Criticality as a Form of Fluid Habitus: Exploring the Lived Experiences of International PhD Students Studying in the UK

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Abstract

In both participants' and my own research journals and in interviews and informal conversations with twelve international PhD students studying in the UK from abroad, there is strong evidence that they and I were engaged in a mutual exploration of our lived experiences of constructing criticality. Throughout this thesis, I refer to the combatting of essentialist grand narratives about international students through my preferred non-essentialist paradigm that appreciates the background resources relating to criticality that these students bring with them and can contribute to the internationalisation process. Adopting this paradigm enables me to begin to learn what often remains invisible in essentialist studies. I begin to learn that criticality is constructed and experienced dialogically in continuous development. This indicates the importance of dialogue in students' relationships with others, such as supervisors and fellow PhD students – both of which are shown to be among the strongest influences on the construction of their criticality. I also begin to learn that there is a link between criticality and living. This link is evidenced in the data as indicated by the following participants' statements: 'being independent becomes a life style', 'stick to it until you do it', 'being critical is a journey I still learn', 'I care about them', 'I always want to know'. This link must mean that criticality is not necessarily only associated with academic study or with being at a university in Britain. Another point I begin to understand is that travelling per se to anywhere and from anywhere might contribute to nurturing students' existing sense of criticality because it is a way of entering into thoughts and feelings other than their own and therefore broadening their perspectives. This is the research opportunity that needs more exploration, and it is what I, therefore, intend to demonstrate in my thesis by focusing on the international PhD students' experiences of constructing their criticality.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Thesis focus

This thesis aims to understand the lived experiences of a group of international PhD students and their interpretations and enactments of criticality. In this thesis, it is my intention to put aside the still commonly held false claim that international students are silent, passive, and not critical thinkers because of their collectivist 'culture'. This limiting essentialist discourse pushes aside so many interpretations. It is, therefore, my aim to pull out what has been pushed aside, such as their sense of criticality which they bring with them from their existing backgrounds.

In the data, some participants' critical reflections on their experiences of living in a war zone provoke their decisions to conduct a PhD study to examine and communicate their critical perspectives, focusing on, for instance, promoting peace through education. Such evidence demonstrates how students from other diverse 'non-Western' locations are competently critical in making their own sense and taking informed decisions.

In another example where a participant thinks of taking off the headscarf in an environment where wearing it may be considered a social norm, I see overwhelming evidence of criticality in the sense of questioning both her and others' perspectives and 'actively' searching for relevant and significant information to support her point. I also witness this criticality in her decision of not taking off the headscarf, which results from both finding insufficient information to support her view and being aware of and familiar with such a social norm. Thus, she reasonably and temporarily complies with this social pressure to feel and live like a 'fish in water'. According to her, once her circumstances changed in the sense of finding sufficient evidence to support her willingness and living in a different environment, she took off the headscarf. Again, it is this putting aside of the essentialist limiting narrative that enables me to

see this inspiring evidence in the participants' experiences before travelling to study in another environment.

I argue that travelling per se to anywhere and from anywhere, not essentially to the 'West', might contribute to nurturing students' existing sense of criticality because it broadens their perspectives. This must mean that it is not being in Britain that makes them critical. Their trajectories continue as a matter of living in different circumstances and unfamiliar environments. It is my looking around that enables me to see, in the data, that what is particular about travelling per se is the interaction with people who hold different perspectives**,** such as fellow PhD students, which may challenge participants to think in ways that would remain unexplored, if only interacting with those who possess similar views. This living in an unfamiliar environment also appears to provoke curiosity and demonstrate perseverance. For example, this study's evidence suggests that, for some participants, living abroad is living like a 'fish out of water'. Overcoming this feeling of pain and intellectual complexity requires criticality in the form of perseverance. This living in an unfamiliar environment, away from family support, contributes to living with some traits of criticality, such as independence, responsibility, and a questioning mind which is questioning what is going on around individuals to better understand their surroundings.

I also argue that criticality takes the forms of both conformity and resistance to others' perspectives. A demonstration of these forms is in the supervisory space, as seen in the participants' reported conversations with their supervisors. In the data, this space appears to contribute to feeding into participants' existing sense of criticality: different thinking and independence. For example, thinking outside the box in the way some participants wrote their thesis shows that they understand the rules of what I refer to positively as the 'PhD game' but decide to play it differently. This type of incident seems to be a celebration of criticality in the form of resistance to the pre-established template or rules of structuring a PhD thesis. Some

other participants appear to comply with the rules of the supervisory space by acting independently and taking full responsibility for their reading materials. This may indicate that they are aware that being independent is one basic rule of the 'PhD game', and complying with this rule can lead to successfully attaining their PhD.

1.2. The aim and the research questions

This thesis aims to answer the following major research questions:

What are the experiences of international PhD students of criticality?

This question carries with it three smaller questions:

1. What is criticality for them?
2. Does criticality influence how they live their lives? If so, in what ways?
3. How do they construct their interpretations of criticality?

Number 3 carries another question:

3.1. What is the role of study abroad in the construction of criticality?

I developed the research questions gradually in parallel with the development of my readings and of the research methodology and in accordance with the initial analysis of the data. This development was influenced by changing the focus of the study to correspond with what emerged from the initial analysis of the data.

By asking these questions, I wished to explore and learn about the experiences of international students of criticality by finding out their understandings of it and their perceptions of it as a way of living or how it influences their lives. I also wished to examine the potential factors that can nurture the participants' experiences of criticality both before and during studying abroad. For example, by posing question 1.3., the thesis was able to find out about the role participants' dialogues with other people and with their backgrounds play in constructing their

interpretations of criticality and their perceptions of it as a way of living. It was also able to reveal possible specific factors related to study abroad that can contribute to constructing criticality.

1.3. Participants of the study

My participants were twelve PhD students studying in the UK from abroad. They included seven Algerians, two Palestinians, one Hungarian, an Italian and a Syrian, the last five of whom were working, as well as studying, in the UK. They were completing their degree in a range of disciplines within humanities and social sciences. Nine were full-time students, two were part-time students and one changed from part-time to full-time. Five had British government scholarships, and seven had Algerian government scholarships.

There are some similarities and differences between the participants' profiles. For example, they are of diverse backgrounds, as mentioned above. All can be classified as 'mature students', ranging in age from their mid-twenties to late thirties. On the other hand, the participants of this study are different in some respects. For instance, while some have been in the UK for more than eight years; others have been there for less than four years. This factor may have an influence on their perceptions of their past and current lived experiences relating to the development of criticality.

Although the vast majority came to the UK for their PhDs and had completed their master's degrees in their 'home' countries, some of them had already studied for a master's degree in the UK. There was also one participant who did her master's degree in the U.S., which is not her 'home' country. I discuss the selection and recruitment of my participants at the beginning of my methodology chapter.

1.4. Positionality

The impetus for this research was largely based on my daily life experience. It is about 10 years ago that I began to think about the significance of critical thinking in academic and social lives. More often, however, I was confined in my beliefs as I had developed a world view which influenced much of my behaviour, but of which I had little or no understanding. I used assumptions accumulated throughout my life, which led to my conclusions, but which I myself had little or no awareness of.

During my Bachelor's course in 2012, in Algeria, I falsely believed my teachers' judgements (which I have recorded in my research journal) that 'our students are educationally deficient, passive learners, and uncritical thinkers' (Zina, research journal, 2017). I was seduced by literature about so-labelled 'international' students as a problem. Similarly, when I conducted my Masters' dissertation in 2016, I falsely based it on this ill-formed stereotype, and examined the possible ways to introduce critical thinking.

It took some critical events to unseat these stereotypes. For instance, the following extract from my research journal demonstrates how a post on Facebook enabled me to take my thinking apart and examine my prejudices and assumptions again. The reason for including this segment of data here is to show that I was taking detailed notes at the time.

> Reading through the comments made me think about my assumptions when I started my PhD. I thought my journey will be more challenging because of my background as Algerian. I had an inferior thought about the level of Algerian PhD students abroad. Today, I thought about it more carefully. I realised that my thinking was superficial. I took what I heard for granted. I totally forgot or did not consider that we develop and change in a constant way and differently… I realised that being an Algerian or a British is just part of who we are. It does not essentially define one's performance. (Zina, Research journal, 2020)

What I now see as my infantilised thinking was that the nationality of individuals might falsely define their performance, and therefore, Algerian PhD students in the UK would experience problems with finishing their PhD because they are coming from an 'educationally deficient non-Western' background. However, reading through the comments of my colleagues revealed an inspiringly positive feedback of their supervisors related to their progress and intellectuality, and that some have finished their PhD in less than 4 years. This was among the significant events that helped me to see the non-collectivist reality.

My research journals, such as the above extract, show the development of my personal research trajectory, which is encouraged by: engaging in regular intellectually challenging discussions with my supervisors and with differently knowledgeable people; and relentless scrutinising of literature and of what is going on around me while living in unfamiliar environment. This enabled me to consider my project from a new perspective – to be open to the experience itself.

Among the aspects of my own biography that gave me the confidence to conduct my research with international PhD students are the following. I am a PhD student in a UK university from abroad, born and raised in Algeria. I am fluent in Arabic, Kabyle Berber, Shawiya Berber, French and English. This multilingual, rich background and experience, has given me a possible way to relate to participants' accounts. This personal knowledge of the setting has enabled me to understand their experiences and to construct data.

I have come to understand, through participants' experiences shared with me, my research and literature in the field that there is a scarcity of qualitative-exploratory research on *how* PhD students from abroad interpret and practice criticality as I am arguing throughout my thesis. This awareness motivated me to conduct this research that created a space for those voices to be heard and gave way to alternative-re-representations.

1.5. Glossary of key terms

Through the process of doing my research, I developed a number of key terms which are either my own or developed from my reading of literature. Rather than providing a list of definitions, I write a section on each term with an explanation of what I mean by it.

1.5.1. Criticality as a form of fluid habitus

Working with my participants, I learnt that life experience plays a significant role in nurturing their sense of criticality. My understanding of criticality as a form of fluid habitus is influenced by my preferred non-essentialist position of meaning-construction and I explain it as follows. I see habitus as 'who we are'. This seeing is inspired by Dean's (2017) development of Bourdieu's (1986, 1990) term, habitus. I will expand on how I arrive at using this term in Chapter Two. Here, I simply say that it makes sense to me that criticality is part of 'who we are'. This is because it encompasses both *ways of knowing* and *ways of living* and therefore I see it as a form of habitus. I also see that the construction of individuals' sense of criticality is continuous, changes and is fluid because it is constantly defined and redefined by their trajectories and is influenced by the constant engagement in dialogue with others. This therefore explains my understanding of criticality as a form of fluid habitus. Connecting these concepts together constitutes new knowledge and becomes the driving force of my thesis.

1.5.2. International student

Throughout my thesis, I use the term 'international' student to refer to students who have left their 'home' country to study in the UK and speak English usually as other language. I suggest that the label 'international' is problematic because it tends to present individuals as a homogeneous group. It is a contested term because labelling particular students as international is putting them aside. University by its definition should mean that everybody has an international perspective. To make this point, I am here putting the term in inverted commas,

but to improve readability, I will not do it throughout the thesis. This decision helped me to look at their experiences as individuals, not as a group, to avoid stereotypes and, instead, explore their past and current lived experiences. That is, this decision enabled me to learn and understand their experiences, instead of looking at them through ill-formed assumptions based on national and cultural backgrounds.

The term 'international' refers to students who are not 'domiciled' in the country (Morrison *et al*., 2005). According to HESA (2016), this label refers to students from countries within the European Union, who represent 5.6% of the total UK student population. It also embraces 'other European' and 'non-European Economic Area (EEA)' countries (5%) or 'non-EU' countries (13.6%) (HESA, 2016). Ploner (2018) adopts the term 'international' to refer to EU, EEA and non-EU students. However, Ruparelia (2018) describes her participants as 'international' in terms of their educational and life experiences and also includes British citizens who have lived in the UK for many years. She further suggests that this is an alternative definition of 'international' student, which most researchers define as those students who study abroad for a course and then return to their countries with their qualifications.

I see, along with Montgomery and Nada (2019), that research on 'international' students is beset by contradictory and conflicted messages regarding who the student is and the nature of their experiences. I categorise this research into two positions: essentialist and non-essentialist. The established essentialist position is argued by various researchers, such as Atkinson (1997), Fu and Townsend (1998), Gui (2009), Zhao and Coombs (2012), and Nisbah (2012, 2016).

I see that this position falsely represents international students as: educationally deficient (Fu and Townsend, 1998); lacking individual voices when writing in English (Gui, 2009); passive learners and uncritical thinkers (Zhao and Coombs, 2012; Nisbah, 2016). These problems are often derived from their previous cultures, which prioritise collective over individual learning,

and discourage critique of other scholars out of respect (Guan, 2000; Zhao and Coombs, 2012; Nisbah, 2012, 2016). This means, as inspired by Holliday (2017, p. 207), that the problems presented by international students, and especially PhD students in British universities, are justified by their solid cultures that are incompatible with the autonomy and criticality necessary to be successful in their studies. The false implication of this position is that such students have to learn this autonomy and criticality by being in the British university environment, and therefore 'Western' education is a gift to these deficient students.

I find very convincing Holliday's (2011, 2017, 2022), Amadasi and Holliday's (2017, 2018), Montgomery and Nada's (2019), and Clark and Gieve's (2006) radical non-essentialist position that international student's background is a valuable resource not a barrier. This radical non-essentialist position critiques the essentialist perspective for perceiving 'international' students as a homogeneous group, which may suggest ill-formed assumptions about cultural differences among these students (Hellstén, 2007) and for being 'deficit' (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Ploner, 2018). The essentialist perspective is also critiqued for dismissing the value of 'international' students' diversity in the sense of developing graduates into global citizens (Caruana, 2014). My preferred non-essentialist position makes me agree with Holliday's (2017) argument that the division of students as 'home' or 'international' students within an intercultural community is improper, and the labels themselves are problematic. They are problematic because being a 'home' or an 'international' student is not a significant factor when it comes to experiencing complexities regarding self-expression in writing, for instance. I elaborate on these two positions in Chapter Four.

1.5.3. Differently knowledgeable

In my thesis, I use the term 'differently knowledgeable' rather than 'more knowledgeable' to recognise that different forms of knowledge are equally valid. My choice is inspired by reading

Martin and Griffiths (2012). This choice links to my attempt to challenge and put aside essentialist information and dichotomous thinking about international students.

1.6. Theoretical framework

While I present a full theoretical framework in Chapter Two, I am offering a summary here for the purpose of contextualisation. Fathoming participants' understandings and practices of criticality required constructing a theoretical framework that would offer a language capable of articulating their complex practices. This theoretical framework was generated both by my reading and my data analysis. References are made to this theoretical framework at relevant points all the way through this thesis, but major presentation and discussion of it are in Chapter Two. Appropriate theorising from my perspective is made at the end of each section in the data chapters.

After seeing in the data that the construction of criticality is dialogic and after much reading and thought, Paul's (1993) conceptions of 'tools of critical thinking' and dialogical thinking and Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic perspective therefore seem a good fit for understanding what the participants told me.

In this thesis, I develop Paul's conceptualisation of 'tools of critical thinking', elements of thought and intellectual standards, in the way that they represent the *ways of knowing* attached to criticality. I also develop Paul's 'tool of critical thinking', intellectual traits, in the sense that they represent the *ways of living* attached to criticality because they define how critical thinkers live their lives, how they learn, how they communicate with other people and how they see the world. Throughout my thesis, I use the term *ways of thinking* interchangeably with *ways of knowing* and the term *ways of living* interchangeably with *ways of being.*

With more findings emerging, it became apparent that Paul's (1993) concepts were insufficient to articulate all the findings, necessitating another set of tools. One interesting finding is the strong relationship between individuals' practices of criticality and the context within which

they take place. Bourdieu's (1986, 1990) habitus, field, rules and playing the game seemed appropriate to help me understand this relation. They were helpful to explain how past experiences influence individuals' current practices of criticality. Because I see criticality as a form of fluid habitus and because there appears to be less clarity and focus on how habitus changes in Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) conception, I (as mentioned above) draw upon Paul's and Bakhtin's idea that engaging in dialogue is the reason why meaning-making, such as criticality, is dynamic and fluid. As could be seen, being able to express participants' experiences resulted from a constant conversation between my data analysis, my literature review and the theoretical framework.

1.7. Locatedness in the literature

Part of my framing for this study did nevertheless arise from my understanding of key elements of the literature and learning that there are some significant research opportunities which I will go into in detail in chapters Three and Four. Here, I would like simply to say that these are the basic research opportunities that my thesis addresses. First, few studies appear to have explored international PhD students' lived experiences of constructing criticality while studying in an unfamiliar environment. Second, I can see that some of the existing research (see, for example, Williams, 2009; Savage and Wehman, 2014; Roberts *et al.*, 2018) that links between study abroad and enhancing criticality supports the essentialist discourse about international students because it falsely implies that these students lack criticality until they learn it by studying abroad. This is evidenced in, for example, not considering the valuable influence of their participants' backgrounds, such as their upbringings, prior education, interactions with other people, and the wider society, on their experiences of criticality's construction. Third, it appears to me that *how* students develop their experiences in criticality because of studying abroad has not been fully explored yet. This means there seems to be a lack of evidence that demonstrates which specific factors related to study abroad that can feed into criticality. I see that this is

limited evidence about students' unique and rich lived experiences of *how* they constantly construct their sense of criticality anywhere which is what I intend to show in this thesis.

1.8. Structure of my thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters. In writing my thesis, the chapters inform and talk to each other. The writing of all the chapters is going at the same time. Therefore, my way of ordering the chapters is just to sort out my thinking.

In Chapter One, I concentrate exclusively and try hard to capture what my thesis is about. I also highlight the research opportunities that my study addresses, its aim, and research questions, and I write about my positionality as a researcher and my own journey through this study.

In Chapter Two, I show the way in which I constructed this thesis' theoretical framework. By construction here, I mean what the participants were doing and telling me about their sense of criticality enables me to see that they ratify and give credence to what Paul, Bourdieu, and Bakhtin said about what appear to me as relevant concepts. These concepts help me to pull together what I am writing about and to show the storyline.

In Chapter Three, I review and present a critique of some of the literature from the related field of critical thinking.

In Chapter Four, I provide the context of this thesis, which is exploring the voices of international PhD students, within internationalisation, from a non-essentialist perspective.

Chapter Five is an account of my research methodology, where I rationalise the research design employed in this thesis and show how it allows me 'more effectively' to capture the participants' voices.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight are devoted to the presentation and analysis of data and demonstration of my arguments. I present the data according to these three arguments, which together constitute a thick description of the participants' voices: the construction of criticality

is in dialogue; criticality as a form of fluid habitus; questioning is the 'golden thread' that links what I refer to as *ways of thinking*.

In Chapter Nine, we should know my answers to the research questions, suggestions for future research, the contributions, the limitations, and the strengths of this thesis. By the end of this chapter, I talk about my own experience as an international student and as an everyday critical person and, here, I highlight the notion, 'knowing myself'.

Chapter Two: Theoretical framework

This chapter represents my theoretical construct that enabled me to develop a discussion between the data and theory. Here, I elaborate on the theoretical framework I summarised in Chapter One. This chapter is divided into two sections which are as follows: Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field and playing the game and Paul's theory of critical thinking. With reference to the three key concepts I introduced in Chapter One, the first one, 'criticality as a form of fluid habitus', relates specifically to the works of Bourdieu and Paul. Additionally, I discuss how Bakhtin's dialogic perspective relates to this. Therefore, I will begin this chapter, first, by explaining the aspects of Bourdieu's theory and, then, Paul's and Bakhtin's ideas that relate to my concept.

2.1. Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field and playing the game

I relate Bourdieu's theory of habitus, filed and playing the game both to what my participants told me and to my concept of 'criticality as a form of fluid habitus'. What my participants told me about the influence of the context where they live on their practices of criticality actually gives credence to what Bourdieu said about the influence of social rules linked to field, habitus, and playing the game on individual's practices. In this section, I will therefore present an overview of Bourdieu's (1977,1990) theory, showing the hybrid activity of agency and structure that transcends the dichotomous way of perceiving the social world. I will then define *habitus* and its formation as 'the outcome of the dialectical relationship between structure and agency' (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 3-4) and its potential for change and development. I will follow this by explaining what *field* and *playing the game* are and highlighting the role of individuals to either resist or comply with the rules of the field. I conclude this section by showing the way in which Bourdieu's concepts of understanding individuals' practices are interconnected.

2.1.1. Overview of Bourdieu's theory

I argue that Bourdieu's (1977,1990) theory of practice was developed through his early ethnographic work in Algeria among the Kabyle Berbers (Wacquant, 2002) and is mostly marked by two publications: Theory of Practice (Bourdieu, 1977) and The Logic of Practice (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu introduced a number of key sociological and theoretical concepts such as habitus, capital, field and playing the game to understand the social world. Here, as Webb *et al*. (2002) and Grenfell (2014) explain, understanding the social world implies understanding the relationship between the objective structures of society (fields) and individual practices through using these concepts.

I also argue, along with (Mottier, 2002), that Bourdieu's theory was developed to critique the false opposition between objectivism and subjectivism. Bourdieu's central aim was to construct a theory of practice that transcends the dichotomous way of perceiving the social world (Webb *et al*., 2002; Maton, 2014). This means he tried to avoid the subjectivist's neglect of structuralism and the structuralism's neglect of agency and action.

I suggest that these are default perspectives because the former point of view ideally represents individuals as independent and entirely able to create their own realities regardless of the influence of fields such as family and government on their behaviour and practices. In contrast, the latter viewpoint falsely considers social agents as the product of social structures such as government ideologies. My point that these are default perspectives is supported by the work of Webb *et al*. (2002). Bourdieu's theory of practice instead argues and explains the 'hybrid activity of socially shaped strategic, but individually constituted, personal practice, which then form[s] common trends' (Grenfell, 2014, p. 44). I see that it is this 'hybrid activity' that needs to be nurtured as alternative form of understanding the social world and individuals' practices.

In the following paragraphs, I turn not only to discuss Bourdieu's concepts (habitus, field and the rules of the game) but also I will allow myself to show the constant conversation between my interpretations of what my participants tell me and how theory, then, enables me to understand what is going on with them.

2.1.2. Habitus

What the participants tell me, in the data, about how layer upon layer of experience informs their existing sense of criticality enables me to therefore understand that this layer upon layer of experience connects with Bourdieu's conception of habitus. I see that this conception might offer a language capable of articulating the participants' complex practice. Throughout my thesis, I understand that habitus describes 'who we are' (see, for example, the middle of Chapter One). My understanding is built on Dean's (2017) way of reading Bourdieu's concept, habitus. Dean (2017, p. 20) presents habitus as 'an embodied way of thinking about people's character, about how growth and development builds on previous growth and development; how external forces as varied as culture, economic welfare, stigmatisation, or social networks can affect one's strength, type, or stability of character'.

Habitus is central to Bourdieu's sociological theory. Bourdieu (1977, p.72) defines it as a 'system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures'. Bourdieu's conception of habitus as durable dispositions connects with Burawoy's (2008a, p. 4) statement that habitus is a 'durable but generative set of dispositions' which are created and change as structures and personal experiences collide (Harker *et al*., 1990). It also associates with Thompson's (1991, p. 12) argument that habitus is a 'set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways'.

Again, referring back to Bourdieu's definition, I can understand that habitus is embodied within individuals in a social world. This embodiment is similar to a 'fish in water: it does not feel the

weight of the water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp. 127–128). This means the rules that govern the social world may become 'common sense' to individuals and can be taken for granted. The implication here is that there is a link between habitus and the social world. This link is that habitus seeks to explain how the social structures within which one is brought up influence later everyday practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 126). This link is represented by Calhoun (2011) and Wacquant (2016) as habitus explains social behaviour and the structure in which those behaviours occur. In my attempt to understand habitus and relate it to what my participants say, I can also see that it can manifest itself both consciously and unconsciously. For example, Hall (2020) found that when making a decision, agents may purposefully and consciously consider their past decisions and their consequences. However, this process can also be unconscious (Hall, 2020).

It appears to me that one's habitus is constructed gradually, in continuous development, and that early year experiences and the influence of family are essential in this construction. This influence of early year experiences is suggested by Bourdieu (1977) and Thompson (1991) as habitus describes how a person reacts to a situation based on their previous experiences. This emphasis on the role of previous experience can be read in Dean's (2017) statement that habitus is a mediating construct where one's prior knowledge and experience combine to a greater or lesser extent to determine responses to situations. The influence of family on constructing habitus is evidenced in Bourdieu and Passerson's (1994) argument that habitus can be shaped by family beliefs and values. An illustration of this family influence is in (Hall, 2020). Hall found that Hana, one of his participants, was expected by her aunt and family to go to university only because her aunt had been to university too. This indicates that the beliefs and expectations of Hana's family are at the heart of her decision-making.

It also appears to me that habitus can be subdivided into class and individual habitus. According to Hall (2020), the former refers to a set of similar conditions and practices formed by social groups. Hall suggests that individuals conform to and imitate those practices which contribute to reproducing the same beliefs, values and behaviours. In contrast, individual habitus stands for agents' own beliefs and practices. An example of this individual habitus is in Hall's (2020) finding that the practices of his participants are based on their own perceptions and interpretations of how they should respond to their class habitus. This sense of individual habitus is expressed in Bourdieu's (1977, 1992) term 'modus operandi', which means that individuals choose to make decisions based upon habit.

Fluid habitus

I argue that the construction of habitus is fluid. Even though it appears that habitus is expressed as 'the product of history' and the influence of family (Harker *et al*., 1990, p. 36), it may be responsive and fluid. This fluidity is evidenced in Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992, p. 133, my emphasis) definition of habitus as 'not the fate that some people read into it...it is an *open system of dispositions* that is *constantly subjected to experiences*, and therefore *constantly affected by them* in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is *durable* but not eternal'. This indicates the potentiality of habitus to change because individuals constantly acquire and construct different experiences. These experiences can influence the formation and development of their habitus, such as how they perceive the social world, interact with other people and make decisions. This fluidity is also demonstrated in Bourdieu's sense of habitus, which seems to allow for agency and creativity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This agency and creativity might enable individuals not to frequently reply in the same ways to similar stimuli (Hall, 2020).

It again appears to me, however, that there is less detailed explanation and demonstration, in Bourdieu's work, of *how* habitus changes. My interpretation of what the participants tell me

about *how* the formation of criticality is dialogic and my understanding of criticality as a form of habitus (see middle of Chapter One) enable me to, therefore, argue that the construction of habitus is dialogic too. This means it is the constant engagement in dialogue with others that explains *how* habitus changes. My argument that habitus is dialogic represents my further understanding of the nature of Bourdieu's theory which in turn represents the contribution of my thesis (see beginning of Chapter Nine).

2.1.3. Field

My understanding of what the participants tell me, in the data, about *how* social spaces such as living in a war zone positively influence their criticality formation enables me to therefore read their accounts as examples that can be explained using Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) concept of field. I view *field* as social spaces or socio-cultural contexts with their own regulatory principles where individuals' practices take place. These social spaces can be institutions, discourses, rules, rituals, conventions and regulations, all of which constitute objective structures (Webb et al., 2002). These social spaces can also be '[f]amily and community structures, corporations and businesses, government departments and agencies…through which individuals may pass as they play out individual life trajectories' (Carrington and Luke, 1997, p. 100).

Field represents the more structural part of Bourdieu's social theory and is also sometimes referred to as 'market' and 'game' (Thompson, 1991). An important point in Bourdieu's concept of field is that individuals are in constant struggle and competition over acquiring capital, preserving their current capital or improving it (Thompson, 1991; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). An example of this constant struggle is in the climbing field. This field, historically, has a set of structures and relations defining its practices, and it is the place of social struggle between several and various competing social positions, including class and gender (Beedie, 2008; Brown and Brown, 2009). The structures of this field define what is

possible and what is impossible for agents and the basis for the social order and hierarchy in the climbing field (Maton,2014).

I also view that individuals' practices, such as criticality, are the outcome of an intersection between field and habitus. Habitus and field (examining the interactions and events that happen in a specific field) are both important to understand the essence of the individuals' practices (Bourdieu, 2005; Thomson, 2014). The reason for this view, as inspired by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), is that exploring the fields where individual's practices take place contributes to understanding and interpreting them. This intersection between field and habitus can be read in Grenfell's (2014) hypothesis. Grenfell hypothesises that if habitus and field are to be examined separately, field would make the objective part of practice, representing a set of rules characterising a social context. In contrast, habitus would be the subjective part.

Field and its rules

My interpretation of what the participants tell me about the influence of social pressures on constructing their criticality enables me later to recognise it in Bourdieu's conception of field and its rules. His conception helps me to understand what my participants are talking about.

I argue, along with Bourdieu, that the rules that govern fields are not static. Instead, they can be fluid and dynamic (Webb *et al*., 2002; Thomson, 2014). Bourdieu (1986) explains the way in which this can happen as follows. Individuals can either try to change and transform the rules of a certain field or opt to maintain their current capital by complying with its rules, which contributes to reproducing the same rules and structures of field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The fluidity of field may be evident in the viewpoint of Webb *et al.* (2002, p. 22), who argue that the fields are formed as a result of 'interactions [and discussions] between institutions, rules and practices'. However, they are not merely set up by the institutions, but

can also be influenced by the development of technology and population growth (Thomson, 2014).

With regard to my thesis, I have some participants' experiences which, according to my subjective interpretation, depict this conception of field and its rules. For instance, 'supervisory field' stands for participants' conversations with their PhD supervisors, and it appears in the data to contribute to nurturing participants' criticality by enhancing different thinking and independence. This field is governed by some rules. Another example is thinking outside the box in the way some participants wrote their thesis shows that they understand the rules of what I refer to positively 'the PhD game' but decide to play it in a different way. This type of incident exemplifies resistance to the pre-established template or rules of structuring a PhD thesis. Some other participants appear to comply with the rules of the supervisory field by acting independently and taking full responsibility for their reading materials. This may indicate that they are aware that being independent is one basic rule of 'the PhD game' and complying with this rule can lead to the attainment of 'profit' in the form of a completed PhD.

2.1.4. Playing the game

Bourdieu's analogy, 'playing the game', therefore helps me to understand what is going on with the participants. I perceive 'playing the game' as reasonably conforming or challenging the rules of different fields. Participants' statements show to me, for instance, that perseverance and thinking and acting independently are essential rules of playing what I positively refer to as 'the PhD game' and the game of living in an unfamiliar environment. They also appear to internalise these rules. The importance of this internalisation that is demonstrated in my participants' accounts resonates with Crossley's (2001) and Thompson's (1991) suggestion that internalising the rules of the game is essential for individuals to participate effectively in it. These rules, perseverance and independence, in turn, represent my interpretation of *ways of living* attached to criticality and that my participants appear to comply with them.

Bourdieu (1986) uses the analogy 'playing the game' to illustrate how individuals can use their symbolic (i.e. status), economic (i.e. material assets, money), social (i.e. social networks) and cultural capital (i.e. cultural artefacts, skills, credentials) to their advantage in order to succeed in education and future employment. For example, regarding the interlink between 'playing the game' and social capital, Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) adopted Bourdieu's description of capitals to explore their positive and negative influences on the experiences of undergraduate students. They found that social capital can widen opportunities for employment. For instance, a middle-class student stated that his social network, such as family members, had helped him prepare for interviews and provided work placements. This demonstrates how he used social capital to conform to normative behaviours. It also shows 'playing the game' in the sense that he aligns with institutional environments, thus succeeding at employment.

2.1.5. Bourdieu's concepts: interconnection

My reading of Bourdieu's theory of practice is that there exists an interconnection between habitus, field and playing the game. This interconnection contributes to explaining the relationship and influence of social structure on the formation of individuals' practices.

Again, as I mentioned at the beginning of this section, my position that it is this interconnection and 'hybrid activity' that needs to be nurtured as alternative forms of understanding the social world and individuals' practices has been widely evidenced in some significant works. For example, this interconnection between habitus, field and playing the game is evidenced in Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992, p. 96) statement that these concepts 'can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 96). This interconnection between habitus and field is further demonstrated in Thompson's (1991) argues that the practices, perceptions and interpretations of individuals can be better understood only with reference habitus within the social context (field).

My position, along with Thompson's (1991), connects with Maton's (2014) assertion that the practices of individuals are the outcome of inter-influence of one's habitus and one's position in a field. What further represents the growing evidence, concerning the importance of the interconnection between Bourdieu's concepts in understanding individual practices is, among others, Crossley's (2001) argument, along with Wacquant's (2002), that Bourdieu's concepts provide both context that helps to better understand individuals' practices and actions, as well as resources for individuals themselves to perform certain actions. Indeed, it is this interconnectedness between these concepts that demonstrates the importance and value of Bourdieu's work (Wacquant, 2002).

Again, Crossley (2001) specifies that there is a circular relationship between Bourdieu's habitus, field and playing the game. First, habitus refers to how a person reacts to a situation based on their previous experience. Second, fields form the context wherein these practices take place, and which also shape them. This circular relationship can be read in Bourdieu's definition of field: 'a critical mediation between the practices of those who partake of it and the surrounding social and economic conditions' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 105).

My understanding of Bourdieu's theory of practice enables me to see that this interconnection between habitus and field can also be explained from this view: the dialectical and dialogical relationship between agency and structure. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1990) and Crossley (2001), the construction of one's habitus results from the dialectical and dialogical relationship between agency and structure in the sense that Bourdieu's theory provides a way of understanding social structure as existing as a real objective form outside of the individual but also in the minds and practices of individuals. This dialectical and dialogical relationship indicates that habitus does not act alone. Instead, habitus as the property of individual agents, groups or institutions that encompasses a set of dispositions, traits and states is shaped by the field (the objective structure) (Bourdieu, 1990). In other words, agents are not just pre-

programmed by the structure of the field. Instead, their habitus in the form of practices and behaviours are the results of this dialectical and dialogical relationship.

2.2. Paul's theory of critical thinking

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I relate Bourdieu's and Paul's theories both to what my participants told me and to my concept 'criticality as a form of fluid habitus'. I now move to explain the aspects of Paul's theory that relates to this concept. Hearing my participants talk about their sense and practices of criticality and how criticality is dialogic enables me to see that their understanding ratifies Paul's conception of dialogical thinking. In this section I will therefore present an overview of Paul's theory, showing that one of his main arguments is that criticality is dialogic. I will then explain Paul's 'tools of critical thinking', illustrating the dialogue and complex interaction between these tools. I conclude this section by demonstrating my argument that Paul's theory is still living.

2.2.1. Overview of Paul's theory

It appears to me that among Paul's main arguments is that the quality of the individual's behaviour is determined by the quality of their thought (Elder and Paul, 2006; Paul, 2012; Elder, 2020).

He also argues that 'though it is human nature to think, it is not natural for humans to think well…Therefore, we need to be able to intervene in thinking, to analyse it, assess it, and, where necessary, improve it…[I connect this with their explanation that] human nature is heavily influenced by prejudice, illusion, mythology, ignorance, and self-deception' (Paul, 2015, no page). Paul Further argues that criticality is dialogic.

Again, seeing in the data that the construction of criticality is dialogic therefore gives me credence to both Paul's conception of dialogical thinking and Bakhtin's dialogic perspective. Putting Paul and Bakhtin in conversation enables me to therefore understand what is going on

with the participants. In the next section, I will first look at Paul's perspectives and then connect it with what Bakhtin argues.

2.2.2. Criticality is dialogic

For Paul (2012, p. 318), dialogic thinking or critical thinking in dialogue refers to the thinking that involves 'extended exchange between different points of view, cognitive domains, or frames of reference'. This sense of dialogue indicates that considering issues deeply requires exploring their connections to other ideas within different points of view. Drawing on the point 'exploring their connection', I argue along with Paul that the dialogue that critical thinkers engage in is exploratory. By exploratory, Paul (2012, p. 318) means 'proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view'.

Paul further argues that dialogical thinking and dialectical thinking are integral to the acquisition of different forms of knowledge. This dialectical thinking refers to dialogical exchange conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. His sense of dialogue that emphasises considering opposing point of view is further evidenced in his statement that 'dialectical thinking can be practiced whenever two conflicting points of view, arguments, or conclusions are under discussion' (Paul, 2012, p. 318).

My reading of Paul's dialogical and dialectical thinking suggests that his sense of practicing this thinking involves two main points: multilogicality and opposing points of view. This reading is supported by Paul's (2012, p. 268) statement that 'most 'real-life' problems are multilogical in nature, and thus require consideration from multiple points of view'. This reading in turn enables me to see a resonance with Bakhtin's sense of dialogue in the sense that this multilogicality and opposing points are represented in Bakhtin's dialogical perspective as multivoiced-ness and disagreement. This is demonstrated in Udaondo's (2008) suggestion that

Bakhtinian dialogue concerns relational communication, which is the outcome of the tension produced by the disagreement, difference and judgement that occurs between multivoiced-ness and diversity of ideas. It appears to me that Bakhtinian dialogue suggests the importance of recognising the voices of others in the process of re-constructing one's perspective. Concerning the relationship between the self and the other in a dialogue, Holquist (1990), along with Bakhtin (1981), suggests that it is a combination and interaction of past and present relations in the present.

Bakhtin (1981, 1984) further notes two main elements of dialogue: speaking person and voice. The former refers to the interlocutor and the latter stands for discourse and speaking consciousness. The speaking person might be an actual person or an idealised person with whom a discourse is fundamentally fused with (Bakhtin, 1981). Discourse, on the other hand, is the language articulated to others by the speaking person in a spoken or written form in a particular situation to others. It also implies a viewpoint on the world (Emerson, 1984). This discourse, is dialogical as it is always 'half-ours and half-someone else's...[that] our own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345). This discourse, for Bakhtin (1984), that is infused with indignation, passion or disbelief, is always present in the person and engage in agreement, conflict, negotiation or even accompaniment with each other in the inner dialogues. This discourse is provoked when it engages in a dialogical interaction with others' points of view that are described as different from that of the speaking person. In line with this, Bakhtin (1981, p. 423) argues that '[e]ach of us has his or her own language, point of view, conceptual system that to all others is alien'. It appears to me that by 'alien' here, he means opposing points of view and therefore perspectives are dialogical and dialectical in Paul's term.

Referring back to Paul's multilogicality, he argues that most important issues of everyday life are multilogical and human and therefore criticality in dialogue (dialogical thinking) is

required. These issues are human because ‘we live in a humanly contrived and constructed world…we do not deal with the world in itself but the world as we define it in relation to our interests, perspective, and point of view…’ (Paul, 2012, p. 272). These issues are therefore multilogical because there is more than one way to construct world. This multilogicality is illustrated in Paul’s (2012, p. 275) statement about dialogical thinking in early school years where many of the children’s beliefs, for example, ‘come from those around them. Nevertheless, from their earliest days, they come up against opposing points of view, differing interpretations of events, contradictory judgements, and incompatible lines of reasoning’.

Meaning-making through dialogue

I see in the data that one of the significant benefits of dialoguing with others who hold different perspectives is reconstructing and growing one’s understanding and practice of criticality in the sense of broadening one’s perspective. This benefit of dialogue as reconstructing meaning resonates with Bakhtin’s (1981) definition of dialogue as self-other communicative practice that contributes to ‘meaning-making’ and suggestion that individuals construct new meanings as a result of engaging in dialogue. This is because this dialogue can give a possibility of transgredience, which means that individuals are influenced by and take from others’ socio-cultural knowledge. This transgredience can result from engaging in agreement, conflict, negotiation or even accompaniment with others’ voices (Bakhtin, 1984).

This benefit of dialogue as reconstructing meaning connects again with Paul’s (2012) argument that dialogical thinking enables individuals to create new ideas and to develop rational knowledge. An illustration of the importance of dialogical thinking is in Paul’s (2012, p. 268) example that ‘teaching all subjects through a dialogical approach…encourages students to make their ideas explicit and to critique them, making their own ideas more sophisticated, rather than superimposing ‘insert school knowledge’ upon ‘activated student ignorance’’. For Paul (2012, p. 277), this dialogical thinking is essential ‘for rationally approaching the most

significant and persuasive everyday human problems, and without it they [individuals] will not develop the intellectual tools essential for confronting their own instinctual egocentric thought. Until we discover our own egocentric thinking, we cannot monitor or work through it'. Paul (2012, p. 279), therefore, concludes that lack of dialogical thinking and, instead, emphasis on monological instruction with various authoritative perspectives being nurtured explain some of the problems of schooling today, such as producing 'vulgar and sophisticated, rather than critical believers'.

Fluidity: dialogue

What I learnt from the participants' lived experiences is that constructing criticality is fluid. This fluidity results from this constant engagement with others in dialogue and thus, again, my working definition of 'criticality as a form of fluid habitus' (see middle of Chapter One). This fluidity does resonate with Bakhtin's concept 'unfinishedness' in the sense that it describes the on-going formation of individuals' perspectives. This resonance is evidenced in Bakhtin's (1981, p. 364) statement that an individual's point of view or what he labels 'voice' is 'not finite, it is open'. I argue that this fluidity and 'unfinishedness' also relates to Paul's (1993) sense of 'still learning'. This 'still learning' is demonstrated in his trait of criticality, intellectual humility. Intellectual humility refers to the thinking and acting that reflects the idea of 'still learning' in response to constant interaction with others.

Paul (2012, p. 317) gives us a sense of this 'still learning' in his assertion that 'students do not come to the classroom with blank slates for minds…their thinking is already developing in a direction… they have already formed ideas, assumptions, beliefs, and patterns of inference… they can learn new ideas, assumptions, and beliefs'. Indeed, Paul (2012) argues that dialogue, where students scaffold their previously constructed thinking, form the core of this 'still learning'.

2.2.3. Paul's model of critical thinking

I see that Paul's sense of dialogue can also be observed in the interconnection and complex interaction of his 'tools of critical thinking'. Along with Paul (1993), a number of recent works, such as Reed and Kromrey (2001), Scanlan (2006), Nosich (2012), Sullivan (2012), Payette and Ross (2016), Bankes *et al*. (2020), and Elder (2020) argue that three interlinked 'tools of critical thinking' – the elements of thought, intellectual standards and intellectual traits – can be used by individuals willing to develop their thinking.

Once again, I argue throughout my thesis that criticality encompasses *ways of knowing and ways of living*. I am aware that similar way of wording my argument can be read in different works, such as Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley's (2016, p. 990) statement that 'criticality comprises both ways of thinking and ways of being'. My argument enables me therefore to see connection with Paul's (1993) 'tools of critical thinking' in this sense. It appears to me that what my understanding of *ways of knowing* resonates with Paul's elements of thought and intellectual standards and of *ways of living* connects with his concept of intellectual traits. This resonance between our perspectives is strengthened in my reading of Paul's argument as basic *ways of knowing* cannot be isolated from basic *ways of living*. Because of the space available and to avoid repetition, I will explain and demonstrate this resonance as I go under each section. I will also show this interconnection and complex interaction between these 'tools of critical thinking' by focusing on demonstrating the interlink between his concept of intellectual traits towards the end of this chapter.

Elements of thought

I see, in the data, that the participants think through different situations by, for example, asking certain questions, identifying their purpose, and interrogating information and evidence. Seeing their ways of enquiry enables me to therefore learn and see resonance with Paul's elements of thought. This resonance in turn helps me to fathom what my participants told me.

These elements of thought represent Paul's conceptualisation of thinking as it encompasses eight different but interlined elements (aspects): purposes, questions, information, inferences, assumptions, point of view, implications, and concepts (Elder, 2020, p. 14). These elements of thought were developed in a number of the publications of Paul and Elder, such as Paul and Elder (2006, 2007, 2008), Elder and Paul (2016) and Elder (2020). For example, Elder and Paul (2016) explain that critical thinkers use concepts, ideas and theories to interpret data, facts and experiences in order to answer questions, make decisions and solve problems.

I see, along with Elder (2020), that individuals' use of elements of thought indicates that they think for a purpose, which could be answering questions. They use information to make inferences and draw conclusions. Individuals make assumptions as attempting to understand certain situations and experiences. Their thinking is underpinned by a particular point of view which draws particular implications.

Referring to this Paul's element of thought, *questions*, the participants showing to me *how* they consider questioning as the golden thread that ties up and drives my understanding of *ways of knowing* (see Chapter Eight). By *ways of knowing*, I refer to questioning the taken-for-granted, considering others' perspectives, questioning the development of the argument, questioning the 'sub-text', and questioning the evidence. My understanding of what the participants told me helps me later to see connections with Paul's element of thought, *questions*. It enables me also to see the importance of this questioning in Elder and Paul's (2019) argument that questioning in a learning mind never ends as it stimulates new *ways of thinking*. The importance of questioning is also visible in this statement that the quality of one's thinking is evident in the quality of one's questions (Elder and Paul, 2006; Elder, 2020).

Regarding the order of these elements of thought, my reading of Paul's theory suggests that this way of ordering them must not mean that their use is not flexible. An illustration of this

flexibility is in Elder and Paul's (2006) statement that the reasoning can start with an assumption, then raising questions in order to achieve a certain purpose ...etc. This flexibility is further evidenced in Elder's (2020, 2021) recent presentations at the 40th and 41st annual international conference on critical thinking who argues that critical thinking must consider the aforementioned eight elements, but the order depends on the critical person. My understanding of Paul's theory also reveals that changing the purpose of thinking, for example, has implications for the other elements. This means that changing the purpose entails changing the questions so that they seek out relevant information.

For Paul (1993, 2012), it is analysing and assessing these eight elements of thought that enables individuals to take charge of their thinking. In taking charge of one's thinking, Paul argues that 'traditionally philosophical approaches' falsely focus only on few elements of thought namely assumptions, information and conclusions. Instead, he argues that 'all reasoning …therefore can be analyzed into eight specific parts in determining its full logic. All products of reasoning (conversations, articles, books, speeches, editorials, video programs, etc.) can be analysed according to the eight elements. Further, to ignore any one part is to misunderstand the interrelationships between all parts' (Paul, 2015, no page).

Intellectual Standards

Among other examples in the data, what appears to represent participants' sense of criticality in the sense of watching their thinking is their emphasis on interrogating evidence sufficiency. Knowing this enables me, later on, to comprehend how Paul's (1993) intellectual standards (which I explain in the following paragraph) might help me to make sense of what my participants said.

Another example is regarding trustworthiness as an essential standard to watch their thinking and therefore be critical. What appears to me is that although trustworthiness is not explicitly

suggested by Paul's (1993) conception of intellectual standards, its meaning in the participants' use appears to resonate with Paul's conception of accuracy as an intellectual standard. This resonance is in the sense that thinking can be checked to the extent that one can determine it represents things as they really are.

Paul's intellectual standards are ten: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, breadth, depth, logicalness, significance, completeness, and fairness (Elder, 2020, p. 21). However, this number of intellectual standards must not mean that Paul does not acknowledge that there could be more or less intellectual standards in natural and everyday languages. I refer again to the true implication of this number of intellectual standards that it shows that Paul's theory is still living towards the end of this chapter.

My interpretation of Paul's theory indicates that he argues that these intellectual standards capture the standards used in natural (everyday) languages that emphasize quality of thought. He further argues that they are vital to assess individuals' thinking. Furthermore, these intellectual standards are significant and essential to practically any type of thinking (Paul and Elder, 2006; Elder, 2017, 2018; Elder and Nosich, 2020). For example, Elder and Paul (2008) argue that these intellectual standards are presupposed in every subject and discipline. It appears to me, along with Elder and Paul (2008), that the frequent use of these intellectual standards is essential to cultivate individuals' intellectual and live as an everyday critical person.

Intellectual traits

In the data, the participants showed to me evidence of how they live as an everyday critical person. This evidence enables me to argue that criticality is more than a set of skills. Instead, it encompasses *ways of living* that depict how individuals live their lives (see Chapter Seven). Knowing this enables me to recognise it in Paul's (1993, pp. 316–317) statement that critical thinking is more than merely mastering a certain set of skills but also having particular traits

that describe how critical thinkers live their lives, how they learn, how they communicate with other people and how they see the world. This connection therefore explains how Paul's theory enables me to understand what is going on with my participants.

My understanding of Paul's theory is that intellectual traits can be referred to as critical thinking dispositions, habits of mind or virtues. My reading of (Elder, 2020) indicates that Paul argues for the need to understand and promote these intellectual traits: intellectual humility, intellectual autonomy, intellectual integrity, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance, confidence in reason, intellectual empathy and fairmindedness. I states them here and I will explain and illustrate their meaning in the following section where I discuss their interconnection.

I see that these intellectual traits were not completely new or firstly introduced by Paul. Instead, I can see an implicit reference to the importance of these intellectual traits in the works of a number of researchers, such as Ennis (1987) and Facione and Facione (1992), who included them in their models and definitions of critical thinking. An instance of this implicit reference is the intellectual traits proposed by Ennis (1987) are incorporated in Facione and Facione' s (1992) and in Paul' s (1993) models under slightly different terms. For example, 'seek as much precision as the subject permits' (Ennis, 1987) relates to 'intellectual curiosity' (Paul, 1993) and 'inquisitiveness' (Facione and Facione, 1992).

My observation that there is an implicit reference to the importance of these intellectual traits in some other works connects with Paul's (2015, no page) statement, in The Foundation for Critical Thinking, that intellectual traits 'can be seen, at least implicitly, in the works of a number of important thinkers throughout history, including Socrates, John Locke, William Graham Sumner, John Henry Newman, and Bertrand Russell'. However, I argue, inspired by Paul (2015) that the contribution of his intellectual traits is in precisely describing them

as *intellectual* in nature; clearly defining and illustrating each of them; and arguing for the importance of these traits in developing critical minds and critical societies.

Intellectual traits: interconnection

As I argue throughout my thesis, adopting non-essentialist paradigm enables me to realise that things could be seen that often remain invisible in essentialist studies. One of my realisations is that, in the data, participants actually show to me further evidence of being critical, such as perseverance, humility and curiosity. I also realise that these *ways of living and being* critical are interconnected. An example of this interconnection is in this heading 'I always want to know' in data Chapter Seven, by which I refer to participants' perception that learning is ongoing. This reference to 'still learning' shows connection between my interpretation of both curiosity and humility as *ways of living* in the sense that they both imply that learning to learn and to unlearn is an ongoing process.

Realising that this interconnection, between what I understand as *ways of living*, continues to emerge throughout the data enables me therefore to see resonance with Paul's intellectual traits. It also helps me to see connections with the works that build on and still developing Paul's ideas, such as Elder (2020), in the sense that Elder argues that intellectual traits are interlinked and interdependent. This realisation, in turn, feeds into my argument that there is a complex interaction and multidirectional influence between Paul's 'tools of critical thinking' and even within the elements of each tool. I choose to demonstrate this complex interaction by focusing on showing the interconnection of intellectual traits.

I, now, refer back to Elder's (2020, p. 27) work because, along with my argument, she asserts that Paul's intellectual traits are interdependent. To demonstrate this interdependence and complex interaction, I start by considering intellectual humility. It means that individuals recognise that they do not know everything (Elder, 2020, p. 24, 27). Elder (2020, pp. 24–25)

further argues that, for individuals, to realise what they know and what they do not know (humility), they need both intellectual integrity and intellectual courage. The former means acting towards others and respecting them in the same way they want to be respected (Elder, 2020, p. 25). It reads to me that intellectual integrity also enables individuals to be true to their own thinking and to recognise the limits of their knowledge as well as the limitations of their point of view.

At a different level, intellectual courage enables individuals to squarely face the biases and prejudices that might be responsible for their own cognitive shortcomings (Elder, 2020, p. 24). This reads to me as intellectual courage requires questioning individual beliefs in order to know if they are meaningful. My reading associates with Elder and Foundation for Critical thinking's (2018) suggestion that elements of thought and intellectual standards are useful to recheck the beliefs individuals have been holding for a long time. This rechecking of individuals' beliefs demonstrates having intellectual courage, which is necessary for intellectual humility in the sense that in order to admit what one does not know, courage is required.

At another level, intellectual integrity and intellectual courage, in turn, appear to require intellectual autonomy. Intellectual autonomy, for Elder (2020, p. 25), is thinking for oneself in accordance with intellectual standards. Elder further argues that it can be used interchangeably with intellectual independence. I again see that talking about the link between these traits is by no means straightforward. However, my attempt to describe this link is that intellectual autonomy is essential to being true to one's thinking (intellectual integrity) and assessing one's own thinking and acknowledge its strengths and weaknesses (intellectual courage) using intellectual standards, such as clarity and consistency.

My reading of Elder's (2020, p.27) statement about the interconnection of intellectual traits indicates that being intellectually independent means discovering solutions to problems for

oneself. One way to decide for oneself what to believe and do is again using intellectual standards. My reading also suggests that since it is challenging to think for oneself in accordance with intellectual standards, especially when one must face and address ideas toward which one has strong negative emotions and to which one has yet to give a serious hearing, intellectual autonomy – and thus intellectual integrity – requires intellectual courage. This therefore illustrates my position that there is a complex interaction and multidirectional influence between these intellectual traits.

This complex interaction is further demonstrated in my observation that intellectual courage, in turn, requires intellectual empathy. My observation resonates with Elder's (2020, p. 24) perspective that for individuals to be aware of their own biases and prejudices (intellectual courage), they often consider counter viewpoints in the sense that they understand how other people think and feel. Indeed, this represents a sense of intellectual empathy. In other words, intellectual empathy can be seen as when individuals disagree with others and try to see the situation from their point of view.

What further shows this complex interaction between these intellectual traits is that intellectual empathy involves the flexibility of mind that enables individuals to reasonably switch from one perspective to another. This intellectual empathy, besides intellectual autonomy and intellectual integrity, require intellectual perseverance. I see that intellectual perseverance is remembering that struggle is part of learning and improving thinking. My perspective goes in line with Elder's (2020, p. 25) assertion that given the demands of thinking for oneself and taking responsibility for one's own thinking, individuals constantly need to stick to relevant information and use their knowledge and insight to the optimum level despite obstacles and difficulties. It seems to me that this type of perseverance is particularly required when the struggle with uncertainty and confusion may persist for an extended period of time.

Likewise, I understand that intellectual empathy requires confidence in reason and fairmindedness. First, Elder (2020, p. 26) suggests that confidence in reason means trusting evidence, facts and reasoning. Elder further explains that one possible way to demonstrate confidence in reason is using information that is accurate and relevant to a specific problem in order to solve it, avoiding superficial answers to complicated problems and thinking about problems from different points of view. Second, intellectual empathy requires fairmindedness in the sense that the latter refers to trying to know what is most fair in every situation and for everyone involved and to imagine what it would be like to think and feel as other people do (Elder, 2020, pp. 25–27). This sense of fairminded thinkers must not mean putting one's desires and needs above those of others and therefore intellectual empathy is involved here.

Furthermore, this interlink between intellectual empathy and fairmindedness is shown in Paul's (Paul, 2012; Elder, 2020) argument that fairminded thinkers do not discriminate against any viewpoint because of their own feelings and interests, or the feelings or interests of members of any group to which they belong. For Paul, what helps them to illuminate this risk of discrimination is using intellectual standards. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, this is how I see this complex interaction and multidirectional positive influence of intellectual traits and it is, in turn, my attempt to show it for individuals to live as an everyday critical person.

2.2.4. Paul's theory is still living

I was constantly looking around my research environment which enables me to see that Paul's theory is still working and living. This looking around provided a place for hearing Linda Elder's perspectives relating to how Paul's theory is evolving at the 40th and 41st annual international conference on critical thinking in 2020 and 2021. Along with Elder's perspectives, my observation that Paul's theory is still living is evidenced in the debate around

the number of intellectual standards (see the middle of this chapter). This debate is illustrated in Paul's (2015, no page) suggestion, in The Foundation for Critical Thinking, of nine standards. However, Bankes *et al*. (2020) assert that Paul's theory does not falsely imply that there could not be more or less intellectual standards than nine in natural and everyday languages. What further demonstrates that Paul's theory is living is Paul's (2015, no page) assertion, relating again to the number of intellectual standards, does not agree with Paul, Elder, and Bartell's (1997) argument that there are seven intellectual standards: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, consistency and breadth. This disagreement in the number of intellectual standards is visible in Elder's (2020, p. 21) list, which shows ten standards.

Another piece of evidence that shows to me that Paul's theory is still living is visible in adding 'sufficiency' as another intellectual standard. Regarding this, Barnes *et al,* (2020) asserts that the Foundation for Critical Thinking recently has added 'sufficiency' as another intellectual standard which enables individuals to decide when they have thought enough to fulfil their intention of considering a certain topic (Bankes *et al*, 2020). The point I want to stress on is the number itself is not important. Instead, what is important is its true implications, such as this ongoing dialogue and thinking about and around Paul's theory enables more layers of understanding and interesting and unexpected complexities to be uncovered.

2.3. Conclusion

Returning to my statement at the beginning of the chapter, I argue that I developed a theoretical construct which enables me to create a discussion that relates the data and the theory. What the participants told me about their experiences of constructing criticality enables me to therefore see that no single theory can help me to pull together what I am writing about. I found three theories which appear to me to be particularly relevant to my thesis. This relevance is in the sense that dialogue (interaction with others), whether explicitly or implicitly, plays a central role in all three of these theories. Referring to particular concepts of Bourdieu's, Bakhtin's and

Paul's theories that relate to my data takes me to more layers of understanding and into finding all sorts of threads between the data and theory. This searching for threads enables me to therefore understand and explain my constructed concept, 'criticality as form of fluid habitus'.

Chapter Three: Criticality

Because criticality is the core concept of my thesis, I also thought it was important to read generally what people are saying about it. And because different people, such as philosophers, cognitive psychologists, and educators had plenty to say on the subject, a thorough review of the literature of critical thinking would be impossible. Therefore, in this chapter, my aim is to provide more critical attention to recent thinking in criticality in higher education, with particular emphasis placed on demonstrating my two interconnected arguments.

Concerning my first argument, my understanding of this literature enables me to organise it based on two opposing positions. The first position is that criticality is a set of skills. I oppose this position by arguing that criticality is more than a set of skills. Indeed, it comprises both *ways of thinking* and *ways of living*. This argument in turn relates to my working definition of criticality (see the middle of Chapter One). Second, I argue that attention to criticality in higher education is important because it connects with and capitalises on how individuals live their lives as an everyday critical person. I will structure this chapter following these two arguments, and in each section, I will show how they are developed in response to the particular literature that I choose to cite.

As a point of terminology, I note that throughout the literature, the two terms critical thinking and criticality are used. Some authors use them interchangeably to mean the same thing. In some cases, the authors use one rather than the other. Throughout this thesis, I use them interchangeably to mean the same thing. Where they indicate different concepts in the literature, I will make a point of noting this.

3.1. Areas of debate

I appreciate that there are different areas of disagreements in the criticality literature. In this section, however, I choose to refer to two main areas of debate because they are closely related to what I am writing about in my thesis. I will therefore take each debate in turn.

3.1.1. Criticality is more than a set of skills

It appears to me that one major area of debate, in the criticality literature, that my thesis contributes to relates to whether criticality is a set of skills (position one), or it is more than this (position two). Here, again I argue that criticality is more than a set of skills. Instead, it encompasses both my understanding of *ways of thinking* and *ways of living*. I presented and demonstrated this understanding of criticality towards the end of Chapter two, where I showed how my interpretation of criticality is informed by what I learnt from the participants and connects with my constructed theoretical framework. Concerning this connection, since criticality is the core concept of this chapter and since I have built on Paul's theory of critical thinking as discussed in Chapter Two, I will refer to his work where appropriate and as I go in this chapter.

I now refer back to this major of debate. Position one is adopted by some researchers, such as Lewis and Smith (1993), Johnson (1994) and Facione (1990), suggests that critical thinking is a set of skills, such as interpretation, inference, and evaluation. For example, this suggestion is evident in Facione's (1990) statement.

> We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based. Critical thinking is essential as a tool of inquiry. (Facione, 1990, p. 6)

This statement is from what is commonly known as the Delphi Report. Delphi Report was commissioned by the American Philosophical Association to provide a definition of critical thinking. Facione (1990), the executive director of this association, conducted a systematic inquiry into the state of critical thinking. He employed the Delphi Method, which requires forming a group of researchers interested in sharing their reasoned thoughts and open to reconsidering them in the light of others' arguments. This group of researchers (panel of experts) consisted of forty-six researchers, drawn from various disciplines. 52% were philosophers, 22% were educationalists, 20% psychologists, and 6% affiliated with physical science. Facione (1990) brought this panel of experts on critical thinking to a 'consensus' on its uses for education, instruction and assessment.

An example of this consensus is this Delphi panel overwhelmingly agreed that analysis, evaluation, and inference were the core skills necessary for critical thinking (Facione, 1990). Along with the Delphi panel, Halonen (1995) suggests that the Delphi Report provides some significant examples of cognitive elements of critical thinking, such as argumentation, inference-drawing, and reflective judgments. Halonen (1995) further notes that this report also shows the inclusion of dispositions, abilities and attitudes, the propensity elements of critical thinking. In Table 1 below, I show how this Delphi panel defines the skills of critical thinking.

Table 1. The Delphi Report skills (Facione, 1990, pp. 6-10)

Skills	**Sub-skills**
Interpretation	Categorising, decoding significance, clarifying meaning. This skill focuses on one's ability to 'comprehend and express the meaning and significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or criteria' (Facione, 1990, p. 6).
Analysis	Examining ideas, detecting arguments and analysing arguments. It enriches an individual's ability to 'identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions or other forms of representation intended to express beliefs, judgments, experiences, reasons, information, or opinions' (Facione, 1990, p. 7).
Evaluation	Assessing claims and arguments. It focuses one's ability to 'assess the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts or descriptions of a person's perceptions, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intend[ed] inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions or other forms of representation' (Facione, 1990, p. 8)
Inference	Querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives and drawing conclusions. This suggests that an individual should be able to 'identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information and to reduce the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation' (Facione, 1990, p. 9).
Explanation	Stating results, justifying procedures and presenting arguments. It emphasises that an individual must be able to, 'state results of one's reasoning; to justify that reasoning in terms of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological and contextual considerations upon which one's results were based; and to present one's reasoning in the form of cogent arguments' (Facione, 1990, p. 9)
Self-regulation	Self-examination and self-correction. It implies that one must 'self-consciously [sic] monitor one's cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis and evaluation to one's own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one's reasoning or one's results' (Facione, 1990, p. 10)

In response to position one, again, it is important to acknowledge here that I prefer the alternative view that criticality is also *a way of living*. My preference indeed influences how I analysed the data. Along with my alternative view, Elder (2020), who is still building on and developing Paul's theory of critical thinking in The Foundation for Critical Thinking, argues that criticality is a way of living and a social practice because it informs and guides individuals' actions, behaviours and their perceptions of the world. What further describes Elder's sense of criticality as a way of living is her statement that critical thinkers do more than thinking; they also act ethically based on their rationalised judgements.

This alternative view connects with the works of Frijters, Ten Dam and Rijlaarsdam (2008), National Research Council (2011), Knight (2021), and Thomas (2021). For example, Inspired by Frijters, ten Dam & Rijlaarsdam (2008), Thomas (2021, p. 157) argues that the ability to think critically is an essential life skill. For Frijters, ten Dam and Rijlaarsdam (2008, p. 68), this means that 'critical thinking should combine logical reasoning with value development to enable citizens to make their own contribution to society in a critical manner, with sensitive awareness'. Here, it reads to me that this focus on criticality as also 'value development' in turn relates to Elder's sense of criticality as behaving ethically that results from individuals' rationalised Judgements. Critical thinking as a way of living is therefore 'a vital 21st century skill for the effective preparation of citizens and workers for life and work in today's society' (Knight and Robinson, 2021, p. 2). I will elaborate on the importance of criticality towards the end of this chapter.

3.1.2. No consensus is a research opportunity

It again appears to me that another major area of debate, in the criticality literature, concerns defining, teaching, assessing and enhancing critical thinking. Regarding this, there appears to be two opposing viewpoints.

First, some researchers, such as Ennis (1987), Facione (1990) Lewis and Smith (1993), Bensley (1998), and Moseley *et al*. (2005), suggest that there is a general, limited consensus on how to define and teach critical thinking and how to evaluate the development of students' abilities. Among these researchers, Lewis and Smith (1993), along with Facione (1990), further argue that this limited consensus may explain why scholars in the field of critical thinking have not yet introduced a definition or theory of critical thinking that is accepted as definitive. The false implication here is that this limited consensus represents a problem.

Second, by contrast, Haber (2020) opposes this view that the existence of a limited consensus represents a problem arguing that a limited agreement on defining critical thinking, less knowledge of how to teach it and how to evaluate if students' critical thinking ability is improving are a myth. Haber justifies this as there exist some significant theoretical and practical approaches that define, teach and assess critical thinking, such as the Delphi report (Facione, 1990) and Paul's (1993) theory of critical thinking, and the works of The Foundation for Critical Thinking Community, which is still to present building on and developing Paul's ideas.

In critiquing the first perspective, I see that having a limited consensus on defining and teaching critical thinking does never represent a problem. Instead, it is indeed an opportunity for further research. My position, no consensus but dissensus, connects with Martin and Griffiths's (2012, p. 923) interpretation of Souza's (2008) argument. Souza (2008) argue that it should never be a goal to arrive at a consensus when focusing on multiple perspectives. Instead, dissensus is the alternative, 'which requires an awareness of internal and external difference (which parallels Burbules' notions of difference within and difference without, 1997) and an openness to new possibilities instead of substantial and universal certainties' (Souza, 2008, cited in, Martin and Griffiths, 2012, p. 923).

An example of this limited consensus which represents research opportunities is in observing unclear relationships between concepts, such as critical thinking and higher order thinking and critical thinking and creative thinking. This unclear relationship is demonstrated in Reed's (1996) assertion that these concepts (critical thinking, higher-order thinking, thinking skills, informal logic, informal reasoning, problem-solving, argumentation, critical reflection, reflective judgment, and metacognition) are related. However, it is not clear how they are related and therefore this creates an important discussion.

Concerning the link between critical thinking and higher-order thinking, while Halpern (1993) uses them interchangeably, Facione (1990, p.13) identifies critical thinking as 'one among a family of closely related forms of higher-order thinking. This is along with...problem-solving, decision making, and creative thinking'. Facione (1990) furthermore pointed out that the relationship between critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making has yet to be satisfactorily examined.

This link between critical thinking and higher-order thinking is viewed by Elder and Paul (1998) as higher-order thinking is an umbrella term that includes critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making, but not creative thinking.

However, it appears to me that this Elder and Paul's (1998) perspective has been developed by Elder (2017). Elder (2017) suggests that there is an intimate relationship between critical thinking and creative thinking. This intimate relationship is evident in her statement that 'though we separate these functions [critical thinking and creative thinking] for purposes of theoretical clarity, we nevertheless argue that each must be involved if the other two are to be effective' (Elder, 2017, p, 21) and that 'the critical and creative functions of the mind are so interwoven that neither can be separated from the other without an essential loss to both' (p. 4).

For Elder (2020), critical thinking is thinking about thinking in order to 'identify its strengths and weaknesses and recast it in an improved form (where necessary)' (Elder, 2020, p. 21). For Elder, this means that critical thinking is analytical, evaluative, and creative because its first characteristic (identifying its strengths and weaknesses) entails examining and assessing a thought, and the second requires individuals to be skilled in creative thinking suggests improving thinking.

Elder's (2020) statement that there is an intimate relationship between critical thinking and creative thinking resonates with Paul's (2012, p. 282) argument that 'it is misleading to talk of developing a student's ability to think critically as something separate from the student's ability to think creatively'. Paul's (2012, p. 282) sense of this intimate relationship is demonstrated in this statement.

> All rational dialogical thinking requires creativity because dialogical thinking is a series of reciprocal creative acts wherein, we move up and back between categorically different imagined roles. We must first of all imagine ourselves in a given frame of reference. Then we must imaginatively construct some reasons to support it. Next, we must step outside it and imagine ourselves responding to those reasons from an opposing point of view. Then we must imagine ourselves back in the first point of view to respond to the opposition we just created. Next, we must change roles again and create further response, and so on. The imagination and its creative powers are continually called forth. Each act must fit the unique move preceding it. In dialogical exchange, we cannot predict in advance what another, or indeed what we, will say. Yet what we say, to be rational, must respond to the logic of what the other just said. Furthermore, integrating the strengths of opposing views, and eliminating weak points are also creative and constructive acts. One must creatively develop a new point of view.

Here, Paul relates this discussion about the link between critical thinking and creative thinking to his understanding of dialogical thinking, which in turn relates to my argument that criticality is dialogic (see towards the end of Chapter two).

3.2. Why criticality is so important

What I learnt from the participants' lived experiences enables me to argue that attention to criticality in higher education is important because it connects with and capitalises on how individuals live their lives as an everyday critical person. My reason for referring to my data in my literature review is to show that there is a resonance between my understanding of what the participants told me and what has already been said in literature. This reference to my data here therefore demonstrates that the chapters of my thesis inform and talk to each other (as mentioned towards the end of Chapter One). To show this resonance, I will begin this section, first, by explaining Paul's statement and then relate it to how what Brookfield (2003, 2012), Johnston et al. (2011), and Davies and Barnett (2015) say relates to my argument.

The participants told me that being independent, perseverant, confident, empathetic, courageous, humble and curious represent their sense of criticality as *a way of living*. This representation of criticality as *a way of living* depicts who the participants are and how they live their everyday lives. It makes sense to me that this representation of criticality as ways of living resonates with Paul's concept of intellectual trait, which constitutes a significant part of my theoretical framework (see the middle of Chapter Two).

Again, these intellectual traits describe how critical persons live their lives. Critical persons for Elder and Foundation for Critical Thinking (2018, p. 8), who are developing Paul's ideas, are ethical, empathetic and just because they 'develop intellectual abilities [traits] to serve one's interests while respecting others' rights and needs and act as forthrightly as possible, resulting in people being treated reasonably and fairly'. This indicates that critical persons try to fulfil

their own ethical obligations at the expense of their selfish desires and interests. An example of how critical persons live their lives is they appear to cultivate their ability to determine whether any belief systems, social norms, or laws are ethical by developing a conscience that is not subservient to fluctuating social conventions, theological systems, or unethical laws (Elder and Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2018, pp. 4 – 17).

Focusing on criticality in higher education is vital because it connects with how individuals live an ethical life and creating an ethical world (Elder and Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2018, p. 2). An illustration of this, and how critical persons act in a group, is they tend to value the welfare of other nations, religions, or ethnic groups as much they value their own. They seem to think about the consequences for others of their own group's pursuit of money, power, prestige, and property. This what shows how they try to act consistently on ethical principles when dealing with other people (Elder and Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2018).

What further demonstrates that it is crucial to focus on criticality in higher education in the sense of connecting with individuals' existing sense of criticality is the human tendencies towards egotism, prejudice, self-justification, and self-deception (Elder and the Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2018, pp. 4 – 17). These individuals as everyday critical persons can resist these tendencies through cultivating Paul's intellectual trails, such as fairmindedness, honesty, integrity, self-knowledge, and deep concern for others' welfare (Paul and Elder, 2003; Elder and Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2018).

My reading of Elder and Foundation for Critical Thinking (2018) and Paul and Elder (2003) suggests that developing oneself as an everyday critical person take time and practice. It is an integral part of becoming educated persons and critical thinkers who apply the art of self and social critique and who recognise the pervasive everyday pitfalls of ethical judgment, such as moral intolerance, self-deception, and unethical conformity.

I now refer back to my representation of criticality as a way of living. It again makes sense to me that this representation of criticality resonates with and can describe what Johnston et al. (2011) mean by critically engaged citizens of the world. Johnston et al. (2011) argue that critical thinking is a major and enduring aspect of higher education, and the development of criticality in students has long been a core aim. They also suggest that higher education should be an educational process involving a composite of thinking, being-in-the-world, and action. This means higher education, potentially, do much more than teach students how to demonstrate critical thinking, for example, as analytic skills and judgments (Johnston et al., 2011; Cowden and Singh, 2013).

This critique of the true role of higher education is also evident in Davies and Barnett's (2015, p. 17) statement that since criticality is an aim in higher education, teachers and academics have a wider set of responsibilities than that 'of imparting skills in argumentation, or developing in students a capacity for rational "reflection" or decision making, or even cultivating critical thinking dispositions'. Instead, the role of higher education is to create critically engaged citizens who, for example, understand themselves, view the world critically, and demonstrate an active socio-political stance towards established norms or practices (Johnston *et al.*, 2011). This again connects with Davies and Barnett's (2015) assertion that higher education should attempt to encourage students to reach a level of 'transformatory critique'. For Davies and Barnett (2-15, p.17), this 'transformatory critique' refers to how individuals 'live and breath as a critical thinker, …become an *exemplar* of what it means to be critical being', who, for example, participate in their societies as critically engaged citizens.

Referring back to the note of terminology I made at the beginning of this chapter, Davies and Barnett (2015) are among the researchers that they use the terms criticality and critical thinking to mean different things. They argue that 'criticality…is a *wider* concept than critical thinking…To some extent it subsumes critical thinking' (p. 17).

A further demonstration of my understanding of the importance of criticality as a *way of living* is in Brookfield's (2012) argument that the ability to think critically about one's assumptions, beliefs, and actions is a survival necessity. It is a survival necessity to be aware of one's assumptions, as is thereby evaluating their accuracy and appropriateness in one's life. Building on this argument that criticality is important in higher education, Brookfield (2003), along with Johnston *et al*. (2011), suggest that there is little evidence on *how* postgraduate students experience criticality to become 'effective' citizens and employees and therefore my thesis. My thesis is worth doing because it shows how the participants capitalise on their pre-existing criticality and this enables them to be more 'successful' students and live their lives in an unfamiliar environment as everyday critical persons (see the beginning of Chapter Nine).

3.3. Critical reading

My participants told me about their approaches to critical reading. While for my participants, their reference to critical reading seems simply to be how they relate their critical thinking to their reading, I acknowledge that in some literature critical reading is a more specific concept. I will now explore the particular literature that connects with my participants' understanding of critical reading.

Talking about their approaches enabled them to communicate and exemplify what criticality is for them (see Chapter Eight). Seeing this in the data in turn made me read generally what people are saying about critical reading in relation to critical thinking. From reading Petty (1956), Kennedy (1991), Wallace (2003), Elder and Cortina (2014), Van Blerkom (2011), and Wallace and Wray (2016), I understand that critical reading, in relation to critical thinking, concerns the application of, for example, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, to the reading of texts. Here, my understanding of critical reading connects with Petty's (1956, p. 300) statement that critical reading is to 'think while reading, to evaluate, to judge what is important or unimportant, what

is relevant or irrelevant, what is in harmony with an idea read in another book or acquired through experience'. Petty's (1956) statement that shows how evaluation is important in critical reading in turn resonates with Thistlethwaite's (1990) suggestion that critical reading involves both evaluation and analysis.

From this group of writers, I found Wallace (2003) and Wallace and Wray (2016) to be the most useful for my purposes. They are useful because I see resonance between what my participants told me and these researchers' understanding of critical reading. For example, the participants were talking about how evaluating the development of arguments is among the aspects that represent their understanding of criticality and their approach to critical reading because it frames and guides their line of thought. This link between evaluating the development of arguments and critical reading in participants' accounts resonates with Wallace and Wray's (2016) suggestion that critical reading is the capacity to evaluate what has been read and to relate it to other information. These researchers also suggest that critical readers evaluate the extent to which authors have provided justification for their claims and, thus, whether their claims are convincing. I see that Wallace and Wray's (2016) suggestion, in turn, relates to Elder and Cortina's (2014) assertion that critical reading is evaluating the author's arguments, skimming for the main ideas, and scanning for specific information. This link between evaluating the development of arguments and critical reading can also be read in Van Blerkom's (2011) statement evaluation is an example of critical reading skills, in addition to analysis and questioning.

Wallace and Wray (2016) further argue that critical reading involves considering the extent to which authors might make an illogical jump in their reasoning by scrutinising and assessing whether their arguments follow the conclusions logically. This might mean examining whether there is a match between authors' claims and those of other authors, and between authors' claims and readers' knowledge. This might also mean that, in this case, critical readers try to

understand the structure of arguments. This understanding of structure of argument, according to Wallace and Wray (2016) can be achieved by checking the relevant literature throughout to ensure that author's understanding is sufficiently deep.

It reads to me, along with Paul and Elder (2016), that this understanding of structure of argument, in turn, enables knowing whether authors have clear foundations for their conclusions and any generalisations they offer, consider alternative perspectives on and interpretations of a supported claim, and have argued convincingly that their interpretation is sound. This focus on logical reasoning in Wallace and Wray's (2016) conception of critical reading resonates again to my participants' understanding of their approach to critical reading when interrogating others' viewpoints, to them, appears to mean questioning the logic and trustworthiness of argument and learning about the experience and background of the author. For example, in the data, such questioning appears to contribute to perceiving that 'absolute truth' is an issue, and criticality is needed to deal with it.

When the participants talked about their approach to critical reading as 'reading the sub-text', among other aspects, this allowed me to therefore see a resonance with Wallace's (2003) concepts of 'reading between the lines' and 'depth noticing'. My reading of Wallace's (2003) work suggests that her conceptualisation of critical reading can be described in two points. First, critical reading is 'reading between the lines'. This might mean that readers understand what is unsaid, as well as what is meant and communicated, by writers. I see that this 'reading between the lines' is closely related to Wallace's (2003, p. 95) term 'depth noticing' which she considers useful for understanding the different functions of language, such as finding the cultural meanings in written texts and 'appreciate[ing] the ways in which texts are written for different audiences'. Along with Wallace (2003), It makes sense to me that this 'depth noticing' can be achieved by analysing language in context, in order to infer what is communicated in a text but not written explicitly. This 'depth noticing' appears to be required because not only

texts are often written for several cultural audiences but also writers themselves could be multicultural due to living in a globalised society.

Second, drawing on this multiculturality nature of some texts, Wallace (2003) further suggests that critical reading is a cultural act. This means it is an individual response to texts that reflect writers' social and cultural lives, which involves understanding cultural meanings in written texts. Building on this particular conception of critical reading, Wallace recommends that educational settings address cultural and social issues through textual study.

It again makes sense to me that it is this multiculturality feature of some texts that explains Wallace's (2003, p. 95) statement that critical readers 'see how texts may be read in different ways by different people'. To demonstrate this statement, I believe that a text written in English could be read differently by readers for whom English is an additional language. This must not mean that those whose first language is not English have a problem with critical reading. Instead, this must mean that it is just that they read critically in different ways.

3.4. Conclusion

My intention throughout this chapter is to provide a critical take on the criticality literature that I chose to use to demonstrating my arguments. My reading of this literature enables me to argue that criticality is not only about skills. It indeed describes individuals' *way of living* as everyday critical persons. My reading of this literature also helps me to argue that the existence of debates, disagreements and a limited consensus on how to conceptualise, teach, assess and even apply criticality in everyday life represent significant opportunities for further research to uncover some more interesting complexities and bring out different layers of understanding.

Once again, my reason for referring to some particular literature on critical reading, in this chapter, is to indicate that my participants relate their sense of critical thinking to their reading. In so doing, I am being true to what I argue throughout this thesis that there is constant

conversation between my data and relevant literature. A final point I wish to make here is that what the participants' lived experiences begin to tell me is that attention to criticality in higher education is important because it connects with and capitalises on how individuals live their lives as an everyday critical person. One way of bringing out this connection is teaching or supervising students, for example, must not presume that students need to learn how to be critical. Instead, the focus must be on encouraging them to bring out their criticality into the academic work and everyday life too. I see that this connecting to their existing criticality is therefore an important educational principle if only we can find more ways to see it.

Chapter Four: International students' voices

In this chapter, my goal is to provide an overview of the context of my study. Recent thinking in internationalisation, with particular emphasis placed on international students and their experiences of constructing criticality represents this study's context. I am going to organise it according to two basic positions about international students: non-essentialism and essentialism. I appreciate that this is a bit simplistic. It is, however, helping me to sort out my thinking. Non-essentialism suggests that international students can be as much critical thinkers and independent as anyone else. It values the experiences they bring with them and appreciates what can be learnt from their learning styles and attitudes and what they can offer to the internationalisation process. This non-essentialist view of international students, I feel, enables me to oppose essentialism. Pre-established essentialist narratives falsely represent international students as a problem. It argues that critical thinking is 'Western', and for international students to learn it, they should learn it from the 'host' national culture.

In this chapter, I make two main arguments, which provide a preliminary rationale for the current research. First, I argue that there is a research opportunity in how international PhD students construct their criticality in particular from a non-essentialist perspective. Second, it appears to me that that some of the evidence that links between studying abroad and criticality builds on and adds to the essentialist discourse about international students because it falsely implies that these students lack criticality until they learn it by studying abroad. In my thesis, however, I argue that traveling per se to anywhere and from anywhere might contribute to nurturing students' existing sense of criticality, which they bring from their backgrounds, because it broadens their perspectives. This is the area that needs more investigation, which is what this thesis intends to show.

4.1. Non-essentialism

My position, the non-essentialist view, represents international students as inspiringly active, critical thinkers and not a homogenous group. This view depicts recent thinking in the internationalisation research. According to Holliday (2011, p. 144), it derives from the social action theory of Max Weber (e.g., 1964, first published in 1922), which argues that social structures influence individuals but do not define them because they are able to dialogue with these structures. This dialoguing can be in a form of resisting the national-cultural influences. Holliday (2011, p. 144) suggests that a critical cosmopolitan argument develops this idea of dialoguing with the social structures in the sense that cultural boundaries are blurred (see, for example, Grande, 2006), imagined and constructed through political positioning within an unequal world (see, for example, Hall, 1991b, 1991a; Hannerz, 1991).

There are significant works that enable me to see this non-essentialist critical cosmopolitan view of international students, in particular Hellstén (2007), Montgomery and McDowell (2009), Holliday (2011, 2017, 2018, 2022), Caruana (2014), Caruana and Montgomery (2015), Welikala (2015), and Ploner (2018). For example, Welikala (2015) makes two main non-essentialist points. First, international students are not a homogeneous group, and UK universities fail to consider this. Academics, for instance, continue to believe in a collectivist narrative that Asian students are not critical thinkers and that Chinese students will never speak up in the classroom. However, Welikala (2015) asserts that this thinking has failed because they are the lack of language proficiency and knowledge about the focus of discussions, which are often centered on British context, that justify why international students do not engage in these discussions. This assertion resonates with Holliday's (2017, p. 216) 'cultural belief' that people from all cultural backgrounds have the same intellectual potential as any British student but might simply be disadvantaged by lack of local knowledge. Indeed, international students are like any other students who bring valuable knowledge, skills, and pedagogic cultures (Welikala,

2015). The thinking that they are a homogeneous group and passive learners, therefore, does not lead to intercultural dialogue. Instead, it leads to misunderstandings.

Second, UK universities have to revisit and correct their perceptions about the reasons international students study in the UK and how they learn. It is a myth that the quality and reputation of UK higher education is the only reason why international students choose to study in the UK. This myth leads to the false assumption that they 'come to the UK to escape the less sophisticated, traditional national education systems' (Welikala, 2015, no page). Welikala illustrates her point as one of the other reasons for studying in the UK is that they are not able to secure a place in the best universities in their home countries.

This non-essentialist view has been widely evidenced in Holliday's work. Holliday (2022) argue that international students are inspiringly active in their own spaces. For example, in his study of Hong Kong students on a language immersion programme in Britain, he observes that despite the common stereotype of Hong Kong students not thinking critically, they '*actively* engaged in their own spaces, in a large university lecture in Hong Kong, on school attachments, when working on projects in their home room, and in a highly critical and satirical theatrical review of British life' (Holliday, 2022, p. 368, my emphasis). He also saw a video of these stereotyped students in a secondary school class in Japan 'actively' engaged in private conversations about how to answer questions from their teacher (p. 368). This true, non-essentialist reality is further demonstrated in his observation that 'the same Iranian students complained in their private talk that their British teacher was not sufficiently 'communicative' to keep them *actively engaged*' (p. 368, my emphasis). When they were invited 'to design their own classroom, they turned it into a radically student-led learning laboratory' (p. 368). This active engagement is also illustrated in Holliday's (2022) observation 'of a Damascus University lecture [that] revealed an inspiringly active engagement among the students, despite their silence, in face expressions, scribbling in their notebooks and body language' (p. 368).

Another piece of evidence of this true, non-essentialist reality is in Amadasi and Holliday (2018, p. 247). They find that a particular student 'presents her 'own culture' as competent to deal with the situation in which she finds herself even though marginalised by the host mother'. This competence is demonstrated in her 'reference to her full engagement with the resource of the discussion in the university class'. This engagement, in turn, 'evidences the critical cosmopolitan expansion of her notion of 'I already have a culture''. It also 'indicates social action in her walking away that crosses structural boundaries and transcends and rejects the 'blah, blah, blah' discourse of the perceived blocking grand narrative' (Amadasi and Holliday, 2018, p. 249). Furthermore, Amadasi and Holliday (2018, p.249) argue that the difficulties that international students, particularly their participant, encounter are not because of 'an essentialist cultural difference in values, but due to a more practical matter of being in an unfamiliar place where she is unsure of the resources available to her'. Given this uncertainty, 'her resilient use of resources is evidenced in different situations, in particular, calling friends, other study abroad students on her course, one of whom is able to join with her resilient action by getting a taxi to come for her' (Amadasi and Holliday, 2018, p.249).

What further represents the growing non-essentialist evidence, concerning international students, in the internationalisation literature is, among others, Holliday's (2011, p. 144) argument, along with Robson's (2008), that 'it is not the foreign [Hong Kong] students who are the problem but the way in which we look at them'. This means 'understanding what is going on between the Hong Kong students and their British tutors therefore requires making sense of the Western condition which underpins the perceptions of the tutors'.

Holliday (2011, p. 147) argues that the established dominant perception of the behaviour of foreign students may seriously undervalue the cultural resources which they bring with them and can contribute to the internationalisation process. This non-essentialist statement is shown in the 'reconstructed ethnographic narrative…which is based on the data collected from the

Hong Kong students and their tutors in Canterbury and on conversations with other students from a range of national backgrounds concerning their experiences with academic life in Britain' (Holliday,2011, p. 147). He further suggests that 'The break from essentialist thinking requires an appreciation that the Hong Kong students bringing postcards of expressionist paintings to the tutorial is not due to a 'Westernising' influence, but to an indigenous, cosmopolitan modernity which is unrecognised and Peripherised by the Centre Western definition of who they are' (p.144).

Further non-essentialist evidence is in Holliday's (2017) statement that being a 'home' or an international student is not a significant factor when it comes to experiencing complexities regarding self-expression in writing. He observes that these difficulties are shared among all his participants (i.e., an American, a Bangladeshi, three British, a German Iranian, a Malaysian, a Mexican, and a South Korean) irrespective of their cultural or national background. Consequently, the students' cultural or national background is not the reason that explains the struggles that the students experienced, such as self-expression in writing. Based on this viewpoint, Holliday (2017) suggests that the division of students as 'home' or 'international' students within an intercultural community is improper, and the labels themselves are problematic.

4.2. Essentialism

My preferred non-essentialist position critiques the essentialist discourse of international students. Essentialism represents 'people's individual behaviour as entirely defined and constrained by the cultures in which they live so that the stereotype becomes the essence of who they are' (Holliday, 2011, p. 4). According to Holliday (2011, p. 143), this essentialist view of international students and their culture is influenced by 'a structural-functional picture of society'. This means their behaviour and values are 'defined almost entirely in terms of national

cultural characteristics' and 'can be predicted and explained by the structures of the national culture which contain them'.

This essentialist perspective has been adopted by a number of researchers, such as Fu and Townsend (1998), Atkinson (1997), Guan (2000), Zhao and Coombs (2012), Fu and Townsend (1998), Gui (2009), and Nisbah (2012, 2016). It suggests that the problems faced by international students in British universities, regarding their approaches towards critical thinking, are often derived from their previous cultures. This means 'Western' education and the British university environment are a gift to these deficient students where they have to learn criticality. This perspective characterises East Asian students as coming from 'collectivist' national cultures (Guan, 2000; Zhao and Coombs, 2012) and, in the case of Zhao and Coombs (2012), correspondingly 'collectivist' pedagogies marked by rote learning. Moreover, these students have been characterised as: educationally deficient (Fu and Townsend, 1998); lacking individual voices when writing in English (Gui, 2009); and passive learners and uncritical thinkers (Zhao and Coombs, 2012; Nisbah, 2016). Consequently, Zhao and Coombs (2012, p. 251) suggest integrating critical thinking skills into the teaching of English to develop 'an original learner voice, self-identity, and an individualised pedagogy'.

This essentialist perspective is evidenced in Atkinson's (1997) research because it shows, as Amadasi and Holliday (2018, p. 248) argue, a blocking 'my culture, your culture' grand narrative. Atkinson (1997) argues that critical thinking is cultural thinking (p. 89), and teaching it to 'non-native' speakers may be fraught with cultural problems (p. 71). Consequently, he argues that teaching cognitive skills, including critical thinking, to non-native speakers is a problem (p. 87). My reading of Atkinson further suggests to me that his moral argument is that respecting 'non-Western' students means not expecting them to be critical because criticality

is not part of their culture. The false implication here is that international students are not critical thinkers and may be unable to understand what critical thinking is.

Nisbah's (2012, 2016) research further supports this essentialist framework of international students. Her research is ambitious but ultimately limited because she establishes it on a collectivist narrative of international students that is 'by no means fixed' (Amadasi and Holliday, 2018, p. 247). Nisbah explores the problems encountered by international students with critical thinking and writing. Employing interviews, self-reports, and learners' diaries, she argues that these problems often derive from students' educational backgrounds, if their cultures a) prioritise collective over individual learning and b) discourage critique of other scholars out of respect. Nisbah (2012, 2016) also argues that students' critical thinking and writing approaches are strongly influenced by familial factors, such as parental education, respect for elders, and parents' fear of children's independence. For example, she reported that some participants believe that 'non-Western' parents want their children to respect and rely on them for decision-making rather than exercising independence. Similarly, Ng (2001, p. 29) argues that 'dependence of the child on the parents is encouraged...[and] is considered desirable'. However, it appears to me that there is a misunderstanding of being independent. Being independent, as inspired by Paul (1993), Elder and Paul (2006), and Elder (2020), refers to discovering for oneself by analysing one's thinking and *considering others' perspectives* using intellectual standards, including clarity, accuracy, and relevance to decide what to believe and do. In contrast, it does not mean believing or doing what a person wants to, unthinkably.

With regards to writing problems related to critical thinking, Nisbah (2012, 2016) found that participants encountered problems with clarity, transitioning between theory and practice, critical analysis of arguments, critical evaluation, and drawing sound conclusions. She interpreted these findings as showing a gap between the 'Western' educational expectations

indicated by English teachers and the difficulties that students from 'non-Western' cultures encounter. The essentialist viewpoint states that international students' academic and cultural backgrounds are the main reasons for perceived problems with critical thinking. This falsely implies that students labelled international are regarded as a homogeneous group, irrespective of their individual differences.

I, now, refer back to my preferred non-essentialist critical cosmopolitan perspective to explicitly critique this essentialist grand narrative about international students. Essentialism has been challenged for being 'deficit' (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Ploner, 2018) because it perceives international students as a homogeneous group. This false perception may suggest ill-informed assumptions about cultural differences among these students (Hellstén, 2007). It has also been widely critiqued for assuming ill-reasoned correlations between cognitive deficit and cultural maladjustment. This concerns, in particular, 'Asian' learners whose 'Confucian' learning modes are often misunderstood as being in conflict with 'traditional Western' pedagogies (Biggs, 2001; Hellstén, 2007).

Furthermore, essentialism has been critically questioned for dismissing the value of international students' diversity. For example, Caruana (2014) suggests that student diversity provides a rich source of lived experiences that can be utilised to develop graduates into global citizens. This indicates the benefits of international mobility for intercultural understanding, which is an essential quality for a global citizen (Caruana, 2014). Furthermore, international students' diverse backgrounds influence the development of resilience (Caruana, 2014) and criticality, for instance, within multicultural learning environments such as the UK. Caruana and Montgomery (2015, p. 13) also suggest that understanding individuals' backgrounds is crucial and, therefore, 'local society and culture is important'. They also note

that the benefits of international education are more than financial and encompass exporting education.

4.3. Internationalisation

Defining the term internationalisation is complex, dynamic, and multifaceted. One 'simple' categorisation of its definitions is in theory and practice. I believe this categorisation is a bit simplistic, but it is helping me to sort out my thinking. In theory, the focus of internationalisation seems to be to enrich educational systems. For example, its commonly accepted definition seems to be 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purposes, functions or deliveries of post-secondary education and research' (De Wit *et al.,* 2015, p. 29, European Parliament Study).

De Wit *et al.* (2015), along with Knight (2011, 2015), Brandenburg and De Wit (2012) and Welikala (2015), suggest that moving beyond the 'traditional' conception of internationalisation requires a focus on enriching the quality of teaching and learning. It also requires enhancing 'the quality of education and research for all students and staff' (De Wit *et al.,* 2015, p. 29). For these researchers, this shift in focus paves the way for more transparency, integrity, and sustainability in the future. This therefore is what makes a meaningful contributions to societies, individuals, communities, and higher education institutions.

In practice, however, the focus of internationalisation is economy-growth. For instance, Taskoh (2014, pp. 158-159) defines it as '[t]he process of commercialising research and postsecondary education, and international competition for the recruitment of foreign students from wealthy and privileged countries in order to generate revenue, secure national profile, and build international reputation'.

There exist various categorisations of the motives of internationalisation, which further shows the complexity of understanding it. For example, its rational can be considered from historical

and critical perspectives. Historically, research on the internationalisation of higher education, learning the motives of incorporating international dimensions into the curricula, has identified economic, political, social-cultural, and academic justifications that are both nationally and institutionally inclusive (Knight and De Wit, 1999; Knight, 2004; De Wit, 2011).

For example, Knight (2004) suggests that nation-building and developing human resources often represent the national reasons for internationalisation. Some other reasons include developing socio-cultural and intercultural understanding, and building strategic partnerships. Knight (2004) further suggests that all this require facilitating student and staff mobility and boosting world economy. Internationalisation, on an institutional level, for Knight (2004), appears to be adopted for different reasons, such as democracy, equity, quality, profit transparency, attraction, mobilisation and reputation across universities, transnational cooperation, cross-border activities, grading systems, diversification and expansion of higher education, intercultural understanding, and income generation.

From a critical lens, the rationales for internationalising higher education fall into three further categories: idealism, instrumentalism, and educationalism (Knight, 2004; Stier, 2004). The idealist rationales concern democracy, equity, and international cooperation. In contrast, economic reasons drive the instrumentalists, who suggest that higher education institutions are engines for economic growth (Stier, 2004; Knight, 2004). Their purposes include commercial trade, strategic alliance, transnational corporation, income generation, reputation enhancement, and mobilisation (Knight, 2004).

From the educationalists' perspective, however, Knight (2004) argues that internationalisation of higher education focuses on broadening students' and scholars' experiences. Furthermore, Knight emphasises that it has be academic in nature: otherwise, internationalisation might be

criticised or falsely interpreted as ‘a way to find solutions for global concerns’ (Knight, 1999, p.18) instead of adding value to the quality of higher education.

Internationalisation, building on the existence of different motives to it, is encouraged by institutions worldwide. This is demonstrated in the 15th General conference of IAU organised in Thailand in 2016, which was attended by 400 presidents and leaders of universities from more than 80 countries. The importance of internationalising higher education is also shown in the British Council report (2017) on national policies for international engagement in higher education. It finds that its importance is evident in being considered within the institutions of 23 out of 26 of the studied countries.

Similarly, the 4th Global Survey Report (2017) of IAU (International Association of Universities) on higher education and research for sustainable development shows that 45% of the 120 surveyed higher education institutions showed commitment to integrating international plans into their institutions. Furthermore, 70% of these institutions showed willingness to working together with other universities for sustainable development (IAU Annual Report, 2017). This focus on sustainable development connects with Trends’s (2015) suggestion that the internationalisation of higher education calls for global collaboration between its institutions. Trends’s (2015) suggestion reads to me as this collaboration therefore feeds into developing innovative and sustainable societies.

4.4. Critical approach to internationalisation

I argue that internationalisation reinforces higher education’s commodification and commercialisation. This argument resonates with Khorsandi’s (2014) and Battistella’s (2020) statement that it is a competitive instrument devoted to income generation, reputation, and nation-building through soft power. The implication here is that even though internationalisation is suggested to address the money-based concerns of globalisation, it faces

similar challenges. Consequently, Knight (2011), Brandenburg and De Wit (2012), Knight (2015), and Welikala (2015, no page) suggest the need for a more meaningful and critical approach to internationalisation, marked by holistic changes and clear values central to everybody.

Some of these meaningful approaches, for Knight and De Wit (1999) and Knight (1999, 1994), encompass the activity approach, which refers to academic mobility and curriculum, and the competency approach, that focuses on the consequences and implications of internationalising higher education and is essential to enhancing knowledge, skills, values, and the way students, staff, and faculties think though things. While the ethos approach of internationalising higher education aims to develop its international, intercultural initiatives of change by potentially creating new cultures and climates on campus, the process approach stresses the institutional policies and procedures underpin the integration of international dimension into academic activities (Knight, 1994).

This focus on creating critical approaches to internationalisation is apparent in Brandenburg *et al*.'s (2019) suggestion of a value-based model. They argue that two opposite dimensions of internationalisation appear to exist: the market-based and value-based models. Inspired by Brandenburg *et al*.'s (2019), I argue that the former is essentialist-neoliberal because it suggests that institutions promote internationalisation using a range of institutional systems for financial and competitive reasons. This market-based model is spatially limited to a single location – the international student office – and seems to be described as a divided and self-centered, institution-student relationship (Brandenburg *et al*.,2019). On the other hand, Brandenburg *et al*. (2019) suggest this value-based model of internationalisation, which critiques the market-based model. This suggestion is because these researchers argue that individuals are not focusing on the true values of both the internationalisation and the institutions and their practices. This model emphasises a holistic and mutually developed institutional programme

that aims to develop learning and teaching and make students 'global citizens'. While the market-based model seems to be simplistic and binary, the value-based model appears to be fluid and therefore requires the embedding of internationalisation across the institution (Brandenburg *et al*., 2019).

This essentialist-neoliberal focus of internationalisation on economic growth is evidenced in the positive economic impact of international students. An extensive study was conducted by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) (2018) examined the economic impact of international students using the data generated by a London Economics report (2018). London Economics report (2018) presented some significant findings regarding their impact on the UK economy. For instance, the economic benefit generated by a typical EU student from the 2015/2016 cohort was £87000. On the other hand, the economic benefit generated by a typical international student within the same cohort was £102000. The total economic contribution by all EU and non-EU students was around £22.6bn, of which £17.5bn was generated by international students (non-EU). While the benefit generated by a typical EU student is estimated at £87000, the costs incurred from hosting them, which covers teaching grants, student support, and other public costs, are estimated to be £19000. In contrast, the costs of hosting international students are estimated at around £7000. This data demonstrates the positive impact of international students on the UK's economy. As highlighted by London Economics report (2018), the benefit of hosting international students, non-EU HE students is 14.8 times greater than the total cost.

I argue, along with Montgomery and Nada (2019), that international students have significant impacts on the local and national economies of the countries they study in, although this positive construction of their contribution is not the predominant representation. Moreover, I suggest that there is an ignorance of constructing international students as individuals with unique and complex trajectories. This means that in addition to being a significant economic

benefit, they contribute to nurturing UKHE through sharing knowledge that develops socio-cultural understanding. For example, their backgrounds can educate 'home' students into becoming 'some of the UK's best advocates overseas' (DFE and DIT, 2019, p. 13). This shift in focusing on the contribution of international students other than economic growth connects with Montgomery's (2009) findings that these students are perceived as having different perspectives on their subjects rather than as deskilled and dependent. Similarly, UK VC (cited in Shiel and Mckenzie, 2008) suggests that globalisation's main advantages in higher education are intellectual and cultural and not only financial because travelling to study may contribute to forming variously interacting global communities.

4.5. Neoliberal university

Neoliberalism in higher education is a good point to refer to because, in its essentialist form, it aims to make money out of international students. Its emphasis on economic growth, as Kubota (2016) and Shahjahan (2014) argue, is evidenced in its characteristics, particularly privatization, marketization, and increased student fees. For example, Shahjahan (2014), supporting Harvey's (2005), Baez's (2010), and Ong's (2006) statements, suggests that neoliberal HE comprises this set of material developments in HE: marketization, privatization, and emphasis on human capital development. It also encompasses the logic that assumes and justifies these material structures. This logic implies that constructing self-enterprising individuals whose main interest is enhancing their human capital should be the main role of society. Furthermore, as Baez (2010) suggests, society is not the object of intervention in neoliberal efforts. Instead, it is the individual.

Neoliberalism's characteristics, such as privatisation and marketisation, encourage competition between universities for income (Kubota, 2016). This competition, according to Altbach (2013), is fed by university rankings, which are, in turn, promoted by research productivity.

This research productivity is measured by citation analysis and research funding (Altbach, 2013). For example, impact factors based on citation both dictate the ranking of academic journals and researchers' productivity (Kubota, 2016, p. 488). This research productivity creates pressure to publish, which obliges academics to try to 'position themselves competitively within the knowledge of marketplace' and 'as a good fit within the institution's neoliberal purpose' (Darder, 2012, p. 414).

I argue, as inspired by Back (2016) and Collins (2018), that through marketisation, the neoliberal university has to show that there are countable benefits to attract international students to spend money. An example of this, within internationalisation, is to claim that international students learn measurable progress in criticality by attending 'Western' universities. This means that these universities sell criticality as a commodity. This focus on countable learning is evidenced in Collins's (2018) statement that neoliberal university has discovered that intercultural awareness is somehow connected to an increase in criticality. It, therefore, encourages intercultural awareness courses in a way to convince students that they become more critical through increasing their intercultural understanding.

Neoliberal university, with its demands for individualisation of performance and value, for autonomous, self-motivating, and responsibilised subjects, found fertile ground in, first, academics whose predispositions to 'work hard' and 'do well' (Back, 2016, p. 10). For Back (2016), this means academics' ambition to do good work merges seamlessly with neoliberal imperatives based on egotism and selfishness. Second, as Shahjahan (2014, p. 221) argues along with Davies (2005), it also found fertile ground in a landscape tied to the 'fear for the survival of one's country' amid economic and cultural globalization; 'fear of the 'Other''; 'fear of the survival of the institution' amid funding cutbacks; and 'fear of one's own survival' created by the weakening of unions and reduction of support from social safety nets.

This focus on marketisation and privatisation, therefore, enables me to argue along with Back (2016) and Collins (2018) that neoliberal university is a toxic environment. This argument is justified by the fact that neoliberal university constructs students as paying consumers. This position resonates with Back's (2016, p.23) statement that in commercialised university, 'it is entirely logical that students should start to see themselves as paying customers. I think it is incumbent on staff to make their teaching worth the price it has cost'. Back (2016, p.23) explains this as:

> The marketisation of the university has turned campuses into places of commerce. It corrodes the value of thinking and learning. Money cannot buy a thought or a connection between ideas or thoughts, or a link between a private trouble and a public issue. The idea the education promises a straightforward return on a financial outlay reduces thought to a commodity. The commercialisation of higher education cheapens us all.

Students play an essential role in the economy of UK universities. Remarkably, the financial survival of these universities in the future may become increasingly dependent on international students (Back, 2016). Back (2016, p.33) illustrates this, stating that 'the Chinese student I spoke to after my lecture is paying three or four times as much to study in Britain than her fellow PhD students. In financial terms, she is not one student but four'. This construction of students as consumers enables me to understand why, as Back suggests, UK universities are increasingly seeking new international markets to recruit undergraduate and postgraduate students.

My position that neoliberal university is a toxic environment further connects with Shahjahan's (2014) argument, citing Canaan and Shumar (2008), that neoliberalism in higher education transforms students into consumers. This transformation is in 'institutions began to compete to sell their services to 'student consumers' and produce specialized, highly trained workers with

high-tech knowledge to enable a nation to compete freely in a global economy' (Shahjahan, 2014, p. 221).

Along with Olssen and Peter (2005), Shahjahan (2014, p. 221) argues that neoliberalism colonises HE. By colonization, he means 'anything imposing or dominating'. One sense of this colonization is that neoliberalism limits one's ways of being and social relations as educators and administrators. Shahjahan illustrates this sense as budget cuts prompt educators and administrators to feel that they will lose the money, coming from students, if they do not treat them as paying consumers. This money 'compensate[s] for lost funds from the public purse. We perpetuate the assumption that students are consumers who should enhance their human capital to secure jobs in a volatile labour market' (Shahjahan, 2014, p. 221).

4.6. Fluidity

I argue that the construction of the international students' experiences is fluid. My argument builds on and links to my statements in the beginning and towards the end of Chapter two. My argument in turn connects with Montgomery and Nada's (2019) finding that international student identities are fluid, and that the diversity of experience narrated by their participants illuminates and interrogates the essentialising assumptions that underlie perceptions of international students. This fluidity results from constant social, economic and political changes in the environment. This is illustrated in Montgomery and Nada's (2019) suggestion that Brexit (I refer to it in detail in the following section) will undoubtedly influence international students' sense of belonging and self-perception in the UK. However, they also found that the impact of political and social contexts might vary from student to student. This fluidity is also influenced by 'the policy context, the institutions (and their international strategies), the curriculum, attitudes of staff and students and the interaction between international students and their social environment' (Montgomery and Nada, 2019, p. 6) in each country.

Some studies that explore the influence of institutional factors include those by Carroll and Li (2008) and Montgomery (2009). The former found that international students' group work and competition were remarkable in higher-stakes learning environments, but also that stereotypes of them as passive, dependent learners still exist. In contrast, Montgomery (2009) considered how student attitudes to interculturality in higher education in group work may have changed between 1998 and 2008. She compared work carried out by Volet and Ang in 1998 in Australia with a similarly-constructed research project in the UK in 2008. The study found that in positive, interactive learning environments where group work was scaffolded and learning was 'low stakes' (i.e. ungraded and comparatively uncompetitive), student attitudes to working in international groups were predominantly positive, with each seeing the other as sources of knowledge (Montgomery 2009).

In Montgomery's (2009) study, students demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of culture and an awareness of the diversity within nationalities. She found that there was very little reference to international students as deskilled and dependent. Instead, international students were, for the most part, perceived as an opportunity to gain different perspectives on their subjects.

Both Carroll and Li (2008) and Montgomery (2009) show that the social and learning environments constructed in universities strongly influence the construction of the identities and attitudes of students. International students *lack criticality* is one of these constructs. For example, Marlina (2009) falsely assumes that international students are passive learners and *lack criticality* compared to 'home' students. This false assumption suggests a deficit approach that views international students as 'lacking in independent, critical thinking skills; as plagiarisers or rote learners' (Ryan and Carroll, 2007, p.6).

In critiquing the perspective that international students are constructed and construct themselves as lacking criticality, Lindsay (2015), Douglas *et al*. (2016), and Quinton (2019) argue that the reasons underpinning this are the negative and essentialist stereotypes that they themselves might create the *lack* they claim to merely identify. Similarly, Brown and Holloway (2008) stresses on the dangers of generalised negative assumptions about international students. Assuming such knowledge about them is a form of emotional-mental violence that could contribute to diminishing students' capacities (Ryan and Carroll, 2007; Coate, 2009). Ryan and Carroll (2007, p. 6) further argue that 'the deficit model is hard to sustain. International students have been successful in their home countries and have shown enterprise and initiative in trying to succeed in a foreign environment'.

In critiquing such adhesive stereotypes, Cardwell (2016) and Beneveto (2018) highlight that despite categorising students as international or overseas, academics often look at them as 'foreigners'. For example, Cardwell (2016, p. 2) argues that this way of looking at these students implies that they are seen as 'outsiders' rather than 'insiders'. Cardwell (2016, p. 5) further argues that seeing students as 'foreign' results from some adhesive and essentialist stereotypes which falsely claim that 'such students bring down standards'. Consequently, they cannot be adequately understood if using essentialising concepts and labels such as international (Trahar, 2014) as well as deficit models (Montgomery, 2010; Rienties and Tempelaar, 2013) that, by failing or refusing to acknowledge their astonishing diversity (Montgomery, 2010; Rienties and Tempelaar, 2013), may be incapable of reaching different conclusions (Lather, 2001).

4.7. International students' mobility

The global patterns of international student mobility are changing. This means contemporary social, cultural and political changes appear to influence this mobility. I therefore argue that their experiences need to be viewed in this fluid context.

There appears an important increase in international students' mobility. For example, OECD figures indicate that in 2014 the UK had 428,724 students from abroad (up from 416,693 in 2013) (ICEF 2017). These figures also show that there were more than 2.5 million students engaging in international mobility across 10 countries, including the United States, Australia, the UK, France and Germany. However, Altbach (2018) reports that the UK Council for International Student Affaires (UKCISA) noted that the incoming numbers into the UK decreased in 2018 because international students prefer other host countries that are less affected by, for example, xenophobia. For example, this decrease is evidenced in a 50% drop in the postgraduate numbers from India during 2013-2014 (Welikala, 2015, no page). What justifies this decrease, according to Welikala (2015), is increasing global competition, the strict migration policy of the UK, and the emerging new regional markets, such as China, Egypt, Japan, and Malaysia. Furthermore, Altbach and De Wit (2017) argue that global higher education may encounter vital changes because against the context of UK-Brexit disarray and increasing isolationism in the USA, China is attracting international students from across East Asia, who would otherwise have been bound for 'the West'.

Since the UK has learned much from EU approaches, such as internationalisation at home, and benefited from EU mobility funding and research programmes (Montgomery and Nada, 2019), Brexit (2016) has important impacts on international students' mobility into and out of the UK. For Montgomery and Nada (2019), Brexit has been strongly motivated by essentialist views of nationality and culture.

Since international students operate in fluid contexts, this UK's decision to leave the European Union exerts an influence on international students' sense of belonging (feeling the fragility of their position in the UK) and, thus, a decline in mobility (Montgomery and Nada, 2019). It has had also an impact on international students' sense of belonging in higher education in the UK. For example, after the UK's vote to leave the EU, in addition to changes in requirements of

obtaining a student visa, a remarkable decrease in students' applications (both EU/NON-EU) has been observed (OIA, 2017 and EHRC, 2019).

Despite the negative consequences of Brexit, ISS in 2019 reports that universities in the UK are encouraged to focus on the quality of students' experiences, which is considered a marketing tool to attract more international students.

> We must do more to ensure that a high-quality student experience remains at the heart of our offer, and that international students continue to see a UK higher education as a valuable, long-term investment (British Council, in DFE and DIT 2019, p. 11).

I argue that this neoliberal essentialist thinking explains the competition between universities to recruit international students. This argument connects with Castro *et al*.'s (2016) and Beighton's (2018) statement that students' mobility is driven by university economics. For instance, UKHE aims to recruit 600,000 by 2030 (British Council, in DFE and DIT 2019), which can be achieved by developing between a positive image of the institution and its international credentials and providing a positive learning experience (BIS 2016; Swist and Kuswara, 2016; MAC 2018). However, I question, along with Castro *et al*. (2016) and Beighton (2018), the extent to which these plans actually work. This neoliberal consumerist thinking in which international students' voices are invaluable means to enriching and maintaining high quality services (DFE and DIT 2019).

4.8. Evidence of criticality development during studying in an unfamiliar environment

In this section, I make two main points. First, some of the research that argues that study abroad can enhance criticality builds on and adds to the essentialist discourse about international students because they falsely imply that these students lack criticality. Consequently, they learn to be critical by studying abroad. Second, in this reviewed research, it appears to me that it is

less clear and detailed *how* studying in an unfamiliar environment can contribute to *nurturing* their *prior* experiences of criticality.

Referring to the first point, some studies, such as Williams (2009), Savage and Wehman (2014), and Roberts *et al*. (2018), argue that studying abroad contributes to developing some facets of criticality, particularly problem-solving, making inferences, and analysis. This evidence is from the experiences of undergraduate and postgraduate students because, as I argue throughout my thesis, few studies appear to have examined the experiences of international PhD students of constructing criticality while studying in an unfamiliar environment. Although their participants are of diverse backgrounds, there seems to be total ignorance that these students, as inspired by Holliday (2011, p. 156), bring prior experiences which have value and potential influence on their experiences of studying in an unfamiliar environment.

For example, Roberts *et al*. (2018) argue that study abroad can enhance students' ability in making inferences through making assessments and drawing conclusions based on what they saw and heard. They explore the impacts of short-term study abroad experience on students' critical thinking using a reflective journaling process while on a ten-day study abroad program in Belize. Eight students of diverse backgrounds participated in this study. This programme consists of visits to several farms and cultural locations. The goals of the group's time in Belize were to provide students with as many opportunities as possible to interact with Belizeans, to find out about the issues that students were researching, and to learn about Belizean culture.

However, there appears to me ignorance and no reference to the students' experiences relating to different facets of criticality, including inference, before travelling abroad for ten days. This ignorance provokes me to question when these participants think they have started developing problem-solving or making inferences. It is unclear whether the participants believed they were not able to engage in problem-solving before enrolling in study abroad programmes, or whether

they used it more frequently while living and studying in an unfamiliar environment. I, therefore, feel that there is a false and essentialist implication that these students learnt to be critical only when they studied abroad.

Now, I move to talk about the second point. Although some studies, such as Williams (2009), Savage and Wehman (2014), and Roberts *et al.* (2018), argue that study abroad can enhance students' experiences in criticality, *how* this enhancement happens is less demonstrated. By 'how', I mean the possible factors of study abroad that influence and nurture their experiences.

These studies' data extracts show to me some of these factors. A focus on them could deepen the understanding of how studying abroad nurture students' criticality. For example, in Williams' s (2009) data, it appears to me that the possible factors that positively influence the students' use of their problem-solving skills are travelling abroad individually and not knowing peers before study abroad experiences. The use of problem-solving skills, according to Williams (2009), is apparent in his participants learning how to budget, dealing with lost or stolen credit cards, learning how to bargain, learning to be less wasteful, connecting with locals, becoming a group leader and, in general, learning to become more independent. Similarly, in Savage and Wehman's (2014, p. 9) data, there is this factor of 'teaching English to the Afghanistan men at the Caritas Refugee Center in Athens, Greece' that might influence the increase in their participants' use of problem-solving skills. This influence is in the sense that it enables one of them 'to think outside the box… [she] did not speak their language, so [she] had to get creative in [her] explanations. [She] had to engage in ongoing problem solving by thinking quickly…breaking things down and explaining complicated concepts'. This increase, as Savage and Wehman (2014) argue, is illustrated in their participants' ability: to integrate information faster and think quickly; to reflect on situations and accommodate new ideas; and to observe, analyse, and interpret information more effectively.

Another example is even though Roberts *et al*. (2018) argue that ten-day study abroad programmes can contribute to enhancing the students' experiences in criticality, as is demonstrated by different examples of the use of inferences and analysis, the extent to which this enhancement in inference is the result of this ten-day study abroad programme, and not any other possible factors, is less demonstrated. Some of their data extracts show to me that interactions with people who hold different perspectives, such as 'Mr Pop' (Roberts *et al*., 2018, p.172), in the 'host' country is one way that explains how studying in an unfamiliar environment nurtures individual' prior experiences. Once again, my thesis addresses these two significant research opportunities.

4.9. The voices of international PhD students

Increasing international students' mobility has led to greater research into its various aspects. For instance, Li and Brady (2007) examine how Chinese students' decisions about higher education destinations arise from the interaction between their personal characteristics – e.g., perceptions and motivations – and external factors that shape the desirability, accessibility, and affordability of pursuing higher education abroad. In so doing, they consider motivations such as academic, professional and cultural growth, economic benefit and enhanced social status.

Ye (2006), meanwhile, focuses on cross-cultural adaption by Chinese international students in the USA. Ye suggests that perceived support from, and interaction with, interpersonal networks – including online ethnic social groups – in the host and home countries negatively correlates with reductions in social difficulty and mood disturbance, respectively. However, Brown and Brown (2009) conclude that freedom from cultural and familial expectations gave rise to opportunities for self-discovery that led to greater independence, strength, and thoughtfulness – although some students were apprehensive about how these developments would be received on re-entry to the culture of origin. Caruana and Ploner (2010) focus more on the impact of internationalisation on institutions, and the ways in which a small sample in Australia, England,

and Wales have integrated it into their equality and diversity agendas by means of structures and activities. However, Montgomery's article (2009) suggests that a greater openness among students towards interacting with other nationalities co-exists with negative stereotypes, with the latter often focused on Chinese students.

Despite this increase in research on international students, it appears to me that few studies have focused on the experiences of international PhD students in general. For example, although Byrne's (2017) thesis explores the lived experiences of international and 'home' students of mixed levels in the UK, it did not include PhD students. Likewise, Raczkoski *et al*.'s (2019) study concerns master's students.

More specifically, there is little research on *how* international PhD students construct their interpretations and enactments of criticality. First, although some studies have been conducted on PhD students, they generally do not address criticality. For example, even though Macleod and Holdridge's (2004) study was about PhD research and submission, it did not investigate criticality. Likewise, Evans (2006) undertook a literature review concerning international PhD students, but not in relation to criticality. Similarly, although the study of Zeilani, Al-Nawafleh, and Evans (2011) explored how PhD graduates experience the process of doing a doctorate in the UK and what they learned from it, it did not tackle criticality with regard to doing a PhD.

Second, while some studies do focus on criticality, they do not investigate the experiences of PhD students in particular. This is the case in Parks' (2018) study, for example. Although Nisbah's (2012) research did include a small percentage of PhD students (eight out of 50 participants), it did not focus on the experiences of these students' interpretations and enactments of criticality. Instead, from an essentialist position, it sought to explore the problems faced by international students with regard to developing critical thinking.

At one level, it appears to me that Xu and Grant's (2017) study is somehow connected to my thesis in the sense that it focuses both on international PhD students and their experiences of criticality. At another level, however, I argue that this study represents international PhD students from an essentialist perspective. It explores the *becoming* of one Chinese international doctoral student's voice. It investigates how Christine '*assimilates* the *most transformative* but *alien* voice of critical thinking in her supervision space by participating in dialogues with her supervisors' (Xu and Grant, 2017, p. 570, my emphasis). 'Assimilation' here refers to locating 'instances when supervisors ignore [Christine's] prior knowledge and demand full conformity with Western/Northern research approaches' (Xu and Grant, 2017, p.577). They argue that because of the interactions in the supervision space of the New Zealand academic context, 'Christine gradually transforms to find a balance point in taking up the voice of critical thinking alongside, or by renovating, her enrooted voice of dependence' (574).

Again, I read this study as essentialist for a number of reasons. To begin with, it represents the grand narrative that foreigners should be 'assimilated' into the 'host' national culture (Amadasi and Holliday, 2018, p. 247). This grand narrative is evidenced in this study because it expects cultural deficiency, such as Christine is not a critical thinker and dependent, among so-called international students and sets structural boundaries that do not only influence individuals but confine them. Xu and Grant's (2017) perspective resonates with Guan's (2000) and Zhao and Coombs's (2012) essentialist argument that East Asian students are defined as coming from 'collectivist' national cultures.

This study is essentialist because it also implies that *the problems* that Christine encounters with critical thinking are because of her previous culture and that she has to learn this criticality and be independent by being in the New Zealand university and, therefore, 'Western' education is a gift to the deficient Christine. Alternatively, Xu and Grant did not consider that *the problem*

might be their perceptions and the way in which they look at Christine. This alternative view resonates with Holliday's (2011, p. 144) statement that 'understanding what is going on between the Hong Kong students and their British tutors therefore requires making sense of the Western condition which underpins the perceptions of the tutors'. Once again, this alternative view represents recent thinking in the internationalisation research that the problem is how we look at international students (Robson, 2008), and, therefore, 'it is our own prejudices that we need to learn to understand' (Holliday, 2011, p. 156).

Another reason is that Xu and Grant's (2017) study represents the dominant discourse of international students which undervalues the cultural resources that they bring with them and considers cultural differences as a barrier. Controversially, as Holliday (2011, p. 147) argues, cultural difference is a resource and can contribute to the internationalisation process. An illustration of this is in Wallace's (2003) research, where students from different backgrounds read cultural texts together. This reading together, with international students, enables 'home' students to see some ideological meanings that would otherwise remain invisible.

Building on this limited evidence, I therefore, argue, along with Valerie and Montgomery (2017), that there is a research opportunity on the experiences of international PhD students in general and of constructing their criticality in particular from a non-essentialist perspective and, thus, my study.

4.10. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I refer to the combatting of essentialist grand narratives by non-essentialist perspectives that value the background resources that international students bring with them and can contribute to the internationalisation process. I argue that, within internationalisation, there needs to be a change to the way in which the perceptions towards international students are constructed. This change of perceptions involves seeing, for instance,

that travelling per se to anywhere and from anywhere might contribute to nurturing students' existing sense of criticality because it broadens their perspectives. This is the research opportunity that needs more exploration, and it is what I, therefore, intend to demonstrate in my thesis by focusing on the international PhD students' experiences of constructing their criticality.

Chapter Five: Research Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the relevance of an interpretivist paradigm to the research design of my thesis. Once again, this study aims to better understand how a small group of international PhD students in the UK from abroad interpret, experience and enact criticality. Qualitative research methods were used for data collection: semi-structured interviews, follow-up interviews, informal conversations, and both my participants' research journals and mine. The strategy employed for analysing the data is a thematic approach. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations in the present research project.

5.1. Social-constructive and interpretive research paradigm

In order to be able to gain insights into the research questions posed and analyse the themes drawn from my participants' lived experiences, it is essential to consider my philosophical position (i.e. research paradigm). In this qualitative case study, this refers to the core beliefs that guide the research, including epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies (Creswell, 2007). First, the ontology and epistemology are presented.

5.1.1. Ontology and epistemology

There are a number of distinct ontological positions that refer to the nature of reality (Creswell 2007), of which objectivism and subjectivism appear to be the most contrasting (Gray 2018). Objectivism is known as realism because it suggests that there is one reality (Gray, 2018). For example, there is no such argument within the disciplines of science that suggest that there are distinct types of realities (Gray, 2018). Unlike objectivism, subjectivism suggests that there may exist multiple realities that are constantly created by different individuals. For example, within social sciences, individual realities can be created as a result of perceptions, desires, work, processes or experiences (Gray, 2018). Consequently, because my study explores individuals'

experiences and perceptions relating to the construction and development of criticality, they may not be coming from one single ontological position experientially. Therefore, because of the complex nature of my research— that its essence is individuals' lived experiences, perceptions and understandings of reality— it is built on a form of subjectivism.

Given this ontological position, the epistemological basis of my research is the notion of contextualised knowledge that is not generalisable. An epistemological assumption refers to the theory of knowledge (Bryman, 2012). It examines the relationship between the researcher and the participants regarding, for example, whether the empiricist views of natural science are transferable to social research (Creswell, 2007; Bryman, 2012).

In my study, the epistemological assumptions that inform my role as an interpretivist researcher guide me to collect data without a definite hypothesis that may control the process of its collection and analysis. Then, I use some concepts from the relevant theories as a lens to help explain my data (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2011). The whole process may lead to the emergence of new concepts and understandings. In addition, as an interpretivist researcher, I view individuals as agents in the social world. They do not simply react to the social situation without logically thinking and then choosing an informed action (O'Reilly, 2009). Because the focus of my study is the participants' different perceptions and understanding of their reality, and the knowledge it creates, I adopt an interpretivist approach to my research. It accepts that the insights I, as a researcher, can gain from the data is based upon experience, and does not attempt to find generalisability.

My philosophical position suggests that there may exist multiple realities. This implies that, within my participants' different social environments – their interactions with people in different social

and academic fields – their ontologies may be different. This suggests that the knowledge they bring with them is contextually and experientially informed, and that it may develop multiplicatively in different environments. Therefore, I am interested in exploring individuals' lived experiences and the complexities these bring with them.

I take a qualitative approach because it may enable me to pose research questions that focus on the students' experiences and understandings from their previous education (Willig, 2013). This means that I refer to their rich past rather than just exploring their current lived experiences relating to criticality. I bridge participants' past and current lived experiences in order to understand their perceptions of how they have been constructing and experiencing criticality and what they draw from their diverse backgrounds. My attempt to examine the richness that results from continuous, diverse interactions is what justifies my preference for thick description over a large-scale study. I explore the multiple factors and complexities in which my participants have lived and are now developing as they move from one environment of learning to another.

The constructivist paradigm, also termed 'constructionism' assumes a subjectivist ontology, which suggests that there are multiple realities. This paradigm assumes also an interpretive epistemology (Patton, 2015). This suggests that the interviewer and the respondent co-create understandings, so that the researcher conducting qualitative research is also engaged in the social construction of reality (Patton, 2015). 'Constructivism' is often used interchangeably with 'interpretivism'. The constructivism paradigm is characterised by a concern for the individual. Creswell (2013), along with Merriam (2009), argues that qualitative research is often called 'interpretive' because researchers are meant to interpret the meanings that individuals have about the world. However, there is no single reality of how the participants in the study interpret and enact criticality. This is evident in Merriam's (2009, pp.8-9) argument that 'reality is socially

constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities or interpretations of a single event. Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it'. Understanding how participants' thoughts, feelings and subjective meanings contribute to constructing their criticality is the primary focus of this study.

Social constructivism is further defined by its emphasis on learning through social interaction. It holds that individuals seek to make meaning of their social lives and that the researcher has to examine the situation in question through the multiple lenses of the individuals involved (Cohen, Morrison and Manion, 2011). The intention is to obtain their definition of the situation and to focus not only on interactions and contexts, but also on environments and biographies. In this regard, social constructivism argues that learning seems to be the outcome of social interaction and communication (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). In other words, in constructivism, people actively select and construct their views, worlds and learning, and these processes are rooted in contexts and interactions. This implies that cognition is generative and active rather than receptive and passive. Through such active cognition, people come to understand themselves, how this affects the worlds they inhabit and how they interact with other people.

Social constructivism begins with the idea that the human world is different from the natural world. This suggests that they should also be studied differently (Lincoln and Guba, 1990). For example, as opposed to the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity, the constructivism paradigm uses terms such as 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'confirmability' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The positivism paradigm, in contrast to its interpretive counterpart, suggests that human behaviour is essentially rule-governed and should be investigated by using methods of natural science. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) suggest that theories constructed within the interpretive paradigm tend to be anti-

positivist, with the basic aim being to understand the subjective world of human experience whereas normative studies are positivist.

The social constructivism-interpretive paradigm suggests that human beings have evolved the capacity to interpret and construct reality. Moreover, the world of human perception is not real in an absolute sense. For example, the sun is real but is 'made up' and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs such as the sun as a god (Patton, 2015). Consequently, qualitative researchers who adopt the constructivism paradigm explore and study the multiple realities constructed by different individuals and groups of people. In this type of research, it appears that any notion of 'truth' then becomes a matter of shared meanings and consensus among a group of people. However, it is important to stress on 'the processes that lead to the construction of meaning' (Hammersley, 2013, pp. 35-6).

5.1.2. Why did I adopt social-constructivism-interpretive paradigm?

I adopted the social-constructivism-interpretive paradigm for a number of reasons. To start with, my decision is related to the aim of my study, which is to gain in-depth understanding and potentially develop new understandings of a phenomenon, which is the construction of interpretations and enactments of criticality. Hammersley (2013, pp. 35-6) notes that constructivism requires researchers to focus on the processes that lead to the construction and character given to independent objects and the relationships between them. This means that the focus of the qualitative researcher is on how people collectively construct their social worlds. This resonates with the focus of my study, which is 'how' the participants construct their interpretations of criticality. The focus is more on exploring the dialogic nature of its by examining the roles participants' social interaction with other people and with their social, political and historical backgrounds play in constructing and experiencing criticality.

In my research, knowledge is co-constructed. This suggests that knowledge is socially constructed via interaction between the researcher and the participants, in interviews and informal conversations, for example. By adopting this paradigm, I am aware that knowledge is not found. Rather, it is constructed, and participants develop subjective meanings of their experiences. Based on the lived experiences of my participants, I argue that the construction of criticality is influenced by constant interaction with people in different social environments. My argument resonates with social constructivists' statement that knowledge is a socially constructed human product (Prawat and Floden, 1994; Gredler, 1997; Ernest, 1999). This means my participants create meaning and knowledge via their constant interaction with me, with each other and with other people. I also argue for the existence of multiple realities instead of one because reality in this research is individually based and constructed through individuals' interaction with others. By 'reality', I mean individuals' multiple interpretations. According to Kukla (2000), reality is non-existent prior to its social invention in the interviews and informal conversations that are used in this study. My perspective that the construction of criticality is an individual-social process is in the sense that it does not take place only within an individual. Along with McMahon (1997), I see that this construction occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities such as interviews, keeping a research journal, informal conversations and interaction with others.

5.2. The rationale of using a qualitative research

Qualitative research is an interactive process that elicits a better understanding of the phenomenon studied by getting closer to it. Some terms such as 'understanding', 'interpretation' and 'getting close' define what is 'qualitative' in qualitative research (Aspers and Corte, 2019). To clarify, qualitative research is 'an inquiry, in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings' (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006, p. 15). In this

study, qualitative research is adopted because it is the appropriate approach to understand the lived experiences of a group of international PhD students' interpretations and enactments of criticality. Along with Creswell and Poth's (2016) and Merriam (2009) statement that in qualitative research, the researcher is the key instrument, my study relied on me in collecting data through interviewing participants, conducting some follow-up semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and keeping research journals. I designed the research tools using mainly open-ended questions and focusing on the 'participants' perspectives, their meanings and their multiple subjective views' (Creswell, 2013, p.46) of their experiences constructing their interpretations and enactments of criticality.

Understanding the participants' lived experiences of interpreting and enacting criticality is the aim of this qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). This study adopted qualitative methods to learn about the research topic from the participants' viewpoints by focusing on the way they interpret their experiences, construct their worlds and make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2009, p.23). In addition, it 'invites the unexpected' (Holliday, 2007, p.8). This is because, even though the included interviews begin with a set of topics, they allow for more fluidity and flexibility. I was aware that all phases of the research process may change or shift after collecting data. For instance, the research questions, the focus of the study and methodology changed and developed. This qualitative case study is defined and discussed in the coming section.

5.3. Qualitative case study

Based on a social-constructive and interpretive research paradigm, a qualitative exploratory case study is adopted in this research. The definition I shall adopt for qualitative case study is 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit' (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). This design can be

particularly useful for studying a process, program or individual in an in-depth, holistic way that allows for deep understanding (Patton, 1990; Merriam, 1998) and focuses on 'context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation' (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

In this thesis, the qualitative case study design is used to explore a contemporaneous phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have experienced it – how a group of international PhD students, including myself, studying in the UK construct and experience criticality. I employed these different research methods: interviews, informal conversations, participants' and my own research journals to collect data (Merriam, 2002; Creswell and Poth, 2016; Merriam and Grenier, 2019; Thomas, 2021). Moreover, in this qualitative case study, data analysis is the process of meaning-construction, which 'involves interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read' (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). I adopt case study design because I aim to gain analytical insights, and to draw rich interconnectedness information from the participants' experiences and unique and established insights from the analysis that follows (Thomas, 2021). More specifically, this decision is related to both the study's purpose, which is exploratory, and its argument, namely that little is known about *how* international PhD students experience, interpret and construct criticality.

I argue that this study is particularly suitable for a case study design because this research is a bounded system and contextual. My argument connects with the statements of Patton (1990), Merriam (1998), and Creswell (2002). 'Bounded' in my argument means it is possible to create limits around the case to be studied, such as being PhD students in a UK university and from diverse backgrounds. The context of this study is the experiences of international PhD students in UK higher education – internationalisation. This case study is contextual because it is impossible to separate exploring this study's topic from its context (Merriam, 1998, Yin, 2003, Friedman,

2012, and Thomas, 2021). In addition, there is not one perception of the studied phenomenon in its context as different individuals might interpret it in different ways. Consequently, while I attempt to produce my version of reality, it does not reflect the entirety. My study's approach can also convey that a trusting relationship between the participants and me can allow for greater access to the richness of their experiences. In the following section, I explain my role in this study.

5.4. My role in this study

My role in this social-constructive, interpretive, qualitative, case study research is fundamental because I am 'the primary instrument for data collection... analysis' (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) and writing up. Since my interpretation of the data is likely to be influenced by my knowledge and experience (Anderson, 2010), I acknowledge my personal limitations in data interpretation, and I tried to control them through member checks. In other words, I share my analysis and interpretation with my fellow PhD researcher for discussion and constructive feedback.

As a researcher in this qualitative study, I usually explore and reflect on my own experience of constructing my criticality in my research journal. Also, I try to become aware of my prejudices and assumptions through writing about them. Becoming aware of my prejudices enables me to bracket them (Ashworth, 1999; Chan, Fung and Chien, 2013) to learn from the experiences of this group of participants and to better understand their unique and individual experiences of constructing criticality. This suggests that I value their experiences and I respect them.

I provide a reflexive account where I examine my research process. By being reflexive, I try to state and justify to the reader my choices at each stage of my research process, and I articulate the possible alternative perspectives that may not resonate with my own. Reflexivity is significant in this research because it contributes to making my position in the present research clear to me

(Barrett, Kajamaa and Johnson, 2020). Furthermore, I may not be always aware of my prejudices and my relationship with the contexts of the study. For this reason, being constantly reflexive and challenging myself to make clear my own prejudices is an important part of the rigour in my research.

5.5. Selection and recruitment of participants

The selection of the participants was purposive and criteria based following the qualitative nature of this thesis. Purposive sampling refers to choosing particular people in particular contexts who can provide important and rich data that could not be gained from other sampling strategies (Maxwell, 2008; Merriam,2016; Gray, 2018).

The selection of PhD students as participants was based on a number of reasons. I wanted to give them voice as they 'had direct experience with the phenomenon' (Merriam and Tisdel, 2015, p.27). Moreover, it was a convenience population, allowing me regular access which is essential for an in-depth study such as this. More specifically, it is because there is scarcity of research on how PhD students experience criticality as I argue throughout my thesis.

This selection was also based on thinking with and against my assumptions and curiosity. To start with, it appears to be taken for granted that PhD researchers are critical and their experiences are rich, for example, because they read a lot critically. This provoked me to explore the practices of criticality of a small group of PhD students. It also stimulated my curiosity to better understand the experiences of criticality they might have brought with them and developed in Britain in multiple ways.

In order to be included in this study, participants had to be PhD researchers at a university in the south of England, who have international experience as students, and who show interest in the topic.

The recruitment of participants involved several stages. To start with, an application form of ethics was submitted to the university ethics committee for ethical review, an approval was obtained and an access into the university was gained. I came into contact with the participants as I know some of them. The few participants who have agreed to take part introduced me to their friends and colleagues, resulting in eighteen participants seemed to meet the criteria of the population of my research. I then contacted them via email, including the participants information sheet and consent form. I informed them that their identities will remain confidential. I also informed them that a signed consent form is required to participate in face-to face interviews and whether they can keep a research journal. I gave priority to those who showed interest in the study and agreed to sign the consent form, thus, twelve participants.

Since interesting ideas constantly emerged from the on-going discussions with my participants between late 2018 and late 2020, there was a point when I decided to write about my experience of (re) constructing criticality as a researcher-participant. As a result, I contacted all twelve participants to ascertain whether they would be interested in discussing this in informal conversations. Only Alex, Ferial, Rayan and Susan agreed to take part.

I take care in my discussion of the interviews, informal conversations and research journals data not to reveal any of their personal details except where they come out naturally from the data. For instance, participants are identified by pseudonyms that they have chosen for themselves (see Table 2 below). Data was ‘cleaned’ in order not to recognise each other especially that they are coming from one university. For example, the names of cities or countries from which they come have

been replaced by the term their 'home' country. Table 2 summarises information which is important because it tells us something about who they are, such as their diversity. This in turn helps us to make links with what they say about their experiences of constructing criticality.

Table 2. Background information about participants

Participants	**Gender**	**Disciplines**
Susan	F	Language studies and applied linguistics
Nore	M	Language studies and applied linguistics
Jihan	F	Literature
Melissa	F	Language studies and applied linguistics
Lidya	F	Sociology
Nathan	M	Language studies and applied linguistics
Fadi	M	Education
Ferial	F	Education
Rayan	F	Education
Alex	M	Education
Nadine	F	Education
Jameel	M	Health and wellbeing

5.6. Bias

In this research, my aim was not to eliminate my biases or subjectivities. Instead, it was to understand how my perspectives, prejudices, and expectations might have an impact on its conduct and findings. I tried hard to make them clear and visible to the reader. This attitude to bias is argued by a number of researchers, such as Lather and St. Pierre (2013), Maxwell (2013), and Merriam and Tisdell (2016). One's subjectivities as Peshkin (1988, p.18) explicitly argues 'can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from

the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected'. This implies that it is crucial to identify these biases and manage them in relation to the theoretical framework and in light of my own research interests, to make clear how they may be shaping the collection and analysis of data (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Because I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and for deciding on a particular theoretical lens that informed my research, this has had biases that might have an impact on my research (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). However, at the same time, being the only instrument is 'perceived as an advantage, because humans are both responsive and adaptive' (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 187).

One of my methods of collecting data was research journals. These personal documents are good source of data concerning a person's view of the world (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Research journals are highly subjective in that I am the only one to choose what I perceive important to record. Clearly, they are not representative or necessarily reliable accounts of what actually may have occurred (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Nevertheless, they are a reconstruction of part of life. Furthermore, they provide an account that is based on the researcher's and participants' experiences which is what most qualitative research is seeking (Burgess, 1991; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Interviewing was my other method of collecting data. It is a complex phenomenon as both participants and I brought predispositions that might have influenced our interaction. I tried hard to explore and put aside my prejudices and assumptions about the phenomenon of interest before embarking on a study so that I 'can examine consciousness itself' (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 27). While collecting data, I also tried to be non-judgmental and respectful of the participants (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Usually, these prejudices were not readily transparent to me. Because I was the only instrument for data collection and analysis, 'data [to some extent] have been filtered through [my] particular theoretical position and biases' (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 264). That is, it was almost up to me to decide, for instance, what is interesting, what should or should not be attended to when collecting and analysing data.

In the context of this study, a number of strategies enabled me to manage my biases for ensuring findings' credibility. These strategies are positionality (see the middle of Chapter One), member checking, thick description, triangulation, peer review/examination, and reflexivity (see the following section).

5.7. Criteria for assessment of qualitative research

In this section, I begin by presenting and discussing the debate as to what makes a 'good' qualitative study. I then illuminate the strategies that contribute to promoting 'validity' and 'reliability' in qualitative research, such as member checking, thick description, triangulation and peer review. I also discuss, along with Gray (2018) and Skrtic (1985), whether that achieving rigor including building trustworthiness is more important than concerns over 'validity' and 'reliability' in qualitative research. Trustworthiness can be achieved through a focus on transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility. I conclude this section by discussing the importance of reflexivity in this study and shows 'how' reflexivity is evident in this study.

There is much debate and discussion in the literature and conferences as to how 'validity' and 'reliability' are viewed in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). Some research critiques and questions the interpretive constructivists' notions of validity and reliability. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) consider the postmodern turn in qualitative research as problematic for its

evaluation. They suggest a serious rethinking of some terms such as validity, generalisability and reliability, which are already retheorised in other types of qualitative research. Instead, they suggest focusing more on enhancing trustworthiness in this type of research.

Kvale (1996) proposes three ways of thinking of validity in qualitative research. In the first, validity can be seen as craftsmanship in which the researcher adopts a critical outlook during data analysis. The second one refers to communication where validity is determined in dialogue with others. The last proposed way of viewing it is as pragmatic validity, which goes beyond an argument's persuasiveness to assessing validity in terms of real-world changes brought about as a result of the research.

5.7.1. 'Validity' and 'reliability' in qualitative research

There are a number of strategies that researchers can employ that will enhance the so called 'validity' and 'reliability' of their research, such as triangulation, member checks, use of thick description, and peer-review (Merriam, 2002).

5.7.1.1. Member checking

Member checking is one key strategy for ensuring validity in qualitative research. It refers to asking the participant to comment on the researcher's interpretation of the data. That is, tentative findings are taken back to some of the participants from whom they were derived to check whether the interpretations represent their voice and are plausible (Merriam, 2002; Gray, 2018). Even though different words are used to write about data, participants should be able to recognise their experience in the researcher's interpretation or 'suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their perspectives' (Merriam, 2002, p.26). Gray (2018) also suggests researchers check informally with participants for accuracy during data collection. Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) further

argues that qualitative researchers adopt a reflective stance through which they critically reflect on their influence on the research process. Such self-reflective criticality can be strengthened through repeated checks of the researcher's interpretations.

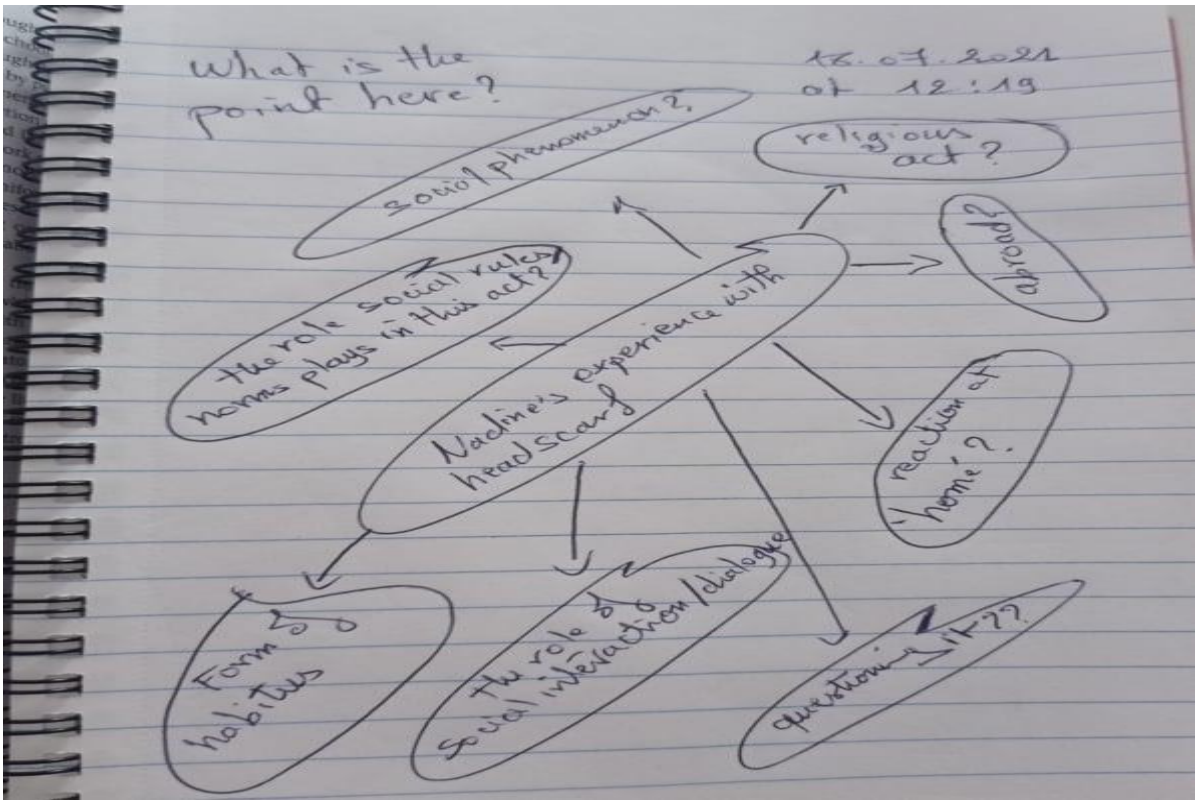
Member checking is also evident in this study. I shared my analysis and interpretation with the participants, and I asked for their comments and viewpoints on whether their voice was well-presented. For example, Fadi, one of the participants, noted that the analysis and interpretation was 'absolutely fine and [he] like[s] the name Fadi'. Member checking with another participant helped clarify he did not start studying in the UK in 2010, but working as a lecturer. He also suggested changing his name to Jameel in order not to be easily identified.

5.7.1.2. Thick description

Thick description, which has been developed by Geertz (1993), is another essential strategy for promoting 'validity' and 'reliability' in qualitative research. It refers to providing sufficient description to contextualise the studies and to show the different and complex facets of the studied phenomenon (Merriam, 2002; Holliday, 2016, p. 84). As a result, readers are able to determine the extent to which their situation matches the research context, and hence, whether findings can be transferred (Merriam, 2002). However, it should be noted that thick description of a social phenomenon does not refer to exhaustiveness of coverage. Instead, it refers to the ways it counts the different facets of the social matrix or culture within which it is found and to enable effective analysis (Holliday, 2016, p. 84). Holliday (2016, p. 84) further suggests that thick description can be achieved in small studies. Richards and Richards (1994, p. 446) note that thick description can contribute to generating richness of perception while 'reflecting and exploring data record', 'discovering patterns and constructing and exploring impressions, summaries, pen portraits' that

enable a ‘working up from data’ towards theory construction. As a result, it is a key element in postmodern qualitative research.

Figure 1. Demonstration of thick description (Zina, research journal, 2021)



In Figure 1, I suggest that thick description is manifested in the ways I count the different facets and interpretations of Nadine’s experience of wearing a headscarf. My interpretation considers the context within which this act is found: I suggest that it is important to draw on Nadine’s experience at ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ highlighting the role of different factors such as social norms and dialogue with other people play in Nadine’s decision to take off the headscarf.

5.7.1.3. Triangulation

Triangulation is another vital strategy that contributes to developing 'validity' and 'reliability' in qualitative studies. It refers to using, for instance, multiple investigators, sources of data or data collection methods to check emerging findings (Merriam, 2002). This study implemented triangulation of data collection methods. I used semi-structured interviews, follow-up interviews, informal conversational interviews and research journals to explore potential different viewpoints of the same phenomenon and to check emerging themes.

5.7.1.4. Peer review/examination

Peer review/examination is another strategy for maintaining 'validity' and 'reliability'. It refers to discussions with colleagues regarding the process of the study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data and sensitive interpretations (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) further suggests that all graduate students have a peer review process built into their thesis or dissertation committee as each member fits and comments on the findings. Peer review or peer examination can be conducted by a colleague, whether familiar with, or new to, the research. This could involve scanning some of the raw data and assessing whether the findings are plausible based on the data (Merriam, 2002).

Peer review/ examination is frequently used in this study. For example, I discussed one data chapter with one of my colleagues because we happened to use Bourdieu's theory of habitus, besides other different theories, to explain our data. We discussed the extent to which the use of the theory is relevant, appropriate and significant in my study.

Figure 2. Example of peer-review with a colleague (Zina, research journal, 2021)

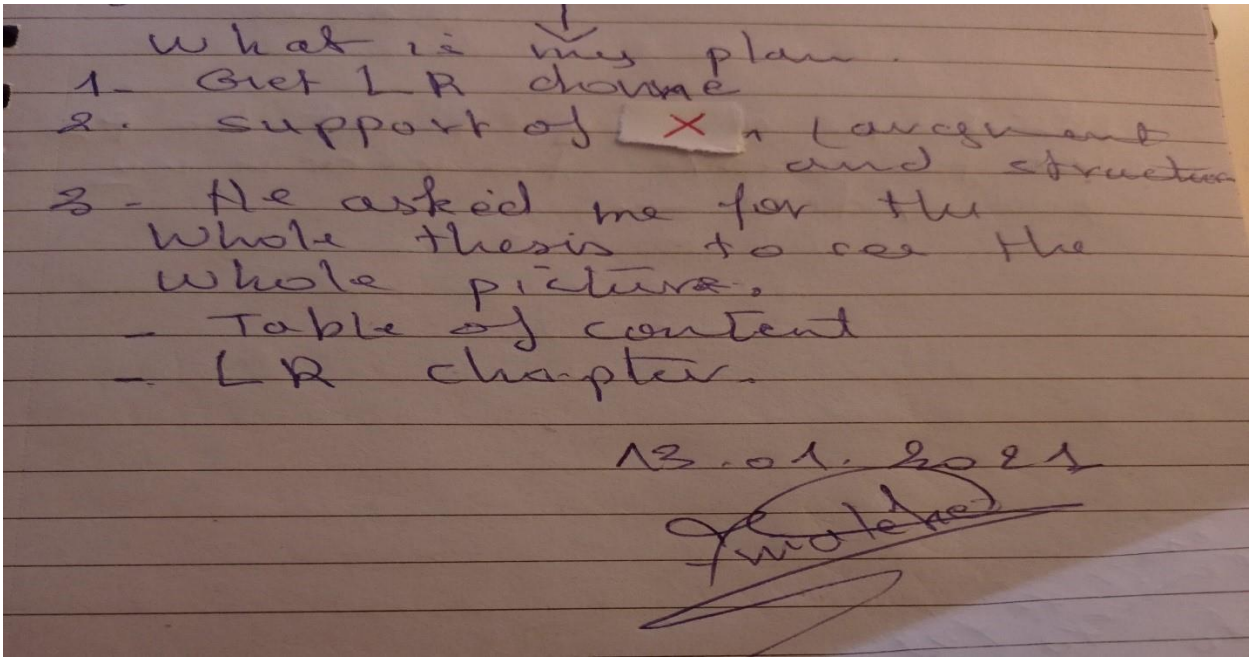


Figure 2 presents another example of using peer-reviewing/examination. I asked a fellow PhD student who is new to my topic to scan my thesis's table of contents and chapters of literature review to check the clarity and flow of my arguments. During the write-up phase of my PhD, I frequently presented some aspects of it on zoom to my fellow PhD students. Some of them were familiar with my research, and others were new to the topic. For instance, I shared with them a segment of my data, analysis and interpretation in order to explore their views on whether the analysis was plausible and meaningful based on the data.

5.7.2. Trustworthiness in qualitative research

Some researchers, such as Gray (2018), argue that trustworthiness is more important than concerns over 'validity' or 'reliability' checks such as triangulation. Skrtic (1985) and Gray (2018) suggest that trustworthiness is addressed through a focus on transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility. These are considered by Hoepfl (1997) and Lincoln (1995) as criteria of

trustworthiness in qualitative research. These researchers further argue that these criteria constitute the naturalistic equivalents of conventional terms: internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity.

To start with, transferability refers to exploring the extent to which findings are context-bound by examining the characteristics of the sample (Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln,1995; Gray, 2018). Dependability refers to evaluating the reliability of the study's conclusions through the use of audit trails through the data, thereby enhancing trustworthiness of the research. (Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln, 1995; Gray, 2018) Lincoln and Guba (1985) were the first to conceptualise reliability in qualitative research as 'dependability' or 'consistency'. That is, rather than insisting that others reach the same results as the original researcher, reliability, in this sense, lies in others concurring that given the data collected and the results make sense, are consistent and dependable (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Merriam, 2002).

Trustworthiness can also be achieved by focusing on confirmability, which refers to addressing the degree to which the steps of the study can be audited, confirmed or replicated (Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln, 1995; Gray, 2018). Confirmability can be achieved by showing the connections between the data and the researcher's interpretations through audits and 'a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study' (Merriam, 2002, p.31).

In addressing credibility in qualitative studies, Lincoln (1995) argues that it can be strengthened by the researcher making a conscious effort to establish confidence in the accuracy of interpretation and the fit between description and explanation. It can also be developed through examining the study design and methods used to derive findings (Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln, 1995). This can be achieved by implementing various strategies such as persistent observations, triangulation of data,

methods theories and investigations, and member checks, where data and interpretations are tested with research participants (Lincoln, 1995; Gray, 2018).

5.7.3. Is it because I am me I found this out?

This heading shows my reflexivity by asking an important question about it. I see reflexivity as a continuous and honest reflection about the impact I and the research environment have on the conduct and findings of my study. This honest reflection, I suggest, is not something to fear. Instead, the fear or the issue is when being unaware of the influence of the presence of the researcher and the participants in the field of study. I claim that reflexivity is actually a much more 'normal' thing than what many people might imagine and that being reflexive is something which lot of researchers are but might not recognise as such.

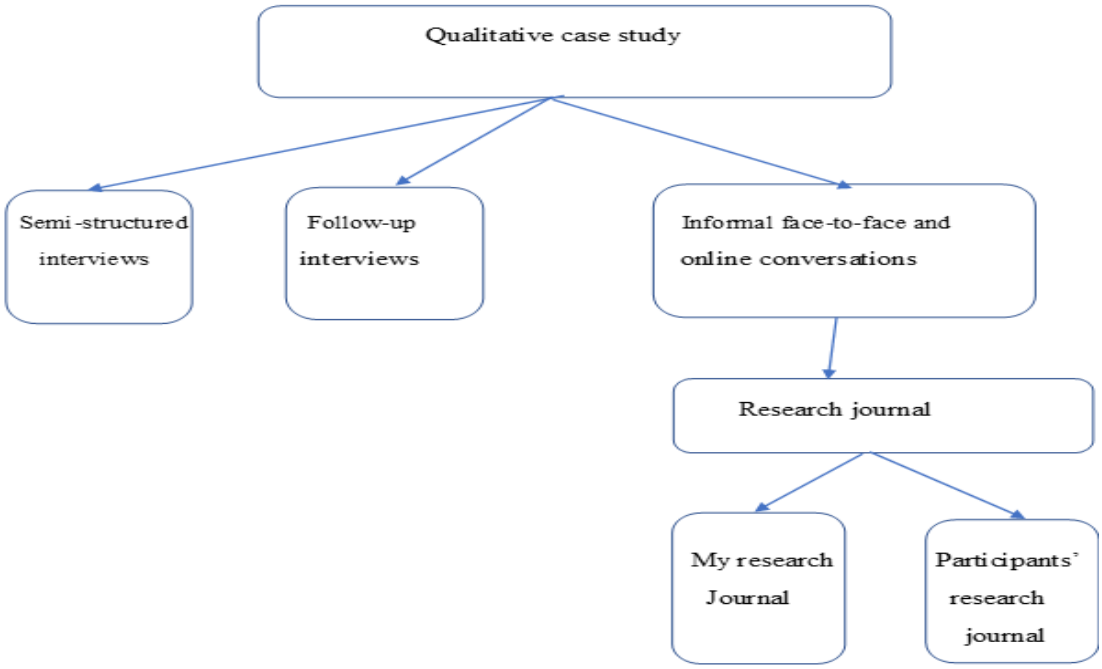
Seeing reflexivity in this way makes me agree with Dean's (2017, p. 44) conclusion that its aim is not to make research objective. Instead, it is to make the subjectivities clear and understand how they may have affected the collection and interpretation of data. Helpful here is what I said about positionality in Chapter One and bias at the beginning of this chapter where I acknowledge my personal positioning. This acknowledgement of personal positioning helps to understand why 'someone with a different theoretical background might have arrived at different concepts, which could have worked equally well' (Platt, 1992, p. 149) and to explain why 'a different researcher, or the same researcher in a different frame of mind, might write a different report from the same data' (Brown, 2010, p. 238).

This perspective resonates with Anderson's (2008), Hughes' (2014), and Dean's (2017) argument that reflexivity requires being transparent about one's competences, skills, position and gaps in one's knowledge. Achieving this transparency necessitates researchers to acknowledge their role

in the research process and how it shaped their experiences in the field — reflection on the effect they may be having on their participants, the direction of their research, or their analysis (Lumsden, 2013a, p. 5; Dean, 2017, p.80). As Finlay (1998), Smith (2006), Anderson (2008) and Hughes (2014) suggest, reflexivity can be applied to the whole research process— more specifically, when designing the study and during data collection and analysis.

5.8. Data collection methods

Figure 3. Summary of the research methods used in this study



This diagram presents the use of different qualitative research instruments to collect data, including eight semi-structured interviews, six follow-up interviews and four informal conversations. It also suggests that the data gathered by informal conversations was recorded in my research journal. I used informal conversations with participants as a secondary research instrument in order to check and back up the data obtained by the main research instruments and to provide a deep exploration and a thick description. My plan was to undertake focus groups once I had analysed the data

obtained via semi-structured interviews to explore further (what I found interesting and not clear) the themes that emerged. After collecting and analysing focus group data, the emerged themes would be further explored in follow-up semi-structured interviews in order to verify and explore deeply the obtained (data) themes from analysing focus groups data and in order to get more thick data. However, I have collected enough and rich data using semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and my participants' research journal and mine.

5.8.1. Interview

This section provides the definitions of interviews in qualitative research that I adopted in this study. It also discusses the reasons of conducting semi-structured interviews in contrast to other methods of data collection, such as structured interviews and observations. In this section, I further describe the interviews and the follow-up interviews of this study by focusing on clarifying and justifying the rationale of conducting my interviews in two stages.

What is interviewing in qualitative research?

I see that within education, qualitative research interviewing has become a common method of collecting data. Qualitative research interviewing is defined by Kvale (2007) as a research method that attempts to understand the world from participants' points of view and to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences. It is also a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the individuals' everyday worlds (Avineri, 2017). Interviews allow research participants to convey to others their situations from their own perspectives and in their own words (Kvale, 2007). According to Merriam (2009, p. 88), interviews are sometimes the only method to collect 'rich' data, and for Dexter (2006), it is the preferred method of data collection because it collects more data or data at less cost than other methods.

A qualitative research interview seeks to operate at the levels of fact and meaning (Kvale, 2007; Flick, 2014; Patton, 2015; Avineri, 2017). That is, it is necessary to listen to the explicit descriptions and to the meaning expressed, as well as to what is communicated between the lines (Kvale, 2007). This qualitative interview seeks also to understand the meaning of central themes of research informants' lived world (Patton, 2015). In line with this, Kvale (2007) suggests that qualitative interviews seek qualitative knowledge and aim at nuanced accounts of different aspects of the interviewee's lived experiences. He further advocates that precision in description and stringency in meaning interpretation in qualitative research correspond to exactness in quantitative measurements.

The interviewer registers and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said (Kvale, 2007; Avineri, 2017). Thus, he or she should be knowledgeable about the interview topic, be observant of-and able to interpret-vocalisation, facial expressions and other bodily gestures (Patton, 2015). The interviewer may also seek to formulate the implicit message, check it with research participants and may obtain an immediate confirmation or denial of their interpretation of what the interviewee is saying (Merriam, 2009; Flick, 2014). Kvale (2007) suggests that the qualitative interviewer encourages the subjects to describe as precisely as possible what they experience and feel, and how they act. In other words, the focus is on nuanced descriptions that depict the qualitative diversity and varieties of a phenomenon, rather than on developing fixed categorisations, for instance. Kvale (2007) further suggests that the qualitative interviewer as one who exhibits openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation. More specifically, the interviewer should be curious, sensitive to what is said and critical of his or her own assumptions during the interview (Kvale, 2007; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

The rationale for using semi-structured interviews in this study

One type of qualitative interviews is semi-structured interviews which lie in between unstructured and structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007). A semi-structured interview is the research method that best accommodates the aim of this investigation, and it might answer the research questions. This study focused on the thoughts, perceptions and feelings of the interviewees with regard to their lived experiences relating to their interpretations and enactments of criticality. Since these cannot be observed (Merriam, 2009), I wanted to find out what the interviewees' perspectives are. As a result, using a semi-structured interview provided the opportunity to generate rich data and helped to better understand interviewees' thoughts, feelings and intentions that the researcher cannot observe. This is because this type of interviews remains fairly conversational and situational (Merriam, 2009; Flick, 2014; Patton, 2015).

Exploring and discussing the lived experiences of the research participants —of how they make sense of their experiences of understanding and developing criticality— is one focus of this study. Semi-structured interviews were used because they allow the researcher to explore the full range of the what, how, and why of individuals' experiences (Avineri, 2017). Moreover, semi-structured interviews are more appropriate in this study because, as Avineri (2017, p.102) argues, they are 'synchronous and have the ability to be more open-ended, allowing for more…back and forth clarification'. This applies to my semi-structured interviews because I asked more open-ended questions and I allowed more explanation through asking follow-up questions.

Semi-structured interviews allow for more fluidity and back and forth to emerge over the course of the interview (Avineri, 2017). This connects with Merriam's (2009) arguement that semi-structured interview questions are used flexibly and neither the wording nor order of the questions be pre-determined. Because of this flexibility that both the interviewee and interviewer enjoy,

semi-structured interviews can result in ‘unexpected’ (Holliday, 2007, p. 8) and rich data. In this regard, Thomas (2013) has proposed that an interview schedule is required to reach the best of what can be offered by semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule provides an aide-memoire of the important points for discussion, and it is a reminder of what the interviewer intends to cover (Thomas, 2013). That is, semi-structured interviews contribute to expressing the perspectives of participants in an openly designed interview situation than in standardised interview or a questionnaire (Flick, 2014).

I decided to write about why I did not use some other methods of collecting data, such as structured interviews and observation to show that a semi-structured interview is the most appropriate method to address the focus of the study and to answer the research questions. For example, structured interviews might not meet the needs of this research study because close-ended questions and response categories are determined in advance (Flick, 2014). In other words, respondents choose from among these fixed responses (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015).

This study did not opt for structured interviews because ‘respondents must fit their experiences and feelings into the researcher’s categories that might be perceived as impersonal, irrelevant, and mechanistic’ (Patton, 2015, p. 349). This could distort what respondents really mean or experienced by limiting their response choices. As a result, this research employed a semi-structed interview to explore the participants’ lived experiences related to their experience of criticality.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to ask about participants’ perceptions and understandings of a certain topic and to clarify or deepen points that I have previously observed. In fact, I opted for semi-structured interviews because I could not observe participants’ experiences, challenges, feelings, thoughts and intentions; nor behaviours that took place at

previous points in time. I could not observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer; nor how people have organised the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. However, I had to ask research participants questions about those things (Patton, 2015).

The purpose of interviewing in this study, then, is to allow me to understand better the participants' perspectives. My semi-structured interviews begin with my assumption that the participants' perspectives are valuable. I interviewed the participants, as (Merriam, 2009) suggests, to find out what is in and on interviewees' minds and to gather their stories and experiences. In parallel with this, Patton (2015) and Flick (2014) suggest that any interviewer faces the challenge of making it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world. Thus, all that is obtained in an interview might be largely influenced by and dependent on the interviewer's skill.

Describing the interview of this study

In this study, the interviews I conducted were semi-structured because I specified the topics to be covered in advance. The interviewer decided the sequence and the wording of the questions in the course of the interview to increase the comprehensiveness of the data (Merriam, 2009; Avineri, 2017). The interview guide of this study included a mix of more and less exploratory and searching questions that every participant was asked. It contained open-ended questions that followed up with probes, and it contained some topics and provocative thoughts about which the researcher did not have enough information (e.g., participants' interpretations and enactments of criticality), seeking to know more from the participants (Merriam, 2009). Although I tried to lead the research informants towards certain themes, I did not lead them to specific opinions about the interview themes (Kvale, 2007).

The aim of the interview was to explore the experiences of international postgraduate students in reading academic texts critically during their postgraduate studies in UK universities. It also focused on exploring what they read in L1 and L2 and what is the difference between reading academic texts critically in L1 and in L2. It was then up to my participants to choose what they think is relevant to talk about. This is important to note here because it contributes to understanding the rationale for undertaking follow-up interviews, which I elaborate on in the following section.

The interviewee's answers might sometimes be ambiguous, raising several possibilities of interpretation. However, the aim of this qualitative research interview is not to end up with quantifiable meanings on the themes in focus (Kvale, 2007). The interviewer clarifies whether a failure of communication explains the ambiguities or contradictory statements or whether these ambiguities reflect inconsistencies or contradictions in interviewees' situations.

In this interview situation, interviewees might change their descriptions of a theme. They may also discover new aspects of the themes they would be describing, and suddenly may see relations that they have not been aware of earlier. In addition, the interview questions may initiate processes of reflection where the meanings of themes described by the research informants are no longer the same after the interview. The research interview may, therefore, be a learning process for the interviewees as well as for the interviewer. Table 3 below provides the names of the interviewees, the dates and the lengths of the interviews.

Table 3. Details of the semi-structured interviews

Date	Interviewee	Length
08/10/2018	Susan	01:05:05
10/10/2018	Lydia	52:34

10/10/2018	Melissa	01:15:39
02/11/2018	Nathan	01:00:33
06/12/2018	Nore	54:41
23/05/2019	Nadine	01:16:55
29:05:2019	Jameel	52:57
13/06/2019	Fadi	37:54

Describing the follow-up interviews of this study

The initial analysis of the data of the interviews revealed the emergence of some strong themes that were not expected, such as the relational nature of criticality. That is, the participants were conversing about their experience of the construction of criticality in relation to the circumstances of the environments they were and had been living in. Consequently, I decided to further explore these emerging themes through conducting follow-up interviews.

Some of the themes that were discussed in the follow-up interviews were change in the understanding of criticality and the influence of environments on the participants' experiences of criticality. In this matter, the participants and I discussed the relational nature of criticality with regards to undertaking a PhD study, studying abroad in an unfamiliar environment, and individuals' political and social backgrounds. We also explored the extent to which we are aware of the self and the other as being critical. Moreover, we examined the importance of reflection in the construction of their experience of criticality. Table 4 below shows follow-up interviews information, including the dates, the durations and the number of participants who agreed to take part in a follow-up interview.

Table 4. Details of the follow-up interviews

Date	Interviewees	Length
05/10/2019	Susan	08:49
17/06/2019	Fadi	42:00
26/07/2019	Nathan	53:18
17/06/2019	Jameel	01:00:53
17/06/2019	Nadine	57:43
26/09/2019	Lydia	34:00

5.8.2. Research journal

This section provides a definition of a research journal and the rationale for maintaining one by both researchers and participants. It also discusses my purposes in using my research journal as a method of collecting data, such as showing the transparency of my research journey, enriching self-understanding and research growth and maintaining a dialogue with different dimensions of my experience visible to me and to my readers. In addition, this section reviews the use of participants' research journals to reflect on their experiences related to criticality and, thus, making them visible to themselves and to me. This section ends with discussing the use of informal conversational interviews as a source of ideas for reflection in my research journal.

Definition of a research journal

A research journal can be defined as a place to 'let it all out' and make sense of what is out, whether for a reader or the writer's private understanding (Holly, 1989). This suggests that a research journal is a working document that helps to make meaning of a specific topic or challenge. More specifically, Holly (1989) suggests that a research journal is a book for expressing the author's insights, reactions, ideas, and feelings related to everyday experiences. A research journal can thus

encompass both the objective data of the log and the personal interpretations of individuals' experience. This study adopts Holly's description of writing journals as a tool for personal and professional growth because he describes research journals in a detailed way and argues that reflection is a fundamental element of writing journals for research purposes.

Evidence on the benefits of keeping a research journal

There are several benefits to keeping a research journal, not only for researchers but also for participants. Researchers benefit from keeping research journals as they might help them evaluate their performance in the research field and probably develop an awareness of the self while immersed in meaning-making prompts (Holly, 1989). Orange also (2016) argues that the use of research journals can contribute to increasing the level of engagement in research. This argument is informed by his study that explores the use of research journals among doctoral students who were learning qualitative research and found that most of the participants did not use journals in their reflective practices. Therefore, he recommends that using prompts can both encourage students to keep a research journal and to enrich details contained in it.

What further demonstrates the benefits of keeping a research journal is Deggs and Hernadez's (2018) suggestion that journaling enables researchers to understand their positionality in qualitative research. In other words, qualitative researchers should be aware of their positionality throughout the research design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation and writing the thesis. This can be through documenting and reflecting on their assumptions, ideas, feelings, biases and plans in research journals throughout the research journey. Deggs and Hernadez (2018) also argue that there is an intimate relationship between understanding one's positionality in qualitative research, and understanding and embracing one's explicit and implicit bias.

Some studies, such as Alwasilah's (2005), Guce's (2017, 2018) and Apsari's (2018) suggest that keeping journals is beneficial for participants. Apsari (2018), based on analysing data from interviews and participants' journal entries, found that reflective reading journals can be used effectively to improve participants' writing skills. This connects with Alwasilah's (2005) finding that journaling contributes to developing participants' writing skills, such as expressing and analysing ideas, textual cohesion and coherence. Alwasilah (2005) suggests that a research journal is a medium to communicate and to evaluate one's own performance, and it is a helpful tool that enables the participants to enjoy everyday experiences and engage in them. Alwasilah (2005) further argues that keeping research journals appear to help both participants and researchers to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and make it visible and possible for them to overcome their weaknesses.

Guce (2017) introduced reflective journal writing to students as a regular activity in mathematics classes to document their thoughts and feelings. Guce (2017) found that reflective journal writing enabled the students to tell the teacher things they could not say verbally and to evaluate their own performances in the class. It also helped some students to relate the discipline to the real-life settings, engaging in it more. Thus, journal writing is a supportive tool that encourages learners' reflective activity (Guce, 2018).

The rationale for keeping a research journal in this study

I decided to keep a research journal to nurture the transparency of my research journey. That is, I kept one to reflect on my feelings, thoughts and experiences and make them visible. As Ortlipp (2008) suggest, keeping research journals can make the complexity of the research process visible to readers, and thus show that it is not a linear process. My reflections had an effect on the research process through recording and analysing the changes that were made to the research design and

the methods used. My research journal enabled me to make my experiences an important and acknowledged part of the research design, data generation, analysis and interpretation through using them in writing-up my thesis. For example, keeping a reflective journal helped me to identify the most appropriate theoretical lens for understanding my data, to reflect on the implications of the chosen framework and to consider who would benefit from it.

Another reason is I decided to keep a research journal for self-understanding, personal and research growth. I used my research journal to confess, to tell my side of the story of this research and the side of the participants, to cope with life as a researcher, and to come to know myself better. That is, journaling helped me to be aware of my thoughts and feelings, to plan, and to explore my research challenges, opportunities and gains. I maintained a journal to capture my unique experience as a researcher and a participant.

Journaling contributed to making my dialogue with different dimensions of my experience visible to me. This means in writing in my research journal, I purposely undertook an inner journey. This inner journey can be described as participating in a dialogue with various dimensions of experience. My dialogue was informed by a number of questions, such as what happened? What are the facts? What was my role? What feelings surrounded the event? What did I feel about what I did?. These different questions evinced the existence of a dialogue between my objective and subjective views and between description and interpretation of different experiences. Figure 4 below presents a picture of some of my research journals.

Figure 4. Some of the researcher's research journals

Participants' research journals

As shown in Table 5 below, initially seven participants out of twelve agreed to keep research journals to reflect on their experiences and perceptions related to criticality and make them visible to themselves and to me. However, two of my participants, Nadine and Fadi, replied to the email-reminder by apologising and withdrawing their consent to keep research journals. All consenting five participants sent me electronic versions of their journals. I used their texts where appropriate in the data chapters.

Table 5. Details about the participants' research journal

participants' research journals' details	Dates
Participants' consent to keep a research journal	Susan 08/10/2018 Nathan 23/10/2018 Nore 03/12/2018 Melissa 16/10/2018 Jihan 30/07/2019
Sent an email-reminder	28/07/2019
Sent a checking email to my participants but Nathan as he has already sent his journal.	18/09/2019
Journals received	Susan 04/10/2019 Nathan 30/07/2019 Nore 18/09/2019 Melissa 05/10/2019 Jihan 21/09/2019

The use of informal conversational interviews to write research journal entries

Informal conversational interviews, as Patton (2015) labelled them, are built on and emerge from observations. The questions in this type of interview come out from the immediate interaction with interviewees. This indicates that there is no predetermination of questions, topics or wording. I was aware that with this type of interview, different information might be collected from different people with different questions. Nevertheless, this appears to be an advantage to this exploratory study.

In this study, I used informal conversational interviews as a source of data to write about in the research journal. That is, some ideas that emerged from my informal conversational interviews with my participants were used as prompts to reflect on in my research journal. I later found these relevant and appropriate to use in different parts of my thesis, such as data chapters and in my epilogue in the conclusion chapter. For example, in order to make the story of my development during PhD study abroad in the UK more accessible to the readers, I decided to ask my participants, who happen to be my colleagues Alex, Ferial, Rayan and Susan, about their observations and perceptions of my personal and academic development during this time. This allowed me to present the observations of my development during studying PhD abroad from both my and my participants' perspectives.

The process of obtaining this rich data was remarkably quick through online informal conversations, during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. First, I sent my participants messages asking for their consent. They showed substantial interest in discussing their observations. Then, they sent me written (Ferial) and voice recordings (Alex, Rayan and Susan) of their observations. It is important to note that each did not know in advance what I asked them, and they did not know who else I asked. These are followed by transcribing and reflecting on their observations in my research journal.

5.9. Ethical considerations in this research

Ethics refers to doing good and avoiding harm, and it suggests that the protection of human participants in any project is imperative (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001). In this section, I discuss the ethical considerations of using interviews and research journals. I also explain the procedures involved in obtaining informed consent.

5.9.1. Ethical considerations in using interviews in this research

Ethical considerations in an interview-based study go beyond the live interview situation itself to encompass all stages such as the thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting of an interview project (Kvale, 2007). Ethical considerations around designing interviews involve considering the emotional well-being of the participants, securing confidentiality and obtaining their informed consent to participate in the study (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

I see that the personal consequences of the interview and its setting for the participants in general are also important to consider. They can include stress during the interview and changes in self-understanding. Regarding the consequences of the interview, Champagne and Goldberg (2005) and Larkin (2009) explain that particular care regarding the emotional consequences of the participants being interviewed is important during the research process.

For Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), attention should be paid to confidentiality when reporting private interviews in public, and to the consequences of the published report for the interviewees and for the groups they belong to. For example, to ensure both confidentiality and emotional well-being of my participants, I used pseudonyms. I also incorporated member checking into my study. This incorporation includes asking participants to provide comments on my writing of the stories we co-constructed and on the themes I formulated. This member checking enabled their voices to be visible.

The transcripts of the interviews were shared with the participants and agreed upon, a process deemed sound ethical practice (Denscombe, 1998). Member checking was also used to address one possible ethical issue in analysis that involves the question of how penetratingly the interviews

can be analysed and of whether the participants should have a say in how their statements are interpreted (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). In other words, member checking can contribute to checking for accuracy and ensuring participants' views were represented.

5.9.2. Ethics of using journal data for research purposes

There are some significant ethical considerations when using journal data for research purposes. Writing a research journal is meant to be personal. However, as Casanave (2011) points out, when qualitative researchers aim to use journal writing as research data, they make these personal data public when they ordinarily would remain private. In comparison to formal academic writing and essays, research journals are written to record private and personal experiences, attitudes, feelings and perspectives concerning the research trajectory. In this research, because I use participants' research journal, I explained the purpose of using it and how to use their journal entries and asked them for their consent. This is similar to what Casanave (2011) suggests because, in the case of my research, I needed to inform them what is to be done with their journal writings, and I made it clear that they are not compelled to keep research journals. This is the reason why not all my participants agreed to share their research journal.

5.9.3. Informed consent

There is a discussion in relation to considering written consent as a key element of the ethical approval process and whether it could be replaced by oral consent in some research contexts. For example, Farrimond (2014) wondered why a handshake was not enough, and why there appears a need to have a signature on paper. Farrimond (2014)'s statement connects with Janovicek's (2006) and Kamhieh' s (2012) argument that the possibility of a one-size ethics form to fit all contexts, asserting that insistence on written consent may interfere with researcher-participant rapport.

Unlike in the UK, in some other countries, such as Algeria, signing a written document can be interpreted as distrust or disrespect. In this respect, Simaan (2018) noted that signing a paper in Palestinian society might be seen as a sign of distrust, and that the occasions when people need to sign papers in Palestine are often when the authorities order them to authorise the confiscation of their land or the demolition of their houses.

By contrast, Kamhieh (2012) and Guillemin and Gillam (2004) suggest that the real consent lies within the interactions between the researcher and the participant during the research process, not on the written paper that an ethics committee peruses. They also assert that in the interactions between researcher and participants lie the possibilities of respecting the autonomy, dignity and privacy of research participants and also the risks of failing to do so. This implies that informed consent appears to be an ongoing act (Haverkamp, 2005) to cover situations as they arise during the process of the study.

It appears that it is difficult to reach a consensus on how informed consent should be given. This is because it could be obtained differently in different situations. In this regard, Kamhieh (2012) and Donohoue Clyne (2001) recommend that university ethics committees should accept that each culture has different ways of obtaining informed consent.

In this study, due to university ethical regulations, I was required to ask participants to sign a consent form as an agreement between us. As a result, I frequently asked for the participants' consent both written and verbally before conducting each interview and informal conversation so that they understood the aims of the study, and that they agreed to provide information to me which could be published in the future. I made clear that they could withdraw from participating at any stage of the study, that they could also withdraw their transcript from the research if they so wished

(Aldridge, 2014). My participants were aware that the interviews' transcripts alongside tape recordings will be destroyed once the research is complete. Providing them with such sufficient information and ensuring understanding contribute to creating trust between us.

5.10. Method of data analysis

5.10.1. Thematic analysis

I adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide to thematic analysis to analyse the data I collected using different methods. Semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and research journals were adopted in order to capture participants' lived experiences through empathetic two-way conversation. The interviews were structured around notions of 'home environment and an unfamiliar environment', 'criticality' and 'critical thinking'. This way of structure enables students to reflect on their lived experiences, such as considering how their sense of criticality is influenced by surrounding different social environments.

I audio-taped, transcribed and subjected my interviews to thematic analysis. In my first reading of the data, I identified keywords and phrases in order to gain a sense of the themes embedded in the data. I then deconstructed the data to support the process of developing and refining themes. The following step involved disaggregating the data to group participants' statements under emerged themes. Then, to create a close fit between the data and the themes, I consolidated Individual statements. After this, I selected some quotations that illustrate the emerging themes. In the following section, I provide more details about the rationale of using thematic analysis, and I explain each step with some examples from my own.

The rationale for using thematic analysis

I adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide to thematic analysis because it celebrates the flexibility of the method. It also provides the vocabulary and the recipe for researchers to using it in a way that is theoretically and methodologically sound. These researchers made it clear that they are not trying to limit this flexibility. They explain that they 'strike a balance between demarcating thematic analysis clearly —i.e. explaining what it is, and how you do it— and ensuring flexibility in relation to how it is used, so that it does not become limited and constrained, and lose one of its key advantages' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p, 78). Indeed, a clear demarcation of this method is useful to ensure that those who use thematic analysis can make active choices about the particular form of analysis in which they are engaged.

Thematic analysis in this study

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis begins with familiarisation with the data. This first step requires reading and re-reading all the interview transcripts to establish a general sense. This involves reading interview transcripts along with taking notes and using highlighters in order to mark data chunks of particular interest.

I opted not to use a software such as NVivo to process and analyse the data for a number of reasons. Firstly, I found it difficult to understand and navigate. The software does the same as the hand: it highlights relevant segments (Simaan, 2018). Furthermore, the amount of data that I generated from interviews, informal conversations and research journals was not so great as to require time-saving measures such as NVivo (Simaan, 2018). Instead, I decided to do the analysis manually in order to familiarise myself with the data, see the details and the unexpected.

The second step in this approach to thematic analysis involves encoding specific extracts by revisiting some aspects of data that were highlighted to be of interest in the previous step. Some initial codes (see Table 6 below) are identified as a result of my search for segments in the overall data that may answer the initial research questions including: (1) How do the participants perceive criticality? (2) What are the factors that influence their development in criticality?

Table 6. Example of initial coding of the data

Data extracts	Initial codes
'To me critical reading is reading the text and understanding the text within the wider context. The context I mean what is happening globally. This sounds very complicated but I think this is how I tend to think of it. I have to understand what was going on there.' (Nadine, 2018).	Text Context
'The ability to cover as much literature as you can the ability to engage in academic debate let us say intellectual debate. I can think of another challenge of having prejudices or pre assumptions and the influence you had from previous environment. If you have a certain assumption about something and you read an article then you are not going to engage in it because you are reading it and you take your assumptions to be the truth so sometimes, I had to challenge my assumptions about certain issues and I had to challenge that to be able to engage in the text. Because I am not allowing myself to see another version of truth since I go there with my pre-assumptions because it is different from what I have, different from my culture.' (Nadine, 2018).	Volume of literature, Intellectual debate Challenges Prejudices Environment influence Assumptions, Engaging
'The concept of you do not read the text as the absolute truth. So, the concept of criticality is the same in both languages. When you hold a book in Arabic or English you still focus on critical reading. Looking at it as not absolute truth but subjective truth.' (Fadi, 2018).	Absolute truth Criticality is cognitive skill Languages Subjective truth
'For instance, there was this book about human development. How humans develop throughout the years. The best thing I remember about this book is, if you are talking about criticality, it was a new way of thinking of our development not as a linear progress from you born until you died. So, as you get older you experience new experiences, and how they are developing as they get older too. So, in	New way of thinking Not a linear progress

that way if you are thinking that is how I started thinking about topics critically you know it is not about how we perceive society, the development of humans from birth to death. So, I remember that book in particular about human development.' (Jameel, 2018).	Experience development Beginning of thinking critically Perception Society

The third stage of the thematic analysis process aims to identify themes, units of analysis, which are broader than codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This stage necessitates seeking more generic topics that might include some of the codes generated in earlier phases in the same or different categories in order to sort the different codes into broader meaningful categories (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Simaan, 2018). These are given candidate names and functions that are guided by certain principles, the most important of which is to listen to self-knowledge and self-interpretations of everyday life and the 'how' and 'why' of participants' actions (Simaan, 2018). This stage involves forming overall themes, sub-dividing them into sub-themes, joining new sub-themes to them, and dropping others, and at times joining the dropped sub-themes to the others for clarification and transparency. At the end of this stage, a collection of candidate themes is obtained. Subsequently, some other segments of the data are revisited to explore the applicability of those themes to them. I searched for suitable terms used by participants in their own words that correlated with the categories I formed (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Simaan, 2018).

The fourth stage of this approach to thematic analysis demands the reviewing and refining of the candidate themes identified in the earlier stage (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During this phase, I reviewed themes and scrutinised the coded data extracts for each one in order to check whether there is a coherent story and to ensure each theme is related to the data segment. This required identifying the essence of each of the formed themes, and I returned to data segments and re-ordered them under the themes to check if there is a coherent story. Then, I generated a final

thematic map which highlights a number of large themes, and each of these was divided into smaller categories, which required further interpretations and conceptualisation. Ongoing exploration, definition and naming of the final themes were continued into the final stages of the analysis and writing up the thesis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Simaan, 2018).

The last two steps of this model to thematic analysis involve finalising the names and definitions of the final themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These final phases of analysis necessitate also checking that each theme tells a coherent story that fits into the broader story of the dissertation (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Simaan, 2018). They also involve an ongoing process of writing and finding my voice in the analysis and interpretations to create a coherent narrative that is meaningful to me, to the participants of the study and the reader. Following analysis of the data, I shared the emerging themes and stories with the participants by email in order to ensure that their views are presented. Their feedback assisted the refinement of the final themes (see Table 7 below). These themes and sub-themes became the structure of my data chapters in the form of headings and subheadings.

Table 7. A list of the final themes of this study

Themes	Definition	Sub-themes	Examples of how the participants articulated it in their own voice.
Dialogic dimension of criticality	The social interaction of the self and the other that can contribute to the construction of criticality, in which the other is a key factor that feeds into the self.	The other: refers to the influence of the circumstances of environments. The self: refers to the individual-based factors.	'I think we need to be critical and some of the advantages are or the motivation is partially self-interest to be critical.' (Nathan, 2019) 'For example, if I did not experience conflict back home, I would not do what I am searching now for my doctoral research' (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)
Criticality comprises *ways of living*	This represents who the participants are and how they live their lives.	'Being independent becomes a lifestyle'	'...a memorable event is becoming an independent researcher, but the actual change happened gradually.' (Susan, 2019, research journal)
		'Stick to it until you do it'	'...It has been like two months from I came back, and I do not know how to analyse it, but I am sure I will find a way to do it.' (Lydia, 2019, follow-up interview)
		'Being critical is a journey I still learn'	'Being critical is a journey where I learnt and still learn about what is going on around me.' (Melissa, 2019, research journal)
		Confidence	'In a way it [being critical] confirmed what I already know but it gave me more confidence to develop those thoughts and to develop my confidence to be more critical.' (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)
		'I care about them'	'I think being with people who are experiencing discrimination...I think these feelings helps to practice my criticality.' (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

		‘I always want to know’	‘If I look at my life as little child, I always questioned things. I always wanted to know...I think criticality starts with this curiosity.’ (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)
Questioning is the golden thread in criticality	This means that the participants show to me that their understanding of criticality appears to be similar in considering questioning as the fundamental facet of criticality.	Questioning the taken-for granted	‘I encourage students to question everything and not take things for granted. I allow the space to question everything…’ (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)
		Considering others’ perspectives	‘This friend of mine was asking so many questions. She was asking about both sides not only about the things that make me happy.’ (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)
		Questioning the development of the argument	‘I began to question if Foucault was to go to X country now…would he change the way he viewed power domination, ideology. Would he have different way of writing?’ (Nadine, 2018, interview)
		Questioning the ‘sub-text’	‘The critical level that is required is knowing the fact where stuff coming from…it is considering why that person write that at that moment in that journal or book.’ (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)
		Questioning evidence	‘For me, critical reading…I think the word critical here means that you do not take things for face value but always seek justifications and arguments as why this text is trustworthy.’ (Nore, 2019, research journal)

5.11. Writing up the analysis

To help me to write about each sub-theme, I use the following micro strategies: SEE-I and 'The Rule of Five'. SEE-I (State, Elaborate, Exemplify, Illustrate) is introduced by the theory of critical thinking (Nosich, 2012), and I created 'The Rule of Five' as a result of my research and knowledge, which resulted from analysing the writing style of some previous theses. It refers to these five steps, which can be used flexibly: state, quote, comment, discuss and theorise, which appear to be similar to the elements of SEE-I. I suggest that 'The Rule of Five' addresses more specifically writing up the analysis, interpretation and discussion of qualitative data. By contrast, SEE-I can be implemented in writing any text (Nosich, 2012, 2020). I argue that the use of these two strategies of writing is flexible. They can also be used creatively. In addition, I argue that the aim of using SEE-I and 'The Rule of Five' is to demonstrate clarity in writing.

The significance and the use of SEE-I in my study

My aim in using SEE-I is to integrate critical thinking tools when analysing my data and writing up my thesis. It is a useful tool to communicate clearly what I argue in my thesis and to make sense of the lived experiences of my participants related to criticality. As a result, I suggest developing SEE-I as a habitus in writing different academic texts such as theses and dissertations. The letters stand for four steps that help make whatever a person is working on clearer (Nosich, 2012, pp.30-33).

S: State it

E. Elaborate [explain it more fully, in your own words]

E. Exemplify [give a good example]

I. Illustrate [give an illustration: maybe a metaphor, a simile, an analogy, a diagram, a concept map, and so forth]

I adopted SEE-I because it improves the clarity of writing. Nosich (2012) states that by applying SEE-I in writing about any idea, the result can be a coherent and smooth flow of understood and well-communicated ideas. It can also be used by teachers in the classroom environment to teach their students and to assess their understanding of concepts, for example. In the following paragraph and Table 8, I define and explain SEE-I.

Nosich (2012), a scholar in the field of critical thinking for more than 20 years, suggests that questioning is a fundamental element in critical thinking because the initial step in critical thinking is asking the questions that need to be asked. The aim of asking questions is to have clear ideas and understanding. According to Nosich (2012), clarifying is a significant step to begin any critical-thinking process. Clarifying a thought, for example, requires two aspects: understanding it clearly and then communicating it clearly to others. A very useful process that works for both is called SEE-I. Nosich's book, *Learning to Think Things Through*, contains a number of critical-thinking processes that accomplish far more than you would ever expect at first glance, and SEE-I is one of them. I reproduced Table 8 below from Nosich (2012, pp. 30–33), which states the meaning of each element.

Table 8. The writing tool SEE-I (State, Elaborate, Exemplify, Illustrate)

Statement	**Elaboration**	**Exemplification**	**Illustration**
To state something is, essentially, to say it briefly, clearly, and as precisely as possible. Sometimes it means constructing a good definition., but it can also mean stating the thesis of a chapter by trying to capture the heart of what the chapter is saying in a single, clear, well-formulated sentence.	To elaborate on something is to expand on it, to explain it in your own words, at greater length, so that the reader gets more of the fullness of what is meant.	Here, the goal is to give a good example—not just any example, but a well-chosen one, one that will clarify for yourself or for a reader what you mean. Usually, it should be ones' own original example, not one from the book or the teacher, and it should fit well with your statement and elaboration.	An illustration is literally a picture (as in 'an illustrated book'). To clarify something, it helps to give readers something they can picture in their minds. Sometimes, it can be an actual picture. In some cases, it can also be a graph, a diagram, or a concept map. More usually, your illustration will be a picture in words: an analogy, simile or metaphor that captures the meaning.

Flexibility of SEE-I

I use SEE-I because it is flexible and adaptable to a variety of circumstances that call for critical thinking. In most cases, critical thinking is not a linear process. This is so for SEE-I as it is among the tools or methods used in assisting individuals to think critically (Nosich, 2012). Even though SEE-I appears to go step by step, it does not mean that moving to the following step suggests that the previous one is complete. For example, elaborating an idea may require revisiting the statement that is formulated in step one. The idea is that working on one step may require going back and forth. The ideal statement, according to Nosich (2012), is not always a single sentence that is brief and clear. In some cases, it may be more. The essence is not in 'how long' the statement or elaboration is. The point of this method is to capture the essence in the first step (state) and to explain it in the second step (elaborate). I find SEE-I useful in writing about my data and other parts of my thesis because I can skip some steps, such as illustration or exemplification, even though illustration allows for creativity to emerge. Though

exemplification entails providing an example, sometimes what clarifies the issue is to give both an example and a contrasting example (Nosich, 2012).

5.12. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the ontological and epistemological assumptions in this study. I have explained the interpretivist approach and qualitative approach which informed the research methods employed for data collection. I have also defined, exemplified and highlighted the significance of reflexivity in this thesis. I have then discussed my approach towards analysing the research data and the ethical considerations in every research method. I conclude this chapter with explaining and demonstrating my 'writing up' process. The next three chapter present my data analysis and discussion.

Chapter Six: Dialogic dimension of criticality

This chapter responds to the first main theme coming out by data. This is represented in three sub-themes which are as follows: the other, the self, and the interconnectedness of the self and the other. Within these subthemes, the participants are showing to me that their construction of criticality is embedded in their unique lived experiences, and influenced by the dialogue between their individual selves and the other represented by social factors. In this dialogue, the other is a key factor that feeds into the self. The participants also highlight that the boundary between these two factors is blurry. This chapter concludes by generating a model, based on the participants' voices, that expresses criticality in dialogue. The contribution of this model lies in demonstrating how criticality in dialogue is fluid – it is in a continuous engagement with other people and thus has a dialogic dimension.

6.1. The other

In this analysis, the understanding of the other continues to emerge throughout the data as environmental circumstances, which means individuals' interactions with what is going on around them. For example, Nathan refers to this understanding as follows:

> I think that you need to acquire that level of criticality. I think it is society and by society, I mean anything: parents, school, friends that rise your awareness to that level of thinking. Even you have the level of criticality it does not mean that they are acting accordingly. Doing critically is different than thinking critically. This is the stage of my personal experience at the moment. Although I can see some of the problems where they are, I cannot always do something about it. (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)

What I think is going on here is that similar to Nathan, Nadine associates the meaning of the other with interactions with other people.

> When [I think of] environment, I think of place surrounding me, resources .... the context of where I lived and the background and whatever surrounds us. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

This subtheme is divided into two sections: past and current lived experiences. The findings suggest that there is a dialogue between the past and current lived experiences evident in how the participants' backgrounds influence the ways they construct their interpretations and enactments of criticality.

6.1.1. Past lived experiences

Past lived experiences are factors that have impacts upon how criticality is constructed before relocating to the UK. These factors are interaction with prior education, other people such as teachers, social pressures, and political conflicts.

Prior education

This is the heading where the participants are showing me that prior education seems to play an important role in constructing their criticality. There appear some individual dimensions that explain what and how different elements of background education influence their experiences. For example, Nadine highlights that students' individual performance in criticality is not entirely defined by their prior educational system.

> If there are problems with the educational systems that does not mean that we say that [the] individual does not have the ability to think critically. My friends and I agree that every individual has the ability to think critically. It is just the ability to let it out or encourage it to emerge and to be on the surface. (Nadine, 2019, follow up interview)

Similar to Nadine, Susan states.

> It's not that my critical thinking was hindered by my cultural surroundings; I think it's just that we weren't really taught how to be critical. We weren't taught what critical reading was

> supposed to be, and thus, we grew up thinking that we didn't have it even though some of us did have and appl[ied] it all along. (Susan, 2019, research journal)

For Susan, in this extract, there is no causal relationship between experiencing struggles with critical reading or thinking and one's educational or cultural background. This extract also indicates that a lack of explicit teaching of critical reading results in growing up thinking one is less critical. However, Susan mentions that some seem to be thinking and being critical but unaware that it is criticality, as Facione (1990) and Elder (2017) suggest.

Concerning what and how different elements of prior education influence Participants' formation of criticality, Lydia notes.

> I think in my local university...the lectures did not help much. However, seminars did help me. In the other university, the American system, I remember I had to write a book review. It is an interesting book, but I spent one week reading it. And I had [an] other friend who studied in like France and Germany and they just skimmed the book. And in three days they finish the book and write the review and we got the same mark. If you know something about how you should tackle it, it would be much easier. For me it took a bit of time as [I had to] read everything, word by word. (Lydia, 2019, follow-up interview)

This statement indicates that the structures of the educational system within which one learns contribute to establishing a particular form of habitus, such as critical reading. For example, attending seminars contributes to encouraging Lydia's sense of criticality, in contrast to lecturing. Furthermore, her experience shows that encountering struggles with critical reading, for example, is because she was not explicitly taught how to do it, as also highlighted by Susan in this section. However, it does not appear to be because Lydia feels that her 'home' educational system is not as good as the one in France, for instance. It is important to note that

Lydia's statement, 'I read [the book] word by word', may suggest that this is not critical reading, which aligns with Elder's (2017, 2020) argument that speed reading could be one feature of critical reading.

Again, as I discussed in Chapter Four, participants' statements are framed broadly within the area of studying abroad. This is because what they say adds to the overall understanding of what happens when people travel to study and how they benefit from their prior lived experience. I categorise evidence on how participants' prior education influences their experiences of constructing criticality into: essentialist, non-essentialist and limited evidence.

The first category falsely suggests that the backgrounds of international students essentially hinder the development of criticality. For example, Nisbah's (2012, 2016) studies found that dual education systems and lack of institutional support appear to negatively influence her participants' experience of critically in the sense of leading to a lack of critical analysis of argument and trouble with making sound conclusions. What I can see is that this type of evidence appears to be refuted by my participants' accounts in this section. This is demonstrated in this strong statement by Susan 'it's not that my critical thinking was hindered by my cultural surroundings' (2019, research journal).

I read the participants' reflections on the influence of prior knowledge on their formation of criticality as non-essentialist. Nadine, Susan and Lydia are making personal narrative choice to resist belonging to an essentialist grand narrative. Their choice suggests that there are marginalised realities that can challenge the stereotype that being international students tells who they are and what they can do. This connects with the research of Beck and Sznaider (2006), Delanty, Wodak, and Jones (2008), and Holliday (2013). The participants' choice also associates with the argument that students' diverse backgrounds help to cultivate global

citizenship and resilience. This resilience, for Caruana (2014), is an important feature that describes international university student mobility.

The third category, limited evidence, concerns the evidence that reveals that studying abroad can enhance the understanding and enactment of criticality. However, as I argue throughout this thesis, none of the studies cited in Chapter Four considered the potential influence of participants' prior education on constructing criticality. For example, like Savage and Wehman (2014), Williams (2009) aimed to assess the gains of studying abroad and found that they included an increase in critical skills such as problem-solving. Roberts *et al*. (2018) also did not refer to the potential influence of their participants' background on nurturing and developing 'inference' as a facet of criticality. Therefore, my thesis represents the evidence which this literature does not refer to.

Interaction with teachers

The participants are showing me that they have different perceptions of how teachers in their prior education experience have influenced their experiences of constructing criticality. Contrary to Jameel and Nathan's views, Nadine perceives that some of her teachers did not play positive roles in her experience. Jameel notes:

> In a way, the environment I was living in was not encouraging criticality, but I was critical… It is always better if you have [an] environment that encourages criticality because when I had teachers who encouraged me, I felt that I expressed myself…At school where I come from, criticality is not really encouraged although I disagree with the notion that only the westerns think critically. I remember [a] couple of teachers that encouraged criticality and I always liked them more than the rest of the teachers because they believed in us and gave us chances to ask questions. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, it appears that Jameel experienced some paradoxical thoughts. On the one hand, he thinks that his environment did not encourage criticality. On the other hand, he asserts that some of his teachers, who might be considered an element of his environment, positively influenced his experience of criticality. It is possible that he was referring to other people than his teachers. The positive influence of interacting with his teachers lies in showing him that they believe in his intellectual abilities and in providing room at school to ask questions and express his thoughts. Encouraging people to express themselves, ask questions and engage in debate represent elements of criticality as Elder (2020) argues at the 40th international annual conference on developing critical thinking.

Similar to that of Jameel, Nathan's intellectual curiosity is stimulated by his conversations with his teacher of history and philosophy, who uses different forms of criticality, such as thinking differently, not taking things for granted, analysing and evaluating the existing knowledge relating to a phenomenon.

> I think those teachers made my way of looking at things different...For example: The teacher of history and philosophy that I had; she was really good. She introduced us to the idea that history does not exist. (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)

Nadine in contrast thinks that the learning environment and some teachers in her prior education experience appear not to encourage students to think critically.

> I think that the learning environment, in some universities, teachers and professors do not encourage students to think critically or outside the box. I am not saying that they do not have the ability to think critically, it is just the environment and people are not facilitating the learning. They are not making it or giving the students the chance to express themselves to think and speak differently. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

Here, Nadine's statement suggests two main aspects that did not encourage students to think critically in schools. The first one is related to the readiness and willingness of teachers to teach for criticality. The second one concerns limited study materials, large numbers of students in classrooms, insufficient social space for students to question, challenge their thinking and that of others and to express themselves. For Nadine, providing room for students to express their ideas is what appears to define criticality. In addition, 'thinking outside the box' appears to be Nadine's frequently used analogy to express her definition of criticality as thinking differently.

What I can observe in Nathan's, Jameel's and Nadine's statements, in this section, about how criticality appears to be nurtured in dialoguing with teachers is that Bakhtin's (1981) idea of dialogue enables me to understand what the participants are saying. This indicates that the way these participants construct their criticality is partially explained using Bakhtin's idea. For example, Nathan's thinking appears to be changed due to dialoguing with his teacher of history and philosophy, who stimulates his intellectual curiosity. This sense of change in constructing criticality is further evidenced in the lived experience of Jameel.

Referring back to Jameel's extract of data in this section, I suggest that it is not important to disclose whether or not he is himself 'non-Western'. 'Western' or 'non- Western' is more to do with subjective narratives of nationality and culture that are by no means fixed (Amadasi and Holliday, 2018, p. 247). What is important is that Jameel's statement, 'I disagree with the notion that only the Westerns think critically', represents a personal narrative of independent resistance in which he does not believe in false and imposed stereotypes. Further evidence to support this notion of resistance is provided by the juxtaposition with what Nadine states in the above segment of data, 'I am not saying that [non-Westerns] do not have the ability to think critically'. This notion of resistance can indeed be part of my preferred non-essentialist discourse, which challenges large-culture narratives. Instead, my preferred discourse 'comprises the natural hybridity of huge cultural diversity that defies fixity that has always

been there. It is a place where marginalised realities everywhere can claim Centre ground' (Holliday, 2022, p. 378).

Social pressures

Social pressures in this analysis refer to the rules that may govern the way individuals act in a certain environment. Social rules appear to be among the factors that influence the construction of criticality. Fadi gave this example.

> A woman came from X country to study here in England to do her PhD. When she went back to X country, she was expecting that she would be loved by her students, but she was shocked to realised that she is hated by her students. There were many complaints about her. Then, she decided to do action research about why her students hated her. She discovered that the reason is she was asking her female students to be critical about some topics that if they do outside classroom, they would be literally killed like 'love' and politics in a society where you will be killed if you do so. So again, I cannot teach criticality in a context where everything around me is against it. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, according to Fadi's interpretation, the students of his friend, a teacher, seem to perceive some of their society's regulatory principles as discouraging questions or debate about certain topics – for instance, love and politics. As a result, based on what Fadi said, these students resist their teacher's approach of teaching and hated her. Moreover, they appear unwilling to think differently, even though the teacher tried to encourage them to discuss these topics overtly outside the classroom. The dispositional factor such as willingness appears to be absent in this incident because social rules, such as those regarding love, may result in students being punished if they think or act in ways that seem critical of these norms. That is, social rules have some influence on the absence of these dispositional factors.

Referring again to Fadi's interpretation, the reaction of the students shows that they conform to the structures of the environment. The consequence of this conformity is not being able to experience thinking differently about these topics. However, thinking and being outside the box may mean trying to think about these topics critically and overtly, wherein different perspectives are communicated and respected. It may also encourage other people in the environment to think differently or critically as evident in the approach of Fadi's friend, the teacher.

What I perceive is going on in the way that Fadi is making sense of the experience of his friend, the teacher, is even though social pressures appear to govern how people behave in certain contexts, individuals react differently to these rules. For example, the teacher tries to resist them, and this is shown by her teaching to cultivate criticality. This resistance might be the outcome of her conception of teaching for criticality as a life skill. However, her students appear to conform to the rules of their society as demonstrated by their resistance. Based on this incident, Fadi concludes that criticality cannot be encouraged or cultivated in a field governed by rules that do not allow this.

The influence of social rules on interpretations and enactments of criticality is also evident in the lived experience of Nadine.

> Because I come from X country, it is politically very complicated place to grow up in. You are affected as an individual by circumstances around you politically, socially, economically, plus there is a cultural aspect which defines certain roles for women, and I grow up thinking to get education and then being qualified to work or marry and have children, like a typical role of women. What I mean by busy particularly is being caught up in these circumstances, the political, social, economic and the cultural defining my own role as a woman. (Nadine, 2018, interview)

In this extract, Nadine, shows me how she is influenced by her environment. In the following extract I see how she connects this with her decision to wear headscarf.

> Some people feel, may be, or let us talk about myself. I was not critical about wearing the headscarf because I believed at that time that if I opened that door, it is just sometimes better to stay or it makes life easy when we do not question certain things, just to avoid questions from people, family, social pressure and all similar sort of things. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, it appears that Nadine started wearing the headscarf because it is a social rule or a norm in her environment. This could mean that she grew up seeing girls start wearing a headscarf when they reach a certain age. This might be interpreted from a religious perspective, or it could be a social phenomenon.

What Nadine and Fadi are saying, in the extracts of data used in this section, about the influence of social pressures on constructing their criticality enables me to therefore understand how Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) conceptions of social rules linked to field, habitus, and playing the game might offer a language capable of articulating their complex practices. This means the way in which Nadine and Fadi are constructing their criticality's understanding and practices is partially explained using Bourdieu's concepts.

It appears that what I see as a form of the students' habitus (framework of thinking), in Fadi's extract, does not encompass being critical about these specific topics (such as love) in this specific field. If their environment is considered as a field, within it, there exist a number of sub-fields such as family, neighbourhood and school that they grew up interacting with. This form of students' habitus can be interpreted differently based on the understanding of the reader. My interpretation is that the students might not have observed their parents, family members or other people discussing these topics critically and overtly in their field.

Contrastingly, in the study of Xu and Grant (2017), the field is the supervisory space, and the rules of this field is to show and develop critical thinking. Their participant, Christine, has to know and comply with these rules. This is considered a currency of great value in this field. Considering criticality a currency may be dependent on the field. For example, it appears to be a currency for doctoral students such as Fadi and Christine. However, it seems not to be a currency in the field of the teacher's students, mentioned in Fadi's extract.

Nadine's statement on wearing the headscarf demonstrates this form of habitus as a way of thinking that is translated into action. First, the act of conforming to wear a headscarf illustrates this form of habitus because it is likely to be a result of Nadine's constant engagement with people in her 'home' field. However, being critical about wearing the headscarf exemplifies a change in this form of habitus. This is in the sense that Nadine developed some critical questions about the essence of wearing the headscarf that is considered 'common sense' and social rules in her field (see extract below).

Another relevant way to explain my understanding of Fadi's and Nadine's data extracts is by focusing on the sense of playing the game (Bourdieu, 1990). The students resisted the teacher's different perspective, manifested in her advocacy of critical thinking because it does not conform with the social rules that govern the field. According to Fadi (2019), in his friend's country, students are not encouraged to discuss topics such as love overtly outside the classroom. As a result, her students hated her, which may suggest that she failed to understand the rules of the game. On the other hand, her students appear to internalise the rules of the game as well as the profit to be gained by complying with them, which is not to be punished by social rules of their environment. This indicates that criticality in this environment is not regarded as a currency, which means that it does not have a great value. Instead, not being critical about such topics is a currency.

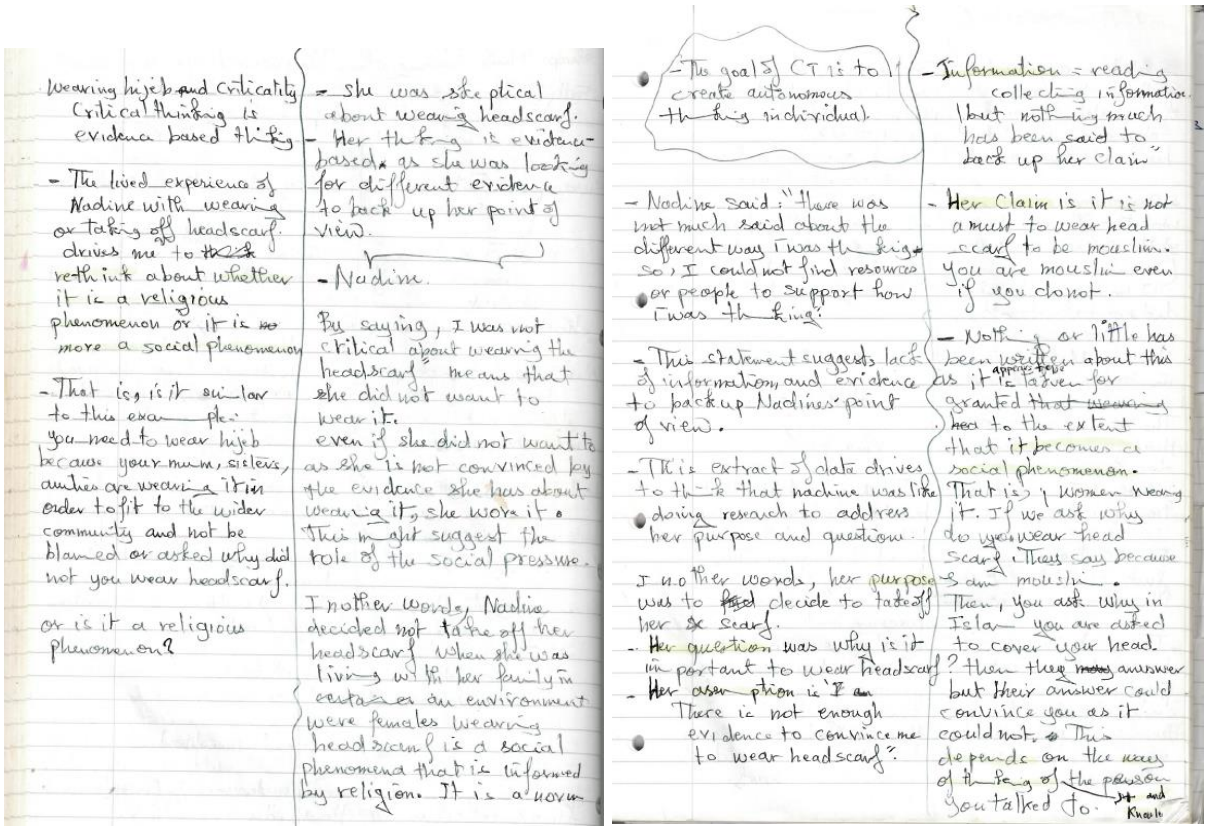
The following extract demonstrates how 'playing the game' is evident in Nadine's experience.

> Sometimes, it is just better to silence that critical thinking, just switched it off and just be like them. At that time, I could not defend my point of view because in that mainstream culture there was not much said about the different way I was thinking. So, I could not find resources or people to support how I was thinking, so I just fit in that mainstream culture. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

Here, Nadine appears to be aware of the rules of the game as well as the profit to be gained by complying with them. That is, she is aware that wearing a headscarf has great value and, thus, is a currency in her field. In order to fit in, Nadine, did not take it off, indicating her conformity with the social rules and her willingness to play their games by their rules.

In the case of Nadine, wearing a headscarf appears to be a social act more than a religious one. This is because she took it off when she travelled to study abroad, in the UK. Travelling abroad means living in a different field that may be governed by different social rules, in which wearing a headscarf is not a social rule. If, for Nadine, wearing a headscarf was more a religious act, she might have been less likely to take it off since changing the field does not alter her religious convictions. This conclusion is a result of much thought and analysis, which is evident in Figure 5 below. I appreciate that my handwriting might not be readable. This is not the reason of including these screenshots from my research journal. Instead, the true reason is just to use these screenshots as illustrations to show that I was taking detailed notes at the time.

Figure 5. Nadine's experience of wearing headscarf: a social act more than a religious one (Zina, research journal, 2020)



To summarise my understanding of what the participants are telling me, I argue for the influence of social pressures on the construction of criticality. Data shows that conforming to or resisting social rules sometimes depends on whether criticality has a positive currency within certain fields, and whether individuals want to attain status within these fields.

Political conflict

In this heading, my participants are showing me some evidence suggesting the positive influence of encountering political conflict at 'home' on their experiences of generating critical ideas and acting upon them. To start with, Fadi comments.

> My experience in the course, my conflict back in my country, watching different media sources reporting the same news in different ways. You have the knowledge in literature and in the media. The way you process it, your experience engages and interacts with it. The experience leads you to do something. For

> example, if I did not experience conflict back home, I would not do what I am searching now for my doctoral research... In my research I focus on the role of education in post conflict in X. I am not looking at education as a way to teach you how you read and write but as a way to promote peace...This is the level of criticality I am thinking of and trying to promote... I think the major thing that happened is the war in my country and the people I lost…For me, I was thinking what made my friends taking part in the war. They were like a normal person, a teacher or a taxi driver. For example, I have friends who are two brothers joining different opposite parties and fighting against each other. That is where I started to think about criticality. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

Fadi, in this extract, appears to suggest a causal relationship between his experience of political conflict at 'home' and his passion for exploring his PhD topic. He is trying to show me how living in a war zone led him to promote his critical thinking in the sense of being reflective and curious to understand current affairs. This characterisation of criticality as curiosity and reflection is evident in Fadi's efforts to understand the motives that drove two brothers join opposing parties and fight against each other.

The positive influence of experiencing political conflict on the construction of criticality is further manifested in Jameel's lived experience.

> The most highlighted identity is actually someone from an ethnic minority in Britain. This is the thing that makes me most critical...I started critical and I become more critical...I find that if you live with privilege, you ask less questions. What about if you come from a minority that it has been oppressed and had to fight for their rights, you possibly questioning more and more. Therefore, I believe that criticality is influenced by context. (Jameel, 2019, follow up interview)

Here, Jameel's account reveals that what informs his experience of criticality is being part of an ethnic minority in the UK, where he has been a student from 2010 to 2018. He had experienced political conflicts at 'home' where he had to fight for his basic rights. In his view, this incident fed his experience of constructing criticality in the sense of developing the habit of questioning his surroundings.

Jameel's statement suggests that he does not perceive himself to be a privileged person, and thus he does not seem to take things for granted, which is another aspect of criticality (Facione, 1990; Elder and Paul, 2016). For him, criticality refers to 'having anti-colonial ideologies... [and] wanting to change the system'. It is also manifested in his preferred readings.

> If I read ... texts, I always make sure that I read by people from the margins whether feminists, post-colonial, gender studies. Those authors that have actually struggled with oppression with critics and society. They had to ask questions. These are the authors I trust most. (Jameel, 2018, interview)

His readings encompass people who lived in a war zone. This is based on assuming that they may frequently ask questions that reflect his experience too. It is likely that this act expresses his sense of belonging to this group of writers.

Unlike the current study, Ruparelia (2018), found that political conflicts negatively influence participants' experiences of developing criticality. For example, at the time of her Zimbabwean students' formative years in school, the country was recovering from a civil war and had recently gained independence. As a result, resources such as teachers and books, were limited and therefore dictating from books that were available may have been the only way to teach large numbers of students. Thus, the field of living in a recently independent country appears to negatively influence the development of criticality. This is due to the large number of students in one classroom limiting opportunities for enactments of criticality, such as questions and debates.

Questioning and debates are stressed in Jameel's statements in this section as essential elements in provoking criticality. This can be associated with a dominant argument that questioning is one basic tool of critical thinking because it generates further questions, stimulates new *ways of thinking* and new paths to excellence of thought (Nosich, 2012; Paul and Elder, 2006, 2007, 2008; Elder and Paul, 2016; Elder and The Foundation for Critical thinking, 2018; Elder and Paul, 2019)

In the above extracts of data, Fadi appears to show me some evidence of criticality such as decision-making, deciding how to contribute to prompt peace. He also embodies an active citizen, which is one goal of being and thinking critically according to Paul (1993, 1996) and Elder (2017, 2020). This discourse aligns with Holmes and Clizbe (1997), The National Academy of Sciences (2005) and Barton and McCully (2007), who all suggest that critical thinking leads individuals to become more active citizens. Encouraging individuals to participate in their societies as critically engaged citizens in the world is among the aims of education (Davies and Barnett, 2015; Elder, 2020).

What Fadi and Jameel are telling me, in the segments of data used under this heading, about how living in a war zone positively influences their criticality formation enables me to therefore read both accounts as examples that can be explained using Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) concept of field. This means how Fadi and Jameel are constructing their criticality is partially explained using the concept, field. Field, in this context, refers to the influence of living in a war zone on the participants' criticality formation. For example, In Jameel's account, criticality appears to stand for frequently being reflective and questioning to gain in-depth insights into his surroundings. Jameel's statement, 'I started critical and become more critical', illustrates change and development in his criticality formation as a result of being constantly influenced by different factors such as field (living in a war zone).

6.1.2. Current lived experience: studying abroad

So far in this chapter, I have discussed the factors related to participants' prior lived experiences that have impacts on constructing their criticality. In this section, I discuss those factors related to their current lived experiences. I divide it into two sub-sections: dialoguing with other people and doing a PhD. It is important to note that as I deal with instances of data and interconnecting them in thick description, I'm developing a discussion that relates the data, the theory, and the evidence within broad context of study abroad, which I use to summarise what I have been writing about. I place it at the end of this first sub-section.

6.1.2.1. Dialoguing with other people

In this first sub-section, the participants are showing me how dialoguing with other people while studying abroad nurtures their experiences of thinking and being critical. Among these people are fellow PhD students, supervisors, people who hold different perspectives, differently knowledgeable people and resources, and teaching international students. I discuss these factors respectively in the following headings.

Fellow PhD students

Engaging in conversations with fellow PhD students appears to have a positive influence on the participants' construction of criticality. This is manifested in the experience of Nadine and myself. Nadine notes.

> I am living with two PhD students: one is finishing and one is starting. We always get engaged in different discussions...my friend is searching feminism in business...She was questioning the fact that in the 'West' the idea of feminism has progressed but she was saying why is our society is struggling, she is from an Asian country, and we have so many unresolved issues. We always discuss these things. The way we perceive the west was different from how we perceive them now. Now we lived in the UK… and we have seen different people…And now we see

> things in real life situation. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

Nadine's statement demonstrates this positive influence. Her conversations with her fellow PhD students appear to contribute to assimilating and using more frequently questioning, reflection, curiosity and analysis. For example, their curiosity lies in trying to understand the development of feminism in the 'West' in contrast to non-European countries through discussing multiple viewpoints. Nadine's assertion, 'the way we perceive the 'West' was different from how we perceive them now', demonstrates reflection and analysis using their personal experience and knowledge.

The positive influence of interacting with fellow PhD students on criticality formation is also evidenced in my account. I developed the courage to discuss my ideas, writings and confusions with some of my PhD colleagues to develop clarity of my thinking. To do so, some of my colleagues and I created a WhatsApp group. This group included Zoom meetings to discuss our thesis related struggles. I recorded most of my reflections in my research journal. The following extract demonstrates an inner dialogue I had before sending a section of my writing about data to one of my colleagues whose input I trust.

> I want to send this data section to my colleague (PhD student) to read for feedback, but I am hesitant...the reason why is he might say this is not how it should be written about or interpreted...ok, but the discussion should not stop here... I should follow that asking why you think so and what is your alternative and why? …then I should analyse his comments and interpretations using my knowledge to decide whether to consider them. This decision depends on whether they seem relevant, justified by data and significant. (Zina, research journal, December 2020)

This extract shows some forms of criticality that are applied in preparing for a conversation with a colleague. To start with, it takes intellectual courage to check whether I am making

informed biases. It indeed reveals both evidence of confidence in reason and the readiness to change my position when evidence leads to a more reasonable one.

Supervisor

In this heading, the participants Nadine and Susan are trying to show me that the conversations they have with their supervisors enable them to practice their criticality in the sense of trying new *ways of thinking and living*, as Nadine notes.

> Thinking outside the box...in the way I wrote my thesis, there is a conventional way of writing it. There are templates…to follow, but for me, luckily, I have a good supervisor and I asked can I do this in this way? She said, I do not see there is a problem unless you justify. So, this is what I mean by thinking outside the box. Thinking differently, basically. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this segment, Nadine's supervisor appears to encourage her to act upon her different ideas and to justify them. She uses the analogy 'thinking outside the box' to illustrate her intention to structure her thesis in an unconventional but rationalised way. This unconventional but rationalised way demonstrates her criticality as a way of thinking and being.

Similar to Nadine, Susan's interaction with her supervisor appears to cultivate her sense of acting independently, which she perceives as a developing trait of her personality.

> like reading for example, my supervisor never gave me a book to read it. I mean he never recommended what I read. He never obliged me to read things. I can say that it [being independent] became part of my lifestyle. When I did my master in x, it was not a lifestyle. I was still dependent on my parents, I needed people to do things. (Susan, follow up interview, 2019)

Susan's statement implies that her sense of being independent is encouraged in her supervisory space. While the positive influence of her supervisor is not clearly uttered in the above segment

of data, it can be inferred from it. For example, Susan is responsible for selecting her reading materials for her PhD, how to read them and for what purposes. Interestingly, both Nadine and Susan used analogies to make and illustrate their complex viewpoints. Nadine compared thinking critically or differently to 'thinking outside the box' whilst Susan linked being independent to a 'lifestyle'.

People who hold different perspectives

Dialoguing with people who hold different perspectives appears to feed into the participants' experiences of constructing criticality. This dialoguing seems significant for Fadi as it is evident in both my interviews with him (in 2018 and 2019).

> In [my country], my fundamental things in life are like a triangle which are religion, family and society…And I came here and none of these … the foundation of my existence here are not important. (Fadi, 2018, interview)
>
> For example, ...I met a person here who does not know his parents. You know in my culture this does not happen frequently. And the same thing about religion…That was my first time I thought that the foundation of my existence was bit shaking… People were questioning me a lot about things that I have never thought about it because I took them for granted. I came to a new life as I never met someone who is atheist for example or Hindu… this exposure for me was very important. I think this could be a critical incident in my life ... I still hold the same values, but I am more aware of how they affect me and affect them as well. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

This extract shows that Fadi's voice, in his prior lived experience, is described as taking certain things for granted, such as the value of family. Being a student in his new social environment enables him to realise that his perspectives may be context-based. This being in unfamiliar place invites exposure to other *ways of thinking*, such as religious beliefs and the

importance of family in one's life and, therefore, contributes to raising Fadi's awareness of the possible *ways of thinking* about what he perceived as common sense. This exposure appears in Fadi's account as encountering difference through contradiction and contrasting viewpoints. I will refer to this example again in the beginning of Chapter Eight in order to illustrate the point I am making there.

Differently knowledgeable people and resources

Interacting with differently knowledgeable people and resources seems to positively influence participants' formations of criticality's interpretations and enactments. However, it is unclear whether this access to resources is specific to studying abroad. Access to resources such as books or technology does not mean that students will necessarily learn to be critical. Rather, I suggest it is 'how' one uses these resources, as Nadine asserts.

> [studying abroad]…the environment around me…gave me the chance to meet knowledgeable people and to check resource to think outside the box (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview).

Here, Nadine's reference to being in her new environment suggests two main contributors to making her think 'outside the box'. The first concerns interacting with knowledgeable people. It is possible she is referring to having conversations with her supervisors and some researchers and academics at different conferences. However, what I observe is 'how' and the extent to which this interaction influences her experience is not well-elaborated. The other factor is easy access to resources, on which point Fadi notes:

> I think this interaction outside the classroom with people [while being abroad] changed me. Studying here is not only about the resources because we can get the resources back home. It is just that exposure to other ways of thinking, other cultures and other religions. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

In these segments of data, the disagreement on whether access to resources is what contributes to demonstrating the specificity of studying abroad is real. For example, Fadi asserts that accessing resources, such as books is not as important as interacting with other people who hold different viewpoints and come from diverse backgrounds in the act of nurturing criticality because the resources can be accessed from his 'home' country.

What I can see in response to the possible factors that may define study abroad, and that influence the construction of criticality, George, who is a participant in Ruparelia's (2018) study appears to support Fadi's viewpoint. That is, in both George's and Fadi's accounts, access to resources is not specific to studying abroad. In contrast, in Nadine's experience in this section, access to resources appears to contribute to both influencing positively her experience of criticality and showing the specificity of studying abroad. Nadine is trying to show me that there is limited access to resources in her prior lived experience. It again appears to me that access to resources itself does not indicate that one engages in criticality. Indeed, Ruparelia (2018) concludes that reading widely can offer different perspectives, but it is up to each student to read analytically and comparatively to engage in criticality.

Teaching international students

Teaching international students is found to nurture participants' interpretations and enactments of criticality. This is shown in the account of Nadine, who teaches English in a language school. She states.

> [people around me] encouraging me to think critically. What I mean by these people again because I am a teacher, I encourage my students to think critically and to express themselves. As teachers, we should create this environment of safety to students to be able to express themselves. This is something I did not do before. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

Here, this teaching of international students appears to benefit both Nadine and her students. For example, Nadine motivates them to express themselves in the classroom. In return, for her, this presents a valuable opportunity to gain experience. This act of encouraging students to express themselves exemplifies her sense of teaching for criticality and, more specifically, her understanding of criticality. In the following extract she demonstrates how she does so.

> [My students] are adults. Sometimes I give them pictures and I tell them can you tell me what you see? They start engaging and talking about what is in the picture. And I ask them to tell me more about things they say so I learn a lot from them. In addition to this, I make sure that I do not speak too much, but I listen. I make sure that I do not dominate the talk. I make them feel that they are in a safe environment whatever they say. We make sure we all accept what others say regardless of their background, culture or country. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, I can see some features of Nadine's approach to teaching for criticality. First, it encourages students' voices and minimises teacher dominance. In addition, it creates a 'safe environment' wherein her students' perspectives are respected and valued.

Further evidence to support this developing understanding that teaching international students feeds into constructing different facets of criticality is provided by the juxtaposition with what my other participant, Lydia, asserts.

> The thing I find a bit harder was the teaching part because I did not know how UK students behave and interact in teaching, and what they think about me, would they listen to me? I mean I knew the content, sociology. Then I did a training of how to teach. But it took lot of time to feel comfortable with teaching...After that I gained more confidence to teach... actually it built my confidence a lot with public speaking. (Lydia, 2019)

In this extract, what I can see as facets of criticality are confidence (confidence in teaching and public speaking), and using problem-solving skills frequently and effectively. It is important to note that I refer to this specific experience of Lydia again in Chapter Seven as I explain and demonstrate how criticality comprises *ways of being* that come out by data.

Similar to my study, Savage and Wehman (2014) conclude that critical thinking is a behaviour that has been influenced or changed by exposure to different ideas, actions, attitudes and decisions made by students during and after studying abroad. For example, they found that 15 out of 33 students understood that they developed problem-solving skill because they were able to integrate information faster and think quickly, breaking things down and explaining complicated concepts. 12 also stated being better able to reflect on situations and accommodate to new ideas. However, what I observe is that the specific factors in this programme that contribute to cultivating students' problem-solving ability are less clear. In this section, one of these factors is exemplified by interacting with and teaching international students, such as those learning English and academic skills and those learning sociology, in the case of Nadine and Lydia respectively.

I can see in this first sub-section how the participants discuss how dialoguing with fellow PhD students, supervisors, people who hold different perspectives, differently knowledgeable people and resources, and teaching international students feeds into constructing their criticality while studying in their new environment. Putting this together, I can see an interesting framework developing which connects with Bakhtin's, Bourdieu's and Paul's theoretical concepts. This means that these theoretical concepts help me to understand what the participants are telling me, pull together what I am writing about and show some layers of understanding.

Various participants accounts, such as Nadine's, Fadi's, Susan's, and Lydia's can be explained using both Bakhtin's (1984) theoretical concepts: dialogue, speaking person, and influential speaking person and Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) ideas of field and habitus. The positive influence of the supervisory field on their experience of criticality is evident. Supervisory field encompasses interaction between the speaking person and influential speaking person, where Nadine and Susan are the former, while their supervisors are the latter, and it appears to contribute to enhancing criticality in the sense of becoming independent in the case of Susan. Her type of independence developed gradually in response to constant interaction with her supervisor, which reinforces this form of criticality to become a lifestyle.

In Nadine's account, the formation of criticality as a form of habitus is the outcome of the dialectical relationship between herself and the classroom field, wherein interaction with her international students is prominent. Nadine's assertion 'this is something I did not do before' demonstrates this formation. This formation comprises gaining experience in providing safe environments for her students to express themselves. It also comprises gaining confidence in teaching, with public speaking, and in solving problems effectively, in the case of Lydia.

Fadi's lived experience is another example that can be interpreted using these theoretical concepts: Dialogue, field and habitus. Field appears to be exemplified by interacting with other people who happen to be: from different socio-cultural environments; have distinct religious beliefs and social values; who show different *ways of thinking* about the value of family. The profit, in Bourdieu's term, that Fadi gains from this specific interaction is the opportunity to think differently about a familiar topic. Fadi's belief that family is important everywhere and to everyone is one thought that comprises what I consider a form of his habitus (a framework of thinking). One possible justification for his belief is that it is important in his 'home' field. This, however, is challenged due to being in his new environment (field) through

dialoguing with others who are from diverse backgrounds. This dialogism contributes to cultivating and reconstructing his thoughts about the value of family in different environments.

The overall point that I wish to make here, again, is pushing myself to refer even more to relevant theory takes me to even more layers of understanding. It is not just that I have to do so. For instance, among other participants, what I note about Nadine's statements, such as 'I learnt a lot from them' is that through social interaction with her students, she is influenced by and takes from their knowledge and background. This can, for instance, enable her to achieve her 'new' self in the sense of gaining experience in teaching international students to express themselves.

This influence by and taking from others' knowledge and background resonates with Bakhtin's (1981) theoretical concept transgredience. In another example, Nadine's conversations with her PhD housemates demonstrates this sense of transgredience through using personal experience and knowledge to frequently question, reflect, analyse and evaluate certain topics, such as the development of feminism in the 'West' and an Asian country. The emphasis on the positive role of knowledge and experience in the act of criticality is evident in Paul's (2011) theory of critical thinking, which is informed by both the philosophical approach of emphasising the structure of arguments, and the psychological insights that give importance to human traits, such as experiences, emotions, and feelings (Burbules and Berk, 1999).

Again, my intention in this theorising section is developing a discussion that relates the data, the theory, and the evidence within broad context of study abroad. **S**imilar to my study, Xu and Grant (2017) (discussed in Chapter Four) found that the fluid construction of criticality is manifested in dialoguing with different social agents, such as supervisors. For example, dialogising with the supervisor's voice of critical thinking creates tensions as, their participant, Christine finds she must make concessions between speaking with the voice of critical thinking

and that of dependence. Helpful here is Bakhtin's (1981) argument that there is always a struggle for hegemony between competing voices.

Unlike Susan who shows me evidence of being independent, Christine's voice of dependence has prevailed from the very beginning of her doctoral candidature. Xu and Grant (2017) observe that she emphasises her high-level dependence on her supervisors. As a result, her doctoral supervisors ask her to challenge their ideas and think critically. Furthermore, Xu and Grant (2017) assert that the voice of critical thinking, and being independent as part of it, is not new to Christine but is given new meanings by her continuous interactions with those most influential speaking persons, her supervisors, on 'assimilating' what they consider the 'alien' voice of critical thinking.

Nadine engages in a face-to-face discussion with two PhD students in which important evidence of criticality is shown, such as questioning, reflection, analysis and curiosity. For instance, Nadine's sense of curiosity resonates with the notion of 'seek as much precision as the subject permits' that Ennis (1987) observes as a significant feature of criticality. This sense also relates to 'intellectual curiosity' (Paul, 1993) and 'inquisitiveness' (Facione and Facione, 1992).

This finding associates with Xu and Grant's (2017) observation that their participant, Christine, highlighted the importance of observing the talk of her PhD colleagues and recalled how one, Jane, refreshed and strengthened her understanding of the potential scope for critical thinking's application. In my account, Bakhtin's (1984) meaning of dialogue is evident in preparing to have a discussion with my PhD colleague. Criticality in our discussion is manifested or acted out in three main ways. The first one concerns the courage to communicate a part of my doctoral research with others, to check my beliefs and the clarity of my thoughts. Analysing and evaluating others' voices, instead of taking them for granted, using my knowledge and

experience to decide to comply with or resist them are regarded as essential elements of criticality by various researchers, such as Willingham (2007) and Elder (2017, 2020). So, too, is considering others' perspectives. For example, Willingham (2007, p. 8) suggests that being critical entails 'being open to a piece of new evidence that contradicts your ideas and reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems, and so forth'.

Similar to the current study, Savage and Wehman (2014) and Ruparelia (2018) found that exposure to different ideas, actions and attitudes during study abroad influences the experience of students in developing their understandings of criticality. Even though data from Roberts *et al*.'s (2018) study may demonstrate dialoguing's potential to foster students' analytical abilities, it is not directly argued by these researchers. Roberts *et al*. (2018) show some interesting incidents of students participating in dialogue with other people. For example, P7 analyses his interactions with the staff at the University of Belize on their plans for continuous improvement of the facilities and curriculum.

6.1.2.2. Doing a PhD

In this second sub-section, the participants are showing me that doing PhD appears to have some positive impact on the construction of their criticality. According to them, what is specific about doing PhD is its depth and increase in knowledge, which are the headings I discuss below.

Depth of PhD study

The depth of PhD study has a positive influence on the participants' experience of constructing criticality. This is evident in Jameel's, Fadi's, and Nadine's accounts. For example, Jameel states.

> [as I am doing PhD, I gained this confidence]…from reading Edward Said and John Berger and other people…from my own

> experience. I know that the majority of the worlds have been silence in academia for a long time…and I would like this to be shaken little bit. Academia is a place to do that. That is how I see critical work. Critical work is the work that actually asks questions. (Jameel, 2018, interview)

It is worth nothing that this positive influence, in the sense of nurturing his confidence to give voice to his critical thoughts, is also noted in Jameel's follow-up interview in 2019.

> [Conducting a PhD] gave me power to be more independent in my thinking to be able to influence others and the world because of that privilege you get from that status. [doing PhD] definitely changed me and my criticality. In a way it confirmed what I already know but it gave me more confidence to develop those thoughts and to develop my confidence to be more critical. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

Jameel's statements suggest that doing doctoral research cultivates his confidence to develop his ideas and dialogue them with others and to be critical about existing points of view through questioning these viewpoints' clarity, relevance, depth, and significance. This questioning drives his selection of information, analysis, evaluation and reflection on them to establish his position. I discuss in detail this point on questioning in Chapter Eight using illustrations from the data. I will bring part of this piece of data back again towards the end of Chapter Seven in order to develop my analysis further.

My interpretation of Jameel's statement enables me to see a resonance with the ideas of currency and rules of the game (Bourdieu,1977, 1990) interlinked with the concept of dialoguing (Bakhtin, 1981). This means that the way in which Jameel perceives that there is an interlink between cultivating criticality and depth of PhD study is explained using these theoretical concepts. Doing a PhD appears to be a currency that contributes to thinking independently and expressing his voice freely, thus increasing his status. The purpose of this

type of thinking is to influence others' thinking through dialoguing with their voices. Jameel's experience implies also that one of the rules of doing a PhD is to think independently. His actions suggest that he complies with this rule and shows his positive attitude towards it.

Further evidence to support this developing understanding that depth of PhD study requires and cultivates questioning mind (a facet of criticality) is provided by the juxtaposition with what Nadine asserts.

> Being open and self-critical, discipline, rational thinking, and critical thinking … I learnt that throughout the PhD. Asking questions and having a questioning mind-set is what defines my criticality. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, it seems that depth of PhD entails being critical in these forms: open-minded, self-critical, self-disciplined and rational. It is interesting that Nadine appears to draw a boundary between these forms and critical thinking. Finding an explicit reference to the argument that critical thinking comprises being openminded and disciplined in the works of Facione (1990) and Paul (1992) enables me to make the point that the interlink between these forms and criticality does not appear clear to Nadine. For example, Facione (1990) defines the ideal critical thinker as someone who is open-minded, inquisitive by nature, flexible, fair-minded, and has a desire to be well-informed. For Paul (1992, P. 9), critical thinking is 'self-directed and disciplined thinking that exemplifies the perfections of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thought'.

Similar to the experience of Nadine and Jameel, Fadi's account suggests that doing a PhD and having teacher training as part of his PhD course appear to positively influence his act of reflection.

> [My understanding of criticality] has changed because of my study. When I did my teaching training, they stressed to be critical. What went well, what did not go well. I have learnt that

> this is a level of reflection. I have learnt that there is a high level of reflection. Transformative critical thinking is when you start thinking, for example why do we teach what we are teaching, who does it serve? What are silencing, we were not thinking of it like this at that time. You do not just reflect at the surface. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, Fadi is trying to show me two types of reflection, which are 'reflection at the surface' and critical reflection. However, Fadi does not seem to consider the former as a form of criticality because it is not driven by critical questions such as 'why do we teach what we are teaching, who does it serve?' One might think that reflection is different from criticality. For example, Naber and Wyatt (2014) suggest that Paul's model of critical thinking can be used in combination with reflective writing to develop students' ability to think critically. However, I find it convincing Ennis' (1987, p.12) statement, in his discussion of the interlink between reflection and criticality, that '[c]ritical thinking is reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do'. Indeed Ennis (1992), Matos (2011) and Paul and Elder (2013) explicitly argue that critical thinking can be presented in self-reflection.

Another layer of interpretation is Fadi's statement appears to suggest a link between reflection and transformation. In other words, it seems that the purpose of reflective thinking is to change an idea or to think differently about a certain point of view. For example, before doing his PhD, he did not think of 'silence' as a meaningful and significant concept that might hold some interesting stories. He realised its value during the process of undertaking his study as it is emerged from his participants' stories. The way he perceives and approaches 'silence' as a phenomenon shows his level of reflective thinking and engagement with criticality.

Increase in knowledge

Another specific element of doing a PhD that appears to provoke positive change in my participants' interpretations and enactments of criticality is being exposed to a greater amount of knowledge. For example, Nadine remarks.

> The change [in my experience of criticality] ... has to do with experience, expose yourself to different resources, read different points of view throughout the process of PhD. The fact that I was exposed to such a huge amount of knowledge, I was delving deeper that helps me a lot to change. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

Nadine's statement suggests that this positive change develops in dialoguing one's and others' viewpoints and evidence. This dialogue takes the form of analysing, synthesising and evaluating them, for instance.

In the next extract, Jameel supports this positive interlink between being exposed to great amount of evidence and nurturing criticality by drawing a thread to his own similar experience. He asserts.

> I mean there is evidence that you need to be critical of. There is evidence that says whatever that you knew might be completely wrong or part of truth. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

Here, again, Jameel indicates that being critical appears to refer to analysing and evaluating some of the pre-existing voices. Jammeel's perspective resonates with the argument of Facione (1990), Dwyer, Hogan and Stewart (2014), and Bankes *et al*. (2020). For example, this resonance is evident in Facione's (1990) assertion that being critical entails understanding diverse viewpoints, and willing to both suspend judgment and consider others' perspectives.

This stance, exposure to great amount of knowledge entails being critical, is further evidenced in Jihan's lived experience.

> My criticality started from my own research. I have found X country has a long and horrible history with black enslavement and human trafficking. I started to question white supremacy and white benevolence towards other ethnicities. This gave me strength because I acquire knowledge to back up my arguments. Now I completely refuse to see or experience any form of superiority vs inferiority dynamics. (Jihan, 2019, Research journal)

In this extract, Jihan appears to establish some informed perspective during her PhD process through questioning the evidence around her, such as 'I completely refuse to see or experience any form of superiority vs inferiority dynamics'. Her statement, 'this gave me strength because I acquire knowledge to back up my arguments' demonstrates her reasoned thinking that sound argument is build using knowledge and evidence. This emphasis on knowledge resonates with Elder and Paul's (2016) assertion that critical thinkers use concepts, ideas and theories to interpret data, facts and experiences in order to answer questions and make decisions.

Similar to my thesis, which shows to us a developing understanding that doing a PhD study requires and cultivates criticality, Xu and Grant (2017) found that doing doctoral education abroad has provided their participant, Christine, with opportunities to participate in dialogues with people who may hold very different views from those in her home country. This dialogue contributes to nurturing her criticality.

Unlike my thesis, there is some evidence that does not consider how the level at which studying abroad is undertaken (whether Bachelors, Masters or Doctoral) can deepen the understanding and enactment of criticality. For example, these studies that I discussed in Chapter Four, Wallace (2003), Williams (2009), Savage and Wehman (2014) and Roberts *et al*. (2018) conducted their research with undergraduate students. In contrast, in Nisbah' s (2012) and Ruparelia's (2018) studies, mixed levels of students participated.

In the study of Nisbah (2012), of the 50 students, 8 were PhD students, while the others were studying for Bachelors or Masters degrees. In Ruparelia's (2018) study, 2 out of 11 participants were PhD students and doing PGCEs in other universities. This ambitious but ultimately limited body of evidence appears to look at the students' experiences as a homogenous group irrespective of their individual differences, particularly the level of study abroad and its potential impact on their experience of criticality. In other words, the experience of studying for a Bachelor's degree may not be similar to the experience of studying for a PhD degree as far as criticality is concerned. Therefore, my thesis represents the evidence that solely considers PhD students' criticality.

6.2. The self

The second sub-theme, the self, is used as an umbrella term to refer to individual-based factors: disposition and knowledge.

6.2.1. Disposition

For the participants, dispositional factors such as interest and passion are among the fundamental individual influences on the construction of criticality.

Interest

In this heading, the participants Susan and Nathan are showing me that there is a positive link between being interested in reading some texts related to their PhD and being critical of them as is manifested in the following extract of data.

> At times, I find myself reading loads of different articles and book chapters without actually liking them and that's when it gets really difficult to be critical about the things I read. I need to be interested in what I'm reading so that I can read it in the way that I should. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. (Susan, 2019, research journal)

In this extract, we can see Susan suggesting that the absence of interest in reading different materials makes the task of critical reading very challenging. There appears also to be a conflict between her obligations and her preferences.

Nathan, in the following extract, appears to suggest two main motives provoke engagement in criticality: self-interest and benefits for other people.

> I think we need to be critical and some of the advantages are, or the motivation is, partially self-interest to be critical or some people think that they are doing that only because they think they make the world better and they do not get anything out of it. But I am not saying that there is not who do it because they get something out of it. (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)

Passion

This is another individual factor that contributes to engaging in criticality. For example, Susan suggests that critical reading is reading with passion.

> I think [critical reading] is reading with passion with your whole mind focused on what you are reading. You do not want to miss out anything because every word is a point... You read as if you are reading your own study. That is how you read with passion, I think. You are reading everything that is there, and you see how things have gone wrong, how things could have gone better, how things are different from other studies. (Susan, 2018)

This extract demonstrates that Susan believes that reading with passion entails being focused on and interested in reading. For her, this reading with passion also stands for reading that shows empathy with others' work or voices, thus engaging in critical reading. This type of reading, for Susan, appears to require analysis, evaluation and reasonable consideration of others' viewpoints. Even though emphasis on passion has been explicitly noted only by Susan, it might have been taken for granted by other participants and thus not mentioned.

6.2.2. Knowledge

The participants (Jihan, Fadi, and Nadine) are showing me that what counts as knowledge is another significant factor that influence how criticality is interpreted and enacted. Knowledge appears to be acquired or learnt through dialoguing different perspectives in both oral and written conversations. I can see this significance of knowledge in what Jihan told me, in the data extract used in the section 'Increase in knowledge' above, about how doing PhD enabled her to increase her knowledge and therefore being able to give herself a critical stance (a perspective).

Fadi provides an example of knowledge that positively influences one's engagement in criticality, which is sufficient and accurate information about the background of the author, as he notes.

> It is important to refer to the background of the author because our writings are part of who we are. Especially in our area we do not have anything that is purely objective. (Fadi, 2018)

Fadi is a PhD researcher in the field of Education. In this statement, he suggests that, in his field of study, gaining knowledge about the authors contributes to understanding their work and position. He also suggests that being exposed to different forms of knowledge – his experience related to his courses, the media resources, and his conflict back home (which I discuss by the end of this chapter) – provoked his decision to undertake a PhD to communicate his critical thoughts regarding how to use education to spread peace.

Nadine is another participant who shows how having sufficient knowledge of a certain topic – in this case, the act of wearing a headscarf – helps her to engage in discussing it critically.

> From a personal experience, being a Muslim woman, having worn hijab to a certain time and then deciding to remove it, that came from my knowledge, from my critical reading. I did not come just from nowhere. I started to look at Arabic texts about

> Islamic traditions and rules if you want to say and I started to give meaning as an individual rather than an institutionalised. (Nadine, 2018)

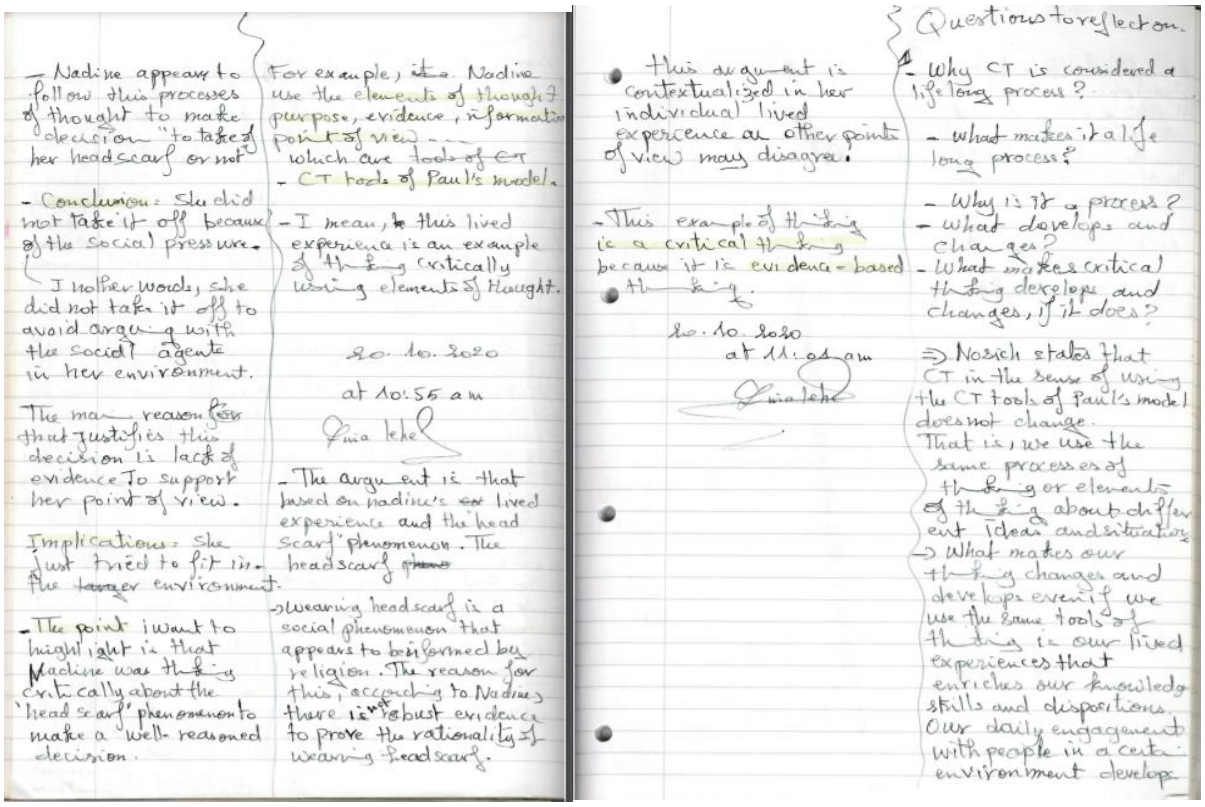
Nadine's statement indicates that she could not start discussing her views on removing her headscarf at first as she did not have sufficient knowledge to make a sound decision. In addition, Nadine refers to the importance of making meaning individually rather than complying with the institutionalised one, which I further discuss using demonstrations at the middle of this chapter.

What the participants show me in this section resonates with some evidence that suggests dispositions such as interest and passion are important elements of criticality. For example, Ruparelia (2018) found that confidence, fear and motivation appear to be among the dispositional factors that influence students' experiences of developing criticality. Elder (2020) and Bankes *et al*. (2020) further suggest that developing an interest in reading, for example, would contribute to developing and exceling in critical reading. Even though interest and passion appear to be essential elements in the act of criticality, there are some studies such as Wallace (2003), Williams (2009) and Roberts *et al*. (2018) that did not draw on the influence of these factors on the participants' experiences of developing criticality while being enrolled in study abroad programmes.

I can see that Nadine's act of taking off the headscarf, for instance, provides a demonstration of how knowledge is an important element of reasoning and that this act can be further explained using Paul's (1993) and Elder's (2017) elements of reasoning, such as purpose and information. Her purpose is to reasonably decide to take off the headscarf, assuming that there is not sufficient and rational evidence to convince her to wear it. Therefore, she claims that it is not an obligation in Islam. She did her research, but she also found insufficient evidence to support her position. As a result, she could not take it off while living in her 'home' environment

because of lack of evidence and social pressure. The implication here is she could not act on her critical thoughts and rationally decided to comply with what is considered as a norm in her social environment. This point of the impact of social pressures on the act of criticality is discussed in detail at the middle of this chapter. In Figure 6 below, I show screen shots from my research journal. I do not expect my readers to read them. However, I expect them to see these screen shots as illustrations that show I was trying hard to make sense of Nadine's act and that I was taking detailed notes at the time.

Figure 6. Nadine's experience: How knowledge contributes to engaging critically with the act of wearing headscarf (Zina, research journal, 2020)



6.3. The interconnectedness of the self and the other

In this third sub-theme, the participants are revealing to me that constructing their sense of criticality is influenced by the dialogism and interconnectedness of the self and the other. Various participants, such Jameel and Fadi have recognised this interconnectedness. For example, Fadi notes that 'we made our societies and our societies made us' (Fadi, 2019, follow-

up interview). This interconnectedness is further stated by Jameel, who perceives that the circumstance of the environments is a key factor that feeds into the construction of criticality. A similar observation is made by Nore.

> I think critical reading is a skill that [individuals] develop on their own. However, some environments, cultures or educational systems encourage individuals to become more critical. (Nore, 2019, research journal)

This emphasis on the influence of context is further supported by Fadi.

> I think [criticality] is both. But more related to context and environment (Fadi, 2019, follow up interview).

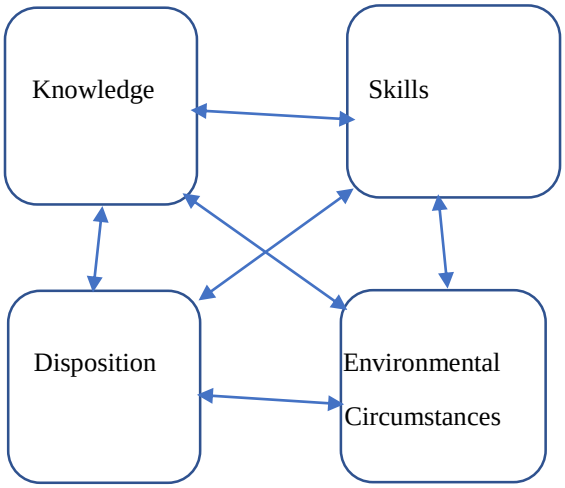
The participants' statements in this section suggest that constructing criticality is an individual-social process. This resonates with Bakhtin's (1981, p. 345) argument that our perspective is 'half-ours and half-someone else's...[since] our own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words'. In contrast to what is stated in the data, I put the *individual* aspect before the *social* to suggest that even though both are vital in this act, it appears to be more about how the individual reacts to, or benefits from, the circumstances of environments.

Furthermore, a number of participants, such as Melissa, perceive that the boundary between the self and the other is blurry.

> The relationship between what is personal and what is environmental is another issue because how can we draw boundaries between what is personal and what is environmental? (Melissa, 2019, research journal)

6.4. The Four-Part Model

Figure 7 . The Four-Part Model of constructing interpretations and enactments of criticality (Zina, research journal, 2020)



This Four-Part Model is informed by, derived and refined based on the lived experiences of my participants. It demonstrates how my thesis contributes to what other people are writing about. I was inspired by my live discussion with Jonathan Haber at the 40th annual international conference on critical thinking (2020) wherein he referred to his Three-Part Model. His model derived from his research on how critical thinking is defined. He analysed numerous definitions of critical thinking, including the one proposed by the Delphi report (Facione, 1990) and the Foundations for Critical Thinking (1996). He argues that critical thinking requires a body of knowledge and a set of skills to apply this knowledge to solve a problem, for example. This cannot happen only with the willingness (i.e. disposition) to use the skills to apply knowledge.

My Four-Part Model builds on Haber's insights by adding a fourth component: the influence of the circumstances of environments on the construction of criticality. It shows there is an intimate and dynamic dialogism and interlink between these four elements. The contribution

of this model lies in drawing on the influence of context and demonstrating, using the lived experiences of the participants, its role in the construction of criticality.

In this analysis, context refers to the circumstances of environments both at 'home' and abroad, and they are used interchangeably. The implication here is that in addition to considering the individual factors such as knowledge essential in the construction of criticality, the context becomes significant because individuals are not solely autonomous minds. They are influenced by and in a constant interaction with other people. This continuous engagement with other people is what makes the construction of criticality fluid.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter presents data collected using various research methods, such as interviews, follow-up interviews and the research journals. The emerged theme and sub-themes are illustrated with quotes from the participants' data. The data analysis demonstrates a number of points. To start with, the construction of the interpretations and enactments of criticality is influenced by the interlink of the individual-based factors and the social factors. This interlink enables me to argue that criticality has a dialogic dimension because the understanding of the participants' experiences lies in exploring and fathoming the individuals' constant interaction with other people, such as supervisors, fellow PhD students, and people who hold different perspectives.

Furthermore, the data analysis demonstrates that the construction of criticality is individual-based rather than nationality-based. This means the influence of the factors related to participants' prior lived experiences: prior education; encountering political conflicts; resisting or complying with social pressures; interactions with others is found to be embedded in the participants' individual experiences. This evidence supports the research findings that refute essentialism. Essentialism represents 'people's individual behaviour as entirely defined and

constrained by the cultures in which they live so that the stereotype becomes the essence of who they are' (Holliday, 2011, p. 4).

The last point I wish to make here is it is vital to consider the interaction between past lived experiences and current ones to understand the construction of criticality in the present. This aligns with Holquist's (1990) statement that the intersection between the self and the other in a dialogue is evident in the interaction of past and present relations in the present. However, many previous studies related to the context of my thesis have largely failed to do this, as I argue throughout this thesis.

Chapter Seven: Criticality comprises *ways of living*

This chapter responds to the second main theme coming out by data. This is represented in six sub-themes: 'being independent becomes a life style', 'stick to it until you do it', 'being critical is a journey I still learn', 'I care about them', 'I always want to know', and confidence. Within these subthemes, the participants show to me further evidence of students' *ways of being* critical – independence, perseverance, confidence, empathy, courage, humility and curiosity – within the non-essentialist paradigm, which has recently put aside expectations of cultural background deficiency among so-called international students. It is again worth noting that I use the term *ways of living* interchangeably with *ways of being* to mean that they depict who we are and how we live our lives. This means in this chapter, I try to demonstrate the relationship between criticality and living, using the participants' statements before and during studying abroad. This use of these particular students' voices represents my thesis's contribution. Because of the space available and to avoid repetition, I will save a discussion of the data to the end of each section.

7.1. 'Being independent becomes a lifestyle'

In this analysis, my understanding of 'being independent becomes a lifestyle' continues to emerge throughout the data as a way of being critical. It refers to, for example, finding solutions to problems by oneself. However, it does not simply suggest believing what an individual wants to believe unthinkingly. Various participants' accounts demonstrate my understanding. I focus particularly on Susan's experience because her data is 'rich'; she was very reflective and willing to share her thoughts. This understanding is apparent in her relationship with her supervisors before and during studying abroad.

To explain her perception of being independent before travelling to study in her new environment, Susan says:

> Since I came here to the UK, or before coming here, I knew that I should do things for myself. That is how things become to change, including research. Actually, I was independent only at the level of research when I was doing my master' s degree, because my supervisor did not help at all, so I did most of the work by myself. So, I can say that I was independent…I will give you an anecdote. As I said, when I was doing my master's degree, my supervisor did not help at all, and at some point, I got really frustrated because I noticed that everyone had their supervisors for them, and I did not have mine. So, I got my father to talk to him (laughing) on the phone. Because we used to be friends in a way, we used to talk all the time on Facebook, but ever since I become his supervisee, he stopped talking to me because he wanted to avoid the responsibility. I knew he was ignoring me. He was online, he just did not talk to me. I gave the phone to my father and asked him to talk to him. He talked to him but that did not change anything. He said he would change, but he did not. I had to run to him several times. (Susan, follow-up interview, 2019)

Susan's anecdote suggests that as a master's student, though she was independent at an academic level, there were some incidents where she needed the help of her father. What explains her action, 'I got my father to talk to him', is her expectation that the role of the supervisor is to help her to do the research in the sense of providing a list of the materials she needed to read and how to read them to write her dissertation, for example. Her expectations appear to be influenced by her university environment because she noticed that 'everyone had their supervisors for them'. Therefore, she believed her case to be exceptional as her supervisor did not follow the rules of being a supervisor in that specific environment. The fact that she involved her father might suggest that she was not independent in some situations and might explain why her level of independence developed more due to being away from her father and supporting network.

The following extract demonstrates my understanding of Susan's sense of gradually becoming an independent researcher as a PhD student in her new environment.

> I can say that my understanding of criticality changed gradually and not all of a sudden. Perhaps, a memorable event was becoming an independent researcher, but the actual change happened gradually. (Susan, 2019, research journal)

Susan's 'becoming an independent researcher' is exemplified by her reflections on her relationship with her supervisors as a master's student, in contrast to this relationship as a PhD student.

> I think the most important thing that changed is that I do not run to anyone now...In the master I ran to my supervisor because I needed guidance, because I did not know that I needed to be independent, but now I do not run to anyone for help. Of course, I ask my supervisor for things, but I tend to give time to me to develop and find out things for my own. I do not go to him as easily as I would [have done] (Susan, follow-up interview, 2019).

Susan's extract suggests that asking for her supervisor's help as a master's student resulted from a lack of awareness that she needed to be independent. Moreover, it should be noted that since her supervisor did not help her in the way she was expecting, she learnt how to do her master's research independently. As a PhD student, however, her expectations of help from her supervisor changed. She asks for guidance only after attempting to sort things by herself.

Susan's statement, 'I do not run to anyone now', can have different interpretations. For her, it seems to refer to a positive change because when discussing this in the interview, she appeared confident and smiling. This suggests that she is happy that she makes her own decisions in life now; She tends to give herself time to process information in order to develop thoughts on her

own. It is worth noting that asking for help when appropriate represents independence too, which Susan is aware of as she asks for support at some point from her supervisor.

My participants' expectations from their supervisors vary. I had an informal conversation with some of them about how they consider their supervisors as a follow-up exploration of what emerged from Susan's lived experience. One said:

> She is like my mom in this country. I respect her and I think about everything she says to me (Zina's research journal, 2019).

Although PhD students, such as Susan, who was in her second year, perceive themselves as independent and that their supervisors are mentors, this participant's perception of his supervisor as a mother could be explained by considering different reasons: being overseas, in his first year of doing a very challenging degree, and he might have been feeling homesick when we had a chat.

In the above extracts, Susan shows me her sense of gradually becoming an independent researcher. In the following excerpt, I can see how she depicts this sense as a lifestyle, a way of life.

> Now, it becomes more of a lifestyle than it is an obligation to think about things in the way I should think about them, like reading for example, my supervisor never gave me a book to read it. I mean he never recommended what I read. He never obliged me to read things. I can say that it became part of my lifestyle. When I did my master degree in X, it was not a lifestyle. I was still dependent on my parents, I needed people to do things…I lived with my parents. At that time what I had to do by myself was to read books and to write things, but now, I do everything by myself. (Susan, follow-up interview, 2019)

What I perceive is going on here is that Susan suggests how becoming independent developed into a lifestyle (a habit of being) in contrast to being perceived as something obligatory. For example, her sense of becoming independent in different aspects of life is exemplified in taking full responsibility for selecting what to read for her PhD research, in contrast to her experience of doing a master's degree. She argues that it became a lifestyle due to being a PhD student, but it is more associated with the factor of living alone, without the support of her father, for instance.

In this extract, Susan might also be speaking about intellectual freedom because freedom and independence could be intertwined in this case. Susan appears to be free from obligations that imprison the mind, such as read this, do this, study in ...etc. This freedom becomes apparent to me when she states that, 'I mean [my supervisor] never recommended what I read. He never obliged me to read things'.

My interpretation of Susan's statements that criticality comprises independence as a way of living is apparent not only in her academic life but also in everyday life. This must mean that criticality is not necessarily associated with academic study.

> I have to do things by myself, if I do not get things done, no one would make them done for me. If I need to do groceries, then I need to do it myself. The thing that I have noticed since I have lived in the UK is that I have become more independent (Susan, follow up interview, 2019).

In this extract, Susan's sense of becoming independent is thinking and acting for oneself while adhering to standards of rationality. This sense of independence is significant because she becomes less reliant on others and seems to be a better decision-maker.

Further evidence to support this developing understanding that criticality comprises thinking and behaving independently as a way of life is provided by the juxtaposition with Nadine's experience of wearing headscarf. Nadine explains:

> [I was critical] ... in the way I thought, not in the way I acted [about wearing a headscarf]. The fact I was able to think in that way and choose not to take any action about it, so that means I keep researching. I always wanted to make my voice heard, change things in action. Start to learn how to find people who agree with me, because I gain my power from such [things] … especially scholars and researchers…Now, when I stand for not to wear a scarf, for example, I can stand with it and have support from literature, scholars, and scientific research. So, that gives me confidence to say that what I was thinking of was not wrong, but people used to criticise me and judge me and that applies to different things, not only the scarf, the scarf is an example. But it works across so many different issues, social or academic. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

What I can see in this statement is Nadine's observation that she was an independent thinker before travelling to study in her new environment in the sense that she thinks differently and challenges what is taken for granted relating to wearing a headscarf. Once again, this means that criticality is not necessarily connected with academic study.

In this segment of data, the act of 'find [ing] people who agree with [her voice]' might be interpreted as an easy way not to question one's viewpoints. However, this is not the case in Nadine's lived experience. Indeed, she interrogates what I perceive as the social phenomenon of 'wearing the headscarf', which appears to be taken for granted, a norm in her social environment, as I have discussed using demonstration at the beginning of Chapter Six.

Furthermore, Nadine's statement indicates that independent thinking and research led her to gain confidence in reason, encouraging her not to wear a headscarf and to stand for not wearing

it. Nadine's stance connects with Elder's and the Foundation for Critical thinking's (2018) suggestion that if individuals uncritically accept cultural values and conform to beliefs that they have not analysed for themselves, they cannot be intellectually free. Nadine's headscarf's lived experience illustrates her analysis and critical thought about this social phenomenon.

Nadine's stance also suggests another important layer of understanding. Since it appears that Nadine started wearing the headscarf because it was a social norm in her environment, it takes courage to resist what is perceived as an established norm in society. Courage, besides independence, is considered by Paul (1993) and Elder (2017) as another trait of criticality because it requires the thinker, such as Nadine, to be willing to take their thinking apart and examine their prejudices, assumptions, and ideas through using elements of thought and intellectual standards, which I discussed at the beginning of Chapter Two.

An overall thick description generated by the juxtaposition of the accounts, which is enhanced by the sense that criticality comprises independence as a way of life that emerges from the data, indicates that an independent person is also a responsible one. Fadi describes his state as being independent and responsible in the sense of taking a clear position in his research.

> I feel more responsible. For example, when I am teaching, I am conditioning not only passing on knowledge. I am contributing to the conditioning of an individual, and that is a scary responsibility… I said that now I analyse what I am teaching. I will give you an example…I am looking at teacher training and the curriculum. Education has been used to teach people how to kill, but at the same time I am looking at how education could be used to teach how to promote peace. I am arguing that education could be used to teach to love others, as I know we could use it to teach to hate others. This is the level of criticality I am thinking of and trying to promote. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

Fadi's statement indicates that being independent is interconnected with being responsible. As a teacher, Fadi influences how his students think and act daily. Criticality is evident in Fadi's experience in terms of frequently thinking and behaving independently and responsibly in these particular fields: teaching and conducting a PhD study. This might imply that being independent and responsible are among the rules of playing the games of teaching and studying for a PhD degree, which Fadi complies with. Furthermore, using the personal pronoun ('I') in this case supports my understanding of Fadi's statement.

Jameel is another participant who talks about being independent as a way of life. He speaks about his life after travelling to do a PhD in his new environment.

> It is exciting because you have got the independence to be whoever you want and to develop the things that you want to develop. There is freedom and liberation, and you do not have to act the way others want you to act…I mean, my understanding of criticality is completely different after coming to Britain and doing my master's and PhD and becoming more independent ...in my thoughts and abilities, and more confident about my identity as well; I have many identities. You know I am a man; I am X, I live in Britain, I am a student, a lecturer. I am a partner, and I am a brother. All those identities are coming into play. This is where my criticality comes in. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

What Jameel says in this extract gives me the impression that becoming independent, responsible and gaining self-confidence are interconnected. These together describe his state of being critical and explain his critical thoughts, such as challenging the capitalist-colonialist system and being willing to change it.

Similar to Susan, being critical is a 'second nature' or a lifestyle for Jameel. This again must mean that criticality is part of his style of living. It does not necessarily have to do with academic study. He notes that it became a habit, part of who he is.

> Every moment of my life. I cannot live without that. It is my second nature. I ask questions about everything, even about having coffee or buying something. I ask different questions, like where this coffee comes from. Everyday choices, everyday moments in my life … how do I travel, do I travel by car, train, or plane. I ask what the consequences are of every action I take, as a privileged man who lives in the UK and who is a lecturer. I am more privileged than other people. So, everything I do, I question it. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

Here, Jameel's account indicates that being critical means questioning various aspects of his daily life, such as buying coffee and travelling. Interestingly, he connects his perception of himself 'as a privileged man' because he is a lecturer in the UK with being critical. My understanding of Jameel's statement is that questioning, thinking and behaving independently appear to be among the rules of playing the games of both undertaking a PhD study and teaching at a UK university.

My understanding of what the participants, particularly Susan and Nadine say in the above data extracts enables me to refer to some relevant theoretical concepts. These take me to even more layers of understanding.

To start with, Susan's perception of being and becoming independent is doing things for herself. Her response seems closely linked to Elder's (2018) description of an independent, therefore a critical, person. Elder suggests that being an independent thinker entails both doing one's own thinking but also listening to other people's views. However, the individual has to have confidence in reason to decide who and what to believe and why. Elder argues that what helps

to have this confidence in reason is intellectual standards such as clarity, accuracy, and significance, which in turn enable making decisions related to how to think and act.

This developing understanding that criticality comprises independence as a way of being resonates with Paul's (1993), Nosich's (2012), and Paul and Elder's (2016) statement that showing independent thinking and action is a trait of criticality. For example, Paul (1993) suggests that intellectually independent thinkers do not rely on others when deciding rationally what to believe and do. Nosich (2012) builds on Paul's statement and further explains that independent thinkers' views are influenced by others' perspectives that show confidence in reason. That is, they are reasonable, given the evidence.

Another layer of understanding concerns Susan's statements about how being independent is part of who she is and her perception of becoming more independent in the aspects of life where previously she had felt she had been dependent on others. Her statements enable me to therefore understand how my preferred non-essentialist perspective of international students might offer a language capable of articulating her complex practices. This means the way in which Susan makes meaning of her criticality is partially explained using non-essentialist discourse because it provides an opportunity for new interpretations.

In her statements, Susan, before travelling to study in her new environment, was dependent on others in some aspects of life. While the essentialist paradigm would consider this (being dependent) a demonstration of their stereotypical arguments, which underpin the lack of recognition and appreciation of what students like Susan have to offer, what I want to emphasise is Susan makes a personal narrative choice to resist belonging to an essentialist grand narrative as I demonstrate at the beginning of Chapter Six. The choice that she expresses suggests a new way of interpretation in the sense of appreciating what can be learnt from the

working styles and attitudes brought by international students. This new interpretation is also argued by Osmond and Roed (2009, pp. 115, 120).

The third layer of understanding is that linking the above Susan's data segments gives me the impression that being independent while living abroad is obligatory because she lives alone, without, for instance, her family support. To express this idea, Susan used the modal verb 'have to', meaning that independence is a necessity, not an option. Helpful here to understand what Susan says is Bourdieu's conception of playing the game in the sense that criticality which comprises thinking and acting independently appears to be among the essential rules of playing what I positively refer to as the game of living abroad, which she complies with.

Another point I wish to make is, in the above extracts of data, what I perceive is going on in the way that Susan makes meaning of her experience with her supervisor is rules of the game of supervision in her particular environment influence their relationship. They used to be friends. Then, when she opted for him as a supervisor, he stopped talking to her on Facebook. Instead, it seems that he wanted a professional relationship. Interestingly, Susan did not expect that her relationship with her teacher would change, and thus, she was unaware of such rules of supervision in this particular field.

The forth layer of understanding is what Susan tells me, in the above data extracts, about how layer upon layer of experience informs her current sense of being an independent researcher and how she reacts to situations enables me to therefore understand how Bourdieu's conception of habitus might offer a language capable of articulating her complex practice. Again, this means that the way in which Susan constructs her criticality's understanding and practices (being independent is part of it) is partially explained using Bourdieu's concept.

In order to explain Susan's independent researcher habitus, I adopt Dean's (2017) example of onion. Let us imagine that Susan as a fully developed adult is an onion, with layer upon layer

of experiences built up over time all coming together to make up the whole of the being. Susan's independent researcher habitus is an embodied way of thinking about her character. Her current sense of growth and development of being independent builds on previous growth and development. This means this sense of growth is defined and redefined by personal trajectories, and thus, is fluid. It is informed and influenced by external factors, such as her education, her relationship with her father and especially her experience with her supervisor when completing her Master's. How Susan sees herself as an independent researcher becomes embodied way of acting and thinking. This, at its most basic, is my understanding of independent researcher habitus.

Now, I move to talk about Nadine's data extract. As being reflexive, I am aware that understanding what is going on in this extract depends on people's frames of mind. A different researcher might write a different report from her data. An essentialist way of interpreting Nadine's action of not taking off the headscarf though she does not believe in wearing it is the following. Nadine's action represents the common stereotype that such a problem (not being independent) presented by international students, and especially international PhD students in British universities, is because they are presumed to come from solid cultures that are incompatible with the autonomy and criticality necessary to be successful in their studies. The false implication here is for them to succeed in their studies, they have to *learn* this independence and criticality.

I then critique this stereotypical, neoliberal and essentialist interpretation when I observe that Nadine took a well-reasoned decision in the sense of being aware of the motives of her action, its consequences, and its implications. This demonstrates thinking and being critical, which follows Elder's (2017, 2020) argument. Furthermore, 'keep [ing] researching' and 'find [ing] people who agree with [her]… [such as] scholars and researchers', who show confidence in

reason, in Paul's (1993) terms, are examples that exhibit Nadine's sense of thinking independently and acting as an independent person and researcher.

Even though Nadine states that she was critical in the way she thought but not in the way she acted, it appears to me that she was critical in both. This is because she acted according to what is considered a currency in her society to fit in. This means since Nadine was familiar with the rules of the game, she reasonably complied with them to feel and live like a 'fish in water' rather than a 'fish out of water'.

In Nadine's statement, her interrogation of what I understand as the social phenomenon of wearing the headscarf, taking off her headscarf, and standing for not wearing it demonstrate my alternative view that Nadine is an independent and critical individual with the ability to dialogue with social pressures which influence but do not confine her. This means Nadine has social abilities which can stand in resistance to or outside the cultural influences of nation. This view resonates with the non-essentialist thinking in the internationalisation project that it is not the international students who are the problem but how we look at them (Robson, 2008). The break from essentialist thinking requires an appreciation that Nadine's illustrations of being critical and independent are 'not due to a 'Westernising' influence, but to an indigenous, cosmopolitan modernity which is unrecognised and Peripherised by the Centre Western definition of who they are' (Holliday, 2011, p. 145).

7.2. 'Stick to it until you do it'

This heading is inspired by the participants' accounts. The understanding of it continues to emerge throughout the data as perseverance – the continued effort to do or achieve a certain objective and goals despite the difficulties that one might encounter. For example, Lydia notes.

> The hardest thing I experienced is when I got my data. With every set of data, it was hard to analyse...I did not know how to analyse it, and I realised that everyone has to learn on their own.

> So, I went to the library and I spent time reading and reading about how I should analyse it, and I had a deadline as I set deadlines with my supervisor. It is the first time I did not meet my deadline and I said I am really sorry I could not finish it. I find it very hard to do this analysis. And I went to my supervisor's office and I started crying. After [my supervisor] motivated and supported me, I produced the first chapter, which was quite good but still needed changing. Now with the third set of data, I did a theatre play, which is new to me. It has been like two months [since] I came back, and I do not know how to analyse it, but I am sure I will find a way to do it. (Lydia, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract of data, Lydia tells me that she found it challenging to analyse her first set of data, but nevertheless she persevered. What I think is going on here is that one mark of a perseverant person is an awareness of the need to use knowledge, information, personal experience, and the supporting network in a certain context or field in spite of the difficulties and confusion that an individual may encounter. In this case, Lydia asked for the guidance of her supervisor who is part of her support network, which helped her to overcome her struggles and produce her data analysis draft. Moreover, this powerful statement 'I do not know how to analyse it, but I am sure I will find a way to do it' suggests Lydia's strong belief and confidence in her personal experience to overcome intellectual complexities. This, despite the frustrations inherent in the task, is one interpretation of being able to persevere.

In the following extract I see how Lydia worked her way through intellectual pain and frustration when collecting data from India. This intellectual pain is evident in the use of these terms: 'hardest, worried, difficult' and the way she expressed her experience.

> The other hard time is doing field work. I was very worried [about] how to do it... I was thinking, would people like to talk to me? And to have interviews, then I was just focusing on doing

> interviews and counting, saying for example 'I have to do twenty'...Then, in the second year, it was a little bit better. This is a long-term research, in the first year we start building relationships with...participants and people in academia. If you do not build a relationship with the participant and you ask them for an interview, you will get something but not really rich. In India, in the first field work in one of the cities, I was staying with my husband's family...I needed to get a certain permission from the government. My visit to the first city was easy as my husband helped me; the second was ok; but the third one I needed a letter from the government, and for that I should have applied three months beforehand and then I was stuck. Then I went on to the second year, and I got the letter beforehand. That's what brings lot of value to what I am doing: different settings and different methodologies. I learnt that things did not work as I expected and it is hard, but in the end, I enjoyed it. If I am not a kind of a person who likes to do these things, it would have been even more difficult. (Lydia, 2019, follow-up interview)

What Lydia says in this extract gives me the impression that perseverance is about being able to deal with the unexpected. This means that the above statements by Lydia demonstrate how perseverance is one way of being critical.

Melissa also talks about what she describes as a journey of doing a PhD, which shows to me further evidence of being perseverant.

> Like any journey in life, doing a PhD is a challenging experience and self-exploratory process. I am trying to make sense of what I am researching, which relates hugely to human life experiences and subjective interpretations of the world. This involves my own understanding of what I am looking into. This means that I am in a constant interaction with myself in different ways; I feel I know what I am doing, I feel down, I regain my confidence, I make mistakes, I feel nothing is ok, I feel everything is alright…!

> Very different but inevitable moments that contribute to shaping this research exactly the way I have developed in terms of who I am now. Everyone goes through instances in their lives which shape them and make them the way they are. (Melissa, 2019, research journal)

Melissa's statement shows continued efforts to achieve despite the difficulties she encountered along the way, such as feeling down, regaining confidence, and making mistakes. This powerful language 'I feel I know what I am doing, I feel down, I regain my confidence, I make mistakes, I feel nothing is ok, I feel everything is alright' expresses a sense of 'how' she, a perseverant and resilient person, feels.

Juxtaposing Jameel's account with that of Melissa and Lydia also further supports my point that criticality comprises *ways of being* such as perseverance. Perseverance is exemplified in Jameel's lived experience by his experience of studying abroad, and summarised as 'feel [ing] like fish out of water'. Nevertheless, it is an exciting journey.

> Most of it is harsh, difficult and tough. Coming to a different country by yourself is always tough. You feel like a fish out of water, but at the same…it is freeing and liberating. Studying abroad is taking yourself out of your water, like taking a fish out of water. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, this analogy of studying abroad, like taking a 'fish out of water', indicates the amount of pain and struggle that Jameel has experienced.

What I perceive is going on in the way Lydia, Melissa and Jameel make sense of their experiences is that perseverance is essential rule of playing the game of studying for a PhD degree in an unfamiliar environment. It, in turn, demonstrates how criticality is a way of being and that my participants appear to comply with this rule. Their statements enable me to therefore understand how Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) conception of playing the game, habitus

and field might offer a language capable of articulating their complex practices. This means Bourdieu's concepts help me to understand what the participants tell me.

Referring back to Jameel's analogy, I suggest that not being familiar with the rules of the game of studying abroad is what explains his experience. In this regard, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest that familiarity with the rules of different fields is recommended for individuals to feel like a 'fish in water'. Nevertheless, Jameel, a perseverant being, works his way through intellectual pain or frustration.

In Lydia's case, perseverance describes her academic habitus in the sense that it somehow describes who she is – her way of thinking and dealing with her struggles in some academic fields. For example, Lydia talks about her struggle with fieldwork, data analysis (discussed in this section) and part-time teaching while doing a part-time PhD (addressed in the middle of Chapter Six). Lydia shows to me that she was confused and worried because she did not have any teaching experience in an unfamiliar environment, in the sense of not knowing how the students learn and behave. This means Lydia was not familiar with the rules of this game (teaching in an unfamiliar environment). However, she 'stuck to it until she did it'. I suggest that a perseverant person is a critical being, is not a quitter, keeps trying, believes in a constant improvement of thinking, and wants to give up at times but does not do so. This sense of perseverance resonates with Paul and Elder's (2016) suggestion that the opposite of intellectual perseverance is intellectual laziness – the urge to give up quickly when faced with an intellectually challenging task, which is not evident in my participants' statements used in this section.

7.3. 'Being critical is a journey I still learn'

This heading continues to emerge throughout the data as individuals recognise that they do not know everything. This further supports my point that criticality comprises *ways of being*, such

as humility. My understanding of the data of four participants demonstrates this point. For example, Fadi refers to this point explicitly as he describes his thoughts and behaviours in the classroom.

> For example, one of the things that I have learned personally is that I am humble that makes [me] more open to learning because the more I learn the more I become critical about my thinking. This makes me realise that what I believe in is true for me, but it is not the absolute truth. As a teacher, I do not go to the classroom as the knowledge holder that knows better than his students. However, we are all learning. This process is ongoing. It does not mean that if I reached a level of criticality that means that I have reached the top. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, Fadi perceives himself as humble because he is open to unlearn what he learnt through interrogating his usual thinking and believing that learning is an ongoing process. This sense of humility is demonstrated in the type of language he uses: I am humble, open to learning, it is not the absolute truth, and we are all learning. Fadi also feels that being humble is necessary to improving and practicing critical thinking. Susan also speaks and shows to me this sense of humility.

> My reading needs to be faster and more efficient. Since I try to be critical, I tend to be very slow when I read, which makes things a lot more difficult than just doing regular reading. (Susan, 2019, research journal)

Here, Susan's statement that her reading is not on an appropriate level implies humility because it suggests the idea of continuous learning and not knowing everything.

In my data, I can see evidence of an overall thick description generated by the juxtaposition of the accounts, which is enhanced by the sense that criticality comprises *ways of being*, where

the participants refer to common point, such as humility. In this regard, similar to Fadi and Susan, Melissa and Nore note.

> Being critical is a journey [on which] I learnt and [am] still learn [ing] about what is going on around me (Melissa,2019, research journal).
>
> I think I need to practise more and try to skim texts and, only scan read [the text] when I decide that [it] is relevant (Nore, 2019, research journal).

Melissa's extract demonstrates humility as she is still learning to make sense of what is going on around her. This sense of humility is implied in Nore's experience of believing that improving his approach to reading is a work in progress.

My understanding of the participants' statements, which demonstrate a sense of humility as a vital way of living, links with Paul's (1993) definition of intellectual humility and Bakhtin's (1981) unfinishedness concept. Both Paul and Bakhtin refer to thinking and acting in a manner that demonstrates continuous learning (humility) in response to constant interaction with others. For example, the concept of unfinishedness describes the ongoing transformation or improvement of individuals' perspectives, which are also 'not finite, [they are] open' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 364). This resonance helps me to understand that criticality encompasses *ways of being*, such as humility.

Thinking and behaving humbly appear to describe Fadi's teacher habitus in the classroom field. For him, it might be a crucial rule of the game of teaching. This means Bourdieu's ideas enable me to explain what Fadi tells me. In the above extract of data, it seems that Fadi is not arrogant, which is the opposite of being humble (Elder, 2017). For example, as a teacher, he does not act as an all-knowing figure of authority. Even though he could be arrogant, he believes that learning is ongoing. This is in line with the viewpoints of Paul (1993), Elder and Paul (2006) and Elder (2017), who argue that humility as a virtue of criticality implies thinking and acting

in the understanding that one does not know everything. Therefore, in Fadi's, Melissa's, Susan's, and Nore's accounts, some evidence of humility is manifested.

7.4. 'I care about them'

My interpretation of this heading continues to emerge throughout the data as empathy, which means understanding how other people think and feel. Two participants explicitly show me this sense. For example, Jameel states.

> It started by critical thinking about the world. It started as a personal thing as a X (his nationality), as someone who has a political ideology and stands with people who are oppressed...I think being with people who are experiencing discrimination ... yes, I think these feelings help to practise my criticality (Jameel, 2019, Follow-up interview).

In this extract, Jameel's sense of empathy is understood as 'standing with people who are oppressed'. This indicates that his experience drives his sense of empathy with oppressed people. This means he feels and understands them because he experienced similar pain before travelling overseas to study for his master's and PhD degrees and settling abroad.

This understanding that criticality is evoked by one's feelings, such as empathy, which influence the enactment of criticality, is further demonstrated in Nathan's lived experience. For him, empathy is shown by caring about other people who suffer in Burma.

> As a human being in today's society... the negative feeling towards the world as people are suffering and I care about them, and some people are creating that suffering and I feel angry that I cannot do anything concerning that. (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)

Nathan's statement indicates a feeling dimension of criticality as he appears to understand and feel these people's pain and angry that he cannot help them because it is beyond his abilities.

How Jameel and Nathan talk about this sense of caring about other people resonates with Paul's (1993) and Elder's (2017) argument that intellectual empathy is evident when a person attempts to see objects or ideas from another person's perspective, while arguing with them. Elder (2017, 2020) also suggests that intellectual empathy is an important trait of criticality that describes individuals' academic and everyday life because it contributes to decreasing misunderstandings between people. This evidence helps me to understand what the participants tell me about criticality comprises *ways of being*, such as empathy.

7.5. 'I always want to know'

This heading is an extract from the data. It refers to individuals' perception that learning is ongoing and concerns not merely learning a particular subject but a wide variety of topics and ideas. It is important to note that there is an interlink between the interpretation of curiosity and humility (discussed above) in the sense that both imply that learning to learn and to unlearn is an ongoing process. What the participants tell me shows that this perception of curiosity depicts their way of living. For instance, Jameel speaks about his childhood.

> If I look at my life as a little boy, I always questioned things. I always wanted to know. You know this curiosity. I think criticality starts with this curiosity. And especially if you feel that you are different. There is always a curiosity of wanting to know. Yeah, since I was little, I felt that I was different. In some ways, not sure how, I am different. For instance, when I was little boy, I always thought I am not like the rest of the boys who liked to play outside, play football or aggressive games. I just wanted to stay in with adults or play inside… in those ways I felt curious about the world and why I am different. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

This sense of curiosity as a way of living continues to emerge throughout the data. This is an illustration from my research journal that shows how curiosity drives my PhD project.

> I want to really understand some aspects of the experiences of 'international' PhD students, including my own, which I have no clue about now (Zina, 2019, research journal).

Referring back to Jameel's extract, curiosity is shown in his questioning mind that aims to understand the world – what is going on around him. This indicates that his curiosity is provoked by the desire to know. Jameel also believes that he was different from other boys because he had different tendencies. For example, he did not use to play with other children outside, which was a natural activity for most children in his environment. This difference, for him, contributes to his curiosity to know why he was different and to make sense of what is happening around him. Furthermore, Jameel perceives that curiosity and criticality are interlinked. This interlink connects with Elder's (2017) statement that curiosity is a trait of criticality that refers to acting upon the desire to learn. Therefore, this evidence supports my point throughout this chapter that criticality encompasses *ways of being*, such as curiosity.

What Jameel's statement demonstrates is that his curiosity, which is expressed through questioning, is evident throughout his lived experiences, such as at an early age and as a lecturer and a PhD student. This means Jameel's curiosity, as a form of habitus, is an embodied way of thinking and acting. His sense of the development of being curious builds on previous layers of experience and is developing in a continual process.

Since the development of curiosity represents fluid habitus, and since criticality comprises *ways of being* such as curiosity, then this is what justifies my argument that criticality is a fluid habitus.

7.6. Confidence

One of the elements that emerge from the data concerns the experience that several participants reported, which demonstrates how confidence is a crucial way of being critical. For example, Jameel makes reference to how being confident and critical are interlinked in his experience as

a PhD researcher. To demonstrate this, I am bringing back an extract of data first seen in Chapter Six, which now shows the continuation of what Jameel says.

> In a way [being critical] confirmed what I already know but it gave me more confidence to develop those thoughts and to develop my confidence to be more critical. I mean, there is evidence that you need to be critical of. There is evidence that says that whatever that you knew might be completely wrong or only part of truth. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

Further to my analysis in Chapter Six, here, it becomes clearer that Jameel perceives himself as a self-confident person who can develop his thoughts and confidence in reason to critique the available evidence rationally. For him, being critical influences his self-confidence, which in turn impacts his criticality.

Confidence also describes Nathan's experience of being a researcher in the sense that this confidence is evident in his approach to 'reasoning'.

> In my research I am looking at the ideologies, I have to do that sort of reasoning: where is this coming from, why they are writing this thing, why they are highlighting this point and not the other one? (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)

Nathan's statement gives me the impression that establishing confidence in oneself and in reason refers to trusting evidence, facts, and reasoning. As a researcher, he appears to have confidence in his reasoning, which is characterised by asking a series of questions, such as 'where' and 'why'.

My informal conversations with Alex, Ferial, Rayan and Susan about their observations of me as a person and a researcher show me the challenging process of reconstructing my self-confidence, again, in different circumstances and unfamiliar environments. These observations

feed into the developing understanding that criticality encompasses confidence as a way of living. For example, as recorded in my research journal, Alex notes.

> I can clearly observe a noticeable change and progress at different levels. At the professional level, you have become more open to talk about your research and more knowledgeable. At the academic level, you have become more engaged with research communities. For example, I was amazed by the question you asked your supervisor about the theoretical framework in the seminar. You just could ask the question that the majority of us wanted to ask but did not for an unknown reason. Moreover, you care about the research of others. A good example of this is that you called me this morning just to further discuss what we talked about in the library. This indicates that you are a real researcher for me. At the social level, you used to isolate yourself before now. Now, I see a tremendous change in the way you socialise with people. I thought that you were arrogant. Now, you are kind of pushing boundaries of shyness. You are trying to be an extrovert and talking more to people. It is clear that you are mixing the academic and social side of you. (Alex, 2020, in Zina's research journal)

What Alex's account begins to tell me is that three main virtues describe who I am and represent my change. What he is saying about me and my change resonates with my own experience. This change, first of all, is evidenced in building my self-confidence. This reading is driven by these specific statements 'open to talk about your research and more knowledgeable… You just could ask the question that the majority of us wanted to ask but did not for an unknown reason… talking more to people'. For Alex, this change is also apparent in being active and engage 'with research communities', which I agree with. Furthermore, empathy describes who I am in the sense that I 'care about the research of others'. This is illustrated in 'call [ing him] this morning just to further discuss what we talked about in the library'. This illustration

suggests that confidence overlaps with being active and empathetic. This must mean that because I am confident about my thoughts and knowledge, I decide to engage in discussion with him.

Hearing what Alex, Ferial, Rayan and Susan tell me about myself, I can see evidence of an overall thick description generated by the juxtaposition of these accounts, which is enhanced by the sense that criticality comprises self-confidence as a way of being. An example of this is the way in which what Ferial, Rayan, and Susan say here connects with and builds on what Alex says.

> I have known you for three years. You were introverted, did not laugh much, not very funny, lost opportunities, showed her negative emotions, and was very homesick. However, now, you are more sociable, laugh all the time, so funny, seizes the opportunities, more positive, and less homesick. (Ferial, 2020, in Zina's research journal)
>
> I've known you for three years. You appeared to be socially distant: introverted. Now, you are a good kind of talkative and extroverted person. (Susan, 2020, in Zina's research journal)
>
> I did not know that you are so friendly, and I can speak so easily to you. You have become more extroverted. I had a thought that Zina just studies, does not have time for fun and no time for entertainment. I discovered lately that Zina likes travelling, cooking, and having a normal life. I prefer the new Zina as I can communicate all my thoughts in any domain and at any time with her. More sociable is associated with being careful and being appreciated by others. I have got a lot of friends who appreciate you. (Rayan, 2020, in Zina's research journal)

My close reading of Ferial's, Susan's, and Rayan's statements helps me to see how challenging it is to learn to unlearn what I previously learnt in a different environment, as far as self-confidence is concerned. The essentialist easy way of reading this data is I become self-

confident and, therefore, critical because of being in Britain. However, this is not the case because the change I experienced is a matter of reconstructing and building my self-confidence, again, in different circumstances and unfamiliar environments.

I find Elder's (2017) conception of confidence as a virtue of criticality a useful concept with which to make sense of Jameel's and Nathan's data extracts, in this section, because she suggests demonstrating confidence in reason requires using accurate, significant, and relevant information to achieve a particular purpose. She also suggests avoiding superficial answers to complicated problems. Instead, she recommends considering different viewpoints. Elder's conception helps me to understand what the participants tell me about criticality comprises confidence as a way of being.

Confidence in oneself and reason appears to define the participants' confident researcher habitus. This means the way in which Nathan and Jameel see themselves confident describes who they are as researchers. It is an embodied way of thinking and acting, which in turn represents criticality.

7.7. Discussion-summary

There are several ways to read the participants' statements in this chapter and therefore to respond to them. The reading of the dominant essentialist discourse can be because they are international students, they must be deficient as far as criticality is concerned. This means for them to succeed in their studies, they have to learn this criticality by being in a British university. I critique this reading because it stands in the way of appreciating the contribution of these students. Furthermore, what I want to draw attention to is there is no point in noticing the negative things that are so well recorded by all the essentialist researchers, as referred to in Chapter Four.

I read the participants' reflections on who they are and how they live their lives as far as criticality is concerned as non-essentialist. What emerged throughout the data, in this chapter, is strong statements that show me their *ways of being* critical both before and during studying in their new environment and therefore refute this type of essentialist reading.

Some examples of these *ways of being* critical are reflected in the subthemes of this chapter and are as follows. First, they are independent (Susan – independent PhD researcher and person), (Nadine and Jameel – independent thinker/attitude of resistance), and (Fadi – being independent/responsible). Second, they stick to it until they do it (Lydia – collecting and analysing data), (Melissa – her PhD journey), and (Jameel – studying in his new environment). Third, they believe that being critical is a journey that they are still learning (Fadi – humble teacher and PhD researcher), (Susan and Nore – believing that improving their approach to reading is still a work in progress), and (Melissa – still learning to make sense of what is going on around her). Forth, they always try to understand how others think and feel (Jameel – standing with people who are oppressed) and (Nathan – caring about people who suffer in Burma). Fifth, they always seek learning and open to unlearn what they learnt (Jameel – questioning mind) and (me – curiosity drives my PhD project). Sixth, they are confident (Jameel – confidence in expressing his critical thoughts in his PhD project) and (Nathan – confidence in his approach to thinking).

Once again, this understanding of criticality as it comprises *ways of being* connects with Paul's critical thinking theory. The construction of these *ways of being* critical is fluid – defined and redefined by the participants' trajectories, which part of it is doing a PhD. For example, the participants show me how they are mystified about the PhD process. This mystification is not justified by the fact of being international students. Even 'British students can be just as mystified about the process as anyone else, even if they have already been students in British universities' (Holliday, 2017, p. 212). The point here is, as Holliday (2017, p. 216) argues, 'all

students from different backgrounds have the same intellectual potential as any British applicant but are simply disadvantaged by local knowledge'.

7.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, first of all, there is sound evidence that students from diverse backgrounds have rich lived experiences before and during studying in their new environment, as far as criticality is concerned. The implication here is that participants' trajectories relating to criticality did not begin when they arrived to Britain. It is not being in Britain that makes them critical. Instead, the growth of their understanding and practice of criticality is a matter of continuing their life in different circumstances and unfamiliar environments. For example, before arriving in Britain, Nadine shows to me her resistance to the social norm of wearing the headscarf; Jameel tells me about his questioning mind; and Susan talks to me about her sense of being independent in some parts of her life. All these examples represent their understanding of criticality.

Second, once again, the subthemes reflect the different *ways of being* critical. This means the participants' experiences demonstrate a number of *ways of being* critical within the non-essentialist paradigm. Adopting this paradigm enables me to realise that things could be seen that often remain invisible in essentialist studies. Some of these *ways of being* critical that are visible in the data are independence, perseverance, humility, curiosity, and confidence. Also, a number of them are implied by the data, such as courage and empathy. However, what is important to note is that these *ways of being* critical overlap, and are interconnected and interdependent. This evidence's value is in observations arising from a very specific group of people and the experience of researching them that may help us to think differently about them and others.

Chapter Eight: Questioning is the golden thread in criticality

This chapter responds to the third main theme coming out by data. This is represented in five interrelated subthemes which are as follows: questioning the taken-for-granted, considering others' perspectives, questioning the development of the argument, questioning the 'sub-text', and questioning the evidence. These subthemes reflect my understanding that criticality encompasses *ways of thinking*. I once again want to note that I use the term *ways of knowing* interchangeably with *ways of thinking* (see the end of Chapter One). Within these subthemes, the participants are showing to me that their understanding of criticality appears to be similar in considering questioning as the fundamental facet of criticality. This means they perceive questioning as the golden thread that ties up and drives the abovementioned *ways of thinking*. This explicit emphasis on questioning represents the contribution of my thesis. I choose to save a discussion of the data to the end of each section because of the space available and to avoid repetition.

8.1. Questioning the taken-for-granted

In this subtheme, the participants, such as Jameel and Fadi, show me their understanding of how questioning is the fundamental facet of criticality, expressed through considering and challenging the taken-for-granted. For example, Jameel refers to this understanding as follows.

> I encourage students to question everything and not take things for granted. I allow the space to question everything. I also express my own opinion, that are most critical. I sometimes say shocking things in order to try to express such things. For example, I say to my students blablabla…then I say this is completely rubbish, what do you think? So yeah, turning things around…[I know when people are being critical] when [they] question things and do not want me to tell them how it is. They question things because they want to develop their own ideas. If they are students; they do not ask me for knowledge to feed them,

> but they ask questions to develop their own opinions. Comparing, contrasting, not taking things for granted, and being reflective of their place in the world. (Jameel, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, what is important to notice is not the negative things associated with international students that essentialist researchers have written about as referred to in literature in Chapter Four. Jameel's statement shows that as a teacher in the UK since 2010, he appears to encourage his students to develop criticality by inviting them to question the taken-for-granted and encouraging them to express their points of view. For example, counter-arguments might be described as his strategy that can contribute to provoking students' criticality. It is worth noting that what Jameel tries to encourage his students to develop reflects what criticality looks like for him. Another example is that his students are being critical because they are not dependent on him to tell them what to believe. Instead, they use different elements of criticality, such as questioning, not taking things for granted, and comparing and contrasting to establish their considered point of view. Furthermore, Jameel's statement suggests that the questions others ask might represent their understanding of criticality.

I am aware that Jameel's account demonstrates other elements of criticality, such as questioning the argument's development, evidence and information. However, I intend to focus on each subtheme's main point. I discuss and demonstrate the other elements in the following sections.

In the above data extract, Jameel reveals his interpretation of criticality as questioning the taken-for-granted in his approach to teaching. In the following excerpt, I see how he connects this interpretation with his approach to critical reading.

> Critical reading is about asking questions, such as where is this knowledge from? How does he get to this conclusion? And the 'so what' question. How does this apply to my situation and whether this could be improved? Having questions in your head

> and not taking things for granted, not taking things for [sic] face value. You always have to ask questions in reading academic texts. (Jameel, 2018, interview)

Another piece of evidence to support this developing understanding that criticality means questioning the taken-for-granted is provided by the juxtaposition with what I read in Fadi's account. Here, I am referring back to the example first seen in the middle of Chapter Six, which now shows my other layer of understanding of what Fadi says.

> When you start questioning; like asking what I believe in this world, or where do I belong, or why did I come to this conclusion? For example, back home, family is very important. When I came here, I realised that, with the people I was interacting with, family is not a big thing…People were questioning me a lot about things that I have never thought about it because I took them for granted. (Fadi, 2019, follow-up interview)

Further to my analysis in Chapter Six, in this extract, I can see that Fadi shows the way in which questioning – his perspective and assumptions – is an essential and the most frequent element of criticality. He asks several questions to address his assumptions, beliefs and the logic of drawing conclusions. Interrogating the taken-for-granted is apparent in questioning and reflecting on the value of family for himself and others he has met while studying abroad. This interrogation is influenced by dialoguing with people from different educational, social and religious backgrounds, as I discussed in Chapter Six. For instance, before engaging with people from diverse backgrounds, he believed that the value of family is universal.

What is important to note is in the example of questioning the value of family, a change in Fadi's perspective is brought about by re-checking his taken-for-granted thoughts. It is also evident in developing openness to, and awareness of, others' perspectives in relation to this topic as well as a consciousness of reciprocal influence.

What the participants tell me about the link between questioning one's and others' assumptions and criticality links with Elder's (2020) suggestion that critical thinking seeks to clearly identify the thinker's assumptions and determine whether they are justifiable and how they are shaping the author's point of view. These assumptions are subconscious beliefs that individuals take for granted, such as stereotypes and prejudices (Paul and Elder, 2006, 2019). Participants' understanding also connects with Brookfield's (2012) argument that critical thinking can save lives because one cannot think critically without hunting assumptions; that is, without trying to uncover assumptions and then trying to assess their accuracy, validity and their fit with life. Moreover, Questioning the taken-for-granted is one of the basic elements of Wallace and Wray's (2016) and Elder's (2020) approaches to critical reading. This resonance, therefore, helps me to understand the bigger picture that criticality comprises interrogating the taken-for-granted as a way of thinking.

8.2. Considering others' perspectives

There is a shared resonance that emerges naturally from the data and also contributes to my genuine desire to make sense of what my participants say. This shared resonance is the participants show me that their understanding of criticality comprises considering others' perspectives. Various participants, such as Nadine, Jihan, Fadi and Melissa, have talked about this. For example, Nadine notes.

> Few days, I wanted to watch a program on TV. It was about X (a certain country). I wanted to see how people interacted. My friend came. She is a supporter of X but she does not know a lot about the situation. While watching, we were reflecting on many things. This friend of mine was asking so many questions. This is the situation where I felt she is being critical. She was asking about both sides not only about the things that make me happy. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

Nadine's statement demonstrates the vital role that considering and challenging the perspectives of others plays in the practice of criticality. Nadine is a final year full-time PhD student living with two friends who are also PhD researchers. They are conducting multi-disciplinary research in education, English literature and international relations. They are also from diverse educational and social backgrounds. This diversity might have contributed to enriching their conversations, as manifested in the example she provided.

In this example, Nadine and a fellow PhD researcher discuss a TV show on Nadine's home country, which I do not name for Nadine not to be easily identified. For Nadine, this type of discussion demonstrates her understanding and engagement in criticality by considering the points of view of both sides. This is because they both engaged in criticality by asking different questions of both sides. For instance, even though her friend appears to have limited knowledge about the situation in Nadine's country, she shows her curiosity and interest to investigate it by asking some provocative questions, according to Nadine. Indeed, this curiosity and interest are among the elements that show criticality and exemplify Nadine's understanding of criticality.

Questioning others' perspectives as an important understanding of criticality is also evident in Jihan's lived experience. This is manifested in building the habit of considering voices from different ethnicities, religions and sexualities, as she states.

> My experience living in Britain had good outcomes. It helped me to be more open and accept people from different ethnicities and religious or spiritual tendencies, as well as different sexualities. Before traveling from X, I have always perceived Britain to be the place of multiculturalism and acceptance… I realised it is all superficial. The media wants to sell you lies and hide the controversial issues that are debatable and refuted...When I personally was a subject of islamophobia, in the form of verbal harassment... I realised that I am strong and resilient and at the same time sensitive, and a fallible human being. To be aware and

> critical caused me lot of problems with other people who were comfortable in their own bubble. I do not mind that, but I cannot take gossiping anymore or childishness acts from others. This is because you think differently and act differently. These incidents happen on a daily basis, for example, to consider white people are angels and have more criticality or they are better than us. This is a debatable view, not all are bad and not all are good. I was surprised that they gossip. I used to criticise my own culture, but I realised now we actually have some aspects that are valuable and unique. (Jihan, 2019, research journal)

What I think is going on in Jihan's statement is that questioning appears to be the predominant facet of criticality, at times stated explicitly by her and other times only implied. In this sense, it refers to considering and questioning others' perspectives. This is evident in interrogating different views related to her research and everyday life. First, she seems to develop the habit of questioning the accuracy of information in the media after being misled by it. For instance, she learned from the media that Britain is 'the place of multiculturalism and acceptance'. However, her personal experience of encountering Islamophobia in the form of verbal harassment in the UK countered the accuracy of this information.

Second, about her research topic, Jihan appears to be critical about superiority/inferiority perspectives, which she does not take for granted. For instance, she questions the viewpoint that 'white people' are more critical than 'us'. This might suggest that she thinks that the difference between individuals in this regard is not culture-based but rather relative and individual-based. I will discuss this point further from my preferred non-essentialist position towards the end of this chapter.

My understanding of Nadine's and Jihan's statements that criticality comprises questioning others' perspectives is further supported by what Fadi says in the following extract.

> I think what is different is not what I am reading is how I am reading. I am more critical now. At the moment, I am reading a lot about critical theory, methodologies, research methods, and the role of education...But for me at this level now when I read, I ask why do I think this and why do I believe in this? Why do I think this is true?... I ask different questions: why they are talking about this, why this is of interest, why they think this is true, is it true? I start questioning all of these things. What is important for me there is nothing that is absolute truth when it comes to what we are reading criticality now is put things together in your own way. None of these represent the whole truth...What is the evidence they have? Are they making claims? Is it supported? Are they making generalisations? ...Who is writing it? Why are they saying this? (Fadi, 2018, interview)

What I see in this statement are two main points. First, there appear to be a number of elements of criticality, but what I want to draw attention to is Fadi's emphasis on the crucial role of considering others' perspectives in his practice of criticality. Such emphasis is evident in stating, 'why they are talking about this, why this is of interest, why they think this is true, is it true? I start questioning all of these things'. For Fadi, who is a part-time PhD researcher in his third year working in a full-time job, questioning others' viewpoints appears to refer to questioning the trustworthiness of their argument, the experience and background of the author, awareness of making claims and generalisations, the purpose and significance of the evidence. Such questioning appears to contribute to perceiving that 'absolute truth' is an issue, and criticality is needed to deal with it. The question 'why' seems to be the most essential demonstration of such questioning.

Moreover, Fadi's account suggests that interrogative reading is not merely looking for faults in a text but also involves perceiving a text as not the absolute truth. The second point is there seems to be a shift in his interpretation and enactment of critical reading from being expected

to take things for granted to having to question them and being aware that there is no absolute truth. This shift appears to be influenced by his experience as a PhD researcher, which I have discussed and illustrated in Chapter Six.

What Nadine, Jihan, and Fadi say about their conceptualisation of criticality as questioning and considering others' perspectives associates with Elder's (2020) statement that critical thinking relies on being aware of how individuals view aspects of everyday life and consider other ways of looking at it. This association can also be read in Banker *et al*.'s (2020) argument that considering others' perspectives is essential in criticality because well-reasoned thinking seeks to identify the person's point of view and the point of view of others. This participants' understanding of criticality is also suggested by a number of other researchers, such as Wallace (2003), Brookfield (2012), Paul and Elder (2016) and Wallace and Wray (2016). For example, Brookfield (2012) argues that showing criticality in reading entails seeing things from distinct viewpoints. This aligns with considering various interpretations in the terms of Paul and Elder (2016) and Wallace and Wray (2016). This also resonates with Wallace's (2003) finding that engaging in critical reading requires seeing how different people may read texts in different ways. These links, therefore, enable me to understand that criticality comprises *ways of thinking*, such as interrogating others' perspectives.

8.3. Questioning the development of the argument

In this analysis, questioning the development of the argument continues to emerge throughout the data as another important understanding of criticality. This understanding is evident in Susan's, Nadine's and Fadi's accounts.

As an example, Susan's approach to critical reading demonstrates the practice of elements of criticality, such as questioning the development of the argument. Susan's approach focuses not only on identifying the argument and critiquing its development, relevance and significance but also on discussing its link to the purpose.

> I tend to believe that my perception of things changes over time and critical reading is no exception. Right now, I'm looking at critical reading as an activity that involves engagement, concentration and interest in what is being read. It doesn't have to be a form of reading that makes me question whatever it is that I read, which is what I used to think before, but it's more like an activity that makes my brain work. I don't have to invent things or come up with flaws in the books I'm reading; I just focus and try to understand what is being written, for what purposes, if that could have any impact on my research, how that relates to my research, and things like that. Sometimes, when necessary, I do mentally challenge the things I read. (Susan, 2019, research journal)

In this statement, Susan, a third-year PhD student, considers critical reading to be an activity involving engagement, concentration and interest. She also realises that critical reading does not have to be a form of reading that makes her question everything she reads. It does not necessarily entail creating new meanings or finding faults and criticising her readings. Her perspective that interest and passion are essential elements of criticality, particularly critical reading, did not change because she highlighted this in both her research journal (2019) (as in the above extract) and her first interview (2018) by stating, 'I think it is reading with passion, with your whole mind focused on what you are reading'. However, it is worth noting that there is a change of perspective regarding her act of reading critically in the sense that she frequently questions the reading material, identifies the purpose, compares and contrasts, and explores whether it relates to her own research. Her approach to criticality in reading appears to be positively influenced by doing PhD research, as illustrated in Chapter Six.

This developing understanding that criticality comprises questioning the development of the argument is also evident in Nadine's lived experience and her questioning of some of Foucault's views.

> I began to question if Foucault was to go to X country now, would he say the same thing or would he change the way he viewed power domination, ideology. Would he have different way of writing? (Nadine, 2018, interview)

Nadine's reference to Foucault is possibly because she uses his work on critical discourse analysis in her PhD research and therefore is aware of his arguments. In this data extract, Nadine's criticality is evident in the way in which she relates some of his ideas to her experience in her 'home' country. As a result, she expresses her curiosity and questions whether the circumstances in her country would contribute to Foucault changing his arguments and their development.

Similar to Susan, Fadi shows to me his understanding that criticality encompasses questioning the development of the argument through referring to his approach to critical reading.

> When I am reading something, first of all, I have an argument in my mind … When doing a PhD, you are arguing something, so you have an argument in your head. You know what you are looking for. In the book I am reading I look for what they are arguing for or against. Sometimes what are you reading could be used as evidence to support your argument or to see weaknesses in the argument. For me, the concept is not just reading the book because I want to read … I read about the author's background, you know for example where they come from, their period when they lived because they affected by it, the politics, the ideologies. It is very important to know the bibliography of the author … I think of how they argue for or against. What is the evidence they have? Are they making claims? Is it supported? Are they making generalisations? ...For me it is important to understand as a teacher I want to write in the language that teachers understand. I do not prefer to read books that did have difficult language or too academic … It is important to know the area and the era they lived in in order to understand what they are arguing … You have

> always to be critical, when reading an article, you need to be critical. Who is writing it? Why are they saying this? But not everybody is critical. Some they take things for granted. For me you have to be critical, but is everyone critical? The answer is no (Fadi, 2018, interview).

What I see going on here is a shared resonance that emerges from the data that contributes to making sense of what Fadi says. This shared resonance is Susan's approach to critical reading wherein questioning the development of the argument and identifying the purpose are essential resonates with Fadi's approach, which illuminates the importance of questioning the development of the argument, the purpose and the evidence in a text. Furthermore, Fadi's statement suggests that critical reading is not undertaken to find faults and weaknesses of the text. Another shared resonance is Fadi's approach to critical reading, in line with the ones of Jameel and Nadine (discussed above), reveals that learning about the author's background and the context of the text can positively contribute to better understanding the development of the argument.

Fadi, Nathan, Nadine, Susan, and Jameel, in the data extracts used in this section, show me that questioning the development of the argument and purpose are among the things that represent their understanding of criticality and their approach to critical reading because they frame and guide their line of thought. Their views enable me to therefore understand how some research on critical thinking, such as the one of Paul and Elder, might help me to make sense of what is going on with the participants. For example, finding an explicit reference to conceptualising criticality as interrogating the development of the argument in the works of Lada (2015) and Elder and Cortina (2014), who all suggest that questioning and evaluating the argument of a text is a fundamental element of critical reading because it contributes to a better understanding of the reading material, enable me to make sense of what the participants say. This questioning

can be done by providing sufficient and adequate justification for the claims that are made in the text (Wallace and Wray, 2016).

Participants' views also link with Scanlan's (2006) statement that questioning purpose is an essential element of the act of criticality because clearly defining it can contribute to better understanding one's task. A purpose is what individuals try to achieve, and it has to be assessed using intellectual standards, such as clarity and significance, in order to achieve a well-reasoned and critical thought (Elder and Paul, 1998; Paul and Elder, 2006). Furthermore, this link is evidenced in Elder's (2020) argument that being aware and questioning the purposes behind one's thinking or reading a text and the author's purposes are important elements of criticality. This is because they help to elucidate the agenda behind one's and others' thoughts and to discipline individuals to think clearly. In this line, some studies, such as McWhoter (2007) and Lada (2015), suggest that identifying the author's purposes, making inferences and recognising biases and generalisations are demonstrations of engaging in criticality. This link means the way in which the participants construct their understanding of criticality is explained using the works of the researchers mentioned earlier.

8.4. Questioning the 'sub-text'

Questioning the 'sub-text' emerges throughout the data as another understanding of criticality. For example, Nathan asserts that, although he is critical in reading both academic and newspaper articles, he is more so when reading the latter by questioning its 'sub-text' or context.

> The critical level that is required is knowing the fact where stuff coming from, not just kind of detailed information about something, but it is considering why that person write that at that moment in that journal or book. That is the level of criticality I am talking about. I still think that, when it comes to academic writing, it may be less an issue. It does not mean there is not an

> issue if criticality as it is in newspaper because I think there are more checks on the way, like peer review. I normally be more critical when I read a newspaper [sic]. When I get an article, I am more focusing on the argument rather than looking to the wider things. The position of the researcher it is often made clearer than the position of a journalist or a newspaper. In most research, you find answers to these questions: this is what I am doing, this is why I am doing it and other questions. Being critical is asking questions and finding out and having a look at alternatives ...it will have the negative consequences that it will confuse you, but it is a healthy type of confusion (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this extract, Nathan, a PhD student in his second year, suggests that criticality is questioning the context of the text, which may refer to exploring where the information comes from, who it is written by and why a person writes at that moment in that journal, for example. For Nathan, criticality is guided by these two important questions: what am I doing? And why am I doing it? Criticality also appears to be a difficult thinking process as it may lead to confusion. However, he believes that this confusion is healthy because it contributes to finding alternatives and leads to a better understanding of different aspects of life, as stated in the following data extract.

> It gives you just a better understanding about different things. I read something; I do not agree with it, and I critique it. But without going beyond that wanting to know why he is saying that, why I do not agree with it, is it just you do not like it, or it does not meet your interest or something else? (Nathan, 2019, follow-up interview)

Similar to Susan's account (in the previous section), this Nathan's statement also suggests that questioning purpose and reasons may define engagement in criticality. This engagement in

criticality is exemplified by questioning not only the writer's purpose but also their point of view to clearly identify the reasons for holding it.

What Nathan tells me about his understanding of criticality as questioning the context enables me to draw a thread to connect his statement with Nadine's and Jameel's accounts. To begin with, Jameel's lived experience suggests that among the elements that define his approach to developing critical reading in his students are questioning the context of the text, the development of the argument, its relevance and significance.

> When I give students article to read, I ask who wrote it. When they wrote it, where, who they wrote it for, and 'so what' question is how is it relevant to what I am doing? What is this article about? What is the main idea? Who is it written for? Who is it written by? And the 'so what' question. (Jameel, 2018, interview)

How I understand this extract is similar to his approach to critical reading with his students, he reads critically by considering a number of criteria, such as questioning the text to learn the author's argument, audience and significance. It also seems that the questions included in the extract represent his conceptualisation of questioning the context of the text.

In the following data segment, Nadine shows to me her understanding of criticality as questioning the 'sub-text' of the text by referring to her approach to critical reading.

> You do not just read the words; you also read the sub-text. The sub-text is where this comes from where the author come from, his political views, his history. So, it is reading the text in a different way; in a discursive way so that is what I mean by criticality in reading. (Nadine, 2018, interview)

Nadine's account reveals that critical reading is described as reading a text in a different way. This different way involves reading the 'sub-text', which refers to considering the source of

the information, the where, and learning the author's background because all these elements can contribute to better understanding the 'sub-text' of the text.

Nadine's lived experience also describes her approach to reading critically. Similar to the approach of Jameel, Nadine highlights that learning about the author's background is important in critical reading, besides other elements, such as analysis, taking notes and questioning the logic of the text in order to understand it. This is illustrated in the following statement.

> I read an academic text by break [ing] it down I mean not just the text itself, so with the text I still take notes, I make questions because when I question things, it helps me understand more. Then I found another thing that helps me very well in terms of understanding and practicing critical reading is where the writer come from. (Nadine, 2018, interview)

What I want to draw attention to in this section and between the sections is there is an overall thick description generated by the juxtaposition of Nathan's, Jameel's, and Nadine's accounts, which is supported by their understanding of criticality as questioning the 'sub-text' that emerges from the data. It is also enhanced by asserting that learning about the background of the author can positively contribute to a better understanding of the context of the text, which is evidenced in Fadi's (in the previous section) and Nadine's accounts.

Jameel, Nathan and Nadine assert that questioning the context of the text represents their understanding of criticality and is among the crucial elements of their approach to critical reading. For example, 'reading the sub-text' is an idiosyncratic element of criticality in reading in Nadine's experience. For Nadine, it refers to considering the source of information, the where, and learning the background of the author because they can positively influence that act of critical reading. In contrast to the other participants' views and literature, it seems that Nadine is the only one that used this expression to explain her element of her approach to critical reading. The meaning of 'reading the sub-text', however, might resonate with Wallace's

(2003) idea of reading between the lines and depth noticing as vital elements of her approach to critical reading.

Being aware of the author's background as part of learning about the context of a text is viewed as another essential element of critical reading by Jameel, Fadi, Nadine, Nore, Susan and Melissa. Background in their use concerns where the author comes from, their political views, and social and educational experiences. In contrast, there appears little evidence in the literature (discussed in Chapter Three and Four) that directly argues for the positive contribution of learning about the author's background to the act of critical reading. For example, Turner (1988) and Wallace (2003) suggest the positive role of incorporating readers' backgrounds and experiences is important for the practice of criticality in reading instead of that of the author. However, this is not evidenced in this study's participants' experiences. As a result, it appears that being aware and learning about the readers' and authors' backgrounds are important elements of engaging in reading a text critically because they both might influence the text's understanding and interpreting.

8.5. Questioning evidence

In this subtheme, Nadine and Nore talk about their understanding of criticality as questioning the evidence. This means my understanding of these participants' accounts further supports my argument that questioning is the fundamental facet of criticality. For example, Nadine notes.

> ...Then we came to talk about universality, for example, women's oppression is a universal issue. And she was saying maybe you should not say that, maybe it is not universal. We were just negotiating different terms. Sometimes she said universal, and I said do you mean global or universal? So even the little terms it comes to even clarify them. That is the kind of dynamic that I have with my friends. That is why I consider myself critical because I do ask people for different perspectives and to challenge my own, look at things differently. And I think

> this may be at the heart of being critical. By living with people, engaging with them, discussing different sort of things I think is at the heart of being critical. (Nadine, 2019, follow-up interview)

In this data segment, Nadine appears to understand criticality as questioning the evidence and information related to different aspects of everyday life, such as questioning the use of terms for clarity and questioning both one's and others' perspectives. These perspectives could be, for instance, assumptions and information. For Nadine, it appears that questioning contributes to 'looking at things differently', which in turn might be essential in her interpretations and enactments of criticality. This 'looking at things differently' is evident in her approach to discussing different topics, such as 'universality'. Nadine's statement also reveals that she refers to questioning other elements of criticality, such as challenging one's and others' perspectives, that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This means that this example and others in this chapter demonstrate the interconnectedness of these elements of criticality in the participants' accounts.

Further evidence to support this developing understanding that criticality comprises questioning the evidence and information is provided by the juxtaposition with what Nore says.

> For me, critical reading is the ability to sufficiently read, understand, synthesise a text or an idea to produce a coherent text or idea. This is closely related to what I have to do as a PhD student. I think the word critical here means that you do not take things for face value but always seek justifications and arguments as why this text is trustworthy. While doing a PhD, in my opinion, critical reading relates to selecting relevant and significant material, analysing and synthesising the content to produce a coherent text. (Nore, 2019, research journal)

In this statement, Nore's reference to his approach to critical reading shows his conceptualisation of criticality as evaluation that uses some examples of criteria, such as the

sufficiency of information and evidence. Criticality in reading for him is not taking things at face value. Instead, it refers to seeking arguments to justify the reader's and the author's viewpoints. For example, it concerns exploring why a certain text is trustworthy.

Similar to Nathan and Melissa (mentioned in the previous sections), Nore suggests that the purpose of criticality in reading is to better understand the text. Nore adds another purpose: to produce a coherent text, as he observes.

> It [critical reading] starts with the selection of relevant documents, assess their relevance through abstracts or introductions. Then, I start skimming, looking for the main idea. When the idea is identified, I look around it, looking for context or more details or explanations or examples. I think criticality lies in the selection of the material depending on relevance and significance and in the synthesis of ideas and assessment of their quality and trustworthiness. (Nore, 2019, research journal)

What I think is going on in Nore's account is that he suggests five essential elements of his approach to critical reading: the relevance and significance of information, the argument, the context, the synthesis of information and assessing the text's trustworthiness. These elements represent his understanding of criticality.

What the participants say in this section about their understanding of criticality as questioning information and evidence enables me to therefore fathom how Paul's (1993) conception of elements of thought might offer a language capable of articulating their understandings. This means how participants construct their understanding of criticality is partially explained using Paul's concept. This participants' understanding connects with Paul's (1993) and Elder's (2020) element of thought, information. Paul and Elder argue that all thinking is based on using information that can be facts, evidence or experiences. This thinking seeks to identify the writer's information and make sure that all information used is clear, accurate, and relevant to

the question at hand (Paul and Elder, 2006, 2012; Elder and Paul, 2010; Elder and Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2018, Elder, 2020).

How I understand Nore's statement, critical reading is 'the ability to sufficiently read, understand, synthesise a text or an idea to produce a coherent text' (research journal, 2019), is his emphasis on interrogating information sufficiency links with Wallace's (2003) argument for the importance of questioning the evidence for sufficiency. She found that critical readers engage in depth noticing by scrutinising the evidence and assessing its sufficiency, relevance and significance. Nore's emphasis on interrogating evidence sufficiency enables me to comprehend how Elder and Paul's (1998, 2006) intellectual standards might help me to make sense of what Nore says. They suggest that there are at least nine intellectual standards important to conducting affairs of everyday life. Once again, these are clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness (Elder and Paul, 2019) (see Chapter two). Elder (2020) added sufficiency because these intellectual standards together contribute to developing sound instances of critical thinking.

Furthermore, Nore is the only one among my participants who notes that questioning the trustworthiness of the reading materials is an essential element of criticality. Although trustworthiness is not explicitly suggested by Paul's (1993), Elder and Paul's (1998, 2006) and Elder's (2020) conception of intellectual standards, the meaning of trustworthiness in Nore's use appears to align with the meaning of one of their intellectual standards, which is accuracy. This alignment is in the sense that thinking can be checked to the extent that one can determine it represents things as they really are.

Participants' statements about how questioning the relevance and significance of information describe their approach to critical reading resonate with Lada's (2015) finding that analysing the relevance and significance of the evidence demonstrates engaging in critical reading.

Furthermore, this aligns with Pettey's (1956) argument that what demonstrates one's ability in critical reading is critical thinking while reading. He further explains that this concerns evaluating the relevance and significance of information, whether it is knowledge or personal experience. The importance of this element is also asserted by Kennedy (1991) as part of analysis and synthesis. Thistlethwaite (1990), Elder and Cortina (2014), Van Blerkom (2011), and Wallace and Wray (2016) refer to the importance of these elements as part of engaging in critical thinking skills, such as analysis and evaluation. This means participants' understanding that criticality comprises *ways of thinking*, such as interrogating evidence, is explained using the works of the researchers mentioned earlier.

8.6. Discussion-summary

In this chapter, what is important to notice in the participants' statements is not the negative narratives that essentialist research has written about international students' experiences as referred to, in Chapter Four. It is my aim to read their statements from a non-essentialist position and bring out the positive aspect of what they tell me. Once again, essentialist research falsely represents international students' individual behaviour 'as entirely defined and constrained by the cultures in which they live so that stereotype becomes the essence of who they are' (Holliday, 2011, p. 4). An example of this essentialist image is actually in the following data extract. Fadi *appears* to make essentialist statements about his culture and his new environment's culture as far as criticality is concerned, which I feel it should not be taken at face value. It is actually a form of me being essentialist to believe and take what Fadi tells me for face value. I furthermore feel that if I do not question what Fadi says, I am actually patronising and 'othering' him.

> Because we are talking about the experiences of international students and the differences, we come from a culture where the book you do not question it, however you learn it by heart ... But when we came to the masters and PhD, you do not need to read

> the book and memorise it, but you provide how you can critique it. These things are not part of our culture. We do not question things. And the teacher whatever he says we do not question it. When you read something, I think the most important thing is that what you are reading is not the absolute truth. I think this is the main difference. We are reading a book as the absolute truth whereas here whatever you read, you read it as fifty / fifty. (Fadi, 2018, interview).

My understanding of Fadi's account is that he appears to be subscribing to the grand narrative that international students are not critical thinkers because of where they come from. Fadi's statement also appears to me to present an essentialist 'blocking narrative of culture', in Holliday and Amadasi (2017, p. 262) terms. This 'blocking narrative of culture' is evident in Fadi's use of the pronoun 'we' which indicates that he is not making a personal narrative due to his own beliefs. Rather, he seems to be making a cultural statement, such as 'these things are not part of our culture'.

I therefore feel that I have to challenge Fadi's statement in these ways. First, it shows to me that he does not seem to unpack this stereotype. Instead, he takes it for granted, and therefore, he is *seemingly* not being critical. Second, as Amadasi and Holliday (2018, p. 252) suggests, I understand that Fadi's statement could be a splinter of the grand narrative of essentialist cultural difference coming into play as we work out our personal narratives of our experiences.

Third, what I can see is that this type of essentialist evidence appears to be refuted by my other participants' accounts in this chapter, who provide illustrations of being critical. These illustrations are from both their prior lived experiences and their experiences of being students in their new cultural environment. For example, being critical is demonstrated in these strong statements by Jameel, 'if I look at my life as a little boy, I always questioned things. I always wanted to know...' and 'I disagree with the notion that only the Westerns think critically'. This

means Jameel appears to resist this essentialist discourse and does not believe in false and imposed stereotypes. This notion of resistance is further illustrated using Nadine's and Susan's accounts at the beginning of Chapter Six.

Jameel's resistance against the discourse that international students are not critical because of their background is evidenced in his statement that shows that his criticality did not start when he attended British universities. Instead, his criticality that is represented in his questioning mind is part of who he is (a habitus), irrespective of the social field, prior lived experiences and his experiences of being student abroad. The growth of his sense of criticality is a matter of continuing his life in different circumstances and unfamiliar environments, as I discussed at the beginning of Chapter Six. For instance, Jameel, as a teacher in his new environment, he frequently encourages his students and himself to engage in critical reading by applying different elements of criticality, such as questioning the context of the text, the taken-for-granted and one's and others' perspectives.

This representation of criticality connects with Elder and Paul's (2019) argument that questioning in a learning mind never ends. Questioning generate further questions and stimulate new ways to think and new paths to follow as one analyses and evaluates their thinking using elements of thought, such as purpose, point of view and assumptions, and intellectual standards, such as clarity, accuracy and significance. Moreover, the quality of one's thinking is evident in the quality of one's questions (Elder and Paul, 2006; Elder, 2020). For example, they point out that every field stays alive only to the extent that fresh questions are generated. In other words, when a field of study is no longer pursuing significant answers to essential questions, it dies as a field (Elder, 2020).

What represents one of the contributions of my thesis in this chapter is my non-essentialist reading of the participants' accounts which shows to me an explicit focus on the importance of

questioning as the golden thread that ties up and drives the elements of criticality. This focus is less marked in previous research into the experiences of 'international' PhD students studying abroad in the UK and their experiences of constructing criticality.

Most of the relevant studies I reviewed for this project in Chapter Four, such as Williams (2009), Savage and Wehman (2014) and Roberts *et al.* (2018), focused instead on other facets of criticality: problem-solving, inference and analysis. Ruparelia's (2018) study, in contrast, shows the significant role questioning plays in nurturing the participants' experiences in criticality. She refers to criticality as asking questions and sharing views with parents, peers, teachers and family members. For example, she found that parents who ask for points of view from their children and encourage discussion of broader perspectives instilled students with confidence. Indeed, Elder (2020) also shows that confidence is an important element of criticality, which I have discussed in Chapter Seven.

Ruparelia (2018) further found that her participants, such as Raabiya, asserted that there was no room for questions and debates when studying with a large number of students. As a result, Ruparelia (2018) advises teachers to include more space for questions and debates to enable the students to engage frequently in criticality. This reveals the positive influence of cultivating questioning in students to nurture their experiences in criticality.

8.7. Conclusion

I am aware that we might have different understandings of criticality. In my thesis, once again, criticality comprises *ways of thinking* (discussed in this chapter) and *ways of being* (see Chapter Seven) that are interconnected. In this chapter, my argument that criticality comprises *ways of thinking* is reflected in the subthemes. Within these subthemes, we can see resonance in the participants' understanding of criticality. This resonance is represented in considering questioning as the golden thread that ties up and drives these five elements of criticality:

questioning the taken-for-granted, considering others' perspectives, questioning the development of the argument, questioning the 'sub-text', and questioning the evidence. For example, interrogation of the taken-for-granted is apparent in Fadi's questioning and reflecting on the value of family for himself and others he has met while studying abroad and Jameel's approach to teaching and critical reading.

Another example is that considering others' perspectives is evident in Jihan's habit formation of questioning the accuracy of the information in the media after being misled by it and challenging the essentialist viewpoint that 'white people' are more critical than 'us'. Furthermore, criticality comprises questioning the development of argument as a way of thinking can be read in Nadine's statement where she relates some of Foucault's ideas to her experience in her 'home' country and, therefore, she expresses her curiosity and questions whether the circumstances in her country would contribute to Foucault changing his arguments and their development.

Once again, this evidence's value is in observations arising from a very specific group of people. Their observations contribute in several respects to the existing literature on the experiences of international PhD students relating to constructing criticality. For instance, trustworthiness, as illustrated in Nore's statements, can be regarded as another intellectual standard besides those suggested by Paul (1993, 1996) and developed by Paul and Elder (2006) and Elder (2020). Participants' observations also suggest that awareness of and questioning the influence of one's and others' backgrounds are essential to engage in criticality. This point, in turn, is interrelated with questioning the 'sub-text' of a text that is strongly suggested by the participants, such as Nadine.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I will attempt to make a link between my research findings and my research questions. This is not a straightforward task because, the findings each relate to several of the research questions. I will therefore structure the first part of the chapter according to the findings and indicate how each one relates to the various research questions. In the second part of the chapter, I will indicate how using the concept of fluid habitus has enabled an understanding of criticality which informs the other parts of the chapter, and this therefore constitutes new knowledge. In the third part of the chapter, I will move on to discuss how my findings inform future action. The final part then will relate all of the above to my own experience as an international student and as an everyday critical person. Here, I highlight the notion, 'knowing myself'.

9.1. Relating the findings to the research questions

I will therefore take each finding in turn.

9.1.1. Criticality comprises both *ways of knowing* and *ways of living*

I am aware that we might have different understandings of criticality. In my thesis, once again, my sense of criticality comprises both *ways of knowing* and *ways of living*. Throughout this thesis, I have no intentions to put a clear cut between when or how criticality is a way of thinking and a way of living. My organisation of chapters Seven and Eight under the headings, 'criticality comprises *ways of living*' and 'questioning is the golden thread in criticality', is just to sort out my thinking. This organisation is my attempt to communicate my arguments as clearly as possible.

I now leave the first part of my argument (*ways of thinking*) pending and focus on the second part (*ways of living*) to help me answer both research questions 1 and 2 (what criticality means

for them and how criticality influences living their lives). I will then return to the first part in the following paragraphs to try to answer research question 1.

Concerning the second part of my argument, my reading of the data shows to me that criticality influences the way the participants live their lives. This means there is a link between criticality and living in the sense that they are living in accordance with these *ways of living*: 'being independent becomes a life style', 'stick to it until you do it', 'being critical is a journey I still learn', 'I care about them', 'I always want to know', and confidence. It is worth noting that in the data, these *ways of living* are interconnected and interdependent.

An example of this link is in my participants' statements that show me how they persevere through issues, problems, complexities until they find their answers. Another example is in Susan's account that criticality comprises independence as a way of living which is apparent not only in her academic life but also in everyday life. Similar to Susan, being critical is a 'second nature' or a lifestyle for Jameel (see the beginning of Chapter Seven). This must mean that criticality is not necessarily associated with academic study. This indicates that the participants show to me further evidence of how criticality influences one's way of living within the non-essentialist paradigm, which has recently put aside expectations of cultural background deficiency among so-called international students. Adopting this paradigm enables me to uncover and see what often remains invisible in essentialist studies. What the participants show me here allows me to answer research question 2 (how criticality influences living their lives) and, also, feeds into answering research question 1 because it represents their sense of criticality.

I now refer to the first part of my argument that criticality comprises *ways of thinking*. Throughout the data chapters, I can see that the participants' accounts are complex, contrastive, and yet, I can see some resonance in the participants' understanding of criticality.

This resonance is represented in considering questioning as the golden thread that ties up and drives these *ways of thinking*: questioning the taken-for-granted, considering others' perspectives, questioning the development of the argument, questioning the 'sub-text', and questioning the evidence. This resonance feeds into answering research question 1 (what criticality means for them). An example of this resonance is in Fadi's interrogation of the taken-for-granted and questioning and the value of family for himself and others he has met while studying in an unfamiliar environment (see the beginning of Chapter Eight) and Jameel's approach to teaching and critical reading (see the end of Chapter Eight). Another example is that considering others' perspectives is evident in Jihan's way of thinking – questioning the accuracy of the information in the media after being misled by it and challenging the essentialist viewpoint that 'white people' are more critical than 'us' (see the end of Chapter Eight). Another way of thinking attached to criticality is questioning the development of argument, which I can observe in Nadine's statement where she relates some of Foucault's ideas to her experience in her 'home' country and, therefore, she expresses her curiosity and questions whether the circumstances in her country would contribute to Foucault changing his arguments and their development (see the end of Chapter Eight).

Now I move to talk about the complexity of the participants' accounts. An example of this complexity can be read in Jameel's paradoxical thoughts relating to the nature of the influence of his environment on his sense of criticality. On the one hand, he thinks that his environment did not encourage criticality. On the other hand, he asserts that some of his teachers, who might be considered an element of his environment, positively influenced his experience of criticality in the sense of believing in his intellectual abilities and in providing room at school to ask questions and express his thoughts (see the beginning of Chapter Six).

This complexity of the participants' accounts is also evidenced in some situations where I disagree on some points with my participants, and I challenge them. Here, I want to draw

attention to two points. The first point concerns Fadi's self-marginalisation in the sense that he *appears* to make essentialist statements about himself that he became a critical thinker only when he studied in the UK and that critical thinking is not part of his culture (see towards the end of chapter eight). I feel that I need to resist these essentialist statements because I do not believe in false and imposed stereotypes. My resistance is supported by the fact that my other participants' accounts appear to refute this false and imposed stereotype. This resistance is evidenced in the illustrations they provide of their sense of being critical from both their prior lived experiences and their experiences of being students in their new cultural environment (see examples at the beginning of Chapter Six).

The second point relates to Nadine's experience of wearing a headscarf, which I discussed towards the end of Chapter Six and the beginning of Chapter Seven. Nadine seems to believe that she did not take off her headscarf when she was living in her 'home' environment though she wanted to and, therefore, she was not critical. Controversially, my reading of her experience is that her decision not to take off the headscarf while living in her 'home' environment resulted from, and is a demonstration of, being critical. This being critical is illustrated in her search for evidence to support her position even though she did not find any. This being critical is also evidenced in her temporary decision to comply with what is considered a norm in her social environment until she collects sufficient evidence. The travel abroad gave her an extra dimension which helped her to make her decision. The criticality which began when she was in her 'home' environment was in a sense put on hold until she arrived in another situation that helped her to resolve it. This means she is wondering and asking critical questions all the way through her experience in her 'home' environment and in Britain. It is simply waiting for the answers that she has always been looking for and then she might change her mind again as she continues. This complexity of the participants' accounts represents an answer to research

question 1 (what criticality means for them), and the part about the influence of environment contributes to answering research question 3 (how they construct criticality).

9.1.2. Criticality is dialogic

The participants show to me that the construction of their interpretations and enactments of criticality is influenced by the interlink of the individual-based factors and the social factors. This means that understanding this interlink lies in exploring and fathoming the individuals' constant interaction with others, such as supervisors, fellow PhD students, and people who hold different perspectives. This interlink enables me to argue that criticality has a dialogic dimension. This dialogic dimension of criticality is what helps me to answer research question 3 (how they construct criticality).

Furthermore, my reading of the data demonstrates that the construction of criticality is embedded in the participants' unique lived experiences. This indicates that its construction is individual-based rather than nationality-based. This means the positive influence of the factors related to participants' prior lived experiences: prior education; encountering political conflicts; resisting or complying with social pressures; and interactions with others on constructing their sense of criticality is found to be embedded in their individual experiences. This evidence supports the research findings that refute the essentialist narrative that the behaviour of international students is entirely defined by their background and where they live, which makes them not critical thinkers. This evidence also enables me to answer research question 3, which is about the factors that influence the construction of their sense of criticality.

Referring again to this essentialist narrative, what gives me more confidence in resisting it is the evidence in the data. Particularly in Chapter Seven, there is sound evidence that students from diverse backgrounds have rich lived experiences before and during studying in their new

environment, as far as criticality is concerned. The implication here is that participants' trajectories relating to criticality did not begin when they arrived to Britain. It is not being in Britain that makes them critical. Instead, the growth of the understanding and practice of criticality is a matter of continuing their life in different circumstances and unfamiliar environments. For example, before arriving in Britain, Nadine shows to me her resistance to the social norm of wearing the headscarf; Jameel tells me about his questioning mind; and Susan talks to me about her sense of being independent in some parts of her life. All these examples represent participants' understanding of criticality and, therefore, they help me to answer research question 1(what criticality means for them).

Once again, this growth in the participants' sense of criticality is not particularly because they are international at all. The reason might be that they have travelled further, and therefore, this enhances their criticality. The positive influence of this further travelling justifies why some of my participants changed their perspectives on some topics. For example, Fadi used to take for granted the universality of the value of family. Being a student in his new social environment invites exposure to other *ways of thinking* and appreciating family and, therefore, enables him to realise that his perspectives may be context-based and that there are other different ways of valuing family. This finding allows me to answer research questions 3 and 3.1(how they construct criticality and the role of study abroad) because it relates to the importance of travelling to an unfamiliar environment on enhancing criticality.

9.2. The contribution to research this thesis offers

This topic of study touches on further important areas of debate. First, by drawing on the students' voices. I argue that, while studying abroad and before relocating to the UK, the dialogism of the participants' voices with others plays an essential role in experiencing criticality. This thesis, therefore, not only uncovers what most people might not expect about international students that, their interactions with their prior education and social pressures

nurture their criticality's formation, but also demonstrates how these students reconstruct their pre-existing criticality due to dialoguing with people who hold different perspectives, such as fellow PhD students and supervisors while studying abroad.

Second, what the participants show me relating to how their background positively influences their experiences of criticality is not dealt with in literature. This is even more significant because what they tell me is different from what the established literature has said. Instead, their statements challenge this essentialist literature that tends to study the experiences of international students through a standardised view, based on nationality and culture rather than perceiving that individuals' experiences, such as criticality's construction, are fluid and dialogic. Moreover, this established literature gives us an inaccurate picture of who the participants are. It prevents us from understanding who they are as people.

My thesis in the sense that I argue that there is a need to learn from unrecognised and marginalised realities supports Clark and Gieve's (2006), Montgomery and McDowell's (2009), Caruana's (2014), Holliday's (2017), Ploner's (2018), and Montgomery and Nada's (2019) argument that international students are not who the literature says that they are and that the term 'international' itself is problematic. For example, my thesis's new empirical data and new concepts strengthen Caruana's (2014) and Holliday's (2017, p. 216) argument that there is a shift from seeing Western education as a gift to the deficient non-West, towards collaborations which value, recognise and respond to the resilient richness of life experience that students from diverse backgrounds bring to higher education.

Third, my thesis's value is in observations arising from a particular group of students and the experience of researching them that may help us to think differently about them. The point I wish to make is for both students undertaking a doctorate and their supervisors to notice that my thesis's data suggests no evidence that PhD students from particular cultural backgrounds

associate the problems they might experience while studying in their new environment with their cultural backgrounds. This empirical data supports Holliday's (2017, p. 215-216) statement that students from all cultural backgrounds have the same intellectual potential as any British applicants 'but have different knowledge bases'. Therefore, they need no allowances-making for them that would result in a drop in academic standards. Instead, a space to be who they can be and do what they can do is what they need. This might help supervisors understand how to work with them. What might also help supervisors is acknowledging that these students are already critical and therefore making sure that this criticality is brought into the educational domain.

Fourth, an important point for international PhD students to notice is they might have falsely believed the stereotypes about themselves. I can refer to this as 'self-marginalisation' which is apparent in what I used to think about myself. Doing this PhD enables me to revisit these stereotypes as I demonstrated in my positionality section in the middle of Chapter One.

Fifth, my thesis is framed broadly within the area of studying abroad because what the participants tell me adds to the overall understanding of what happens when people travel to study. It provides further evidence of students' *ways of being* critically – perseverance, independence, confidence, empathy, courage, humility and curiosity within the non-essentialist paradigm, which has recently put aside expectations of cultural background deficiency among so-called international students. This evidence strengthens Dervin's (2011) argument with new empirical data. My different reading of the data suggests that the experiences of both the participants and I demonstrate these elements of criticality in the sense that they depict who we are and how we, critical thinkers, live our lives. In so doing, this thesis represents the evidence that explains and demonstrates these elements from the perspective of international students. This is exactly the type of evidence that most people might not expect about these students.

Sixth, my argument that questioning is the driving force in constructing criticality contributes to the existing literature on criticality. For instance, questioning trustworthiness, as illustrated in the experience of one of my participants, can be regarded as another intellectual standard, besides those developed by Paul (1993, 1996), Paul and Elder (2006) and Elder (2020). Furthermore, I suggest that questioning the influence of one's and others' backgrounds on practising criticality is important. This point, in turn, connects with interrogating the 'sub-text' the participants strongly suggest.

My understanding of what the participants show me about the relational nature of criticality enables me to find some sorts of threads. One is about explaining some demonstrations of criticality in practice that describe how individuals react to a present situation based on their previous experiences and understanding the complex interconnections between individuals and social contexts in criticality. What helps me to understand and explain these demonstrations and complex interconnections is Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and playing the game (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Another is about understanding criticality as a form of fluid habitus. What helps me to explain this is Paul's (2012) dialogical thinking and Bakhtin's (1981) idea that the reason that meaning-making is dynamic is engaging in dialogue, or what I refer to as constant and everyday engagement with other people. Putting these together enables me to revisit Bourdieu's conception of *how* habitus changes. This revisiting in the sense of further understanding the nature of Bourdieu's theory is important. What is even more important is my interpretation of the nature of criticality as a form of fluid habitus. Both of which constitute new knowledge.

9.3. Limitations of the study

My study is limited to a particular researcher, participants, place and time. Its findings are, therefore, restricted. The reader must be aware of this particularity and that it is not my goal to claim unrealistic generalisability of the findings. I am aware that there is much more to learn

about the participants' experiences of constructing their sense of criticality. I therefore want to stress that my reading of the participants' accounts is not intended to be definitive. This ongoing learning is implicit in the nature of my research, which is interpretive. In this type of research, recounting the participants' experiences relies on, as Creswell (2013) argues, several layers of interpretation, such as the participants' accounts, the researcher's recording, the analysis and the description of the research, and the reader's understanding of the description.

9.4. Suggestions for future research

In this section, I shall present some suggestions for further investigation. My thesis tells us that it is our limiting assumptions about the behaviour of international students that inhibit our understanding. Putting aside these assumptions enables me to appreciate learning about what international students have to offer to the internationalisation project. It also helps me to uncover that they can be as much critical thinkers as anyone else. I acknowledged throughout my thesis that I prefer the alternative, non-essentialist narrative about international students. Given the rapid growth in research that favours this alternative narrative and that criticises essentialism, I suggest that further research of this kind may produce important findings and uncover unexpected narratives. This suggestion is because there is much more to be learnt about international students.

What my thesis also tells us is that travelling per se feeds into individuals' sense of criticality. This point of travelling per se is significant for future research to draw on. For example, I suggest exploring the role of the length of studying in an unfamiliar environment (whether short-term or long-term study abroad programmes) plays in individuals' experiences of constructing criticality. I suggest the type of the research that reflect participants' perspectives and connects with everyday experience, such as longitudinal or ethnographic studies.

Another point that my thesis makes is that criticality is among the vital rules of playing what I refer to positively as the 'PhD game'. I therefore suggest further exploration of this point to

uncover deeper complexities. I can see an opportunity to further this research by examining the assumption that individuals' experiences in criticality when studying for a Bachelor's degree might be different from those studying for a PhD degree. For example, conducting longitudinal comparative studies to examine the potential influence of the level of the study, such as for Bachelor's, Master's or PhD degrees, on the students' experiences of constructing criticality is recommended. The importance of this type of research into who we are and where we go is unquestionable because it reveals more interesting complexities.

9.5. Implications of the study

The findings of my thesis hold several important implications for internationalisation, students and teachers, and qualitative research.

Travelling to the so-labelled 'West' for study must be seen as travelling to anywhere and from anywhere, as far as travelling per se feeds into constructing one's sense of criticality is concerned. It must not, however, be seen that for international students to learn to be critical, they have to study in the so-labelled 'Western' countries. I therefore encourage travelling per se because it is an opportunity to nurture one's understanding and practice of criticality. This nurturing results from engaging in dialogue where there is an exchange and moving between different points of view.

I encourage students and researchers to learn and familiarise themselves with qualitative research. This is because conducting my research makes me realise that adopting an interpretive approach is what enables me to appreciate other people's perspectives and, therefore, helps me to avoid reductionist and essentialist constructs of international students. This approach also helps me to construct meanings, such as my Four-Part Model. Once again, to remind the reader, this model results from my understanding of what the participants tell me about their experiences of constructing their sense of criticality. It is my attempt to depict my argument

that the construction of criticality is dialogic (see at the end of Chapter Six). This model can be used as a framework to further investigate how dialogue plays a vital role in the way individuals experience and construct their interpretations and practices of criticality. I believe that other researchers with a different theoretical background and position than mine might consider this model from different perspectives. In so doing, more layers of understanding and interesting complexities can be uncovered.

As I explained towards the end of Chapter Five, I used the micro strategy, SEE-I (State, Elaborate, Exemplify, Illustrate), to help me to write different parts of my thesis, such as writing about each sub-theme in the data chapters. I found it useful to improve the structure and clarity of my writing and I, therefore, recommend students to use this strategy. I also suggest that SEE-I can be used by teachers in the classroom to teach and assess their students' understanding of concepts both in written and spoken forms. The usefulness of this strategy is also evidenced in Nosich's (2012, 2020) works. He argues that by applying the SEE-I in writing, the result can be a coherent and smooth flow of understood and well-communicated ideas.

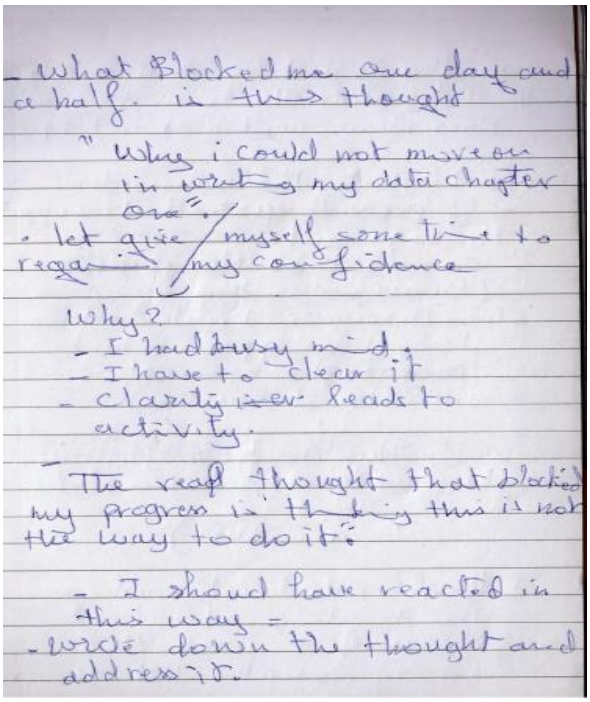
9.6. Criticality to 'knowing myself'

In this section, I relate all of the above to my own experience as an international PhD student and as an everyday critical person. Here, I highlight the notion, 'knowing myself'.

I feel that what 'knowing myself' takes in everyday situations is being critical. By being critical, here, I mean understanding the intimate relationship between a situation, a thought, a feeling, behaviour, and results. This intimate relationship can appear in this way: being in a particular situation creates a thought, which in turn triggers a feeling. These together may lead me to behave in a certain way and, consequently, get particular results. I appreciate that this intimate relationship does not always appear in this order and is not straightforward. However, this way of ordering helps me to explain my point here. I find this 'knowing myself' is a way of

understanding and adapting to complex and rapidly-changing circumstances (situations) and planning for self-fulfilment and achievement. It is also a way of gaining command of my thinking, which enables me to gain command of my life.

An example that demonstrates my sense of how being critical enables 'knowing myself' is in this screenshot from my research journal.



This screenshot shows an instance of 'knowing myself' in the form of an inner conversation. This conversation begins in the top part of the screenshot where, I identify my situation of confusion, which is 'what blocked me one day and a half'. Allowing myself to identify this situation of confusion enables my ideas to begin to move. Directly underneath is the indented part where I ask a question to try to discover the 'real' problem underlying 'why I could not move on in writing my data chapter one'.

My reference to this situation of confusion about how to analyse and write about the data connects back to the moment in the middle of Chapter Seven, where Lydia told me that she found it challenging to analyse her first set of data, but nevertheless she persevered. She asked

for the guidance of her supervisor, which enabled her to overcome her struggles and produce her data analysis draft.

My conversation continues in the middle of the screenshot, where I initially seem to think that 'I had busy mind' explains my situation of confusion. However, just underneath this, notice the statement 'the real thought that blocked my progress is…'. My use of the term 'real' indicates that I then realise that the initial explanation 'I had busy mind' is false and that the situation is far more complex than it initially seems. Instead, what 'blocked me one day and a half' is this limiting thought 'it is not the way to…[write my data chapter one]'. This inner conversation about 'knowing myself' shows my persistence and continued efforts to get to the bottom of things.

As a result of writing this, I remember searching for theses that are in the field of my study for some inspiration. I also searched for some micro strategies, such as SEE-I (see the end of Chapter Five), to help me to improve the structure and clarity of my writing. Writing this also enabled me to develop this perspective that my powerful word for the year 2021 (the year when I wrote the text in this screenshot) is *believe*. For me, this word is powerful because it pushes me forward to learn it until I gain it. 'It' here refers to learning my own process of doing my PhD. Again, referring to Lydia's account, the power of the word *believe* can be felt in her statement, 'I do not know how to analyse it, but I am sure I will find a way to do it'.

In the bottom of the screenshot, the statement 'write down the thought and address it' reveals that one thing that I now know about myself through being critical is that thinking through writing my thoughts enables me to address them.

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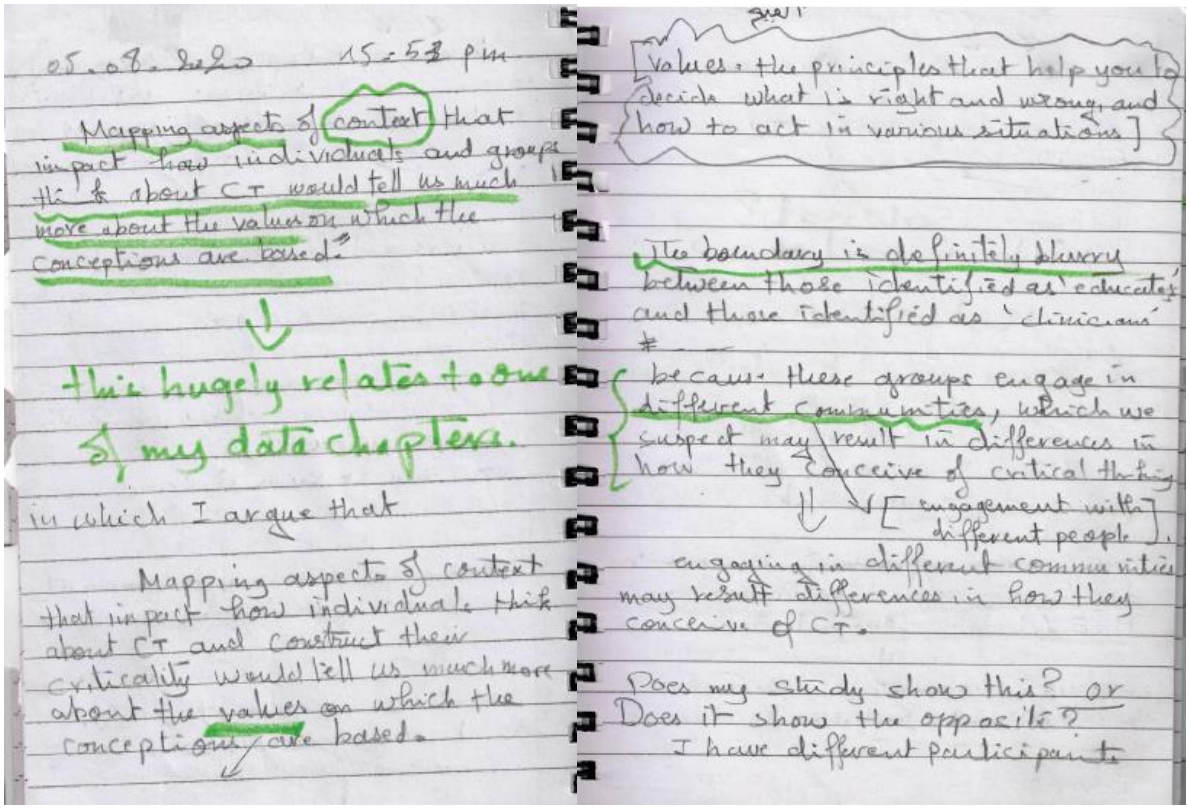
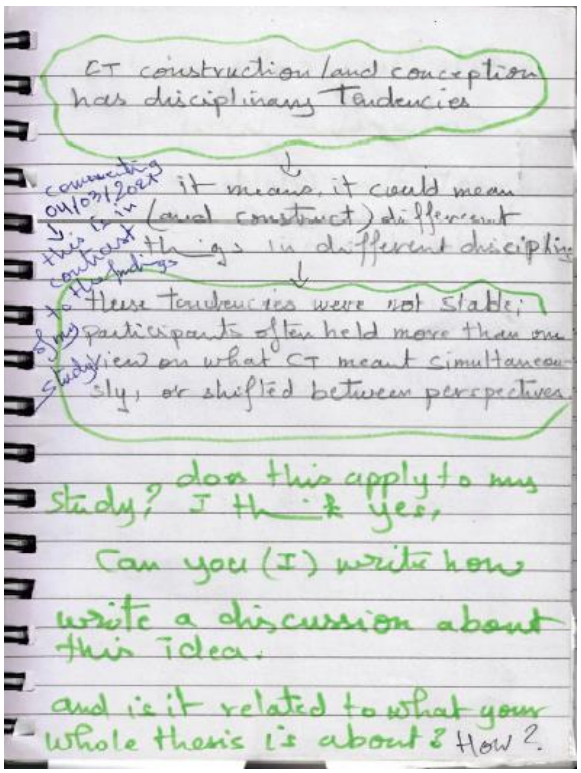
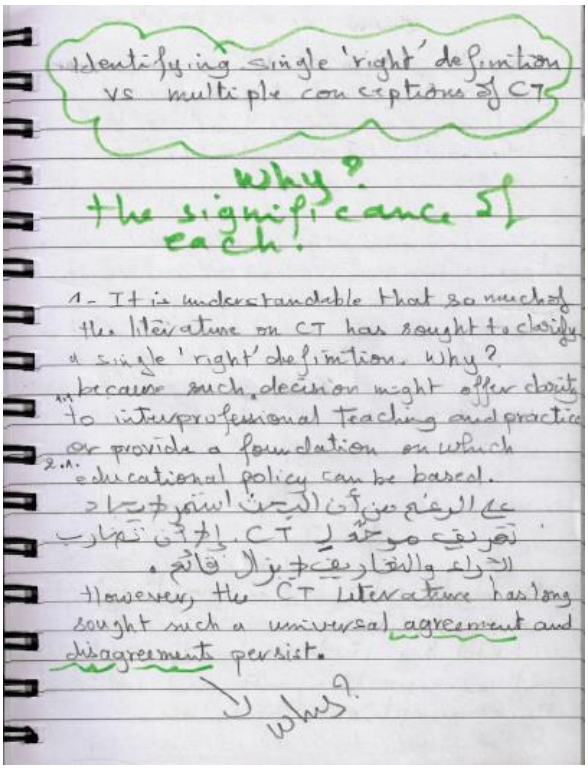
Appendices

Appendices A and B are extracts from my research journal.

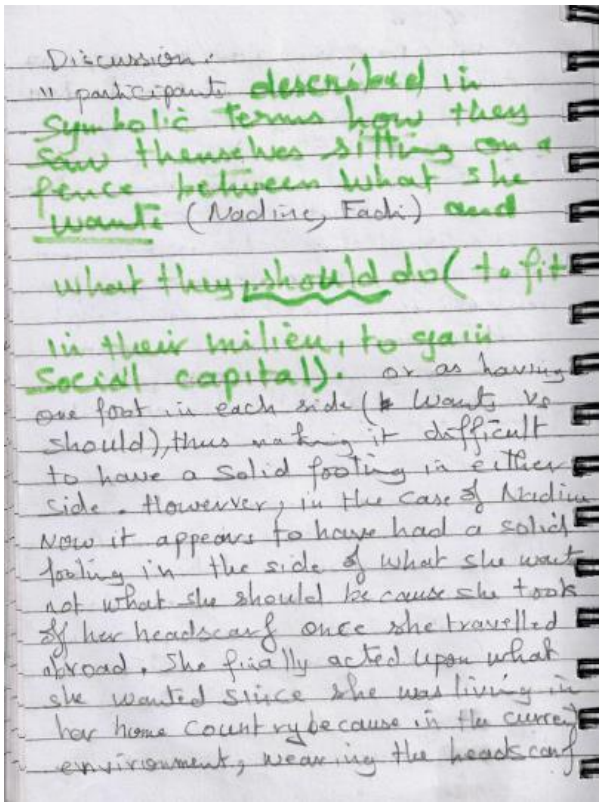
Appendix A. Thinking about my thinking





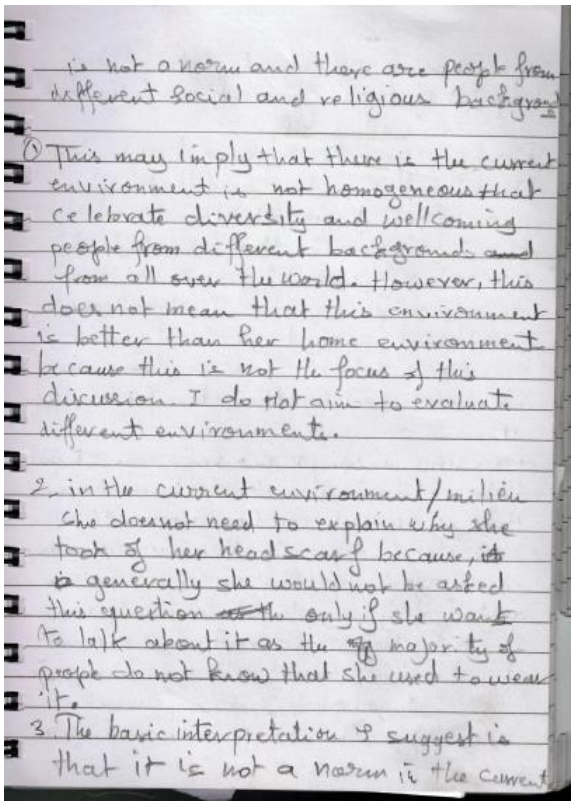


Appendix B. Reflecting on my participants' lived experiences



Discussion:

11 participants described in symbolic terms how they saw themselves sitting on a fence between what s/he wants (Nadine, Fadi) and what they should do (to fit in their milieu, to gain social capital). or as having one foot in each side (* Wants Vs should), thus making it difficult to have a solid footing in either side. However, in the case of Nadine Now it appears to have had a solid footing in the side of what she wants not what she should because she took off her headscarf once she travelled abroad. She finally acted upon what she wanted since she was living in her home country because in the current environment, wearing the headscarf

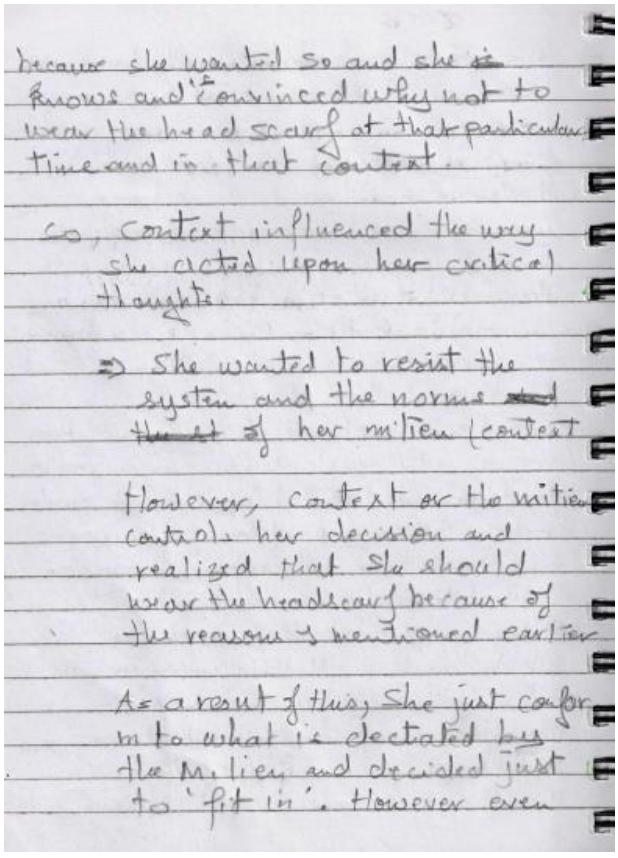


is not a norm and there are people from different social and religious backgrounds

① This may imply that there is the current environment is not homogeneous that celebrate diversity and welcoming people from different backgrounds and from all over the world. However, this does not mean that this environment is better than her home environment because this is not the focus of this discussion. I do not aim to evaluate different environments.

2. in the current environment/milieu she does not need to explain why she took of her headscarf because, it is generally she would not be asked this question only if she wants to talk about it as the majority of people do not know that she used to wear it.

3. The basic interpretation I suggest is that it is not a norm in the current



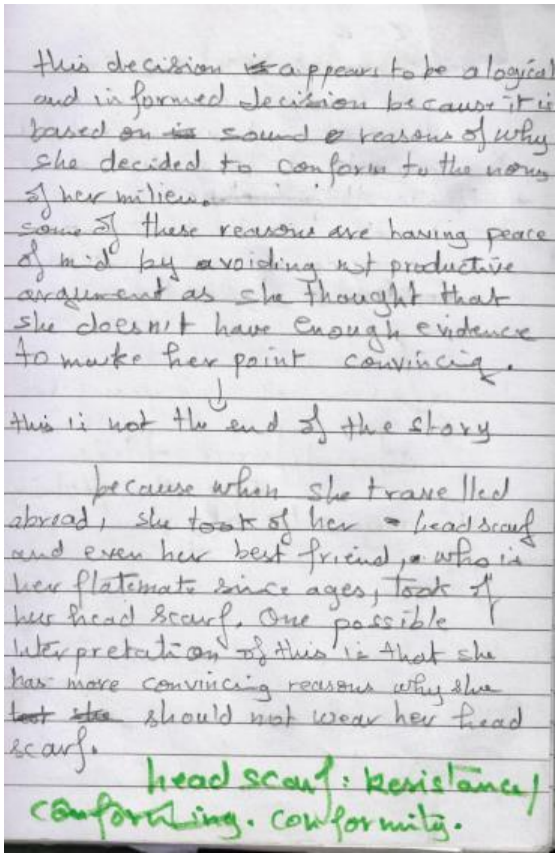
because she wanted so and she knows and convinced why not to wear the head scarf at that particular time and in that context.

So, context influenced the way she acted upon her critical thoughts.

⇒ She wanted to resist the system and the norms and the of her milieu (context

However, context or the milieu control her decision and realized that she should wear the headscarf because of the reasons I mentioned earlier

As a result of this, She just conform to what is dictated by the Milieu and decided just to 'fit in'. However even



this decision appears to be a logical and informed decision because it is based on sound reasons of why she decided to conform to the norms of her milieu.

some of these reasons are having peace of mind by avoiding not productive argument as she thought that she doesn't have enough evidence to make her point convincing.

this is not the end of the story

because when she travelled abroad, she took of her headscarf and even her best friend, who is her flatemate since ages, took of her head scarf. One possible interpretation of this is that she has more convincing reasons why she should not wear her head scarf.

Head scarf: Resistance/ conforming. Conformity.

Appendix C: Interview schedule

Title of Project: the experiences of international postgraduate students in reading academic texts critically during their postgraduate studies in UK universities.

The aim of the interview is to investigate the experiences of international postgraduate students whose L1 is not English of reading academic texts in English language. It also focuses on exploring what they read in L1 and L2 and what is the difference between reading academic texts critically in L1 and in L2.

1. When did you start reading?

1.1. Can you give me an example of what did you read?

1.2. How did you feel about reading at school?

2. What did you read as an undergraduate student?

2.1. How did you find it? Tell me about a typical reading you did?

3. How is what you read as a postgraduate student different from what you read when you were undergraduate?

3.1. These days what do you read?

3.2. Why do you read?

3.3. Give me a detailed example of how you read academic texts in English language

3.4. What is difficult about reading?

4. When reading academic texts in English language, what do you look for?

4.1. Would you tell me how do you evaluate the author's argument?

4.2. How do you identify the author's bias?

5. Do you think that critical reading is different from the kind of reading you usually do? How is that?

5.1. What do you understand critical reading to be?

5.2. What challenges do you encounter when reading critically academic texts in English language?

6. In what languages do you read?

7. What do you read in your first language these days? Why?

8. Do you read texts written in English in the same way you read texts written in your first language? Why? Why not?

8.1. Do you read critically academic texts written in English, first language or both? Why?

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Appendix D: Follow up interview schedule

1. To what extent has your understanding and conceptualisation of criticality changed?
2. Can you give me an example of being critical?
3. What do you think, is criticality influenced by environment?
4. In other words, do you think that criticality is developed by influence to context or is it personal or is it both?
5. What do you think is the link between doctoral research and criticality?
6. In relation to doctoral research what do you feel has developed your criticality?
7. What do you think about awareness and criticality? Are you aware of being critical?
8. Are you aware of others being critical?
9. What do you think of studying abroad? Has studying abroad changed you?
10. What do you think is the link between criticality and your background? Did not you think at any time that your background could hinder or encourage your criticality?
11. Criticality and reflection: Are you reflecting in different ways between now and when you started your PhD?
12. What personal skills you think you have developed because of doing a PhD?