, which Carey (1956) discovered in his study of colonial students in London as well, play an important role in shaping the kind of interpretations the students will have of the UK, particularly their initial reactions.

The reverberations of colonisation in Trinidad unfortunately expose the students to negative stereotyping and Otherness. The remnants of colonial power regimes, particularly the ways in which the dominant group produced and disseminated the image(s) of subject groups remain part of global discourse today (McLeod 2000; Omi and Winant 1994, 2004; Said 1978; Spivak 1994). Part of the responsibility of decolonisation is reconciling these residual elements of mental oppression in the new states. The students enter the UK, then, aware of these historical circumstances and of how they have been and may be constructed by different groups here. This makes them sensitive to stereotyping and prejudice. Primarily,

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the students felt constructed as the exotic, Caribbean other. The students confronted constructions of the Caribbean as undeveloped and inhabited by lazy, relaxed people who partied considerably. Whether these constructions are colonial remnants or part of contemporary commercial interests is uncertain. However, it is possible that these images, produced and managed by different power groups, one historical the other contemporary, are not unrelated.

The students' fears of being perceived at home as having adopted 'foreign' values and ideas also surfaced in the above discussion as related to core ideas in postcolonialism. Ophelia, and in different ways Val and Mikey, feared that other Trinis would recognise that they had changed and they would be exposed as having adopted a different identity, or worse, be accused of *pretending* to have adopted a different identity to fit in with more powerful groups. This surfaced primarily with language and how it is used. The fear of losing one's accent, of no longer being able to speak Creole, for Ophelia, could mean being Othered, ridiculed or isolated at home for being perceived as embracing Eurocentric values. Val and Mikey constructed this fear in different terms, not with language but in relation to how foreign-based nationals grow to perceive their own culture, country and people over time, but the implication is the same, not wanting to be perceived as having embraced values that undermine Trinidad and Trinidadians.

Hybridity, which was identified as a primary connective element in all of the students' experiences in the UK, is also a fundamental postcolonial concept. While postcolonialism invokes the image of the hybrid to describe the racial, cultural, ideological and ethnic synergies that emerged out of colonialism in different states, the image is also used as a metaphor for the cultural and identity politics surrounding postcolonial migration (Bhabha 1994). The findings and treatment of hybridity in this study fit well within this latter framework and provide support for the assertion that the participants' reactions to the UK were postcolonial.

While postcolonialism seems to fit the students' experiences in the UK well, I am hesitant to describe postcolonialism as reflective of the participants' primary experience of the UK. The students overtly recognised the UK's prior relationship with the Caribbean as having an impact on their adjustment. However, only Ophelia openly described her situation in clear, postcolonial terms. There are a number of other variables that could account for each student's experience in the UK and these may be more valuable than a single postcolonial

approach. For example, Trinidad and Tobago, with the rest of the Caribbean to the north, Latin America as close as six miles to the south, North America and Canada to the west, is strategically located to act as a confluence of cultures. Many Trinidadians have experience travelling abroad, particularly throughout the Americas (Thomas-Hope 1986; Miller and Slater 2001; Potter 2005). There are thus a lot of messages entering Trinidad and Tobago from different places via shared regional (in the broader sense) media and international travel. These messages gave the students important cultural references to help bridge the cultural gap they experienced in the UK. All the students in the study travelled extensively in the region before coming to the UK. This experience with international travel also gave them the tools they needed to help them adjust to the UK. Val felt that his age, work experience and financial maturity also significantly impacted his adjustment to the UK. For Liz and Sabine the length of their courses, one year, affected how they interpreted their experiences in the UK and how they experienced adjustment. Thus there are a number of factors that affected the students' experiences in the UK, I have provided a postcolonial 'reading' of their experiences but I acknowledge that there are other factors impacting their adjustment.

5.4. ADJUSTMENT AMONG TRINIDADIAN STUDENTS IN THE UK: THEORY OF (DIS)JUNCTURE

This study advances a theory of (dis)juncture to describe how the participants adjusted, and continue to adjust, to the UK. The theory is rooted in the term 'juncture' which the Collins Dictionary defines as: "a point in time, [especially] a critical one (often in **at this juncture**)" (2004: 649, emphasis in original), and as "a less common word for **junction**." (2004: 649, emphasis in original)[81]. As another word for 'junction' the term takes on added meanings. The Collins Dictionary defines a 'junction' as "a place where several routes, lines, or roads meet, link, or cross each other" (p. 649). 'Disjuncture' describes an opposing state, one of disconnection, disunity, separation and incoherence, that is, "[l]ack of cohesion or clarity or organization" (Wordweb). The adjustment process according to this theory is characterised by simultaneous experiences of connection and disconnection.

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[81] I am using dictionary meanings here because my understanding and construction of (dis)juncture are tied to the layers of meaning associated with the terms juncture and disjuncture. Later in this section I will look at the theory in terms of Appaduri's (1990) disjuncture theory as described in Chapter two.

An adjustment theory of (dis)juncture envisions the international student experience as a wide confluence, a junction, where countries, nationalities, cultures, ethnicities and ideas meet (see Picture 4 below). It is a critical point of change and departure, intellectually, experientially, emotionally and spiritually, for the student as he/she comes into contact with a number of different people, cultures, perspectives and worldviews which transform him or her in some way. However, the magnitude, scope and weight of the junction can simultaneously engender feelings of disjuncture, as feelings of disconnection from others, the past and the self are interwoven with, and juxtaposed against, the more connective elements of the experience. The significant differences between the street (home) and the junction, as well as the tremendous loss(es) that accompanied the journey from the street to the junction, can easily become overwhelming and, at times, even threatening to the isolated student who has no social or familial networks to support him/her as he/she journeys through the junction.
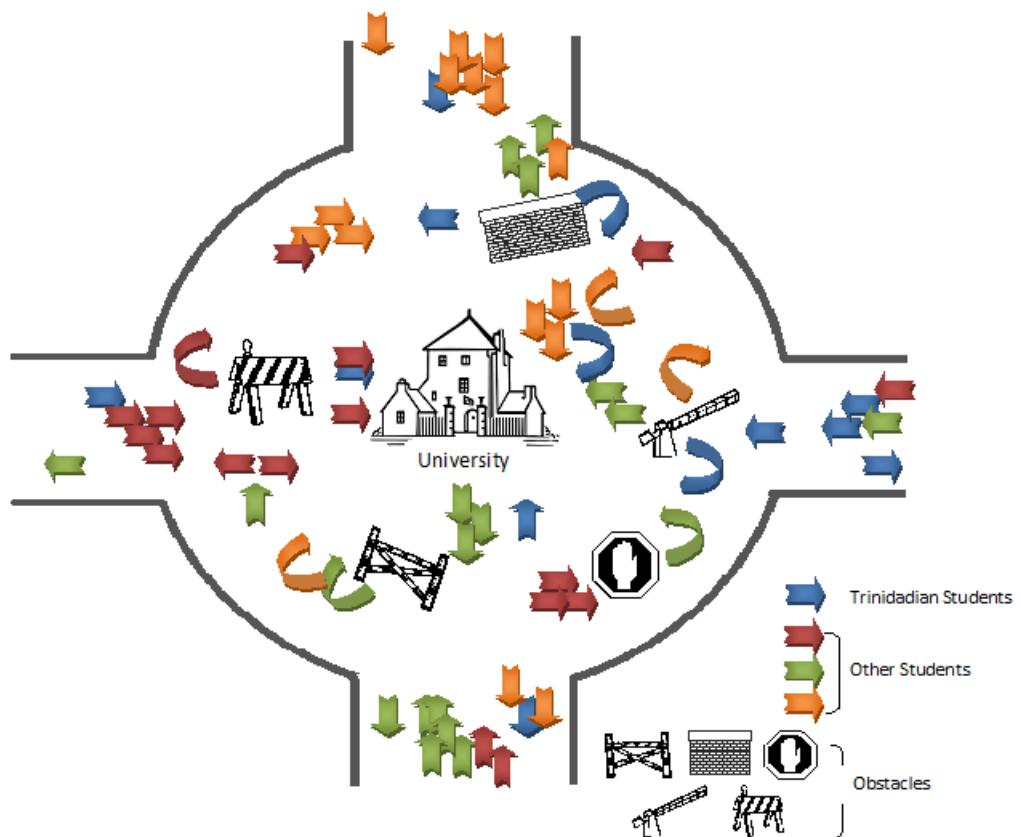
Picture 4: Visual of (Dis)Juncture. It is important to note that the juncture is filled with students of different nationalities all trying to navigate the confusing space. (Dis)Juncture is thus much more complicated than the diagram suggests. The diagram simplifies the process by including only a few 'nationalities' and possible 'movements' to make the process understandable.

(Dis)juncture is thus about movement, change and transformation and, as such, the concepts and ideas that are connected with the theory are rooted in terms of growth, movement and evolution. This was anticipated in section 5.2, where the concepts and ideas associated with (dis)juncture were unravelled, which is dominated with 'movement' terms such as journeying, navigating, (re)discovering, exploring, engaging and traversing. All of the students' experiences at the juncture can be classified as connective, disconnective, or both.

The uninterrupted and simultaneous connection and disconnection that occurs through the juncture play pivotal roles in the individual's continuing transformation. The experience of adjustment is thus simultaneously constructive and destructive and it is up to the individual student to contend with these enormous colliding forces. The experience is one of ambivalence and contradiction. Out of this contention comes ceaseless negotiation of the one with its binary other, of the connecting with the disconnecting elements of the experience. Forces of past and present (and future) are always involved in these ongoing negotiations and they continuously collide with each other as the student attempts to reconcile with his/her evolving situation. The difficulties involved in navigating the junction thus result in acute and profound ambiguity and incoherence.

"(Dis)Juncture" is related to Appaduri's (1990) "disjuncture" in the sense that it discusses a fracture within a system. However, while Appaduri views his object, globalisation, as fundamentally a chaotic, uncontrollable fracture I see Trinidadian student adjustment as a simultaneous negotiation between fracture and connection. For Appaduri, social and cultural politics are built upon layers of disjuncture. Here, interaction takes place at a massive roundabout or junction, not at a fracture within a perceived linear system. The process is built upon factors coming together – the result of which is both connective and disjunctive. That one is conceived as a junction and the other a fault line helps to distinguish the internal characteristics of the two theories. The formation "(dis)juncture" takes on several layers of meaning, not only chaos/uncertainty:

- A junction

- A critical point in a journey

- A connection

- A fracture

- Degrees of *simultaneous* connection and disconnection

The relationship between Appaduri's "disjuncture" and this thesis' "(dis)juncture" lies in the concept of fracture. However, Trinidadian student adjustment in the UK is not just about fracture, it is about simultaneous connection and transformation as well.

Navigating Student Life

The (dis)juncture theory of adjustment places the university at the centre of the Trinidadian student experience. The university, instead of being perceived as a structure(s), is conceived as a constructed space, an international meeting-place, a stage for human transformation. All roads at the juncture lead here but they also extend outward in all directions taking human lives out into new and different connected territories.

The junction is often confusing, disorganised and unclear, bombarded with obstacles and obstructions which the student must surmount or navigate around in order to continue the journey. Meeting the demands of the university requires the student to also come to terms with the layout and nature of the junction, to understand the requirements of academic life, to find ways of coping with the ambivalence of the juncture. These are interpreted as obstacles to a successful HE career. These obstructions are not always directly related to the academic experience, for example, visa issues, financial difficulties, lack of social and familial support networks, but they contribute significant stress and can complicate the student's performance in HE and also influence the way he/she interacts with, and navigates the juncture.

(Re)Discovering the Environment

While the student is trying to come to terms with his/her academic life he/she is also struggling to navigate the complexities and confusion of the juncture itself. The street seemed clear and straight-forward. It was easy to understand and navigate. The juncture has its own layout and norms, rules and regulations for 'safe' passage. Someone familiar with the junction may perceive signs and signals everywhere to assist the lone traveller, but for someone who has not yet understood and conceptualised the space there is no clear help, no warning signs, only the disorder and vastness of the junction. This vastness is both disorienting and exciting. The newness: the new knowledge; the new connections; the tremendous span and potential of international ideas, beliefs, and worldviews; the previously unfathomable possibility of crossing the junction into new and different streets; they thrill and motivate travellers. Yet the vastness can also be overwhelming. It can become too much to reconcile. Difference can disorient, particularly when there is so much difference to reconcile at all once. This collision of connection and disconnection, disorientation and

excitement, is part of the nature of the junction. Confronted in all directions by difference, by numerous and changing signifying systems simultaneously, the students are constantly involved in processes of (re)presenting or (re)negotiating their environment in the light of new unpredictable experiences.

Navigating Social Life

An important element of this juncture for many students is meeting other travellers on the junction and building new bonds and connections with them (Sovic 2009). Before entering into this, however, the newcomer must learn the rules and guidelines for appropriate communication and relationship formation on the juncture. The nature of, and rules underscoring, communication on the juncture may be different for the different groups of travellers sharing the junction. Many international students enter the juncture without their previous social and familial networks and must build these communities anew, without knowing the rules and regulations guiding communication. Communication difficulties may cause groups of similar travellers to huddle together for safety and security even though they wish to extend their networks outward (Sovic 2009; UKCOSA 2004). Travellers form communities based on perceived similarities with others. The construction of similarity on the juncture is interesting as the boundaries of these constructions are quite malleable and flexible; they allow different kinds of perceived similarities through in different contexts. (British) Residents of the juncture, however, are conceived as being on the outside of these international social experiences. This is because they usually enter the university with their previous social networks and do not actively seek international networks (Sovic 2009; UKCOSA 2004). Trinidadians are conceived to move easily among these resident and international groups that surface throughout the juncture. However, they find it difficult to feel like they fit in entirely with any group. Their experience is simultaneously on the inside and outside of social groups. Life on the juncture for them is about continuously negotiating this contradiction and ambivalence.

Navigating Representations: Confronting Otherness

Faced with difference the student-as-traveller becomes aware of his/her own signifying systems. While this is an illuminating process for many students, the process can be difficult as the student is forced to come to terms with his/her own difference. When this difference is conceptualised and highlighted by other travellers, that is, when they face externally-constructed representations of themselves, the students' experience of

insiderness/outsiderness can be compounded. Positive representations help the students to feel included and appreciated, building on the connective forces of the juncture; negative representations and stereotypes, which some students can be very sensitive to, thrust the student firmly on the outside of a group or an experience. Again, the journey of adjustment is perceived as (dis)juncture, as the simultaneous experience of inclusion and exclusion. This process never ends as new significations and representations surface and the students are forced to come to terms with them in relation to past experience and personal representations.

(Re)Discovering Home

The deepest fracture in this scene of simultaneous connection and separation, (dis)juncture, exists, not within the junction itself, but at the boundaries separating the junction and individual streets. Within the junction the past exists in memory, it is immortalized and idealized. It is negotiated with the present, with the junction, in filtered and pure forms. The realities of the past and the present, of home and abroad, dwell at the boundary, and it is in negotiating at the boundary that the student faces both who he/she was and who he/she has become as a result of the instability of junction. It is a space where fear and anxiety can take hold, where harsh realities can demolish idealized conceptions that once comforted and reassured the student. This is actualised in the student who returns 'home' to discover that 'home' is also simultaneously perfect and imperfect, that it also needs to be reconciled with and reconceptualised. This is partly because the interpreter has changed in subtle and not so subtle ways, but also because that process of idealizing 'home' needs to be tempered with more naturalistic constructions. Home has also changed, whether the interpreter is aware of it or not, and these changes also need to be reckoned with, particularly in terms of the future. This fracture, and consequent 'mending' of previous constructions of home, is as important to understand as the (dis)juncture that occurs within the junction because it influences subsequent constructions of, and interactions within, the juncture.

Navigating Identity: (Re)Discovering Self

Existence within the vastness and chaos of the juncture encourages reflection on identity: where travellers construct themselves as belonging within the juncture. The students need to find a secure space that they believe accepts them. This reflection on belonging is ongoing, influenced by new experiences in, and personal reconstructions of, the juncture. Identity and identification are riddled with complexity. Searching for safety and belonging along a juncture can take travellers through both fulfilling and difficult personal journeys as

travellers face different degrees of simultaneous inclusion and isolation both within the juncture and at its boundaries, where home and juncture collide. These constantly colliding forces of simultaneous community and alienation, of insiderness and outsiderness, are always in the process of reconciliation.

Navigating Insiderness/Outsiderness: Traversing Boundaries

The international student who is constantly negotiating representations, differing degrees of similarity and difference, can come to view him/herself as an in-between figure. The student is not of the street (home) or the juncture. He/she emerges out of them; a synergy of global experiences, signifying systems, representations, identities, worldviews and perspectives that is not exclusively one or the other. This transformation is not without its difficulties. The double (or multiple)-vision of the student can be liberating and productive. It allows for the illumination of several 'parent' signifying systems and ideologies. It allows the student to be simultaneously inside several groups at once, to connect and experience the global potential of the juncture through continuous (re)constructions of both home and juncture. However, this liminal vision, this multiplicity of experiences, can also be alienating and isolating as the student also denies definition, the security of boundaries.

5.5 REFLECTION ON (DIS)JUNCTURE

The details, dynamics and limits of this theory have, admittedly, not been completely worked out here. The development of these particulars depends on critical assessment of the theory and its continued growth over time. The theory and its associated concepts are presented here as a proposal, a possible account and explanation of adjustment among the students involved in this study. It is hoped that the information which appears here will prove sufficient for critical feedback on, and a deeper interrogation of, the theory, propelling its refinement and further development.

I recognise also that the theory is advanced as a reflection of how the eight students who took part in the study responded to their new environment during the course of this research. It is contextually bound. It may not represent how other international students or other Trinidadian students respond to the UK. I have tried to develop a theory that is infused with openness, flexibility and contextual sensitivity so that a variety of human experiences could be represented. The validity of this statement lies in the development of the theory and subsequent testing of the applicability of the theory in different contexts.

This approach to adjustment does not view the process in stages, which is the prevailing position in the literature (Adler 1975; Brown 1980; Lysgaard 1955; Mohamed 1997; Oberg 1960; Torbiorn 1994). Previous theories have viewed the process in terms of stages and phases that eventually lead to adjustment. (Dis)Juncture views adjustment as a process of continuously navigating among past and evolving connective and disconnective forces. The opportunity to look into the lives of people who have been in the UK for a number of years has shown that adjustment does not end, it is a process of continuous negotiation between elements of the past and present, of self and other, of local and alien, of national and international. International student adjustment is the scene of continuous transformation as a result of constant contact with multiple signifying systems simultaneously. Adjustment as (dis)juncture is not conceived as something that one can achieve.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed the key findings of the research in relation to the research questions and commented on these in light of the theoretical perspective. The findings, presented as concepts, were then woven together in abstract form to present a theory of adjustment for the students who took part in the study. The main concepts that surfaced out of the data were articulated in terms of movement so as to reflect the participants' continuously changing reality. These concepts were: Navigating Student Life, (Re)Discovering the Environment, Navigating Social Life, Navigating Representations: Confronting Otherness, (Re)Discovering Home, Navigating Identity: (Re)Discovering Self and Navigating Insiderness/Outsiderness: Traversing Boundaries. In commenting on these concepts it was noted that while postcolonialism seems to fit the students' experiences in the UK, I am hesitant to describe postcolonialism as reflective of the participants' primary experience of the UK as there are other factors influencing their adjustment. The theory that emerged from these concepts is referred to as (dis)juncture. This theory views the students' adjustment as a continuous process of negotiating among simultaneous connecting and disconnecting forces. This process can create a student who is a synergy of global experiences, signifying systems, representations, identities, worldviews and perspectives that is not exclusively one or the other: a hybrid.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

This study was conducted to discover how Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment. Trinidadians are viewed as an important research group in this study. The historical and socio-cultural contexts which help shape Trinidadian students' experiences provide a unique perspective from which to investigate international student adjustment in the UK. Fundamentally, contemporary Trinidad and Tobago has been carved out of a complex colonial history. This colonial history nurtured a culturally rich and diverse nation which is well-experienced in negotiating among different cultural groups. It does this through sustained cultural dialogue with the different groups that inhabit the country and by spreading knowledge and tolerance of cultural difference. This situation has, over time, encouraged increased cultural awareness and sensitivity in the islands. Students from such a context can provide significant insight into the nature and characteristics of international student adjustment in the UK. Their cultural awareness and sensitivity has encouraged the development of important skills which assist them in their adjustment to different environments. This thesis demonstrates the unique experience and perspective Trinidadians bring to the field of international student adjustment.

Trinidad has a contentious colonial history with Britain. It was curious whether the remnants of this colonial history would impact the students' adjustment to the UK in any way. An earlier study (Coate 2009) indicated that such a history, penetrated as it was with significant oppression and racism, could evoke complex responses from postcolonial students in the UK. Consequently, the study approached Trinidadian student adjustment in the UK from a postcolonial perspective. Studying international student adjustment from a postcolonial perspective is unique to adjustment literature. Some studies have used hybridity theory and Otherness to describe student adjustment in the past. These theories, however, were used in isolation to describe the students' experience. They were not directly connected with postcolonialism. A distinctive element of this research, then, was the overt postcolonial approach that it took to student adjustment.

The research used postcolonialism in an open way acknowledging that the students may not construct themselves or their experiences as postcolonial. I therefore did not go into the field seeking only data that intersected with postcolonial concerns nor did I present and

analyse only data that resonated with postcolonialism. Rather, the thesis took an open approach.

The openness that guided my approach is demonstrated in the research question, which was: how do Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment? Subsidiary questions were:

- What kinds of experiences do the participants have in the UK?
- How do the participants (re)construct the meaning of these experiences?
- What are the effects of these experiences on the participants?

The data that the students provided were analysed to see *how far* the students' everyday experiences and responses intersected with postcolonial concerns.

6.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Since the study aimed to discover and conceptualise student responses to the UK, grounded theory analysis was conducted on the data to generate a working theory of the participants' experiences in the UK. Constant comparison and continuous abstraction of the patterns and themes that surfaced in the data produced seven main concepts. These concepts were elaborated in Chapter 5 with close reference to the data. The main concepts that surfaced out of these repeated phases of constant comparison were:

- Navigating Student Life
- (Re)Discovering the Environment
- Navigating Social Life
- Navigating Representations: Confronting Otherness
- (Re)Discovering Home
- Navigating Identity: (Re)Discovering Self
- Navigating Insiderness/Outsiderness: Traversing Boundaries.

These concepts were deliberately articulated using terms of movement to reflect the participants' continuously changing reality.

An analysis of these concepts revealed that the students' response(s) to their new environment overlapped considerably with postcolonial concerns. Living in a postcolonial, diverse cultural setting takes continuous dialogue and communication among different

groups, and individuals within groups, to help the society function as a unit. The images and representations of their selves and country which the students faced in the UK had deep roots in colonialism and are significant elements of postcolonial discourse. The students also confronted profound fears of being perceived as different at home, as having adopted 'foreign' values and ideas. This also surfaced in the discussion as significant in postcolonial theory. Finally, hybridity, which was identified as a primary connective element in all of the students' experiences in the UK, is a fundamental postcolonial concept. It is used to describe the double- or multi-voiced figures that emerged out of the colonial experience. The image is also used as a metaphor for the cultural and identity politics surrounding postcolonial migration. The findings and treatment of the students' experiences in this study therefore fit quite well within postcolonial discourse.

However, while the students overtly recognised the UK's prior colonial relationship with the Caribbean as having an impact on their adjustment, only one participant, Ophelia, openly described her situation in clear, postcolonial terms. Other variables which emerged included the students' experience with international travel before beginning their degree, their previous life and work experience, their ages, their past experience managing finances, the length of time they had been in the UK and the length of time they were expected to remain in the UK. These variables, taken together with the postcolonial evidence, provide a deeper, more multidimensional picture of the students' response to the UK, than a single postcolonial approach.

(Dis)Juncture

Continuous comparison and abstraction of the concepts and patterns that surfaced out of the data produced a theory called (dis)juncture to describe the participants' responses to the UK. (Dis)Juncture views the participants' experiences in the UK, and their responses to these experiences, as characterised by simultaneous connection and disconnection. An adjustment theory of (dis)juncture envisions the international student experience as a wide confluence, a juncture, where countries, nationalities, cultures, ethnicities and ideas meet. It is a critical point of change and departure, intellectually, experientially, emotionally and spiritually, for the student as he/she comes into contact with a number of different people, cultures, perspectives and worldviews which transform him/her in some way. However, the magnitude, scope and weight of the junction can simultaneously engender feelings of disjuncture, as feelings of disconnection from others, the past and the self are interwoven with, and juxtaposed against, the more connective elements of the experience. (Dis)juncture

is thus about movement, change and transformation and, as such, the concepts and ideas that are connected with the theory are rooted in terms of growth, movement and evolution.

This research aimed to understand international student adjustment in its multidimensionality, complexity, individualism and dynamism. Therefore it does not contend that the findings and analyses which have been advanced are 'widely-applicable'. I believe the (dis)juncture theory is open, flexible and contextually sensitive and may apply to a variety of human experiences. However, the extent to which the theory can be applied to different contexts depends on its subsequent use and interrogation. (Dis)Juncture carves a new direction in the field. It is a significant contribution to theorising and articulating the international student experience.

6.3 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
Theoretical Issues

A major strength of the study is its original contribution to knowledge. This contribution is noted in three important theoretical arenas: the research paradigm, constructivism; the theoretical approach, postcolonialism; and the theory which the study advances, (dis)juncture.

I discussed the value and significance of the research paradigm section 6.1 above. By viewing human experience as constructed this study was able to explore, not just identify, the complex contextual and perceptual meaningfulness of studying in a different country. It was also able to follow the ways in which the meanings which the participants constructed to interpret their experiences changed over time. Constructivism thus allows me to capture the flux and changeability of the adjustment experience. By viewing human experience as rooted in meaning the study goes beyond many of the positivist research that dominates the field. The results demonstrate an experience that is profoundly ambivalent and even contradictory. Adjustment is thus a situation that is both connective and disconnective; a paradox the depths of which are not easily captured in quantitative studies.

The postcolonial perspective which this study took also contributed significantly to the field. Very few researchers have connected the adjustment process explicitly with postcolonialism in the past. Some researchers have used postcolonial concepts such as hybridity and Otherness to describe the adjustment process but they did not view the process from a postcolonial perspective. As Coate (2009) acknowledges, "making a journey to the

place that evoked strong emotions about colonial history, oppression and racism" (p. 18) can significantly impact an international student's adjustment process. These colonial connections and responses have been overlooked in the literature. The postcolonial perspective used in this thesis thus contributed an important perspective from which to better understand the dynamics of international student adjustment. This perspective was rooted in constructivism (meaning), ambivalence, contestation and contradiction, which captured the complexity of the Trinidad students' adjustment process.

The theoretical perspective, however, did limit the possibilities of meaning that I was able to acquire from the data. This was because it attempted to view how far the students' responses were postcolonial. As the previous section noted, there are a number of different variables which could have impacted the students' response to the UK. These variables, *taken together with* the postcolonial evidence, may provide a deeper, more multidimensional picture of the students' response to the UK, than a single postcolonial approach. However, the scope of the research did not allow me to investigate these intersections to a greater extent.

The theory that emerged from the data is also a significant strength of the research. In the field there is currently no similar means of conceptualising and representing international student adjustment. There are writers who agree that the process can be both positive and negative for students (Gill 2007; Sovic 2008b) but the imagining of adjustment as a continuous, ambivalent juncture where the student constantly negotiates the collision between *simultaneous* connective and disconnective forces is novel to the field. The complex and potentially contentious theoretical arena of (dis)juncture, particularly the simultaneous insiderness and outsiderness experienced by the hybrid student, is striking and merits further research. (Dis)Juncture thus carves a new direction in the field. It is a significant contribution to theorising and articulating the international student experience.

Further, the details and future possibilities embedded in this theory depend on critical assessment of the theory and its interrogation over time. The theory and its associated concepts are presented in this thesis as a proposal, a possible theory of adjustment among the students who were involved in this study. It is hoped that the information which appeared in this thesis will prove useful for critical engagement with, and a deeper interrogation of, the theory, propelling its refinement and further development.

Methodological Issues

The method used to collect the data can also be interpreted as both a strength and limitation of the study. The blog element of the method is not one that is popular in social research. The ways in which I elected to use the blog was not well-documented in the literature and I had to improvise at different times during the data collection period to make the method work. More studies need to be conducted using blogs in social research. These studies will help to refine and develop the method.

Additionally, conducting research with students is difficult. Research that aim to follow changes in students' attitudes, behaviours and thoughts require consistency. However, students have busy and tight schedules. Data collection was intermittent during times when students had mid-term and end-of-semester exams, or research papers to write. This meant that I was not able to *trace* changes in the students' construction of their experiences in as much detail as I wanted. Many of the gaps that were created because of inactivity on the blog had to be filled during the follow-up interviews. As the interviews were conducted after the blog was completed, the data reflected interpretations of an occurrence after a long period of time. I was unable to minutely trace the differences in interpretations over time as I had originally intended.

The blog can also be perceived as an advantage of the study. Methodologically, as Fielding, Lee and Blank (2008) admit, the use of blogs in social research has been primarily speculative. My use of the method was based on personal experience of using blogs as well as analogies I created between this technique and other documented methods. The research then explores and experiments with the method and tries out its possibilities for collecting qualitative data. It is a useful experience that can be documented in greater detail and used/adapted for different studies. Further, the blog allowed me to collect continuous documentary data, and provided continued access to that data regardless of the participants' geographical location. These were important strengths of the method. The way it was used also gave the participants important choices about how, when and in what form they provided research data. The participants enjoyed interacting with other Trinidadian students in the UK and expressing themselves in Trinidadian Creole on the blog. The blog thus facilitated co-national interaction. In this way the blog fulfilled some of the students' social needs.

The number of participants also surfaced as both a strength and limitation of the research. The theory that emerged from this research is based on data collected from eight

individuals. The theory is therefore not generalisable. However, the small sample size facilitated the collection of dynamic, context-based data that was rooted in meaning. It prioritised the depth and complexity of the participants' experiences. This depth would have been difficult to capture with a large number of participants. The results and subsequent theory though not generalisable can be applied to different situations and can be tested in further research.

A significant challenge I faced throughout the research was reconciling the power I possessed in constructing and (re)presenting the participants' lives and experiences. Qualitative research acknowledges that the researcher has the primary responsibility of interpreting and representing participants' lives. I was deeply conscious of this power. I sought to find "a *meaningful balance* of collaboration" (Hoskins and Stoltz 2005: 101) between myself and the participants so that they would not feel victimised by this power. I did this by encouraging the participants to display their own power, and different kinds of power, on the blog and in their face-to-face interactions with me. I also tried to reconcile my powers of representation by referencing the participants' voices, triangulating my methods and analyses and reflecting on my role in the research. I was determined not to misuse the powers I possessed as a researcher and made deliberate attempts to address power imbalances in the study. When faced with dilemmas about power my decisions were guided by what I felt was right, responsible and respectful at the time. I continue to grapple with issues of power in this research because they are deeply personal, contextual and riddled with uncertainty.

6.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The previous sections described the contributions that this study has made to knowledge in light of the study's aims and objectives, its findings and its methods. This section clearly identifies these contributions.

The study has identified and treated important gaps in the research on international student adjustment. It did so by studying a small community of international students who possess important postcolonial connections with the host country. These students' experiences in the UK facilitated a new perspective on the nature and characteristics of international student adjustment in the UK.

The study also contributed to a growing literature exploring how international students construct and interpret their experiences. Researchers on international student adjustment have been slow to utilise qualitative approaches[82]. Constructivism allowed me to capture the flux and changeability of the adjustment experience. It also allowed me to capture the ambivalences and contradictions apparent in the process in ways quantitative studies are unable to achieve. These ambivalences and contradictions contribute significantly to the material available in the literature.

The research also utilised a method that has not been extensively used or documented in the literature. As Fielding et al (2008: 14) commented, the use of blogs in research, "remains at this stage speculative ... Hopefully, the blogosphere will continue to be the site of further exploration and experimentation". This research takes research *using* blogs out of speculation and into 'exploration and experimentation'. It thus makes an important contribution to research methods.

The most significant contribution this study has made is in the area of theory. The theory which this thesis advances to describe the adjustment process is unique. (Dis)Juncture carves new directions in conceptualisations of international student adjustment. Its envisioning of student adjustment as a multi-layered junction is unique to the field. The juncture that is used to describe adjustment is both a physical space that we can envision and a mental condition that we can experience. It is thus multi-dimensional. (Dis)juncture is significantly different from the approaches that exist to describe adjustment.

The theory, because it is open and flexible, may accommodate other perspectives on adjustment, such as Oberg's (1960) culture shock model or Ward et al's (2001) ABC model of culture shock, but it is not limited to these conceptualisations (see section 2.3.4). The degree to which the theory can accommodate other perspectives to adjustment may also prove an interesting avenue for further research.

6.5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The research may have important implications for policy. Participants in this study complained that they felt neglected by the Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) government during

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[82] Gill (2007) and Sovic (2008a and b) demonstrate recent attempts to address this imbalance in the literature.

their stay in the UK. The connection between the government and foreign-based nationals progressively deteriorates because of this perceived neglect. This research supports the need for greater governmental interest and participation in the lives and experiences of Trinidadian students abroad. I have developed a proposal to increase communication between the T&T government and Trinidadian students in the UK through the development of a student-run, government supported, Trinidadian Students' Guild. This guild intends to open lines of communication and support between the students and the government, via the T&T High Commission in London. With the support of their society students will be able to access greater help from the government. These communication channels will also allow the government to better understand and respond to the needs of their UK-based students. The guild will be controlled by Trinidadian students in the UK. The Trinidadian Students' Guild will give Trinidadian students the opportunity to develop important community and leadership roles. It may also provide some students with experience and confidence to become more involved in university-based societies and unions. As a society of students it will also help to bridge the chasm that separates Trinidadian students from each other in the UK, providing an important co-national support network. This proposal was drafted for consideration by the previous Trinidad and Tobago government. A recent change in government has stalled its progress. It is hoped that this idea will be actioned.

6.6 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

In February 2008 I began an academic journey to better understand Trinidadian student adjustment in the UK. I embarked on this journey to better understand cultural contact. I wanted to use my knowledge to develop mechanisms for increased intercultural communication competence. I selected Trinidadian students because I believed that their cultural knowledge and experience would provide a useful context to investigate responses to difference. Trinidadian students were generally confident acting within an international arena. All the students had been exposed to difference and this exposure helped them in their socio-cultural adjustment to the UK. The students' postcolonial connections to the UK impacted their adjustment to different degrees, particularly regarding how they perceived they were constructed by others, and in their changing constructions of 'self' and 'home'. However, the role of other factors in this process such as international travel, age and personality remain unattended in this thesis. This should be an important consideration for future research.

Additionally, it will be useful to compare Trinidadian students' confidence in acting in an international context with other students' feelings, particularly students from other culturally diverse countries. This may help to generate a greater understanding of the factors that encourage productive intercultural experiences. It may also help to better address the problems that recur among international students in general.

One of the difficulties of doing research with people with significant similarities with the researcher is navigating issues of insiderness and outsiderness and researcher bias. In chapter 3 (sections 3.5.2 and 3.7.3 deal with this particularly) I discussed the practical steps that I took to retain distance from the participants even while I sought to present myself as a fellow Trinidadian and a student to gain their trust. One of the issues I recognised early in the research was that these similarities could cause bias in the collection and interpretation of the data. For instance, as an international student I had similar experiences as the students. I realised early on that I was interpreting the students' blog posts thorough my own experiences in the UK. While we may have similar experiences, the way we construct these experiences would be different. This acknowledgement encouraged me to actively and consciously question the data from different perspectives and to ask the students questions about the data to clarify their meaning. In the beginning, this was a very deliberate and conscious process. Over time, however, this practice became more natural for me and I was able to distance myself from the data. Because the students were also Trinidadians, I feared that I would interpret the data in a positive light. This fear also determined the rigor with which I handled the processes of data collection and analysis. I was determined to interrogate the data from different angles so that my influence on the research could be limited.

6.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis began with a fictional story of a student who could have been involved in this research. 'Our Girl' reached out to me as someone who was suddenly struck with the realisation of her own difference, and was confronted with negotiating how she represented, and was represented by, the UK in light of this difference. Through systematic inquiry the thesis produced three more stories of adjustment, this time of participants involved in the research. These stories demonstrated the (dis)juncture of adjustment: the simultaneous and uninterrupted connection and disconnection that emerge as a consequence of difference. (Dis)Juncture encourages the development of a hybrid student, who can, through in-

betweeness, critically examine the postulations and representations of the symbols surrounding him/her. It is as productive an existence as it is a lonely one. Whether 'Our Girl' ever came to recognise her generative powers is unknown, but it is hoped that she found companions with whom to share her journey.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter sent to International Student Offices in the UK to forward to Trinidadian students on file.

University of Southampton
School of Education

Hello and welcome to the UK :)

First of all let me wish you all the best in your upcoming programme here in the UK. I hope that your experience here meets and surpasses all of your expectations and opens many new doors for you in all aspects of your life.

My name is Michelle and I am a Trini at the University of Southampton. I am currently doing research for my PhD. My area of interest is international student adjustment. In short, I hope to understand how Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment and to the experience of Higher Education here. This is where I am hoping you will be willing to assist me. I am searching for Trinidadian students who have just started a programme in the UK to take part in the study and share details about their varied experiences here.

I understand how pressed your time is and as such I have tried to make the research as flexible, convenient as student-friendly as possible. If you choose to take part, you will be able to participate around your schedule in your own free time. All you would need is an Internet connection. I hope that you will be able to take a great deal away from the research experience as well. If you choose, you will be able interact with other Trinis of all ages who are studying across the UK and learn about the cities they are in and their experiences here as well. They will all be students who just started a course of study here and all interaction with them will be anonymous. I am hoping that the experience will be a helpful, sociable and enjoyable one for all the participants.

If I have piqued your interest, even just a little, and you would like to know more, please contact me at [email] . I will be happy to hear from you and provide you with more details about the study. You can be assured as well that my research procedures have been approved for its adherence to the UK Data Protection Act and the University's Ethical Research Policy. All measures were taken so that you will have an enjoyable and safe research experience.

My very best wishes to you, and thank you for your time-I did not intend for this to be so long. But we have learnt something very important here – never ask a researcher to summarise her work :).

Michelle Harricharan

APPENDIX B

Participant Information Sheet which all participant read prior to consent to the study. I provided the students with the Sheet prior to our first face-to-face meeting. During the meeting the participants and I went through the material contained therein together. The participants had the opportunity to ask questions about everything included in the sheet at this meeting as well.

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

School of Education

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Ashes Col' Darg Lay Dong: Trinidadian Students' Response to the UK.

Researcher: Michelle Harricharan

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

My name is Michelle Harricharan and I am a Trinidadian undertaking PhD research at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom (UK). My research is concerned with understanding how recently arrived Trinidadian students in the UK respond to their new environment. I wish to record and understand your experiences as international students in a different country, culture and educational environment. I also wish to explore your thoughts, feelings and perceptions about your experiences. My intention is to use this information to produce a formal theory based on your individual and collective experiences as international students in a new environment.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You were asked to take part in the research because you will be commencing a course of study at a UK-based university during the academic year 2008-2009. I am hoping to acquire responses from a cross-section of Trinidadian nationals throughout the UK.

What will happen to me if I take part?

For my research I wish to track participants' responses to the UK and to being an international student over the course of six (6) months. All participants will be asked to contribute to a private online group journal or blog. This blog will function as a diary where participants will write entries about their experiences and talk about their thoughts and feelings regarding these experiences. These entries may be in words (narratives, poetry, musical lyrics and drama/skits) or through visual forms such as art or pictures. Your journal entries can be made visible to the entire group of participants or only to the researcher depending on your personal preferences. In choosing to make your journal available to all of the research participants you will be granting them permission to view and comment on your

journal entries. I am hoping that this type of blog will be open and interactive and you will learn about each other and your individual experiences from it. If you opt to make your journal entries private, I will be the only one reading and commenting on your entries. You will also not be allowed to view other participants' entries. There is no word limit for a journal entry – they may be as long or as short as you prefer.

If you are interested in taking part but think that you will need training on how to use a blog, I will provide that training at your convenience.

In addition to journal entries on the blog, I also wish to conduct face to face interviews with the participants. These interviews will be conducted at your convenience in a location chosen by you. The purpose of these interviews is to clarify information which you have posted on the blog and to facilitate a more personal type of communication which is not possible through the Internet. You will be given the option to decide whether you wish to be interviewed or not. Interviews will be conducted at the end of the six-month blogging period.

Will my participation be confidential?

All efforts have been made, and will continue to be made during the course of this research project, to protect your identity and the material you provide. All the data you provide will be used in compliance with the British Data Protection Act and University policy. The blog will be password-protected and only those participating in the study will be authorised to view its contents.

In addition, your identity will be kept confidential and a pseudonym will be used in all communication about the study. This pseudonym will be chosen by you and it will be the username in which you participate in the blog. The other participants in the study will not be aware of your identity unless you reveal it to them. All identifying personal data will be kept in an encrypted, password-protected document. I will use a strong 128 bit Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) to encode all personal data. This encryption strength is the standard recommended by the American National Security Agency (NSA) in The National Policy on the Use of the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) to Protect National Security Systems and National Security Information.

What happens if I change my mind?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without your legal rights being affected.

How will my information be used?

All the information you provide will be used solely for my PhD research.

If I wish to use your data in conference presentations, published journal articles or any other publications I will seek your permission before doing so. In each of these cases your rights to confidentiality and anonymity (explained above) will be rigidly adhered to.

What does 'Ashes Col' Darg Lay Dong' mean?

It is an old Trinidadian proverb I came across while browsing the Internet one day. I would like to credit Julian H. A. Neijhorst, author of *Caribbean Talk: 1000 Proverbs and Sayings from the Afro-Caribbean Diaspora* for introducing me to it. It means that we can only really settle down and relax when a crisis is over.

APPENDIX C

A copy of the Consent Form which consenting participants signed at the end of our first meeting.

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton
School of Education

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

Study title: Ashes Col' Darg Lay Dong: Trinidadian Students' Response to the UK.

Researcher name: Michelle Harricharan

Ethics reference (RGO): 5897

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (11 Jun 08/Version 1)

and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to

be used for the purpose of this study.

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw

at any time without my legal rights being affected.

I agree to be interviewed.

Interviews with me may be tape recorded.

My data can be used in published journal articles.   ☐

My data can be used in conference presentations.   ☐

My data can be used in published work proceeding from   ☐
conference presentations.

Name of participant (print name)……………………………………………………

Signature of participant…………………………………………………………..

Date……………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX D

Evidence of Ethical Approval

Ethics approval was sought and approved in 2008. Two letters acknowledging this approval are provided here. In 2008 the study site was London. When the site changed to the UK I was advised that further approvals were not necessary since the core ethical elements of the study were unchanged. These letters have been edited to protect my address. The letters are otherwise untouched.

Miss Michelle Harricharan

04 July 2008

Dear Miss Harricharan

RGO Ref: 5897

Project   **Ashes Col' Darg Lay Dong: Trinidadian Students' Responses to Studying in London**

I am writing to confirm that the University of Southampton is prepared to act as sponsor for this study under the terms of the Department of Health Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (2nd edition 2005).

The University of Southampton fulfils the role of Research Sponsor in ensuring management, monitoring and reporting arrangements for research. I understand that you will be acting as the Principal Investigator responsible for the daily management for this study, and that you will be providing regular reports on the progress of the study to the Research Governance Office on this basis.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of your responsibilities under the terms of the Research Governance Framework, and the EU Clinical Trials Directive (Medicines for Human Use Act) if conducting a clinical trial. We encourage you to become fully conversant with the terms of the Research Governance Framework by referring to the Department of Health document which can be accessed at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/12/24/27/04122

In this regard if your project involves NHS patients or resources please send us a copy of your NHS REC and Trust approval letters when available.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information or support. May I also take this opportunity to wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Martina Prude
Head of Research Governance

Tel: 023 8059 5058

Corporate Services, University of Southampton, Highfield Campus, Southampton SO17 1BJ United Kingdom
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Miss Michelle Harricharan

02 July 2008

Dear Miss Harricharan

Public Liability Insurance

RGO REF – 5897   School Ethics Ref – 22276149

Project   **Ashes Col' Darg Lay Dong: Trinidadian Students' Responses to Studying in London**

Participant Type:	No Of Participants:	Participant Age Group:	Notes:
Healthy volunteers	24	Adults	

Thank you for forwarding the completed questionnaire and attached papers.

Having taken note of the information provided, I can confirm that this project will be covered under the terms and conditions of the above policy, subject to written consent being obtained from the participating volunteers.

If there are any changes to the above details, please advise us as failure to do so may invalidate the insurance.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ruth McFadyen
Insurance Services Manager

Tel: 023 8059 2417
email: hrm@soton.ac.uk

cc: File

APPENDIX E

The interview topics that were used to guide my interviews with the participants.

STUDENT LIFE

WORK   STUDIES   STRESS

    FINANCE   CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SOCIAL

IDENTITY   RACE   ETHNICITY

    RELATIONSHIPS   UK FRIENDSHIPS   TRINI

CULTURE - GETTING USED TO THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE HERE

FESTIVALS   FOOD   COMMUNICATING

HOME

DEPRESSION   LONELINESS   HOMESICKNESS

    CARNIVAL   CHRISTMAS   SUMMIT

How would you say you have changed since you have been here?

APPENDIX F

Screen shots of the Question Feature series on the blog.

There is a gap in the Question Features between March and mid-April. In March the question features stopped because of student examinations and research papers. In early April discussion was progressing and I did not post any question features as I did not see a need to intervene in the blog.

Ophelia's pseudonym on the blog was different from the one in the thesis. We elected to change it for all publications. Consequently, there are edits around Ophelia's name in these screen shots.

Question Feature 1

11 Feb 2009

QUESTION FEATURE: CARNIVAL

Posted by Michelle

In the spirit of Ophelia   ' upcoming trip to Trinidad for a Carnival break I decided to make this first Question Feature about Carnival.

Is anyone else going back home for a nice Carnival break? What are you looking forward to the most?
For those of you who are not heading home, are you missing the build-up to Carnival at all? All the energy and the parties?
I know part of the whole Carnival vibe is de beach days...jus loungin in Maracas or maybe even in Pigeon Point. We [a group of family and friends] normally spend the weekend in Tobago, just enjoying the sun and the lime. What do you normally do? Without the contagious Carnival energy here do you even think of it?

TOP

Question Feature 2

18 Feb 2009

QUESTION FEATURE: TEACHING STYLES

Posted by Michelle

This week's question feature comes out of a conversation i overheard on a bus this past week (overheard, not eavesdropped on :)) as well as something hinted by Liz in a past post.

On the bus two international students were chatting about the teaching methods here. The students were commenting on what they felt was a very relaxed style of teaching. This came out of a comment by one of the two about having another break, which seemed ludicrous as they felt they'd barely learnt anything for the semester so far and they were already having a break.

What about you guys? Did you find the teaching styles here difficult to adapt to? Did you find it difficult to understand what the lecturers wanted and/or what your role should be in your different classes?
Is there anything about the style/methods of teaching and learning here that's different from what you were used to before you came to the UK or before you started this course? What do you think about these differences?

TOP

Question Feature 3

25 Feb 2009

QUESTION FEATURE: TECHNOLOGY

Posted by Michelle

Hey all! Hope you had a good pancake day yesterday.

Sorry this question is going up so late today I had to do a presentation earlier and the whole thing only finished at 7:15.

This week's question comes from a comment Liz made two weeks ago on the feature question on Carnival. She mentioned her friends messaging her and posting pictures on Facebook which keeps her up to date on the Carnival fun but also make her miss it.

Does the technology we have today (Instant Messaging, Email, Facebook, Skype, Mobiles, Photobucket, etc) play any role in how you have adjusted, and continue to adjust, to the UK? Does it help make things easier or more difficult for you? Is it a bit of both? Neither? Or do you not bother too much with all this technology stuff on the whole?

TOP

Question Feature 4

QUESTION FEATURE: BAN YUH BELLY!

Posted by Michelle

This week's Question Feature comes from Liz's post in a past Question Feature on teaching styles. She brought up, seemingly in passing, "the meagre student existance " - this will definitely be quoted in the final thesis by the way... I love it! - and i was wondering what are the features of this existence.

So far, a lot of the problems brought up on the blog have dealt primarily with Trinidad and being away from home. But there may be several other issues we have not talked about and i think this is wonderful way to better understand the different dimensions of the student experience.

Does anyone else live this (warning, i'm about to quote it again!) "meagre student existance"? What does this expression mean for you? Is it only about bannin yuh belly as Liz explained, or is there more to it? What are some of the things that characterise this - here we go again! - "meagre student existance" (oh, but i do love it!)?

TOP

Question Feature 5

QUESTION FEATURE: TRINI?

Posted by Michelle

This week's question feature comes from Ophelia   ' very interesting post on going home last week. There were so many questions that I had regarding that post - but I kept it down to one at the moment. Today I wish to talk about another bigger question that came up reading that post. I thought of it when she said her friends said her fiancé was very Trini.

What does it mean to be a Trini? The term might mean different things for different people and I'd be happy get a lot of different views on the topic. Does the meaning of 'Trini' mean something different to you now that you are here in the UK, or has the meaning essentially remained the same for you since you left home?

TOP

APPENDIX G

Screen shots of the blog.

Ophelia's pseudonym on the blog was different from the one in the thesis. We elected to change it for all publications. Consequently, there are edits around Ophelia's name in these screen shots. These screen shots have also been edited to remove identifying material.

Screen Shot 1

Posted by chants

Hey everyone, Ive jus been checkin out the posts so far an glad to see people startin to post. Sometimes I relly miss home although the freshers' experience is really like no other. It's my second year in England. Last year I did a one year teaching course but now Im at uni doin my degree. I dont know any Trinis in my uni although luckily I know some in other parts of England. Before leaving Trinidad though, I couldve never predicted exactly how much I would value jus knowin other Caribbean people here. I always thought it would be easy meetin people of different cultures and becomin friends with them. Dont get me wrong, it is great, but sometimes I fine the explainin things about Trinidadian culture and how we do things differently an not bein able to use all the Trini words I want to when I want to use them...it gets a lil tiring. But my English friends have been great and willing to learn. They've even started listenin to a bit of soca an dancehall...lol.

TOP

3 COMMENTS:

Val said...

"but sometimes I fine the explainin things about Trinidadian culture and how we do things differently an not bein able to use all the Trini words I want to when I want to use them...it gets a lil tiring."

^Ah tink yuh hit d nail on d head dey, palos

(Now see...who else but Trinis could understand what I just wrote ;-)

One thing though, I'd propose introducing them to more soca than dancehall at this stage, lest you fall into the other trap that seems to be so common: "You sound just like a Jamaican OR Is Trinidad next to/close to/part of Jamaica? OR Where in Jamaica are you from?"

Thu Nov 20, 11:50:00 PM 2008

Ophelia   said...

My problem is the opposite. Since I've never really spoken much dialect, when people meet me here they assume that I'm Welsh or sometimes even English. And I'm constantly meeting people enamoured with Caribbean culture who want me to give them some tips on what soca they should be looking out for but I couldn't really say because I've just never followed it. :-) Makes me feel like a fraud until I hear some

Screen Shot 2

15 Dec 2008

HOME

Posted by chants

I jus came home last Thursday and it seems everytime I come back things are a bit different. Im glad to be home, still waiting for all my family and friends to return but being back here reminds me that its not all sunshine and beauty. Seeing who has been murdered everyday in the papers is really depressing as is the poverty that Im just not exposed to in England. Sometimes the grass can seem alot greener when your not actually here...Merry Christmas everyone.

TOP

Screen Shot 3

19 Dec 2008

FINALLY SOME FREEDOM

Posted by Liz

Oye everybody,

This studying thing not easy yes... after going, going, going for three months, all papers and exams are done and I found myself wondering what I was going to do with my free time. Being a trini, it of course didn't take too long. The Christmas spirit is definitely lacking though. It's quite sad because I really thought England could do Christmas well...not quite the case. Apart from Oxford St, I haven't seen anything too spectacular or oozing of Christmas like back home. I miss the buzz of the season - the music blasting from every street corner, the greetings from everyone "All the best for the season, pass for a drink". Gosh, I miss a pastelle, lol. I had a glass of sorrel today, wasn't even all that great, but it was the closest thing :-) Hopefully it will get better. If not, at least I can say I spent a Christmas in England...just for saying it sake, ha. Hope it's going well for everyone and the semester didn't almost kill you :-)

TOP

Screen Shot 4

Posted by Liz

Hi everyone!!

It's been a while. After the rush of exams, there was Christmas and well the new semester has started with a bang. I must say, the UK stint has not been too bad so far. I've been very very lucky to find really good friends and the lecturers are tres nice. I do miss home sometimes though. I miss the feel of the sun, being able to go outside with shorts and a tee...lol. I'm hoping to go for a couple weeks in May before dissertation writing gets onerous. I plan to sit on beach till I'm back to my original complexion and then some shades darker :-P
The snow was good fun though. In the spirit of pure university idleness, there was a medieval snow war of sorts among university students - very spontaneous and good viewing entertainment. For those of us who are here for a year, it's quite amusing that England is experiencing some freak cold weather, lol.
Well this was just a lil oye to all out there. Looking out my window and it looks a lil suspicious...hmmm. If that snow comes this weekend, hope it doesn't utterly depress you :-)
Take care!

TOP

2 COMMENTS:

Ophelia   said...

Haha, the snow war sounds hilarious. Unfortunately, I had to go to work on the snow day! But two men in their 30s were ready to pelt me with snowballs! I had to actually talk them out of it. Also, young people were taking down 'To Let' signs and using them as sleds! Good grief, British people just doh know what to do with extreme weather. By the way, you might find in May (if it's anything like it's been the last few years)you'll get plenty brown just sitting outside here! I don't know what it is about the English summer sun but it's surprisingly strong! Good plan about taking a break though....if I have the means I might take another short one before I start my thesis too!

Tue Feb 10, 12:00:00 AM 2009

239

Screen shot 5

Sorrel, pastelles, etc...pure heaven.

On saturday I made some fish pastelles as I am vegetarian and I think tonight is a good time to take out two for dinner. I am sure you can get sorrel here , especially in London.Try Brixton or Clapham for those who are passing through or live in London.

These are the things I miss the most but I also know Trinidad is changing so much and in many places not so much sorrel and pastelles going around...more jerk chicken and coke. The interesting part is that our local food remains a mystery in these parts and many assume it is esentially Jamacian like cuisine or for those who visit Barbados then flying fish and coo-coo. We all know Trinbago has the best and most diverse culinary offerings.:) :) I find it good to invite class mates etc for some of our traditional christmas items. Even if they have fruit cake here I am sure they like our rum ladden kind just as much. Try it cause I have learned food is like a social glue in this country (as well as alcohol lol!!!)

Apologies to those people who do not have the nice-ities like pastelles. Maybe I should start a mail order Christmas food program. hehehe

Wed Dec 10, 09:40:00 AM 2008

Screen shot 6

mikey said...

Well I have not had any problems with Visas thank God but you are definitely not alone. These people wait until they have collected lots of information to say something from the first batch was invalid. I recall when I got my bank account it took 1.5 months!!! The first excuse was that they needed to know what my middle initial " " was for...then they said the school did not quote my name as but so these needed clarification...then they wanted a new letter about my course etc.

To be honest I think they just like collecting information , as do some of our local people at the Scholarhsips division in Trinidad! (had a really bad experience with them as well) I know a Jamacian guy who

Edited for privacy

Your nervousness is normal. For me it was about how much I changed the way of doing things and people tend to notice the changes more than you do personally. If anybody say "like she gone british or wha" just ignore them and say when in Rome I learned from the Romans to survive.
Mikey

Wed Feb 11, 03:27:00 PM 2009 🗑

Ophelia said...

Thanks Mikey, I might do a post about how I'm feeling about going home to see what other people feel as well.

Wed Feb 11, 08:54:00 PM 2009 🗑

Screen shot 7

Post by Ophelia

21 Nov 2008

GOING HOME

Posted by

Sorry, this is a quick post as everything's a bit mental at the moment. Just wanted to introduce myself. I just completed my first degree in   and am doing my MA at the same university. These past four years have been soul-searching ones in terms of trying to figure out what my identity is based on, especially since none of my friends are from the Caribbean let alone from Trinidad. It's been rife with excitement about learning new things (I didn't even know Northern and the Republic of Ireland were separated before I came here!) and at times, feeling dreadfully homesick.

And it's been very odd going back home. Sometimes I go and it feels like I never left. Other times I don't feel like I belong there anymore and as if the Trinidad I remember doesn't exist and possibly never did. When I'm in England, Trinidad feels like a far away dream. When I'm in Trinidad, England never happened. It could be because I don't go home that often. How do other people find going back?

TOP

3 COMMENTS:

Naitian said...

> It is always it a bit weird going home, but I still love it. I have a little bit of a transition period when I go home , because so many things are different. Yes it is a bit strange, but at the end of the day for me anyway it is home, as messed up as it is right now, it is where I am from and what I am proud of.
> Hopefully It will get back to what it use to be in a decade or so.
>
> Thu Nov 27, 01:42:00 PM 2008

Screen shot 8

Ophelia   said...

> No that was always there, that feeling of not culturally belonging. That's why when I came home the first time, the summer after my first year, my friends in Trinidad were not surprised that I loved England. But I definitely don't feel like I fit here either. I think it's more a case of it being ok to feel alien in a place you don't really belong than to feel that way somewhere that's supposed to be your home.
>
> Sun Apr 12, 12:31:00 PM 2009

Screen shot 9

chants said...

> thats a good point, i find it so outdated that they ask u that anyway. i have personally
> never experienced difficulty in ticking a box, perhaps i dont think about it enough but
> i do always think that there are not enough boxes to tick and that not everyone can fit
> into the categories especially with the diverse caribbean population that we have.
>
> Thu Apr 02, 04:05:00 PM 2009

Liz said...

> Hmmm...never really thought about it that way. But I have problems too. I don't fit
> into any of the boxes either. I have to tick other, even with 40 options.
>
> Thu Apr 02, 05:14:00 PM 2009

Ophelia said...

> If I'm feeling cheeky, I'll tick everything because that's technically true. Of course, if
> it's a job application, you've got to be more serious so then it's Mixed Other which I
> never feel quite says it!
>
> Tue Apr 07, 02:10:00 PM 2009

Screen shot 10

OYE!

Posted by

Mawnin ppl! I was taking a break from studying and decided to come say hello one time. For once the radiator isn't rattling out of control, so I can actually focus without having to drown out the ruckus with music.

The noisy radiator aside, my time here so far has been mostly a breeze (and sometimes a cold one at that). I arrived in the UK on Sept 23, spent a few days with some family, then came right down to campus and my new digs on hall. It's been a little while since I did my first degree, so sliding back into the campus lifestyle took a bit of mental adjustment. One thing is for sure, the people down in my neck of the woods really make sure that foreigners feel welcome and that helped stave off homesickness for the most part. Although, I eh go lie, one night last week I really felt the urge to pack up and ride straight outta here. Luckily that was just one night out of several, so I figure my odds of sticking with it are pretty good.

The one down side of my experience has been the lack of fellow Trini, or even West Indian, students to link with, so on that front, I'm looking forward to this blog experience.

One very good thing about the experience is that there is no shortage of things to do around here in   . From liming at pubs or clubs, visiting historical sites, chilling down by the sea (emphasis on 'by', not 'in' ... I eh takin dat chain up), and a whole host of other activities, anybody can find some sort of fun to get into. I have some videos that I took during the recent Bonfire Night celebrations in the nearby town   as an example. I swear one of the bonfire societies that passed sounded like a riddim section (you'll see for yourself).

Video 1
Video 2
Video 3
Video 4

Da's it for now. Catch allyuh later.