Experiences of Mexican doctoral students supported by the CONACYT international mobility scholarship programme

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Declaration:

I, Karla Alejandra López Murillo confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

"Don't let anyone rob you of your imagination, your creativity, or your curiosity. It's your place in the world; it's your life. Go on and do all you can with it and make it the life you want to live"

Mae Jemison

Abstract

The exploration of scholarship programmes supporting International Student Mobility (ISM) has largely focused on their human capital benefits. In most of these studies, however, students´ voices, identity negotiations and the implications of socio-cultural differences on their international experiences are absent. This research aims to explore the array of capabilities former Mexican doctoral students supported by the National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT) international scholarship programme acquired through ISM. The research seeks to further our understanding of the transformative nature of ISM associated with the individual meanings of their experiences and its implications for social change. Following a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data was gathered through surveys from 120 participants from a unique larger sample of former doctoral students supported between 1997 and 2008 by the CONACYT programme. Next, a smaller subset of participants was purposefully selected to conduct 34 in depth semi-structured interviews to explore their international experiences and personal meanings, and if there were associations with their further life trajectories. The main findings of this research show, firstly, how personal, social and environmental heterogeneities and previous educational opportunities informed the participants´ decision-making processes for ISM, revealing a complex mix of drivers linked to particular life experiences and aspirations. Secondly, it identifies three types of students based on their degree of cultural identity centrality, and cultural flexibility: *isolators, adapters and integrators.* This typology helps to understand the students´ levels of adaptation, the ways in which social relations are forged and how the overall international experience is negotiated. Thirdly, this research shows the potential of ISM contributing to the reduction of gender inequalities and the adoption of positive gender attitudes through the interaction with more egalitarian societies. Further, the findings indicate that accompanying partners and children lived individual transformative experiences and developed their own set of capabilities. Finally, the interviews revealed the development of intercultural understanding, the widening of worldviews and the expansion of life and professional opportunities. From a human development lens, the CONACYT scholarship programme fosters through ISM, the development of capabilities, social mobility, gender equality, social participation and social change.

This study makes an important contribution to the exploration of the broader benefits of ISM scholarships at a national and at an international level. At the national level, the findings of this research show that the benefits of the CONACYT international scholarship programme transcend the training of human capital, academic production and institutional capacity building. The findings show the different ways in which former awardees are being influenced by the mobility experiences and how these transformations ripple outwards, not only in their individual lives but into the societies they live in, contributing with social and cultural change. Therefore, this study provides an alternative approach that could help strengthen CONACYT current methods of evaluating the long-term outcomes of their programme at a larger scale and could contribute rearticulating the programme´s aims and outcomes. Strengthening the evaluation of the programme could additionally provide relevant data informing society about the wider benefits of the programme and the relevance for continuing governmental funding of ISM. In a similar way, other outward mobility programmes around the world could benefit from using the approach presented in this thesis. Firstly, it offers an alternative to evaluate their long-term outcomes and contributions in their particular contexts linked to their national development needs and objectives. Secondly, it could contribute helping to redefine and expand the vision and rationales of these programmes by focusing on the individual beneficiaries and the different ways in which they contribute with their societies.

The findings of this thesis additionally contribute with the research carried out in the ISM realm and have implications for future research in three main areas. Firstly, they might be helpful to explore how specifically doctoral students from different nationalities live their international experiences, considering their heterogeneities, identity negotiations, social relations and family dynamics. Secondly, the findings offer a broader understanding of how the intersection of students´ individual identities, socio-economic backgrounds, and previous HE opportunities shape their international experiences and the development of capabilities. Thirdly, the thesis proposes a typology based on the students´ cultural identities and how they forge social relations in the international settings. This typology could contribute changing the ways in which international students are perceived and be useful to explore how

students from different nationalities negotiate their relationships and their acculturation processes in diverse international spaces.

Finally, these findings could inform HEIs and stakeholders involved in attracting international students to establish adequate support networks for students to manage their transition to the new environments. Tackling issues related to their wellbeing, language, and adapting to different ways of teaching and learning would enhance their overall experiences. Further, it could contribute with the generation of effective strategies to help them integrate with home students and with the local community.

The findings of chapter VII identifying ISM as an as enabler of reduction of gender inequalities, were presented as a formal paper in the Comparative and International Education Society international conference in San Francisco in 2019. Further impact will be achieved through a wider dissemination of the findings of this thesis in scholarly journals.

Acknowledgments

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Mexican Higher Education Institutions by their Spanish acronyms

BUAP   Meritorious Autonomous University of Puebla

CIBNOR   North-western Centre for Biological Research

COLPOS   Postgraduate College

ECOSUR   College of the Southern Border

ENEP   National School of Professional Studies

FES   Faculty of Higher Studies

INIFAP   National Institute of Forestry, Agricultural and Livestock Research

IPN   National Polytechnic Institute

ITAM   Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico

ITESM   Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education

ITESO   Western Institute of Technology and Higher Education

ITSON   Sonora Institute of Technology

UAAAN   Antonio Narro Agrarian Autonomous University

UABC   Baja California Autonomous University

UACh   Chapingo Autonomous University

UADY   Yucatan Autonomous University

UAEM   Morelos State Autonomous University

UAEMEX   Mexican State Autonomous University

UAM   Autonomous Metropolitan University

UAQ   Querétaro Autonomous University

UDLA   University of the Americas

UIA   Ibero-American University

UNAM   National Autonomous University of Mexico

UV   The University of Veracruz

I.   Introduction

The mobility of international students worldwide has dramatically increased over the last decades. Some estimations show that there were 0.8 million international students in 1970s, whereas in 2017 the number had increased to 5.3 million (OECD, 2019). In Latin America, Mexico is the main sending country where almost 35 thousand students participated in degree mobility in 2018[1]. The programmes developed throughout time for the financial aid of international student mobility (ISM) have on one hand contributed to this mobility trend and on the other, have fulfilled two main objectives: the development of international cooperation and the training of human capital. The National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT) international scholarship programme falls into the category of scholarships developed in the 1970s for the training of human capital in Mexico.

Through this federal programme, the Mexican government has funded ISM and particularly doctoral studies for capacity building and to develop research activities contributing with Mexican competitiveness and economic development (Grediaga, 2017, Luchilo, 2009, CONACYT, 2014b)[2]. Therefore, investing in ISM is considered to have economic returns for Mexico, for instance, through the positive impact on students' employability (Varghese, 2008). In this context CONACYT had awarded until 2014 almost 84 thousand international scholarships uninterruptedly since 1970, from those, over 30,000 were granted for doctoral studies between 1997 and 2014 (Lopez-Murillo, 2015). Furthermore, the aid accounted by this programme was nearly 20% (CONACYT, 2014a) of the 27 thousand internationally mobile Mexicans in 2013, according from data from UNESCO statistics.

ISM has been researched mainly exploring the way it contributes to knowledge production and transfer, research productivity, the development of human capital and the economic benefits associated with increased employability (Perna et al., 2015,

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[1] UNESCO global flow of tertiary-level students http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow Last consulted 17.03.2020

[2] Science and Technology Law http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/242_081215.pdf Last consulted 31/01/17

Crossman and Clarke, 2010, Wiers‑Jenssen and Try, 2005, Fry, 1984, Parey and Waldinger, 2011). One of the most significant current criticisms about the approaches analysing ISM in general is that they fail to explore students´ voices, identity negotiations and the implications of socio-cultural differences and understandings of their international experiences (Jones, 2017, Gargano, 2009, Phelps, 2016). In this sense, a limited amount of research has found that these lived experiences have transformed people´s identities, gender relations, behaviours and attitudes shaping their future live and professional trajectories (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015, Brown, 2009b, Brooks and Waters, 2011). Perhaps more importantly, how these transformations have positive ripple effects for social change.

The aim of the research in this thesis is to address some of the above criticisms by exploring the relationship between ISM and the transformative experiences of the international sojourn of former Mexican doctoral students who were supported by CONACYT scholarship programme between 1997 and 2008. Additionally, it aims to analyse the implications of former students' experiences in relation to the CONACYT programme's objectives and the wider Mexican society.

Currently, there are several ISM scholarship programmes supported by developing countries or in transition which outcomes have been mainly explored in terms of their success to develop an internationally competitive workforce and on their human capital benefits (Engberg et al., 2014, Perna et al., 2015, Bukhari and Denman, 2013). In the case of the CONACYT scholarship programme, studies have only addressed topics such as the number of students supported, participation in particular subject areas, occupational trajectories and students' perceptions about economic benefits accrued through ISM (Ortega et al., 2002, Luchilo, 2009). While the existing body of research has contributed to our understanding of outward mobility of students financed by their governments, it has not yet provided sufficient empirical evidence about their broader individual, social and intercultural ISM experiences. In this context, Engberg et al. (2014) have pointed out that besides quantitative information about the number of students supported, destinations and areas of study, there are still important gaps in the literature about how and in what ways these countries are benefiting through the investment on ISM programmes. For instance, it has been suggested that the examination of life stories, experiences and

links made by students through the international sojourn is needed to contribute to the efforts and resources intended for internationalisation processes in Mexico (Grediaga, 2017). In light of this paucity, it becomes urgent to test out a human development approach to assess the outcomes of governmental ISM programmes.

Few studies have used the capabilities approach (CA) to explore student´s development of personal and professional capabilities associated with credit mobility programmes. Boni et al. (2015) examined the effects of participation of Spanish students through a mobility internship programme in Latin America. They explored the impact of the programme in terms of students' personal and professional capabilities and its further association with social justice. Similarly, Martínez-Usarralde and colleagues (2017) found evidence of the development of capabilities and broadening of employment opportunities' through participation in the ERASMUS programme. Finally, focusing on degree mobility, Pham (2016) showed the transformative potential of ISM analysing aspirations, opportunities and practices of Vietnamese overseas graduates after they returned to Vietnam. These studies show the applicability of CA to analyse the broader benefits accrued through ISM programmes. The outcomes of degree programmes such as the CONACYT one thus, need to be evaluated in terms of the possible transformative nature associated to the individual experiences lived through the whole international mobility process, the array of capabilities that students might have acquired, and their implications for social change. Therefore, following a mixed-methods approach, this research offers a contribution to the general understanding of the influence of ISM on Mexican key former awardees' life trajectories through in-depth examination of their international experiences.

1. **Overview of the research and research questions**

The research was carried out from January 2017 to April 2020 with fieldwork of five months between 2017 and 2018. Informed by the capabilities approach, this study explores the development of people's diverse capabilities arising from the international experience and their choice and freedom to transform them into functionings. Capabilities in this research are understood in Sen´s (1999) terms as what people are able to do and be, as existing opportunities such as accessing

higher education (HE) but also as abilities, skills or capacities as a part of a wider concept of a capability to achieve one´s goals (Walker, 2008, Nussbaum, 2011, Martínez-Usarralde et al., 2017). Moreover, CA considers peoples' heterogeneities and the influence of both, the particularities of former students' social contexts and the characteristics of the societies where they have settled during the international experience. The experiences are identified using transformative learning theory concepts (Mezirow, 1991). Meaning perspectives are the distinctive ways an individual interprets experience and the structure of assumptions within which the new experience is assimilated and transformed. Adult transformative learning is a process of reflection:

> "reassessing the presuppositions on which our beliefs are based and acting on insights derived from the transformed meaning perspective that results from such reassessments" (Mezirow, 1990 p.1)

Furthermore, from a behavioural science perspective, "what makes any single item meaningful is not its own individual quality but the difference between this quality and others" (Hawkes, 1977) (cited in Pritchard and Skinner, 2002). In other words, international students identify familiar phenomena which have different meanings depending on the cultural setting (Pritchard and Skinner, 2002).

The research sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the experiences of the ISM sojourn of former doctoral students supported by CONACYT's scholarship programme?

2. What are the meanings associated with these experiences in terms of transformation of their own life paths?

2. Theoretical framework

This section presents the theoretical framework used in this study to answer the research questions. It first deals with key concepts of the capabilities approach and how it has been used as a lens to examine HE processes as enablers of agency and freedom (Lozano et al., 2012). It then moves on to describe the ways in which CA has been useful in the exploration of capabilities acquired through ISM. This section additionally presents key aspects of transformative learning theory, focusing on how

transformative learners construct and adopt new inclusive and self-reflective interpretations of the meaning of their HE and ISM experiences (Mezirow, 1997). It finally explains how these two theoretical orientations work together to explore the wider benefits of ISM scholarships in terms of the transformative nature associated with the individual international experiences, the array of capabilities that students acquire and the possibility of achieving valued functionings. The section concludes with the background information of the development and operationalisation of the typology of international students —*adapters isolators* and *integrators.*

2.1 Capabilities approach and education

The capability approach is a broad normative theoretical framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and to theorising about basic social justice (Nussbaum, 2011, Sen, 2009, Sen, 1999). Capabilities are potential functionings —what one actually manages to achieve or do, the freedoms people enjoy to achieve the functionings they value, that is to say, the opportunities to choose and to act (Sen, 1999). "Functionings represent parts of the state of a person —in particular the various things that he or she manages to do or to be in leading a life" (Sen, 1993). For instance, a capability is the opportunity to receive higher education and the functioning to be able to choose a desired job. The success of a society is to be evaluated predominantly by the substantive freedoms that the members of that society enjoy, which can be of political, economic or social nature (Hart, 2013). Moreover, the individual, social and institutional interconnections that facilitate those opportunities are important aspects to take into consideration (Sen, 2009).

The CA recognises that the individual is placed in a social context, with particular moral and legal norms, underpinning Sen's argument that capabilities need to be context-specific (Sen, 1992, Hart, 2013). Moreover, the conceptualization of capabilities leaves the functioning choice to the individual, and does not assume that a capability will necessarily become a functioning (Hart, 2013). In fact, the development of capabilities will be influenced by the social interaction of individuals in society and the weight culture, environment, history norms and values exert over them (Hart, 2013). In this sense the adaptive preferences have been described by Nussbaum (2000) as choices that result from these diverse interactions, regardless

of the apparent agency and freedoms the individual has. "What is not possible today, might become possible in the future with adequate support, effort and possibly even a little luck" (Hart, 2013, p. 23). In other words, people make specific choices based on social, psychological and environmental constrains, therefore the preference of choice is often dictated by what can be realistically achieved at a given moment (Bridges, 2006). However, in very deprived circumstances the choices are so limited that people adapt their preferences to those constrains without even realising that their world view is reduced. "Habit, fear, low expectations and unjust background conditions deform people´s choices and even their wishes for their own lives" (Nussbaum 2005 cited in Hart, 2013 pp 24.). Therefore, it is argued that in order to evaluate people's well-being under the CA, it is important to consider individuals' different opportunities as well as the functionings. "Behind these equal outcomes may lie very different stories, and it is the difference that is germane to thinking about justice and equality" (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007 p 4).

A key aspect of the CA is the acknowledgment of the ways in which conversion factors (personal, social and environmental characteristics) influence the achieved functionings of an individual. This means that these differences in sex, age, geographical location, wealth and so forth are associated with the ability to convert the resources into capabilities to function (Nambiar, 2013, Sen, 1992) even when individuals share exactly the same commodity bundle (Hart, 2013). Furthermore, Sen (1999) has also argued that individuals live and work in a world of institutions and thus people's opportunities and chances of success are dictated to a certain extent by the way those institutions function. The CA is thus concerned about how institutions contribute to our freedoms, if they provide individuals with rights and opportunities and if they limit or expand people´s choices (Lozano et al., 2012).

The CA has been further developed in the HE realm as an alternative lens looking at the most relevant capabilities to develop agency and autonomy for educational opportunities and life choices (Walker, 2008). Capabilities in this sense are understood both as opportunities ((o) capability) but also as skills and capacities ((s) capability) that can be fostered (Gasper and van Staveren, 2003). Gasper and van Staveren (2003) have suggested that theorising capability considering both opportunities and skills, closer to Nussbaum´s (2011) definition of capabilities,

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broadens the possibility to build a picture of personhood and agency. With this in mind Walker (2006b) developed a list advocating for the production of "flexible and revisable" inventories of capabilities fostered by HE. However, she is clear about how these types of capability inventories have to be tailored for specific purposes and contexts and have to be generated considering community participation and dialogue. CA thus offers a normative framework to conceptualize and evaluate individual well-being and social arrangements in particular contexts and societies (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007). According to Sen (1999), education is centrally important to well-being because it fosters public debate and dialogue, allows the interaction with diverse people and has redistributive effects between social groups, households and within families, reducing gender inequalities. Individual heterogeneities such as social contexts and social relations can expand or limit individuals' capabilities for education and in education, personal and relational differences set conditions for capabilities. Education in the CA is thus considered to be empowering and transformative (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007).

The CA is therefore an appropriate lens to think about the effect of HE through the examination of the freedoms´ students enjoy and how through education, they achieve the functionings they value. Political, economic and social freedoms can be accomplished through university education and they can be expanded or diminished through the learning experiences, social interactions and institutional interconnections. The evaluation of these freedoms together with people's differences and their particular social contexts can provide information about the changes in the *status quo* of societies.

The social contexts and the individual, social and environmental heterogeneities are manifold among HE students from the same country and even when they come from the same educational systems. Therefore, the things people consider valuable for their own well-being will vary together with the transformative learning experiences and the meaning of their education. Consequently, the capabilities acquired may or may not become functionings.

2.1.1 Capabilities in the exploration of ISM

To date, only a limited number of studies have used the CA to examine the benefits if ISM. Boni et al. (2015) explored the effects of an internship programme on Spanish students, who had participated in credit mobility in Latin America. Using the eight pro public good capabilities proposed by Walker (2006b), the authors explored the impact of the programme in terms of students' personal and professional capabilities acquired through the ISM experience and its further association with social justice. This approach can be helpful in reimagining HE and moving forward the traditional goal of preparing people to join the workforce (Ibid). This broader scope looks into other benefits of education such as enhancing the wellbeing and freedom of individuals, improving economic production, and influencing social change (Ibid). Other studies have analysed aspirations, opportunities and practices of Vietnamese overseas graduates after they return to Vietnam (Pham, 2016) and the adaptive capabilities acquired through participation in the Erasmus programme (Martínez-Usarralde et al., 2017). The latter study found that the ERASMUS programme promotes the development of capabilities related to the adaptation to different environments and skills suited to the labour market. Furthermore, it broadens employment opportunities and the range of options for life projects. The same study shows that the Erasmus experience enhances opportunities and choices, thus increasing valued freedoms for participants on their paths to developing their lives (Ibid). Therefore, these studies show the applicability of CA to analyse the broader benefits accrued through the CONACYT ISM programme.

Amartya Sen (1992) and other researchers have been explicit that the CA needs to be complemented with context-specific theories (Robeyns, 2005, Walker, 2006a). Therefore, in developing the theoretical framework, this study draws on Mezirow´s transformative learning theory concepts to explore the meanings of the international experience for the participants, which will be discussed next.

2.2 Transformative learning in HE and ISM

The acquisition of knowledge by HE students has a transformative effect wherein the learning process has the potential to change students positively as persons (Walker, 2008). From transformative learning theory perspective, the primary role of adult

education is to help individuals developing autonomous thinking where learning is a process of making meaning (Mezirow, 1997). Under this perspective autonomy can be denoted as the understanding, skills and disposition that are needed to critically reflect on our own views, have the capacity to question them, and even modify them, thus autonomy has an emancipatory connotation (Ibid).

The transformative university seeks to transcend the world with the purpose to achieve living under democratic values of freedom, inclusion, equality and justice (Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2016). Therefore from a sociological point of view, when students attend university they are exposed to manifold experiences and social interactions with diverse people and in an range of settings —which would constitute in part their moulding identities, particularly the felt identity (self-concept) (Kaufman and Feldman, 2004). Nonetheless, it has been documented that people's heterogeneity in terms of social and cultural background, ethnic origin, age and even city of provenance, have an effect over student's HE experience and success (Bourdieu, 1990, Crozier et al., 2008, Jones, 2017). Further, that the learning processes might be different depending on personal, cultural and environmental heterogeneities, depending on particular academic or cultural contexts and across disciplines (Chan and Kan, 2017, Brock, 2015). Additionally, from a sociocultural perspective, differences in sex also play an important role in learning processes and learning outcomes (Ro and Knight, 2016).

The education acquired through ISM represents a learning experience, which forces students to reorganize pre-conceived structures —their frames of reference, to be able to assimilate new information and negotiate new environments (Hunter, 2008, Popov et al., 2017). In this sense, Mezirow (2000 p 293.) defines the frame of reference as "the structure of assumptions and expectations (aesthetic, socio-linguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, psychological) through which we filter and make sense of our world". This challenging experience might lead the individual to reconsider the fundamental reasoning behind its basic notions of the way the world works and therefore, has the potential to change the person's perspectives and behavioural practices. This way of learning has been acknowledged to be transformative (Ibid). ISM might offer students room for probing themselves and fostering a sense of self-efficacy which could enhance their learning potential

(Bandura, 1989, Hunter, 2008). It has been shown that the overall international experience brings about transformative outcomes such as cross-cultural skills, personal independence, broadened life experiences and interests, acceptance of people with different attitudes and values and a wider world view (Gill, 2010, Robertson et al., 2011).

The transformative learning process begins with an experience that serves as a disorienting dilemma for students, such as the transition to life in a foreign country or the process of returning home (Mezirow, 1991). Disorienting dilemmas can be understood as the problems, challenges, and confusing hurdles a learner will encounter in the course of forging a new routine overseas, and they can arise as the result of the student's interactions with the host community. Once students become aware that this dilemma has challenged the applicability of their existing worldview, it is their level of willingness to actively engage in learning as a result of that disruption that will, in large part, determine whether the experience will lead to transformation (Hunter, 2008).

This section shows how the synergistic use of the capabilities approach alongside transformative learning theory, offers an alternative approach to explore the broader benefits if ISM scholarship programmes. The CA analyses opportunities and skills accrued through ISM and a transformative learning theory lens helps explain the complex ways in which students learn and develop capabilities in the international milieus. This framework takes into account the individual personal, social and environmental conversion factors and the ways in which the institutional and social contexts affect them (Robeyns, 2005). Further, it considers the person´s previous capabilities, in terms of being able to receive education, acquire relevant knowledge, learn additional languages and so forth. The international mobility experience is considered as an opportunity or o-capability (Gasper and van Staveren, 2003) that is enabled by the international scholarship (capability input) (Robeyns, 2005) and thus is up to the individual to convert that resource into valued capabilities. It is in this point where the international sojourn is analysed as a learning experience that can change peoples´ frames of reference and become transformative (Mezirow, 2000). The development of capabilities is thus determined by the intersection of previous capabilities, personal heterogeneities, social relations and the extent to which

individuals transform their frames of reference. Individuals will end up with different level of achieved functionings following different ideas of a good life and influenced by their community, background, cultural ties and family, but also by the lack of social and economic opportunities or unfreedoms (Robeyns, 2005). Finally, this framework allows the exploration of the ways in which the achieved functionings contribute to individual agency and social well-being **Figure 1.**

Figure 1. Capabilities/transformative learning theoretical framework for the exploration of the broader benefits of ISM and scholarship programmes.
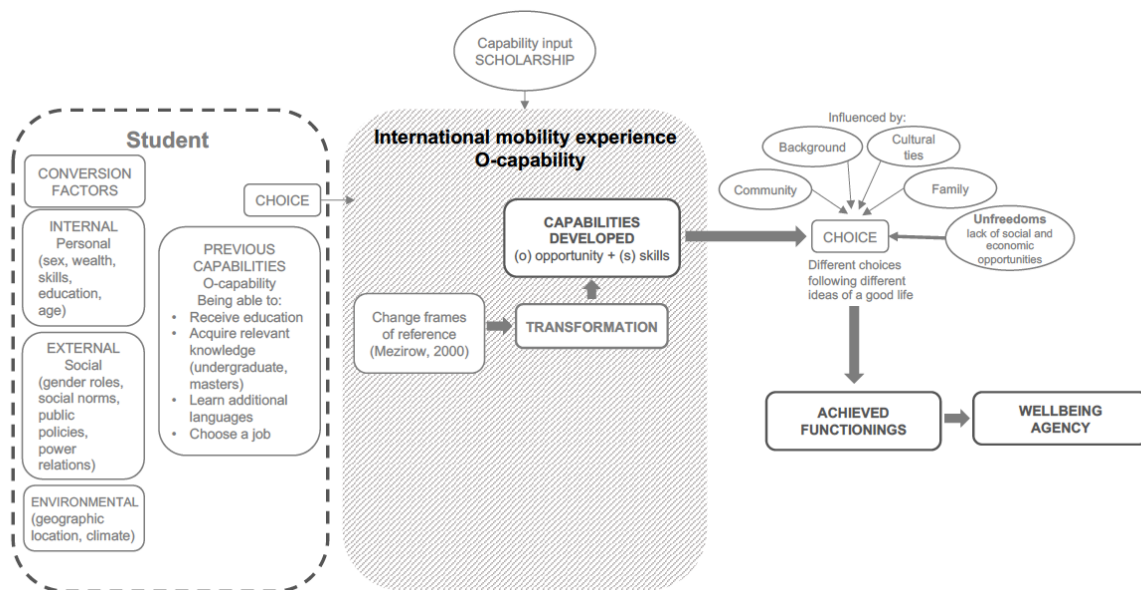
2.3 Typology of international students: adapters, isolators and integrators

During the qualitative analysis process of the interviews (chapter IV), a major emerging theme was the individual perceptions of cultural identity. The different degrees of cultural identity of the participants were often articulated in relation to previous conversion factors and in the ways in which they established diverse relationships in the international milieus. It became evident that the intersections between identity and socialisation with the "other" determined to a certain extent how the international experience unfolded and the further development of capabilities. These observations were consistent with the literature related to identity formation and socialisation processes discussed in more detail in chapter II —specifically, with Sussman´s (2000) model of cultural identity and cross-cultural transitions and with Bilecen´s (2014) different types of transnational friendships forged during doctoral ISM.

Therefore the typology of adapters, isolators and integrators was conceived informed by the model of empirically grounded construction of typologies (Kluge, 2000). The properties and the dimensions used are shown in **Table 1**. It is important to mention that all the interviewees did not possess any international family background and did not have previous international studying experiences (for further details of the selection criteria see page 84).

Table 1. Dimensions and attributes of adapters, isolators and integrators typology

Isolators	Adapters	Integrators
High cultural identity centrality*	High cultural identity centrality*	Low cultural identity centrality*
Low cultural flexibility*	Moderate cultural flexibility*	High cultural flexibility*
Meaningful friendships with Mexicans Limited relationships with host nationals/international students	Meaningful relationships with Mexicans Instrumental relationships with host nationals/international students	Limited relationships with Mexicans Meaningful relationships with host nationals/international students
Not interested in learning local ways of being and doing	Moderate adaptation to local ways of being and doing	Highly interested in understanding local ways of being and doing
Reproduce lifestyle that is similar to them including speaking in Spanish	Interested in immersing in the culture however cultural identity limits this	Interested in the culture and nuances of the local language

*Sussman (2000).

This typology is introduced and discussed in detail in chapter VII. It is further used in chapters VIII and IX to explain the diverse capabilities developed in the international sojourn and the individual understandings of cultural difference which determined the ways in which the participants were able to acculturate. Chapter IX additionally explores how different types of students experienced the end of the sojourn either in their re-acculturation processes to Mexico or settling in other countries. Overall, this typology offers a retrospective, outward view of the whole international experience of Mexican doctoral students in different countries. Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2019) have developed a model of social interaction of international students from an internationalist perspective of social capital formation, that resonates with the one developed in this thesis. However their model —similarly to Bilecen´s (2014) study with international students in Germany, provides an inward look at the social interactions of international students from different nationalities while studying in a single university in the USA. Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2019) further identify different degrees of English language proficiency and previous travel and/or international experiences as determining variables of different social interactions.

3. Rationale of the research

As an international and a mature student —also supported by the CONACYT programme, the development and shaping of this research has greatly influenced and challenged the perspectives and preconceptions of my own international sojourn. From my own experience and those of my parents and friends who had the opportunity to study abroad at graduate level, I have knowledge about stories of personal and professional growth, development of new understandings of other cultures and forms of collaboration, establishment of social and academic networks, and the broadening of minds. Moreover, they have shared their experiences in their own communities through teaching and research collaborations and have been upwardly mobile in relation to their parents. For instance, and in connection to the latter, during my undergraduate and graduate studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), I had teachers and supervisors who obtained their doctoral degrees overseas and were still conducting research in collaboration with the international HEIs and research centres. Therefore, these stories have made me consider the analysis of my own "life story", my age, sex, gender, cultural identity and socio-economic background to further understand the array of untold stories of other individuals supported by the CONACYT programme and the different meanings that ISM had for their lives and their future personal and professional development.

In this research, I link the transformative potential of HE for individuals and society to the question of international mobility scholarships. The transformative potential of HE has been recognised in graduates who have participated in ISM (Brown, 2009b). The international and cultural exposure influenced by the rationales of scholarship programmes such as the Fulbright and Erasmus have been acknowledged to be essential components of the integral development of individuals studying abroad, and thus recognised as transformative (Akli, 2013, Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012). For instance, Findlay et al. (2012) has pointed out that the life-course aspirations of students and the different dimensions of the social and cultural capital accrued through studying abroad, should be considered a fundamental component of ISM and analysed conjointly. In this sense, existing research has unfolded the transformative outcomes of ISM including cross-cultural skills, cultural tolerance and widening of world views (Gill, 2010, Robertson et al., 2011). The acquisition of these

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competences in the international milieus has been associated with acculturation processes which are mainly determined by the interaction of members of different cultures and the disorienting dilemmas presented (Ward et al., 2001).

Nonetheless, some studies have identified acculturative stressors which have had a negative effect on international students. These stressors have been related to and are not limited to language barriers, lack of social support, discrimination related to cultural, racial, gender and sexual differences and different academic cultures (Pritchard and Skinner, 2002, Smith and Khawaja, 2011). These difficulties have also been associated with course failure and psychological, medical and adaptation problems upon return (Searle and Ward, 1990, Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

It has been argued that people might endow their biographies through geographical mobility with the further possibility of having more successful and creative careers (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002). In fact, Cannon (2010) argues that these international students have become a different inter-cultural group in professional society, reflecting the complexity of personalities developed through the international experience. However, previous research has also shown that there is nothing spontaneous about the portability of international degrees, and that their completion does not automatically lead to a specific post-study life course trajectory, thus the need to further address how life unfolds for individuals after the international experience (Collins et al., 2017).

This study thus contributes to this growing area of research in the international arena and addresses gaps found in the literature regarding ISM in Mexico and globally. It explores retrospectively, the experiences of the participants embedded in three key moments, before traveling overseas (chapter VI), while living abroad (chapters VII, VIII) and at the end of the sojourn (chapter IX). It considers the diverse set of identities related to culture, class, gender, career and how those can be moulded or reinforced by the international experience (chapter VII). It further unpacks the different experiences and how life is negotiated in the international milieus considering the diverse identities of the participants, and their interplay with context specific external influences (chapter IX). These include particular characteristics of the different receiving cultures, such as food, language and weather conditions; HE institutional differentiation, and academic cultures; and financial and discrimination

issues. Additionally, it addresses some of the psychological and emotional challenges that international students face and how in some instances, they lead to undesirable outcomes of ISM in detriment of achieved functionings and general well-being.

Finally, and in connection with the existing literature, this study argues for the need for a synergistic approach to evaluate the outcomes of the CONACYT international scholarship programme. It proposes an alternative framework to evaluate the benefits of ISM from a human development lens and identifies the shortfalls of the traditional assessment mechanisms focusing exclusively on human capital outcomes. This research offers new understandings about the ways in which ISM is experienced and can be used in the exploration of the diverse capabilities acquired through academic geographic mobility in different contexts and in a different range of international students.

4. Structure of the document

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of ten chapters. Chapter one has delineated the rationale and the theoretical dimensions of this research. Chapter two focuses first on ISM, on the different motivations to study abroad in a broader context and highlights the importance of institutional differentiation in the analysis of learning opportunities in the HE realm. Section two explores in detail the acquisition of competences and their association with different acculturation processes in the international milieus. Section three explores the concept of identity and the possibility of identity plasticity linked to socialisation processes.

Chapter three provides a historical background about the changing rationales for the promotion and support of ISM and some examples of the existing scholarships worldwide that focus on two main aspects: the promotion of international cooperation or human capital development. The second section introduces a condensed synopsis of the evolution of HE in the Mexican context highlighting the relevance of graduate studies for national development. It additionally stresses the association of HE participation in one hand, with possibilities of upward social mobility and on the other, with the transformation of the country into a modern and competitive society. Lastly, and vis-à-vis with internationalisation and ISM trends worldwide, it explores

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the particularities of ISM in the Mexican context presenting available financial support. The chapter concludes with a historical exploration of the CONACYT international scholarship programme.

Chapter four focuses on the methodology used to address the research questions. It first presents the justification for using a mixed method approach and the epistemological foundations. It explains in detail the fieldwork process including sampling strategies, the development and conduction of a pilot study and a reflection of the ethical considerations. The remainder of the chapter explains the quantitative and qualitative analytical processes carried out in this research.

Chapter five presents the quantitative findings of the survey instrument providing rich information about the socio-economic, educational and professional trajectories of former CONACYT awardees. It additionally examines the outflow trends of Mexican students in terms of study destinations, institutions and programmes. It is divided in four sections highlighting personal, social and environmental heterogeneities and identifying the dimensions of the mobility experiences that are further developed in the qualitative chapters. In this sense, it identifies diverse backgrounds and opportunities suggesting nuanced international experiences and capabilities developed.

Chapter six to nine are the core of the thesis focusing on the experiences and meanings of the international sojourn. They are constructed as an organised progression of events. Chapter six shows the diverse socio-economic backgrounds and opportunities of the participants linked with the quantitative findings of chapter five. It then describes the capabilities that the participants developed through their education trajectories in Mexico associated on one hand, with the transformative effects of HE and on the other, with the possibility of relocating to different Mexican cities for undergraduate studies. It finally shows the different motivations to study abroad and the influence that different degrees of languages command had over the choice over particular destinations, programmes and institutions.

Chapter seven explores the different cultural and social identities of the participants and the ways in which they were moulded or reinforced through their diverse interactions in the international settings. The negotiation between these identities

and the socialisation processes abroad pointed towards a proposal of a categorisation of international students: *adapters*, *isolators* and *integrators*. Further, this chapter reveals on one hand the fundamental role that the accompanying family plays in a successful acculturation process and on the other, the additional implications that the international experience has for these families. It finally examines the international experience from a gendered perspective providing insights about the possibility of reduction of gender stereotypes and the negotiation of gender roles in parenthood through ISM.

Chapter eight is concerned with the ways the three types of students adopted different strategies to negotiate their lives abroad. It deals with adjustment to daily life practices that were strongly influenced by environmental, personal, cultural, contextual and institutional heterogeneities. It then moves on to explore psychological adaptation and health issues associated to acculturative stress. The last section deals with the whole academic experience, adjustment to PhD life, new educational practices and the importance of effective tutoring. The chapter makes associations with the previous set of capabilities identified in chapter six and the extent to which they facilitated or hindered acculturation processes.

Chapter nine brings together the findings of the analytical chapters and unfolds the meanings of the international experiences reflecting the transformative experience of ISM. It identifies the acquisition of capabilities for intercultural understanding and argues that the development of these capabilities is linked with personal and environmental heterogeneities and the typology of students. It additionally highlights how the broadening of worldviews might be one of the most transformative aspects of ISM. Linked with the findings of chapter eight, it provides insights showing that some transformative elements of the international sojourn are also being experienced by spouses and children. It finally reflects about the extent to which ISM facilitates opportunities at the end of the sojourn, enables the exertion of agency and contributes to the wellbeing of societies.

Chapter ten presents the conclusion of this thesis including the theoretical and empirical contributions of this research. It presents the key findings and their connections with the Mexican socio-cultural and economic context. It addresses some of the limitations of this work and considerations for further research.

II. Higher Education and ISM —transformations, identities and socialisation in transnational spaces

This chapter makes connections between the educational, economic, and cultural drivers of student mobility and the literature considering the transformative aspects of the acquisition of intercultural competences in the international milieus. Section one explores ISM as a key form of internationalisation of HE and presents current global trends of international mobility. It further explores previous empirical research of the different motivations behind students´ engagement in mobility in the global context and the role HEIs play. Section two moves on to consider the international mobility experience as a driving force that transforms students' perspectives, behavioural practices and promotes the acquisition of intercultural competences. It also reviews the existing empirical evidence about the acculturation processes to understand the ways in which students negotiate academic and every-day life in their transnational experiences and upon return. Section three discusses the importance of considering the individual´s different cultural and gendered identities and the ways in which sojourners socialise with "the other" when exploring the experiences and meanings of ISM. Reviewing and analysing these notions is key to establishing the importance of the analysis of the individual international experiences, their different meanings and the extent to which they have the potential to transform students´ lives.

1. The context of ISM

Internationalisation of HE is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in constant evolution which varies depending on the country, the institutions, and is associated to multiple practices and purposes. There is not a single definition, in fact, several authors have conducted extensive research in an attempt to approach the diverse dimensions that have been incorporated into the conversation of internationalisation practices across time (Teichler, 2004, van der Wende, 2003, Gacel-Ávila, 2005a, Wit and Knight, 1999). In this sense, a broad definition that has been widely used and

that does not specify rationales, benefits, outcomes, actors and stakeholders due to the great variations across contexts is provided by Knight (2004).

> "At the national/sector/institutional levels is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels" (p.11).

Amongst the internationalisation strategies and activities —greatly associated with cross-border education, that have diversified throughout time include the mushrooming of new education providers and programmes, the establishment of international agreements and collaboration, the internationalisation of the curriculum and the geographic movement of students and academics (Knight, 2014). For the purposes of this research, the focus of this section is the flow of students to foreign countries for education and the diverse reasons to do so. Finally, it considers HE institutional differentiations in contributing to or hindering the capabilities developed and the conversion into functionings.

1.1 International Student Mobility

International student mobility is defined as the movement or flow of students to foreign countries for education purposes (Ridder-Symoens, 1992). Student mobility has acquired a central role in many internationalisation policies transitioning from an elite activity to a mass phenomenon. It has been argued that the flow of people is transforming HEIs, cultural practices and even our sense of identity and belonginess (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). The mobility of international students worldwide has dramatically increased over the last decades. Some estimations show that there were 800,000 international students in the 1970s, by 2017 the number had increased to 5.3 million (OECD, 2019). In 2017, 22% of enrolments at the doctoral level were international students (Ibid). Moreover, OECD and partner countries attract 85% of mobile students where 67% of those are from less developed economies (Grediaga, 2017). In 2017, students from Asia accounted for 56% of the world´s total outbound mobility population and another 24% came from European countries (OECD, 2019).

For the receiving countries, attracting international students has become a fundamental internationalisation activity that contributes towards institutional efforts to ascend positions in the international rankings, diversify student bodies, as an

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opportunity to increase innovation and economic performance through attracting the "brightest" students from across the world and overall, to increase revenue. USA, UK and China have been the major receivers of international students and in 2019, Canada took over the fourth position before Australia and France (UNESCO, 2019). However almost half of the international student population have moved to English-speaking countries, USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (OECD, 2019). Other popular ISM destinations have been Germany, Japan and the Netherlands. In 2016, the revenue from ISM was almost 40 billion dollars for the USA, 32 billion for the UK and 25 billion for Australia (UNESCO, 2019).

1.2 Drivers to study abroad

Different scholars have studied the international flow of students and have identified diverse factors "pushing" people to pursue international education or "pulling" them to particular destinations (Cummings, 1993, OECD, 2004, Altbach et al., 1985). De Wit (2008) defines push factors as those motivating students to engage in outward mobility and pull factors as the ones attracting students to a specific country. He developed a framework taking into consideration these researchers' findings, looking at educational, political, social, cultural and economic factors that are not mutually exclusive to other categories (Ibid). Moreover, it added to the discussion the factors involved in South-South flows as well as South-North flows.

The most mentioned factors in the literature for students to consider studying abroad are linked to the quality and prestige of the university (Van Bouwel and Veugelers, 2009, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). This is associated with the possibility of acquiring a "world-class" international degree in subjects that are not available at home or where the programmes might not be internationally competitive (Altbach, 2004, OECD, 2004). The portability of an international degree thus, can open employability opportunities upon return (Wiers‐Jenssen, 2011) and, in some cases, labour market possibilities in the host country. Attached to the prestige of the institution, is the language of instruction. English is the main language of study and several of the best-ranked institutions are located in English speaking countries such as the USA, UK, Australia and Canada thus, their popularity as ISM destinations (De Wit, 2008, OECD, 2004). In this sense previous studies have found that students consider learning English as a skill that would increase their job opportunities upon return to

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their home countries (Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014). Nonetheless, other non-English speaking host countries are also appealing for international students such as France, Spain and Germany. This is depicted by the 40% of international students of the total tertiary enrolment in doctoral studies in France, the same percentage as in the USA (OECD, 2018). In these cases, additionally to the quality of the institutions and degrees, other factors come in to play such as sponsoring governments who have agreements in place to send students to specific destinations for special training (Agarwal and Winkler, 1985). Moreover, some students are attracted by scholarships which besides financial aid, they offer language instruction such as German or French. Cultural and geographical proximity as well as historical, economic and colonial ties between the sending and receiving countries have also been mentioned as influencing factors of ISM (OECD, 2004). Further, the networks forged at university and the guidance provided by teachers, people working in particular fields, or who have engaged in international mobility have been found to be important push factors for ISM (Beech, 2015, Lopez, 2015).

Adding up to this body of research, are the ideas that individual perceptions and motivations are as important as the external push and pull factors (Wells, 2014). These notions take a step back from the traditional human capital development reasons to study abroad and look at ISM within migration literature and more closely to the capabilities framework (de Haas, 2009). de Haas (2009) argues that this type of mobility is an integral part of human development because it can add to peoples' wellbeing "…the desire for adventure and curiosity seems to motivate youngsters around the world to discover new horizons". Moreover, people exert their agency when decide to migrate —thus is a form of exercising their capabilities, but also moving geographically to places that might offer better educational opportunities could give the sojourners the capabilities to increase their social, economic and political freedoms (de Haas, 2009). In this sense, students have expressed that their interest to study abroad was motivated by the possibility of going back to their home countries and contribute to the nation building efforts (Holloway et al., 2012).

Amongst the push factors particularly for developing countries, basic human resource capacity, domestic scarcity of science and technology offerings (Cummings, 1993) home country investment in human capital and the level of

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technology capacity (Davis, 2003) have been mentioned. Finally, students interested in ISM consider the availability of scholarships to study abroad as opportunities for general international life experience (Altbach et al., 1985). In the case of intra-European mobility, the reasons to study abroad most frequently mentioned were improvement of language skills, personal growth and the experiential aspects associated with interacting with other people, cultures and places (Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014).

In summary, the literature shows that ISM has taken a central stage as one of the most prominent mechanisms of internationalisation of HE worldwide. The mobility patterns are in constant evolution although the greater movement of students remains from developing to developed countries. Nonetheless the rise of popularity of other countries such as China as an ISM destination and regional hubs like South Africa are escalating rapidly. There are different push and pull factors motivating students to engage in geographical educational mobility, however they are often associated with the perceived economic benefits of the acquisition of foreign degrees in prestigious institutions worldwide. The next section will address the ways in which the dynamics of internationalisation affect HE systems and institutions.

1.3 Differentiation of national and international HE institutions and the influence over education quality

As noted by Sen (1999) and mentioned previously, the nature of the institutions people have contact with has direct influence on individuals' opportunities and chances of success. Furthermore Sen also argues that 'the freedom of agency that we individually have is inescapably qualified and constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us' (Sen, 1999 p. xi-xii). In this context, the constraints people live amidst depending on the different characteristics of the HE institutions they attend to, can restrict the capabilities they can pursue (Nambiar, 2013).

The massification of HE led to an increased supply of educational providers at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, towards diversified HEIs on teaching, academic training and research. This expansion has made evident the differences in the reputation or profile between individual institutions and between public and

private providers (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). It has also increased inequalities in access and provision of tertiary education where HEIs have devised different institutional missions to attract an array of students in terms of age, ethnicity and academic qualifications (Crozier et al., 2008). Consequently, socioeconomic background has played a decisive role when students choose HEIs and fields of study based on the assessment of benefits and costs as well as probabilities of success associated with the available educational options (Reimer and Pollak, 2010) and in certain cases, grounded on social acceptance (Crozier et al., 2008). Therefore, the learning experiences and development of capabilities of individuals will also vary depending on the institution they are enrolled and will have a direct influence on the freedom of agency and the way students make choices of the further available set of functionings that will be valuable to them.

Vertical and horizontal differences of universities also play an important role in the ISM realm on people's learning experiences, the capabilities developed and their further conversion into functionings. Vertical differences are the diverse capacities, resources and status of institutions and the horizontal differences are associated to the diverse sizes and configurations, specialisations, types of HEIs, balance between public and private providers, language of instruction and academic cultures (Marginson and Wende, 2007). HE institutions influence students' experiences, firstly because there are diverse values assigned to the credentials obtained and courses attended depending on the prestige of the granting institution, which has been argued to generate different levels of power and advantage (Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017) and in modern societies can determine personal life chances (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008).

Secondly, the resources provided by HEIs are also dependant on their ranking prestige, financial resources, research capacity, student satisfaction and possibility to brand themselves higher in contrast with smaller, younger or more specialized institutions worldwide (Findlay et al., 2017). The aforementioned has direct impact on the international students' decision making processes to invest either on x or y degree and explains to some extent the geographical distribution of international students around the world (Findlay, 2011). For instance, this differentiation of HEIs has become a key aspect that CONACYT takes into consideration when granting

scholarships, since the students are required to be accepted in institutions that are ranked among the 200 best in the world.

Thirdly, the level of engagement of HEIs in internationalisation processes and activities, and the way programmes and degrees are framed and implemented in terms of the provision of global competences and the development of international curriculum present great variation between, countries and institutions, thus bestowing an additional factor that will influence individual international experiences (Landorf and Paul Doscher, 2013, Marcotte et al., 2007). Lastly, the academic cultures and contexts will vary greatly not only between countries but even between HEIs within the same country (Wu, 2002) including a diversified student body, programmes and educational environments (Jary and Lebeau, 2009). All of the aforementioned aspects grant relevance to the study of the individual experiences of former Mexican students in the different international settings representing the constantly evolving international education around the globe.

Overall, this section has focused on the physical mobility of students to different countries for educational purposes as one of the most relevant HE internationalisation activities. It has shown how ISM has increased in the last decades as the result of combined dynamics: the increased motivation of some nations in sending students abroad met the interest of others in intensifying their internationalisation strategies to attract students. Specifically, it has identified the diverse push and pull factors found in the literature which have shaped these mobility patterns in connection with education, political, social, and cultural aspects of specific countries. Moreover, the section has discussed how the quality of education in the transnational spaces is strongly determined by horizontal and vertical differences between HEIs. These differences are important because they affect the level of participation, learning experiences and capabilities developed by the students and could also determine their future professional and life paths. Having summarised the context of mobility, the next section focuses on the benefits of ISM at the individual level and presents empirical evidence of the individual transformative learning experiences of international students, which is the main focus of the research presented in this thesis.

2. Transformative experiences of ISM

The benefits associated with ISM have been acknowledged to go beyond formal HE and academic attainment. These benefits recognise the whole life experience, from taking the decision to pursue ISM, all the way to the professional decisions taken when returning home or staying abroad, as formative and transformative (Baláž and Williams, 2004, Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012, Milstein, 2005).

This section begins by briefly introducing the notion of competences due to their central role in the shift of the purposes of HEIs towards equipping graduates with the right skills, creating innovative knowledge-based societies and fostering employability (Braun and Mishra, 2016). Then it moves on to examine empirical evidence that points towards the development of intercultural and global competences through the international mobility experiences, which has been the focus of many ISM literature. Thirdly, it shows the acculturation process in the international milieus, and the factors that promote —or hinder, the acquisition of intercultural competences in the sojourners and their families. Lastly, it describes the return process as an integral part of the international experience and the ways in which graduates contribute with social change and global engagement.

2.1 Competences in HE

Competences refer to non-cognitive skills associated with personal, social, leadership and communication capacities that can be applied in a wide range of (complex) situations and settings, not exclusively in the labour market but in everyday life (Braun and Mishra, 2016). The general conception of the role of the traditional university has moved towards the development of these particular competences and skills, which go beyond the general foundations of the disciplines and the individual transformational aspect of HE (Lozano et al., 2012, Mulder and Winterton, 2017). This has led to the re-conception of university curricula in order to provide students with a new set of 'tools' to be competitive in the market, to increase their employability and to satisfy the nations' need of international competitive workers (Ibid). This was very broadly the competence model followed by the USA and UK —whereas continental Europe took a more holistic approach combining skills, attitudes and knowledge. The continental approach not only focused on

increasing employability opportunities for graduates, but also highlighted personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship. According to a European Comission (2018) report, the key competences for lifelong learning include; communication in mother tongue and foreign languages, mathematical and digital competences, social and civic competences and cultural awareness, amongst others.

Nonetheless, competency-based education which has been key in the development of curricula throughout Europe (Lozano et al., 2012) and has had further influence in Latin America (Aboites, 2010), has been criticized. The main criticisms have been the emphasis on development of specific skills primarily externally demand-oriented rather than for the development of whole human beings (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, Walker, 2003). This means that sustainability and democracy are the outcomes of education and not the reason for developing specific core competences (Lozano et al., 2012). Further, it is enough to acquire competences through HE and there is no need to question the ways in which society operates (Ibid).

2.2 Intercultural and global competences

ISM has been acknowledged to provide cross-cultural and intercultural experiences such as the possibility of learning other languages and understanding other cultures and ways of living (Deardorff, 2006). There is evidence that this experience also contributes to the development of cognitive, affective and behavioural abilities related with the awareness and knowledge of other cultural perspectives and the ability to perform effectively and appropriately in an array of contexts (Doyle, 2009, Deardorff, 2006). It has been argued that a multicultural interaction strategy, where people are capable of embracing other cultures while retaining their own ethnic identity leads to the development of intercultural competence that has further implications for world peace and understanding (Bochner 1981; Gudykunst 1998; Kim 2001 cited in Brown, 2009b).

Moreover, the daily interaction with unfamiliar people allows the construction of bridges with the other, therefore contributing with the development of intercultural skills (Gill, 2007). It has been said that when these sojourners go back to their home countries, they become mediators between cultures (Brown, 2009b).

Furthermore, it has been suggested that intercultural learning has the potential to generate important transformations in students, modifying their understanding of the learning experience, self-knowledge, awareness of the other, values and worldview (Ricœur, 1992, Gill, 2007) and ultimately leading to a journey of cultural learning, personal growth and development (Adler, 1975). Building on Nussbaum's (1997) view of the need of the cultivation of humanity, the acquisition of HE in an international context might enhance or contribute to the development of "world citizens" with:

> "An ability to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region or groups but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern" (p.10).

Over the last two decades, more importance has been given to the acquisition of global competences through international education, encompassing a broader realm than only the intercultural competence aspect (Gacel-Ávila, 2005a). However, some authors have used the term interchangeably with intercultural competence. A globally competent person demonstrates broader knowledge, awareness and understanding of the complexity of the world system; shows attitudes of empathy, sensitivity and respect for personal and cultural differences and; develops skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, cooperation among others (Currier et al., 2009, Popov et al., 2017, Hunter et al., 2006). Previous studies have indeed demonstrated that, these competences can be promoted through international education (Mestenhauser, 1998, Jacobone and Moro, 2015).

However, it has also been pointed out that the international exposure does not guarantee the acquisition of global competences, since the learning outcomes are influenced by several factors both dependant and independent of the students. Among these factors are: students' motivations, socioeconomic background, previous knowledge, skills and international experiences, language command, length of stay abroad and financial resources (Vande Berg et al., 2012). The aforesaid grants relevance to the study of the individual experiences of former international students through the CA lens, because it considers social political and cultural factors that influence the acquisition of cognitive skills and intellectual and social abilities (Lozano et al., 2012). The CA therefore, can be a more suitable way of

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examining particular contexts where capabilities are developed, for a better understanding of the outcomes of the international sojourn and the implications for the international students future lives and integration into the productive society. The extent to which individuals develop skills and abilities through these learning experiences and the ways in which they are able to negotiate life in the transnational settings will determine their specific acculturation processes.

There is growing interest in conducting research exploring the individual experiences of international students. For instance, Brown (2009b) identified issues brought about that have a direct effect in the development of intercultural competence of international students such as becoming independent; confronting stress; changing priorities; renegotiating domestic life and going home to a new beginning. Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) described the development of social networks, intercultural empathy, international awareness, cosmopolitan competence and communication skills in international Chinese students. The acquisition of these new abilities and behaviours is the consequence of the acculturation process that students experience when moving to an unfamiliar culture, which will be discussed next.

2.3 Acculturation, Culture Shock and reverse culture shock

Acculturation has been described as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005). Ward et al. (2001) propose a model to understand acculturation processes largely informed by Berry´s, where cross-cultural transition is conceptualised as a meaningful life event involving changes and new forms of contact between members of different cultures (see Figure 2 below). They acknowledge that even when these contacts can be stimulating, difficult, bewildering or demanding, individuals have enabling mechanisms to cope with this array of new situations in different ways. Acculturation thus, depends in one hand in psychological well-being and on the other, in sociocultural adjustment where the individual develops social skills to "fit in" and it is able to negotiate characteristics of the host culture (Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

These mechanisms along with the outcomes of intercultural interactions depend upon individual and societal characteristics. In general it has been argued that the larger the differences between cultures, the more difficult it is for the sojourner to acculturate (Ward and Kennedy, 1993, Ward et al., 2001).

Figure 2. Acculturation process model by Ward et al. (2001)

SOCIETY OF ORIGIN
• Social factors
• Political factors
• Economic factors
• Cultural factors

SOCIETY OF SETTLEMENT
• Social factors
• Political factors
• Economic factors
• Cultural factors

SOCIETAL LEVEL VARIABLES

CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSITION
• Life changes
• Intercultural contact

STRESS AND SKILLS DEFICITS

RESPONSES
• Affective
• Behavioural
• Cognitive

OUTCOMES
• Psychological
• Sociocultural

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL VARIABLES

Characteristics of the Person
• Personality
• Language fluency
• Training and experience
• Cultural identity
• Acculturation strategies
• Values
• Reasons for migration

Characteristics of the Situation
• Length of cultural contact
• Amount of intra- and intergroup contact
• Quality of intra- and intergroup contact
• Cultural distance
• Amount of life changes
• Social support

This model is useful to understand the acculturation process of different sojourners, such as tourist, migrants, workers and international students (Ward et al., 2001, Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Life changes associated with the acculturation process in international students include but are not limited to adjusting to different cities, cultures (Brown and Holloway, 2008a), food (Brown et al., 2010, Kumi-Yeboah, 2014), economies (Smith and Khawaja, 2011), languages and environmental conditions (Brown and Holloway, 2008b) and education pedagogies (Wang and Li, 2011, Gill, 2007). Amongst the hurdles frequently mentioned in the literature that students face are housing, financial, academic and language problems (Ward et al., 2001). These changes in students´ lives have the potential to become acculturative stressors (Smith and Khawaja, 2011) and the way they are dealt with depends on the capacity of the sojourner to manage stress, to communicate effectively and

willingness to have significant interactions with others (Ward and Kennedy, 1993, Gill, 2007). Culture shock has been previously described as a period of mourning of the live in the home country accompanied by feelings of separation and anxiety (Brown and Holloway, 2008b). This separation is from friends, family, social circles and in general from a life that is left behind. Ward et al. (2001) acknowledge that when sojourners interact with people from other cultures, these are often difficult, uncomfortable and stressful. Moreover, they identify that the way people feel, behave, think and perceive these interactions are fundamental components to explore how people experience and manage culture shock (Ibid). Adler (1975) pointed out that culture shock should be studied in its positive influence on self-development and personal growth.

A high level of environmental stressors combined with too low a level of personal and environmental resources to deal with those stressors leads to the experience of threat with its attendant negative psychological and physiological outcomes (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Some factors that have been identified as challenging for international learners have been associated with language barriers, lack of social support from the host country nationals, difficulties forging friendships, loneliness, depression, isolation and alienation (Lee, 2010, Tomich et al., 2000, Brown and Holloway, 2008b, Sawir et al., 2008). Furthermore, cultural dissimilarities related to perceptions of time, sexual tolerance, cultural identity and gender roles (Pritchard and Skinner, 2002, Marsh et al., 2016) have also been documented. Additional challenges include variations between previous education and the learning needs and expectations in the foreign country (Gill, 2007). Other factors that can influence adversely the international student experience include racial discrimination and being socially accepted (Henze and Zhu, 2012, Lee and Rice, 2007, Marginson, 2010). There is evidence where acculturative stress has affected the psychological and sociocultural adaptation in the transnational spaces with negative consequences for sojourners lives (Smith and Khawaja, 2011, Mori, 2000). Besides the factors described above, extreme cases such as course failure, dropping out, psychological, medical and adaptation problems have been mentioned (Searle and Ward, 1990).

While it has been suggested that some international students face similar problems to those of local students such as conflict related to personal development in late

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adolescence and early adulthood (Ward et al., 2001), they fail to address how the acculturation processes are experienced by mature students including the ones that travel with their families. In this sense, some international students embark in the international sojourn accompanied by partners and children, however, very little is known about how the acculturation process and the overall experience unfolds for these students and their families (Brooks, 2015, Sakamoto, 2006, Doyle et al., 2016).

There is, however, research focusing on family migration that can be used as example to shed light on international students as a geographical mobile group. This has been explored by Leemann (2010) with postdoctoral students highlighting the importance of understanding the academic mobility experience as simultaneous processes along with the dynamics with partners and children. She argues that the experiences are differently lived by males and females, thus, adding a gendered perspective, which is discussed in more depth in section 3. In this sense, the exploration by Brooks (2015) of the experiences of international students and parents finds differences amongst gender. Thus, the examination of parenting practices and the nuanced acculturation processes and experiences for the sojourners' partners —and children, in the international settings should also be explored (Brooks, 2015, Myers-Walls et al., 2011, Loveridge et al., 2018, Phelps, 2016). Research focusing on these aspects is limited since ISM generally explores either undergraduate international students or young graduates that have not established long term familial relationships.

Therefore, along with the experiences and meanings of the international sojourn for the students, it becomes relevant to explore if these were similar for those who travelled with partners and children and to what extent they were transformative for them. Indeed it has been shown that the children of international students had their own linguistic, cultural, social, educational and emotional experiences while living abroad (Loveridge et al., 2018). Additionally, how individuals who had internationalisation experiences at a younger age are more prone to pursue ISM later in life (Brooks and Waters, 2010).

Researchers have suggested that when international students go back to their home countries, they have to re-adjust again to their lives, friends, jobs and culture and therefore these aspects should be considered as one form of cultural adjustment. This process is also referred as cultural repatriation (Sussman, 2000). There is evidence that re-entry to the home country is experienced in different ways. Positive attitudes towards returning home include more appreciation of the host culture, awareness of acquisition of elements associated to intercultural competence and general satisfaction of the international sojourn (Le and Lacost, 2017, Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). Previous studies have highlighted the transformative aspect of ISM. Marsh et al. (2016) found that ISM promoted positive social change through the engagement of African alumni returnees with their communities leading changes in policy, university structures, health and education reforms. Moreover, they showed that the international university experience continues to be useful in their current work and in maintaining international collaboration and networks (Ibid). Gill (2010) reported that Chinese returnees maintained their intercultural values and understandings and applied them in their everyday practices, influencing in positive ways the wider Chinese society. Finally, Paige et al. (2009) showed how ISM had a positive impact on the career paths of international graduates in terms of increasing their civil engagement, knowledge production, voluntary work and social entrepreneurship. This evidence suggests the need to explore the ways in which the participants´ life trajectories unfolded after the international experience and if they had a positive impact over their societies.

Nonetheless, returning home can be accompanied as well with stressful factors, this adjustment has also been referred as "re-entry shock" and "reverse culture shock" (Le and Lacost, 2017, Ward et al., 2001, Şahin, 1990). Reverse culture shock —in the same way as some aspects of the acculturation processes, have been associated to an extent to cultural identity changes (Sussman, 2000) which is further described in section 3. It has also been argued that the re-entry process should be considered as the culmination of the international experience and thus explored as an integral aspect of ISM (Şahin, 1990).

Amongst the difficulties experienced, unmet job expectations, local network loss, renegotiations with former relationships and emotional loss of friends have been

described (Butcher, 2002, Le and Lacost, 2017, Cannon, 2010). Further, the change of worldviews, which is considered a positive outcome of ISM and associated to the acquisition of intercultural competences could be perceived as a double edge sword influencing negatively re-entry experiences. For instance, Le and Lacost (2017) have described in graduate repatriates, feelings of alienation from their own cultures and having to adjust to local academic traditions. Re-entry shock has also been reported in students' children who had experienced fear of rejection and ridicule for being "foreign" in school (Enloe and Lewin, 1987), nostalgia for lost lifestyles (Werkman, 1983, Loveridge et al., 2018) and cultural identity crisis (Phelps, 2016). The nuanced experiences that underpin re-entry processes of international students have not been extensively researched.

Together the studies presented thus far provide evidence of the manifold aspects considered when defining intercultural or global competences and their particular relationship with ISM. Notwithstanding, the interculturally competent student is depicted as an individual who has developed different levels of abilities, an understanding of different cultures and opinions and further, has the ability to work collaboratively. Whilst there are few studies regarding the development of globally competent students through ISM, and more recently the CA has proved to be a useful lens to explore the capabilities accrued through ISM, there is still much to understand about the international experience as a multifaceted experience.

The international experience might expand or reduce people's opportunities even when the outcome of acquiring international education could seem at first glance as a common achievement of all the former Mexican students. Therefore, the exploration of the individual experiences and meanings along with the individual, social and environmental heterogeneities could contribute to the discussions of justice and equality and about the level of development of agency and autonomy acquired by these students. Further, this examination could also contribute to the evaluation of the level of transformation of capabilities into functionings and well-being and to what extent this transformation could also be experienced by accompanying family members.

Section two has provided evidence that ISM not only offers academic advantages, but contributes to the development of intellectual abilities, attitudes and cultural

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perspectives. ISM has the potential to change people's perspectives and behavioural practices and thus it has been acknowledged to be transformative. It has been shown that individuals with the opportunity to live an international experience associated with education also develop general and complex abilities that might have a fundamental influence in their future professional and personal development and further, have the potential to be applied benefiting their own societies. However, it has been argued that global competences are not guaranteed through the international exposure due to several factors and challenges that might differ between individuals and that could have a negative impact in their lives.

The aforesaid highlights the importance of the analysis of the individual international experiences of former students supported by CONACYT programme, to make sense of the process as a whole and its influence over people's freedom of agency, development of capabilities and what these individuals have been able to do with the particular opportunities international mobility has provided them. Having defined the advantages of ISM and its transformative potential, the final section of this chapter deals with the moulding of peoples' diverse identities, including gendered identities and gender roles and the ways in which they determine the socialisation and acculturation processes in the international sojourn.

3. Identities and socialisation processes in ISM

It has been argued that ISM not only promotes the acquisition of intercultural competences but the democratisation of gender relationships (McIlwaine, 2010, Mahler and Pessar, 2006). This section defines the concept of identity and discusses the possibility of dynamic identities influenced by the international experiences and specifically, through the interaction with culturally different individuals. Secondly, it explores the intersections between sex, gender roles and family dynamics in the international settings. Thirdly, it discusses the types of socialisation that international students seek in the transnational spaces and how they are linked with the acculturation processes and the development of intercultural skills. These aspects are also key to understand the importance of considering personal heterogeneities, the ways in which they are circumscribed by geographical movement and the possibility of reconfiguration of gender roles and identities.

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Generally, identity is how we perceive ourselves. Amartya Sen (1985) explains that we possess several identities that are related to our community, nationality, class, race, sex, union membership and so on. Identities are shaped by personal experiences, colonial histories, cultural traditions, political complexity and professional aspirations and they are constantly reshaped by new cultural interactions (Rizvi, 2005). In the HE realm, this is associated with the German concept of *Bildung*, a "process of maturing, development and transformation toward an autonomous and reflected form of being" (Bengtsen, 2014 pp.178.). *Bildung* leads to transformation because the experiences acquired through education often prevent the learners to go back to "the former self" driving them to continue studying until they can master a new identity (Barnett 2007 cited in Bengtsen, 2014). Therefore, international students own a diverse set of identities that can be moulded and negotiated in unpredictable ways by new cultural experiences in the transnational spaces (Rizvi, 2005). In this sense, previous studies have shown that the interaction with people from other cultures enhances the perception of the individual´s own cultural identity (Bilecen, 2013, Sussman, 2000). It has also been argued that age is an important factor that might contribute to different degrees of sense of identity with the home culture in migrants (Ward et al., 2001). From a sociological perspective, people (re) construct their identities through the interactions with "the other" — identifying differences and similarities, which consequently influence (in a fluid manner) how they understand and perceive themselves (Rutherford 1990, cited in Easthope, 2009).

Linked to acculturation processes and the ways in which individuals perceive themselves and the others in the transnational spaces, different interactions can occur. The individual can reinforce their heritage culture and identity or alternatively, they allow learning transformation to take place incorporating elements of other cultures into their own identity (Bilecen, 2013, Berry, 2005). From a cross-cultural psychology lens, Sussman (2000, p.364) suggested that *task centrality*, *cultural identity centrality* and *cultural flexibility* are the three factors influencing the sociocultural adaptation process of sojourners, where cultural identity is placed in the foreground. Task centrality is the motivation to succeed overseas. Identity centrality refers to the importance cultural identity has to the sojourner. The more significant

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the cultural identity is, the higher probability that the persons reaffirm their initial identity abroad. For instance, if an individual has the motivation to thrive in the sojourn and a low identity centrality, then, it is up to them to make the necessary modifications in behaviour and thought —this is, the degree of cultural flexibility, to successfully adapt. In this sense, it has been argued that ISM might encourage the moulding of cosmopolitan identities characterised by cross-cultural understanding and further, with the acquisition of intercultural competences (Brown, 2009b, Rizvi, 2005). In the CA terms, the different ways in which international students (re)shape their identities will be determined by two elements: firstly, by the extent to which personal and social conversion factors influence their agency to negotiate those identities, and secondly by their diverse freedoms to choose what type of person, citizen or professional they want to become (Tran, 2015, Marginson, 2014) and how they want to acculturate (Berry, 2005).

As explained in section two, the repatriation process is greatly influenced by the tensions between the newly formed cultural identity and that of the home culture environment. In this sense, Sussman (2000) suggests that depending on the identity salience, sociocultural adaptation and self-concept, cultural identity will experience changes and will affect in different ways the transition back to the home country after the sojourn. For example, the more integrated a sojourner is to the host country, the greater the levels of distress in the re-entry to the home country will be and vice versa. Moreover, sojourners who neither adapted to the host country nor experienced a change in their identity, will often feel relieved when they return home. However, if the sojourner is able to hold multiple cultural identities simultaneously and successfully adjusts to the host country, it is highly possible that the re-entry process will be eased[3].

Finally, differences in gender also play an important role on learning processes and learning outcomes (Ro and Knight, 2016), and gender roles influence international trajectories of students (King and Raghuram, 2013). Therefore, issues related to gender are critical aspects to take into consideration to make sense of acculturation

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[3] For a detailed description of the repatriation identity categories see (Sussman, 2000).

processes and understandings during the international experience and subsequent life trajectories of international students.

When individuals incorporate specific cultural meanings attributed to male and female social categories into their psyches, gender becomes part of their identities (Wood and Eagly, 2015). Gender identity is constructed along with understanding of other gender constructs, including gender stereotypical attributes and the self-perceptions of those attributes that characterise males and females (Tobin et al., 2010). In this sense, gender identity is multifaceted and the identification of gender associated attributes can be different across cultures, age cohort, social roles and local conditions (Wood and Eagly, 2015).

Within the self-perceptions, both men and women can endorse sexist beliefs, protective paternalism and traditional gender roles —for instance, males being breadwinners and women housewives. These gender perceptions are generally associated to social group norms and as a consequence of different ways of thinking and acting and severely influenced by gender identification. Moreover, research shows that endorsed sexist beliefs have been connected to right wing authoritarianism, and religiosity (Glick et al 2002 and Sibley et al. 2006 cited in Becker and Wagner, 2009).

Traditional values and gender roles are still prevalent in Mexican families. The division of labour in traditional families is based on gender where the male is the breadwinner, and the female is in charge of bringing up the children and performing all household activities. The portrait of a *madre abnegada* (selfless mother) is the one who sacrifices her own needs for the sake of her children and maternity is a fundamental aspect in the construction of the feminine identity (Hubbell, 1993, Torres Velázquez et al., 2008). Gender asymmetries dictated by cultural guidelines in Mexico, even have privileged access to food to the father and male children over women and daughters (Salles and Tuirán, 1995). These Mexican values related to female gender roles come from Marianism. There are thus asymmetric power relations in this familial model where usually the heads of the households exert power over their wives and children (Torres Velázquez et al., 2008). There is also an

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association between social class and gender inequalities where women vulnerability and subordination are greater in lower social strata (Salles and Tuirán, 1995).

These traditional roles were not challenged until the mid-1970s as a response to the Mexican economic crisis of that decade, where women were forced to look for economic remunerated activities (Hubbell, 1993, García, 2001). From the 1980s onwards there has been growing participation of women from different social classes contributing with the family economy however, in many cases, asymmetric power relations prevail. This means that women from lower socio-economic classes started performing low-payed and low-skilled jobs, also related to their lack of education. On the other hand, some women with undergraduate studies perform high-skilled activities, receive better wages and thus have started questioning the traditional male authority and have more active participation in the familial dynamics (García, 2001). Nonetheless, even when women actively participate in the labour economy, they are also responsible for the household activities and bringing up the children. Hence, when it exists, the involvement of Mexican men in these activities is selective and not shared. Therefore, parents are responsible for perpetuating gender differences. Torres Velázquez et al. (2008) showed how Mexican families treated their children different according to sex where females had to be taught values of dignity, respect and honesty and hard work and responsibility were considered more as masculine treats.

The self-perceptions of the traditional gender roles can however be modified when societal changes happen. Becker and Wagner (2009) described how women´s identities in post-industrial societies were reconfigured to consider having careers and sharing domestic work. German women with progressive gender identities rejected sexist beliefs and were more likely to engage in collective action to improve conditions for women and thus realising gender equality.

Hereof, research has shown that gender relations prior to migration shape geographic mobility patterns and experiences (Mahler and Pessar, 2001) and further, the degrees of agency people exert in the international spaces can remain static or be reconfigured. Previous studies have shown that through study abroad experiences women from traditional upbringings were able to reshape their professional aspirations (Holloway et al., 2012). Tienda and Booth (1991) have also

found that migration can promote the lessening of gender asymmetries by balancing headship roles and the marital decision-making dynamics. These positive changes influencing women´s position in the familial domain can encourage social change. In the case of males, it has been shown that they are also susceptible of transforming their identities in complex and conflicting ways when they migrate (McIlwaine, 2010). In the same ways than women, males are confronted with different ways of thinking and acting about gender roles, gendered lives with partners, in the labour market and the state (Ibid). Therefore the intersection of social relations such as class, gender, nationality and individual agency are relevant factors when exploring different meanings, challenges and outcomes of migration (Mahler and Pessar, 2001). International experiences and acculturation processes are thus gendered based (Jöns, 2011, Lee et al., 2009). While there is emerging research regarding academic mobility and gender, the gendered nature of educational mobility has been under-researched (Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, familial dynamics associated with ISM such as accompanying spouses and children and doctoral students experiencing motherhood abroad have been reported in the literature. Sakamoto (2006) and Brooks (2015) for instance, have described how "female spouses´ decisions were generally determined by their male partners´ decisions of studying abroad and that accompanying female spouses have been the sole carers of children (Brooks, 2015). Other studies have pointed out that female partners often give up their employment in the home country facilitating the mobility experiences for the male partner and the family unit (Waters, 2002, Yeoh et al., 2005) including taking full childbearing responsibilities (Myers-Walls et al., 2011). On the other hand, women that have become mothers while their doctoral studies abroad have expressed feelings of guilt for not spending time with their babies or having to leave them in childcare (Trepal et al., 2014, Brown and Watson, 2010).

Previous research therefore suggests the pertinence of exploring three main aspects associated to the gendered identities of former Mexican students in the transnational spaces. To what extent gender roles are confronted by men and women during the international experience, the ways in which women traveling with their partners (re) configure their gender identities and power relations and how they negotiate

motherhood. The exploration of this aspects will shed light about the possibilities that ISM offers for Mexican mobile students regarding gender equality and social change. The next and final section will move on to elucidate the importance of forging social relationships with others in the international milieus.

3.3 Socialisation with the other

The literature suggests that international students establish different relationships with individuals in the international milieus. In general, this contact is made with three different groups: co-nationals, host nationals and other international students from different nationalities (Bochner et al. 1977 cited in Ward et al., 2001). Social interaction with people from the same country with whom they share similar language, traditions, values and cultural understanding. Relationships with host nationals are forged primarily in the university settings that ease the acculturation process in the academic realms. The last group with whom international students have contact with is people from other parts of the world predominantly for leisure purposes (Ward et al., 2001). These social interactions and the extent to which they become meaningful are influenced by several factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, culture and age (Bilecen, 2014). Bilecen (2014) provides a useful characterisation of four types of support that international students sought when they are establishing social relationships. Emotional support relates of caring, empathising and comfort and it is generally associated with the expression of acceptance by family, friends and partners. Instrumental support entails helpful advice, and sharing information and resources related more to practical aspects of everyday life or academic tasks and is provided by close friends, neighbours and colleagues. Financial support and, social activities are associated with leisure time, traveling, sharing hobbies and sports and spending time with others. Additionally, Elliot et al. (2016) propose that some international students pursue a "third space" outside academia with local people. They define it as "the informal spaces to foster personal learning, enjoyment and development through friendships, social activities and wider support networks" (p. 1189). Previous studies have suggested that the type of relations that international student forge, are not only contingent to the type of support needed, but might also be associated with stronger cultural identity (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Furthermore, other studies have suggested that the

establishment of international ties in the host country have a positive influence in the adaptation process and in the development of new identities (Kashima and Loh, 2006).

Researchers have criticised how studies related with international students are looking at this sojourners as a homogeneous group failing to deal with socio-cultural differences between nationalities and even between individuals from the same country (Jones, 2017, Heng, 2016). The exploration of the ways in which international students establish friendships and social relations is key in understanding their specific acculturation mechanisms in the international milieus. This grants relevance to considering the heterogeneities of former Mexican international students to determine whether their social interactions follow a general pattern of sojourners abroad or if there are nuances associated with their individual identities.

Overall, this section has highlighted how individuals are equipped with a set of diverse cultural, gendered and academic identities which are moulded an (re) constructed through interactions with others and through new experiences. These identities dictate to a certain extent the ways in which students negotiate socialisation processes in the international spaces. The willingness to interact with the other, culturally similar or distant, and to build meaningful relationships, is key to successfully acculturate abroad and to potentially develop new skills and capabilities. Therefore, when exploring the capabilities developed through ISM, it is germane to consider individual, social and environmental heterogeneities to understand the extent to which the international experiences can be transformative, and the different meanings associated to those experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented ISM as one of the most important aspects of cross-border education. It has shed light on current trends of student flows for educational purposes and the ways in which the origins of students have shifted based on the sending nations' needs and the receiving countries' recruitment activities. The chapter has also presented the diverse motivations for students to engage in ISM that are mainly driven by global forces related to the acquisition of skills, increasing

employability opportunities and participation in the global knowledge economy. The aforementioned without downplaying the importance of personal motivations. It has further examined the connections between the vertical and horizontal differences of universities and how these, influence the students´ decisions to study abroad, their experiences, learning, further opportunities and the capabilities they develop in the transnational spaces. These aspects will help situate ISM supported by CONACYT in the Mexican context within the worldwide picture of mobility.

It has been argued that there are several global competences that can be developed while studying abroad and include: awareness and understanding of the complexity of the world system; empathy, sensitivity and respect for personal and cultural differences and, the acquisition of skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication and cooperation. More recently however, some researchers have criticised how studies related with international students are looking at this sojourners as a homogeneous group failing to deal with socio-cultural differences between nationalities and even between individuals from the same country (Jones, 2017, Heng, 2016). These heterogeneities have influenced how students, live, experience, learn and perform in foreign contexts. In this sense, this review has also provided evidence that accompanying family members have their own individual experiences which bestow them with their own set of capabilities.

While the international experience has often transcendental life and professional implications for many students, whether the sojourner after the completion of their studies ends up with a more positive, more negative or mixed view of the host culture depends upon a variety of factors. Among those factors, the "fit" between the student's personal traits and the programmatic realities and cultural patterns of the study abroad destination have been documented (Stephenson, 1999). In fact, there is evidence that there are country specific conditions that can affect the final outcome of the ISM experience such as the nation's historical realities, economic conditions, openness to foreigners, the university environment, cultural practices and beliefs (Stephenson, 1999). Moreover, it offers evidence about the relevance to explore the challenges that the negotiation of the newly acquired credentials, academic practices and capabilities accrued through the international experience

represent, and their influence on the everyday lives of former international students (Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017).

In the case of returnees, the disadvantages that some individuals face as a consequence of spending long periods abroad have also been reported and are related to the loss of local professional networks, or the dissimilarities of the knowledge acquired that could potentially become detrimental compared with their locally trained counterparts (Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017, Collins et al., 2017). The aforementioned could ultimately result in downward social mobility, affecting people's abilities to convert the resources into capabilities to function.

From a gendered perspective, the differences of the experiences between men and women have also been documented. For instance the life-course dynamics such as parenthood and personal relationships including partnering and marriage, have dissimilar influences on academic mobility and career development depending on gender (Ackers, 2005, Leung, 2017). Furthermore, there is evidence showing that in the cases where students came from national contexts with stereotyped gender roles they moved to a more androgynous gender concept through the cross-cultural and international experience (Pritchard and Skinner, 2002). Nonetheless, these researchers have acknowledged that there is still the question whether people who return to this contexts —where these stereotypes are still current, adapt again to the local traditions or if they exercise agency and influence social change (Pritchard and Skinner, 2002).

Before establishing the relevance of this research, the next chapter provides an historical account of the most relevant programmes supporting ISM in the world and discusses the Mexican HE, the ISM activities and the CONACYT scholarship programme in the global mobility context.

III.   ISM scholarship programmes, HE and mobility in the Mexican context

Introduction

Having established the ways in which ISM can be transformative, this chapter moves on to explore particularities of HE in Mexico and the motivations for Mexican students to engage in ISM. Section one explores the evolution of ISM scholarships worldwide and how the motivations and discourses for the promotion and support of ISM have been directly related to national economic and political contexts. Analysing these programmes will shed light to further understand the market driven direction taken by the CONACYT international scholarship programme in Mexico. Section two presents the Mexican HE system, general aspects of university participation, and addresses the importance of the promotion of graduate programmes as a key objective of national development. Section three focuses on the Mexican engagement on ISM, the most relevant examples of scholarships in Mexico, concluding with an historical exploration of the CONACYT scholarship programme.

1.   Scholarships and international grants supporting ISM

This section presents an overview of the USA and European Union's interests in promoting and financing ISM for their historical relevance in shaping this type of mobility. Additionally, it provides some examples of scholarship programmes intended for national development and human capacity building purposes. It explores the arguments against the existence of ISM scholarships because they reproduce social inequalities. This section will provide the economic and political contexts of developed countries that can be further contrasted with the Mexican case and explain the diverse objectives of HE and the support of ISM.

1.1 Organisations and ISM programmes in Europe and the USA since the early XX century

International academic mobility has been driven throughout history not only by academic reasons, but by a complex interplay between cultural, political and economic motivations (Guruz, 2011). In the USA the interest in foreign countries and

awareness of international affairs after WWI grew dramatically. This increased attention led to a rise in the numbers of US scholars participating in international education and the attraction of foreigners to learn more about USA culture, people and institutions (Duggan, 1920). A notable evidence of this is the establishment in 1919 of the Institute of International Education (IIE). The purpose of this post WW1 non-profit independent organisation was to promote international educational interchange of people and ideas for the development of a peaceful world to increase understanding between nations (Johnson and Colligan, 1965). The IIE was also the precursor of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) which was founded in Heidelberg in 1925 (Guruz, 2011). The DAAD, an association financed by the government, is considered the largest agency worldwide providing funding for outbound and inbound mobility and promoting other relevant internationalisation activities (Ibid). In the UK, the British committee for relations with other countries was established in 1934, the forerunner of the British Council. Amongst the core activities of the DAAD and British Council have been the promotion of national cultures and national interests (Guruz, 2011).

The use of academic exchanges as foreign policy instruments accelerated after World War II. The support of 'junior years abroad' became popular in the USA after WWII generally emphasizing the importance of the cultural experience and in organised cooperation between sending and receiving HEIs (Teichler, 1996). In doing so there was a certainty that mutual understanding and the construction of a common identity through international dialogue had the power to prevent the development of warlike conflicts (King and Raghuram, 2013). Moreover, International organisations such as NATO and the former European Economic Community established scholarships for academic cooperation and mobility and the UK and France, created academic exchange programmes for their former colonies (Guruz, 2011). Finally, joint study programmes were created by the Institute of Education of the European Cultural foundation in Paris which led to the establishment of the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) programme in 1987 (Ibid).

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It has been argued that through educational exchange programmes, nations set examples about the expression of culture and ideas, the ways policies are made, the local practices, norms and behaviours thus contributing to their soft power strategies (Nye, 2004 cited in Atkinson, 2010). On the other hand, Nye has emphasised that the effective exchange of values and ideals depends on the common identity shared by the individuals to be able to build a strong sense of community. The interaction of international students in transnational settings is therefore the perfect hub for this exchange. Previous research has shown that former recipients of these type of scholarships who returned to their home countries, influenced the political behaviour during the Cold War (Cohen, 2005) which has been said to have contributed to the eventual collapse of communism (Richmond, 2003). Other studies have described returnees with more positive attitudes towards American people and their way of living and reinforcing democratic values (Atkinson, 2010). Alumni that have been supported by German scholarship programmes have been described as leaders in their fields who go back home to spread the "Germanophila virus" [4]. These programmes therefore have played an important role disseminating Western cultural, political, scientific and academic practices and ideas.

1.2 Fulbright and Erasmus programmes

After WWII the Fulbright scholarship programme was created in 1946 to fund exchange of students in the fields of education, culture and science through foreign currencies paid to the US for surplus war property overseas (Johnson and Colligan, 1965). The main drivers were to increase mutual understanding among people worldwide and the promotion of international cooperation for education and cultural advancement in pursuit of peace (Ibid). Further, to provide economic and social modernisation through cooperation with countries that were interested in this kind of aid from the USA. Yet, a recent study points towards the tight relationship between the diplomatic and the cultural/educational purposes of the programme (Bettie, 2015). The Fulbright scholarship has supported more than 300,000 scholars from the USA and from 155 countries, through an annual endowment from the US Congress

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[4] Is smart power the new soft power? German and Russian Examples
https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Soft_Smart_Power_RUS_GER_translation_FIN.pdf Last consulted 09/06/2020

to the Department of State and from funds from participating countries (McWhirter and McWhirter, 2010).

The foremost programme in Europe for the promotion of non-profit horizontal credit mobility is the Erasmus programme, funded by the European Commission in 1987 (Teichler, 1996). The main aim of its creation was to achieve greater integration between European countries (Bode and Davidson, 2011). Strengthening a European identity was part of a larger project to mitigate differences between European countries in order to avoid conflicts such as the World Wars (Sigalas, 2010). The underlying goal however was to create a political identity linking European citizens to the EU (Ibid) In the further expansion of Erasmus, other goals were equally promoted such as cultural maturation of students, intercultural education for peace, educational pluralism and the pursuit of cooperation through mutual trust (Norgaard, 2014).

The Erasmus programme forms an estimate of almost 80% of all programme-based credit mobility in Europe (Choudaha and De Wit, 2014). An estimated three million students have become mobile under the programme by 2013 and the number of countries grew from eleven to the current 28 EU members (Ibid).

1.3 Other examples of outward mobility scholarship programmes around the world

It has been argued that the HE attainment of a country is a determinant of nations' wealth and competitiveness (OECD, 2012, Cornell University et al., 2015). Therefore many developing countries have funded ISM programmes with the main objective of increasing their human-resource capacity, particularly in high ranked HEIs and in subjects that are underdeveloped or unavailable at home (Engberg et al., 2014). Examples of these scholarships include: Kazakhstan's Bolashak programme which has supported 10,000 students (Perna et al., 2015) the King Abdullah scholarship programme in Saudi Arabia which awarded 35,000 scholarships in 2012 (Bukhari and Denman, 2013) and the China Scholarship Council awarding diverse types of ISM scholarships and supported about 13,000 students in 2010 (Engberg et al., 2014). In Latin America, Brazilian programme Science Without Borders by 2015 had supported 100,000 students in four years following the aim to develop the national industry (Nery, 2017). Comparatively, *Becas* Chile has only awarded over 8,300

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scholarships in 35 years[5]. Nonetheless, it is another example of governmental funded programmes to increase their research capacity through training of human capital (CONICYT, 2012). So far, the influence of these programmes has been mainly quantified in terms of the human-capacity development, nonetheless nations have not developed procedures to measure the programme's effects on peoples careers (Engberg et al., 2014).

1.4 Debates on international scholarships

The main debates about ISM scholarship programmes are concerned with the supply of scholarships for students from privileged socio-economic backgrounds and the use of public resources for what some might consider not a priority area. Johnstone (2003) and Andere (2004) for instance have argued that ISM funds should be redirected to priority areas such as: public infrastructure, public health and sanitation and environmental restoration, among others. Further, they argue that the majority of these scholarships, when awarded to the best students in their disciplines, are benefiting people that might come from privileged backgrounds and who eventually could seek other financial resources to pursue international education (Andere, 2004).

The increasing demand for international education and permanent migration have pushed the receiving HEIs to increase the entry requirements such as grades in the previous levels of education, language proficiency, money for expenses and fees (Rivza and Teichler, 2007). These requirements have forced scholarship programmes to remove the aid based on economic needs of the students (Ortega et al., 2002). Therefore, it has been suggested that the social implications of ISM points towards exclusionary tactics that ultimately privilege students with better socioeconomic conditions (Waters, 2012, Findlay et al., 2012). Nonetheless there is evidence that some scholarships have placed mechanisms to guarantee that the financial aid is allocated to people with disadvantaged backgrounds (Engberg et al., 2014). For instance, Otero (2008) research has shown that there has been an increased participation in the Erasmus programme of students who come from

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[5] CONICIT Ministry of Education, statistics becas Chile
https://www.conicyt.cl/becasconicyt/estadisticas/informacion-general/

families with incomes below their nation's economic average. Further, some scholars suggest that through the investment in these programmes, a transformation of societal benefits into public goods can be achieved (Marginson, 2007, McMahon, 2009)

Overall, this section has recounted relevant aspects of the evolution of the most renowned agencies and programmes who provide financial aid for ISM worldwide. It highlights the manifold motivations for the promotion of international mobility, and how they have unfolded mirroring key aspects in history legitimising political and economic underpinnings. Nonetheless the purposes of these scholarship programmes have been constructed in relation with particular necessities of the countries, such as capacity building or increasing the trained workforce for economic progress, but also for the promotion of international cooperation, cultural advancement and the engagement with a global society.

Some critics however, have questioned countries' expenditure on ISM arguing that they have benefited only the elites and have not contributed to other nations' priorities. Nonetheless, these programmes have been acknowledged as providers of opportunities for growth, economic progress and international cooperation. The CONACYT programme falls into the category of scholarships developed in the 1970s for the training of human capital and it has also been subject to the general debates aforementioned. This research therefore aims to broaden the empirical evidence supporting the beneficial effects of ISM for the individual and the society. The next section addresses particularities of HE and the transformative university in the Mexican context.

2. The Mexican case

The United Mexican States, commonly known as Mexico is a federal republic of 32 states with an approximate population of 126.5 million people, 51% females and 49% males[6]. The official language is Spanish however, there are 70 indigenous

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[6] National Council of Population http://www.conapo.gob.mx/work/models/CONAPO/Mapa_Ind_Dem18/index_2.html
Last consulted 13/07/2020.

groups[7], 68 different indigenous languages and 364 linguistic variations (CDI, 2006). In 2015, just over 21% of the population self-identified as part of an indigenous community. It is also has minority groups from other countries such as Africa, China, Italy, France and Lebanon (Martínez Montiel, 2004).

The World Bank describes Mexico as an upper middle-income country, the second largest economy in Latin America[8] and 11th in the world and has also been a member of the OECD since 1994. Nonetheless, Mexico is also a country of contrasts being among the 25% countries with the highest levels of inequalities in the world (Esquivel, 2015), where in 2020 the minimum wage for an eight hour shift is 128 pesos, equivalent to 4.5 pounds sterling, therefore people earning minimum wages live below the national poverty lines. The GINI index for 2018 was 45.4, 41.9% of Mexican population lived under poverty conditions, 7.4% lived in extreme poverty (CONEVAL, 2019), and almost 65% of the Country's wealth was concentrated in the richest 10% of the population (Esquivel, 2015). This section first presents an overview of the HE system in Mexico. Then it moves on to briefly consider the evolution of graduate programmes as a key concern of government for national development. It is followed by the exploration of the different meanings of the transformative university in the Mexican context. This background will be helpful to understand the pursuit of ISM in the country and the drivers for governmental support of the CONACYT scholarship programme.

2.1 Mexican HE at a glance

The Mexican university system has been shaped since the establishment of the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico in 1552, the precursor of what we know today as the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) (Lorey, 1993). The HE system has had a complex evolution since 1929 mainly driven by the demand of a changing economy for professionals and the broad-based demand for social mobility through professional education (Ibid). University education has thus become

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[7] National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples http://atlas.cdi.gob.mx/

[8] Mexico overview http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mexico/overview Last consulted 01/06/2020.

one of the most important symbols of social mobility in Mexico and from the state point of view, of economic development of the country (Lorey, 1993).

In the 1950s Mexico's population was about 25 million people and only 30,000 students were enrolled in HE, which represented 1.3% of the 2.3 million young population in the 20 to 24 age range for that year (Mendoza-Rojas, 2010, Rodríguez-Gómez, 1998). By 2018, the undergraduate education coverage reached 33.9% of the population group in the 18 to 22 age range with 3.5 million students enrolled in undergraduate courses in HEIs across the country (Presidencia de la Republica, 2019). The aforementioned was possible due to the mushrooming of the HE system which by the end of the 1970s was constituted by five federal institutions, 28 state universities,17 technological institutes and 52 private institutions (Szekely-Pardo, 2010).

Currently, the Mexican HE system is characterised by a complex institutional heterogeneity which classifies HEIs in eleven types based on their vertical and horizontal differences (Cruz López and Cruz López, 2008). However, a fundamental dimension of the HE differentiation in Mexico is between the private sector whose main source of income is tuition fees and the free of charge public sector. The latter is constituted by a mixture of HEIs that either are fully funded by the federal government or receive 50% of financial resources from the different states (COMEPO, 2013). In 2018, there were 1,103 public and 2,688 private HEIs registered[9], respectively enrolling 2.5 million (66%) and 1.2 million (34%) of undergraduate students[10].

2.1.1 Patterns of university participation across the country

For over fifty years, researchers have associated students' university choices based on the proximity of HEIs to their hometowns (Hillman and Weichman, 2016). This is true for Mexican students that frequently choose to apply to local institutions and stay in the parental household through their undergraduate studies (Ducoing, 2005),

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[9] Comparative study of Mexican universities http://www.execum.unam.mx/ Last consulted 15/07/2020.

[10] ANUIES Higher Education Statistics Yearbook. http://www.anuies.mx/informacion-y-servicios/informacion-estadistica-de-educacion-superior/anuario-estadistico-de-educacion-superior Last consulted 15/03/2017.

before evaluating relocating to other cities. However, the demand for spaces is greater than HE provision in the country, but is also unequal across the country (Garay et al., 2016). Despite the nationwide increase of HEIs, both public and private, there is still a preference from prospective students from the country, for three public universities which main campuses are located in the metropolitan area of the valley of Mexico: IPN, UNAM and UAM[11]. While some research has focused on students´ experiences in Intercultural Universities[12] (Bermúdez, 2017) no studies have explored the experiences of students that move for their undergraduate education to other Mexican states. In a study focusing on the experiences of students from indigenous communities enrolled in a public HEI in Mexico City, Czarny (2010) found that the students challenged their preconceptions about life, constructed intercultural relationships, developed undergraduate identities, learned to live in "the city" and strengthened their indigenous identities. In this sense the literature suggests that the process of leaving home "allows students to construct a new individual identity for themselves, free from the ties of their families or connections to their home spaces" (Giddens, 1991 cited in Christie, 2007).

Participation in HE is often associated to utilitarian reasons of the portability of a university degree, the possibility of better social status and life opportunities (Hirsch, R 1976, cited in Maringe, 2006). However, participation has been also linked to family preconceptions about HE, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, parental education, and social mobility aspirations (Hemsley-Brown, 1999, Lorey, 1993). The choice of applying to a university in a different city is also informed by the cost and availability of resources (Briggs, 2006) often associated to the economic possibilities of the families, which in many cases is considered a sacrifice made in order to aspire to better lives.

There is scarce information regarding mobility patterns of students across different states in Mexico pursuing HE (Paredes Zepeda and Espinosa Butrón, 2019, González-Velázquez et al., 2014).The limited information about the state of

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[11] http://archivo.estepais.com/site/2014/oferta-y-demanda-de-educacion-superior/ Last consulted 09/02/2019

[12] Intercultural Universities (IU) were created by the Mexican government and are located in indigenous regions with infrastructural marginalisation and high economic exclusion however, they are not exclusive to the indigenous population. For a detailed analysis of the IU see (Oyarzún, et al, 2017).

provenance has been recorded conjointly with socio-economic profiles and academic trajectories of first year students from specific degrees and universities, to evaluate the efficiency of HEIs' programmes and to understand students' behaviours (Ortega Guerrero, 2015). González-Velázquez et al. (2014) mentions for instance, the percentage of those who come from pre-university education from other states without providing more detailed information about them.

2.1.2 Graduate programmes as a key objective for national development

UNAM was the first university to offer graduate studies in the 1920s followed by the IPN in the 1930s. In the 1970s when CONACYT was created with an endeavour to provide graduate scholarships and promote the establishment of national programmes, 13 HEIs offered graduate programmes with 4,000 students enrolled (Arredondo Galván et al., 2006). By 1982 there were 32,000 students enrolled in speciality, masters and doctoral programmes in Mexico (López Godinez, 2017). In 1991 the CONACYT National Programme for the Strengthening of Graduate Studies (PNPC) was created mainly, to ensure an optimum allocation of graduate scholarships to the best candidates enrolled in the best programmes in the country (COMEPO, 2013). This was done fundamentally to identify the best programmes at national level that could be strengthened to be competitive at an international level. The scholarships are awarded to students accepted and enrolled in full-time, face-to-face high-quality programmes recognised by the PNPC (Lopez-Murillo 2015), and in 2014, online programmes and professional doctorates were also considered. However in 2015, less than 20% of the existing graduate programmes in the country are registered in the PNPC (COMEPO, 2015).

In 1997 the Programme for Teaching Staff Improvement (PROMEP) was drafted encouraging HE full-time professors to get doctoral degrees to enhance universities´ quality, mirroring prestigious universities across the globe (Gil-Anton, 2003). In 2000, there were 3,900 graduate programmes from which 7% were for doctoral studies (Arredondo Galván et al., 2006), by 2014, 10,576 programmes were registered in the country, 41% from public and 59% from private institutions and only 1,051 (10%) were doctoral programmes (COMEPO, 2015). In 2017, 334,547 students were enrolled in 12,552 graduate programmes, 16% in speciality, 72% in masters and only 12% in 1,527 national doctoral programmes, 24,000 in public and over 15,000 in

private institutions[9]. In 2017, less than 0.1% of the adult population in Mexico held a doctoral degree, nonetheless the number of students graduating at this level increased 8% across OECD countries primarily driven by the increase in doctoral graduates in Mexico (9,000), Spain (20,000) and the USA (71,000) (OECD, 2019). Therefore, graduate studies and specifically doctoral degrees are considered by the government fundamental for scientific and technological development, to increase human and social development, and economic competitivity of Mexico (COMEPO, 2015).

2.2 Transformative experience of HE in Mexico

The fundamental social goal of the university system since the late 1920s was the promotion of upward social mobility through the provision of access to the job market (Lorey, 1993). Indeed, economic and political developments in Mexico since the 1940s stimulated the social mobility process, cultural progress and political stability (Mungaray et al., 2010). Afterwards, HE and knowledge were thought to be necessary conditions to succeed in the new economic structure (Ibid). The transformative aspects of HE from the learning theory perspective have thus been understudied in the Mexican realm.

Competency-based education (CBE) was implemented in the 1960s in some courses at the technical level (Meza-Rojas, 2013). However, it was not until the 1980s when the notion of competency was related to performance, efficiency and practicality. By the 1990s a Mexican CBE model was implemented (Ibid), however, CBE was not yet discussed at the HE level. The CBE model was drafted following the European version from the Tuning project, this was criticized because it copied the European list of competences rather than adopting the methodology to develop a Mexican model (Aboites, 2010). From the 21st century, only one institution at the HE level promotes the acquisition of professional education along with diverse competences (Meza-Rojas, 2013). The literature shows that the acquisition of competences has been dealt with in the teaching training realm related to professional ethics (Hirsch Adler, 2009), teaching practice (Barrón Tirado, 2009) and teaching and research practice at the graduate level (Ortiz, 2012).

Recently, Cortés (2014) studied the relationship between the development of university students towards becoming adults and citizens. He asserts that the prospective college student in Mexico sees HE as a transitive and formative process and as an opportunity to fulfil their aspirations of social mobility, access to qualified jobs and to progress personally and socially. Moreover, that the university constitutes an essential stage in their reconfiguration as social beings and in their further articulation as citizens (Ibid). Other researchers have analysed university students' capacities through the understanding of their social realities from the perspective of the UN World Declaration on HE for the 21st century (Gonzalez-Lara et al., 2014). They have brought back to the discussion the importance of an "all-round" HE where the other roles of Mexican HEIs such as the dissemination of culture, the promotion of democratic values and the demands of more equal societies, cannot be evaluated in terms of their economic impact (Ibid). In this sense, the transformative potential of HE and the development of competences are being addressed in relation to their importance for social development.

So far it has been shown that the value of HE in Mexico from the society point of view is associated with the possibility of emancipation of people, social transformation and social welfare. However, this has been in tension with the state´s interests of development of the HE system in pursuit of modernisation, economic development and competitiveness over human rights values (Barba Casillas, 2010). The final section moves on to summarize the main changes in internationalisation policies and the development of ISM in the country.

3. HE Internationalisation in Mexico

This section presents the mobility trends in the country, the development of internationalisation policies and other examples of financial aid available for ISM, providing evidence on how ISM has acquired relevance as an internationalisation activity in the country. It additionally explores the CONACYT international scholarship programme throughout its 50 years of existence.

3.1 ISM in Mexico in numbers

Mexican students enrolled in international education account for the largest group of Latin American students studying outside their countries of origin (Luchillo, 2008, Rodriguez-Gomez, 2009). According to data retrieved from UNESCO statistics website[1], there were 34,900 Mexican students participating in degree mobility in 2018. From those, the overall enrolment distribution along the five preferred destinations were: 47% (16,414) in HEIs in the USA, 8.1% (2,831) in Spain, 7.2% (2,514) in France, 7% (2,458) in Germany and 5.9% (2,065) in the UK. This mobile population represents approximately 0.8% of the total number of HE Mexican students. From the Mexican mobile student population almost two thirds account for individuals engaged in short stays which are directly funded by the public and private HEIs (Lebeau, 2019).

3.2 Motivations for Mexican students to study abroad

Few studies have investigated the drivers that have pushed/pulled Mexicans to look for educational opportunities abroad. For instance, Gérard and Maldonado (2009) showed that for UAM academics the particular attractiveness of France and interest of working with particular world renowned researchers were strong pull factors. Likewise, the development of networks with French visiting researchers during the respondents´ undergraduate studies and influence from their former teachers who also studied in France. This resulted in the creation of a doctoral programme, of academic agreements and student exchanges at UAM upon return to Mexico (Ibid).

More recently, a comprehensive research project exploring education and work trajectories of diverse generations of Mexicans who had diverse experiences studying abroad has also linked motivations with socio-economic possibilities and previous educational opportunities (Grediaga, 2017, Lopez, 2019, Lopez, 2015). Some respondents were influenced by previous international experiences (short stays, exchanges, credit mobility) throughout their educational trajectories. External factors mentioned included the influence of former teachers and tutors or friends that already had experiences abroad. Amongst the personal motivations, the prestige of the institutions, the status of having an international degree and the possibility of establishing networks abroad were frequent push factors. Moreover, students who

chose Spain often were driven by cultural and language similarities. Finally, three main push factors associated with the labour market in Mexico have been reported. a) the unavailability of quality graduate programmes in the country; b) scarce job opportunities, lack of professional development and low wages; and c) available financial support from employers to study abroad (specifically from Mexican HEIs) (Lopez, 2019).

3.3 Internationalisation policies

Academic activities involving internationalisation in Mexico started to be developed and implemented several decades ago particularly in the national HEIs and through the support of CONACYT, including ISM. However, despite existing national support, there was not a clear set of rationales, policy statements or particular plans in national documents justifying why the government was investing in ISM.

It was not until 2001 that internationalisation activities were mentioned in official documents as part of the national internationalisation agenda (Gacel-Ávila, 2005b). These changes corresponded with an important political transition period framed by the election of Vicente Fox (2000-2006), member of the "right wing" National Action party. Fox was elected after Ernesto Zedillo's presidency (1994-2000) who was a member of the "centrist" Institutional Revolutionary party, which held power uninterruptedly for 71 years. Between 2001 and 2011, the international dimension gained a place in the education plans (SEP, 2001, SEP, 2007); nonetheless there were no specific proposals in order to achieve internationalisation goals. Finally, in 2014 the Programme of International Development Cooperation (PROCID) 2014-2018[13] was published establishing priorities, strategies and actions for national cooperation policies. In this document, broadening the scholarships supply for graduate education as an integral part of the international cooperation policy and, promoting participation of Mexican students in the global knowledge economy are the two strategies found related to ISM. Despite the few available comprehensive national policy documents supporting internationalisation activities and specifically

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[13]Programme of International Development Cooperation
https://transparencia.sre.gob.mx/amexcid/images/pdf/procid/logros-2018-del-PROCID.pdf Last consulted 13/04/2020

ISM, the mobility of Mexican students pursuing education abroad increased 63% from 1997 to 2018 (Lebeau, 2019).

There is an array of financial aid programmes supporting ISM for Mexican students. These are mainly provided by foreign institutions and governments interested in attracting international students as an economic activity, a source of additional revenue and in some cases, for the expansion of their own knowledge economies (van der Wende, 2003, Findlay, 2011, Adnett, 2010). Among these well-known programmes is the Chevening Scholarship programme, awarded by the UK Government and funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), to pursue one-year master's degrees. For the Mexican student the programme is presented as an opportunity for "future leaders, influencers and decision makers" for professional development, to develop long-lasting relationships and to experience UK culture. However, for the UK government this form of support represents for instance, foreign alumni's allegiance to British brands, embedded UK values and links and, the promulgation of UK pedagogic style on return home (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2013).

Another scholarship scheme is the Fulbright-Garcia Robles founded by the USA government which provides financial aid to students from Mexico since 1990 (Engberg et al., 2014). Their goal is to support "members from all social sectors, ethnic and minority groups" who excel academically, creating exchange opportunities, understanding and binational cooperation. While the programme has always been protected by the mutual understanding aphorism, in the assessment report among the national interests accomplished are the goodwill for the USA, to educate US viewpoints to future elites and leaders of other countries and, to improve the education, research skills, and knowledge base of people in foreign nations (Ailes and Russell, 2002).

These two particular cases symbolise to a certain extent, the level of control exerted by strong nations over developing economies which has prevailed since the inception of the scholarship programmes, legitimised by internationalisation and cooperation motivations. For instance the Fulbright programme and its underlying

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rationales to persuade foreigners to favour particular ideological stances during the Cold War (Bettie, 2015). For a more comprehensive account of available scholarships for credit and degree mobility for Mexican students see Lebeau (2019).

3.5 CONACYT ISM scholarship programme

The ISM scholarship programme contributes to the training and consolidation of human resources particularly in scientific and technological academic areas, through funding graduate studies in high-quality masters and doctoral programmes worldwide (CONACYT, 2017). Therefore CONACYT has supported ISM uninterruptedly since 1970 (Luchilo, 2009). As previously mentioned, the international scholarships provided by CONACYT do not represent the main financial resource for ISM in the country, however it has been considered a "visible milestone" of regulated mobility, of long duration and focused on graduate studies supported by the state (Grediaga, 2017). In this sense, from the 27,118 Mexican students involved in ISM in 2013, 19.1% (5,181) were funded by CONACYT (2014a). The international scholarships are embedded in a larger programme that provides financial aid for the Mexican population to carry out graduate studies (specialities, master´s, doctorates), technical, academic, postdoctoral and sabbatical stays, in national and international institutions (CONACYT, 2017).

It has been argued that investing in HE contributes to technological and scientific advance and in consequence will lead to the development of innovation activities. Encouraging innovation fosters development and economic growth (Cornell University et al., 2015). This has been the rationale for CONACYT since the 1990s to support ISM, and a priority to award more scholarships towards doctorates over masters degrees was put in place as an institutional strategy (Ortega et al., 2002).

The justification of this strategy relies on the possibility of mirroring the success of developed countries through the investment of human capital, to provide intellectual added value to the goods and services developed by these professionals (Grediaga, 2017, CONACYT, 2017). In this sense, **Table 2** shows an increase in budget, a rise of in-force overall national and international scholarships and 50% annual support of international doctorates between 2009 and 2017. However, **Figure 3** shows that in 2017, there was a drop of 28.2% of new international scholarships awarded from the

previous year. Overall, 57,796 new international scholarships were awarded between 1991 and 2017.

Table 2. Comparative of CONACYT national and international in force annual graduate scholarships 2009-2017 and the expenditure in USD with adjusted prices of 2017

	National doctorates	National masters	Total national*	Cost m USD**	International doctorates	International masters	Total international*	Cost m USD**
2009	10,409	17,241	28,210	**193,332**	2,017	387	2,424	**62,018**
2010	11,794	21,428	33,982	**219,322**	***	***	3,414	**51,068**
2011	13,000	22,770	36,514	**239,166**	2,405	1,615	4,082	**53,490**
2012	14,709	25,455	41,755	**282,119**	2,448	2,080	4,559	**63,018**
2013	15,884	27,892	45,638	**326,064**	2,607	2,550	5,181	**68,967**
2014	17,255	30,045	49,640	**356,419**	2,894	3,033	5,991	**78,391**
2015	18,124	31,479	52,372	**349,278**	3,150	3,267	6,463	**102,927**
2016	18,864	32,319	54,170	**373,070**	3,302	2,662	6,420	**110,040**
2017	19,502	32,203	54,402	**360,492**	3,494	2,915	6,982	**113,990**

*The totals include Specialities, mixed scholarships and postdoctorates and does not include Specific scholarships.
Mixed scholarships: short national and international academic stays as part of national graduate programmes and to conclude research
Specific scholarships: awarded based on cooperation agreements with other Mexican states, institutions or actors intended towards the training and consolidation of human capital in areas, topics or actions with gender perspective or for disadvantaged population (indigenous people and people with disabilities).
**Exchange rate for 1/01/2017 1USD=20.70 MXN
***The breakdown of international scholarships for 2010 is not consistent throughout the available documents of the period.
Table constructed using data from the following sources (CONACYT, 2017), CONACYT activities reports 2010-2019

It is very difficult to estimate the total scholarships awarded since the 1970s due to inconsistencies with the data and the variations in which it has been reported throughout time and across available documents (Ortega et al., 2002, Lopez-Murillo, 2015). Further, additional types of scholarships awarded along with other institutions and through cooperation agreements are not being accounted for in the totals reported by year **Table 2**. Moreover, under the new government the annual general report has no longer been published, which contained detailed information regarding the in-force scholarships, the breakdown of the type of awards and the exercised budget.

Figure 3. CONACYT international programme new scholarships by year 1991-2017
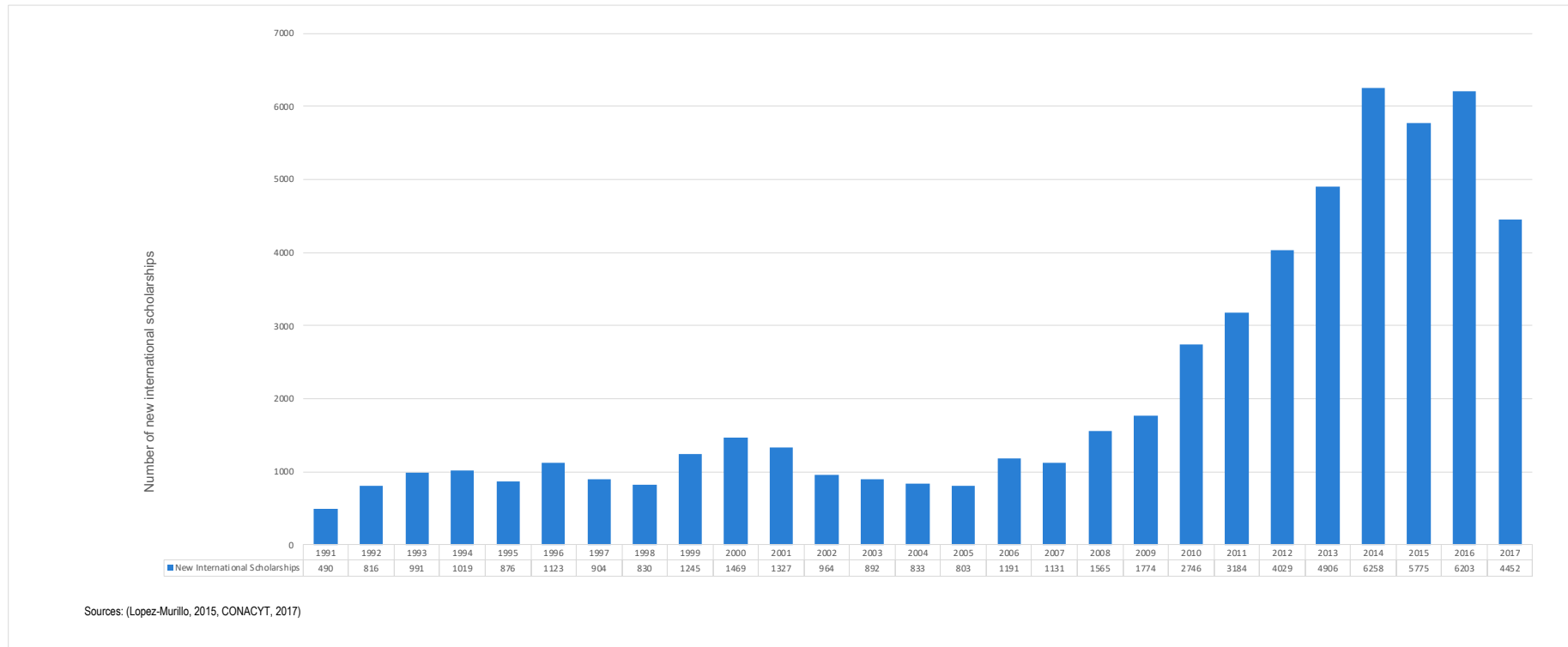
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
New International Scholarships	490	816	991	1019	876	1123	904	830	1245	1469	1327	964	892	833	803	1191	1131	1565	1774	2746	3184	4029	4906	6258	5775	6203	4452

Sources: (Lopez-Murillo, 2015, CONACYT, 2017)

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The international scholarship programme was developed in the 1970s initially offering short term specialisation courses. In the 1990s there was a clear aim to train HEIs' staff to strengthen the capacity of the institutions, the national postgraduate system and the national research centres and institutes (Lopez-Murillo, 2015). From 2000 onwards, the programme efforts have been directed mainly towards the acquisition of doctoral studies (Centro Redes, 2008). There have been modifications in the regulations of the programme throughout time, however there is not enough available information to understand exactly how the programme was managed prior to 2001 (Lopez-Murillo, 2015).

In 2001, the programme existed as a loan-scholarship scheme. The type of aid provided could cover totally or partially the tuition fees, medical insurance and an accommodation stipend which was defined after the result of a socio-economic survey of the students and their families and whether they had additional external financial support. If they were fully supported, the monthly stipend was 1,000 USD, regardless of the country of studies. The loan-scholarship only covered postgraduate courses with a minimum duration of one academic year and they could not exceed 72 months.

By 2004, a new legal document was sanctioned to establish the foundation, procedures and requisites for CONACYT to award scholarships within the framework of the Science and Technology Law[2]. Its main objective was to propel training, development, and consolidation of scientists and technologists and to give priority to doctoral studies over master's degrees. One of the main modifications in the policy was the shift from loan-scholarships to scholarships. This modification was legitimised stressing that through the expenditure on training high-quality scientists and technologists, the benefit for the country would be reflected in the application of the acquired knowledge into the private and public sectors of the country (Centro Redes, 2008). The awardees thus, stopped having to reimburse the funds spent in their education and repaid through their own professional activities.

In 2008 a new regulation was published to broaden the normative aspects of the previous one considering the programme as a fundamental instrument of the Human

Capital Formation Programme established in the National Development Plan 2007-2018. **Table 3** shows the changes in the monthly stipends awarded. Additionally, CONACYT covers the annual cost of medical insurance for the awardee and their family for the duration of the programme. The stipend increment was announced by CONACYT as a response to the rise of living expenses in the countries of destination.

Table 3. Variations in the monthly stipend of international scholarship awardees depending on countries of destination

	Europe (euro)		United Kingdom (pound)		London (pound)		Rest of the world (USD)	
	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married
2004	990	1,238	700	875	800	975	1,000	1,250
2013	1,090	1,362	770	963	880	1,073	1,100	1,375

Source: (Lopez-Murillo, 2015)
https://www.conacyt.gob.mx/images/Becas/2019/Tabulador_autorizado_2019.pdf
https://www.conacyt.gob.mx/index.php/el-conacyt/convocatorias-y-resultados-conacyt/convocatorias-becas-al-extranjero/avisos-becas-al-extranjero/avisos-2103-becas-en-el-extranjero-1

The establishment of the Science and Technology law along with the shift to non-repayable grants were the most important events at the policy level of the CONACYT programme. The change to scholarships, the increment of the monthly stipends and change of currency had important implications on the awardees´ international experiences, as will be discussed in chapter VIII.

3.5.2 How are scholarships allocated

Before 2004, the loan-scholarships were awarded to students admitted in "an international accredited HEI" that was also recognized by CONACYT, with a GPA of 8 out of 10 or equivalent in the previous level of studies and providing evidence of language proficiency of the country of destination. If the studies were conducted in a Spanish speaking country, they had to additionally provide certification of English or French language skills. The loan-scholarship holders had to repay through diverse payment schemes. However, if they went back to Mexico to work in an academic institution or as civil servants, they could be exempt of paying up to 75% and up to 100% if they went back and work as researchers in national HEIs, at least for the

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same number of years spent abroad. This scheme prevented returnees seeking employment in the private sector due to the acquired debt which, in contrast with those working in the public sector, they had to pay back in full (Canales, 2005).

From 2004 onwards the socio-economic surveys were no longer conducted, thus the scholarships started being granted only on the basis of the academic performance, the quality of the programme and the relevance of such studies for the country. The validity period was up to 60 months for doctoral studies. In contrast with the previous regulations, the only requirement to be exempted from the reimbursement of the funds, is for the awardees to go back to work in Mexico, without giving further specifications of the nature of the job.

The 2008 regulation provided a general framework for the allocation of scholarships giving room for specific modifications that could be put in place every year through the different calls. Therefore, the number of scholarships, the stipend amounts given, the pertinence of academic subjects, the quality of the programmes and institutions chosen by the potential awardees and the candidates' profiles can be modified every year. The regulation was slightly modified in 2018, however among the modifications —more cosmetic than normative, added that the human capital formation had to be in "subjects or actions with a gendered perspective and inclusion" [14].

The requisites for the awardees are still based on academic performance however, now it is specified that the programmes selected should be delivered by HEIs considered in the best 100 places of the Academic Ranking of World Universities or, among the 200 best universities from the Times Higher Education Ranking. Moreover, preference is given to programmes offered in universities where a co-funding collaboration agreement is already in place. The attention of CONACYT on supporting students accepted in prestigious international institutions is consistent with changes in internationalisation policies in countries such as the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand that were focused on increasing the recruitment of international students (Geddie, 2015). Investment in education in elite institutions is additionally associated to perceptions of high-quality educational standards, growth

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[14]Modifications to the 2008 scholarships regulation
https://www.conacyt.gob.mx/images/conacyt/normatividad/interna/Reglamento_de_Becas_2019.pdf Last consulted 21/05/2020

and development opportunities, and global economic competitiveness for sending countries (Lomer, 2018, Perna et al., 2015). As discussed in chapter II, the experiences of students are ultimately influenced by the type of institutions they are enrolled in, and will have further implications for the available educational, life and work opportunities available to them. The awardees had to go back to Mexico within 12 months of completion of the programme and spend a minimum of six in the country to be accredited with no-debt by CONACYT. However, it was no longer a requirement to be working, as long as they lived in the country. In the 2018 modification they re-introduced that the awardees have to additionally demonstrate that they are working in Mexico[15].

Overall, this section has explored the development of ISM as an internationalisation strategy in Mexico showing an increased participation of students in international education and the array of motivations to do so. Despite several financial aid opportunities to pursue ISM, many of which are provided by international organisations through cooperation agreements with Mexico, the ISM programme funded by CONACYT is still the most important governmental funded programme in the country and further, one of the oldest operating worldwide (Engberg et al., 2014). As has been shown in this review, the international experience fosters the development of capabilities and individual transformations that can further contribute to social change. Therefore, the exploration of these experiences will provide a better understanding of the wider benefits promoted by the CONACYT programme.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the most prominent examples of international scholarships and their two main purposes: the promotion of international cooperation and the development of human capital. It has also provided a general outlook of the Mexican HE system highlighting the tensions between HE as an enabler of social mobility and the state interests of modernisation and economic development. In this sense, and in connection with global trends, the promotion of ISM has followed a human capital development aim, firstly for capacity building purposes supporting individuals to

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[15] http://www.ordenjuridico.gob.mx/Federal/Combo/R-5.pdf Last consulted 15.05.2019

study highly specialised subjects that were not available in the country half a century ago. Secondly, to expand and strengthen national HEIs that could, in turn, prepare the next generations and participate in the global knowledge economy.

Despite continuous support of ISM by the Mexican government and other institutions and organisations, educational mobility is still an under-researched subject in the country. It has been suggested that one of the areas that needs to be explored regarding Mexican mobile students is the analysis of life stories, experiences and links made by students through the international sojourn, to contribute to the efforts and resources intended for internationalisation processes in the country (Grediaga, 2017).

Additionally, the reviewed literature points to an increasing amount of research showing the possibility of transformation of gender identities, gender relations, behaviours and the development of an array of capabilities through ISM experiences. Moreover, how students´ heterogeneities play a fundamental role in the different way they choose, learn and experience the international sojourn but most importantly, in the extent to which ISM transform their lives.

The research presented herein thus addresses some of these academic literature gaps. Firstly, it focuses exclusively on the CONACYT international scholarship former awardees and builds a socio-economic, educational and work trajectories profile of a sample of these individuals. Most of the literature often explores the influence of ISM experiences in undergraduate or master´s students. In this research, the object of study were Mexican doctoral students who most likely were motivated to study abroad as a self-reflexive process and not driven by parental expectations (Rizvi, 2010). Additionally, some of them were in a transitory position between consumers of education and knowledge producers (Bilecen, 2013) while others, were mature students with professional trajectories and families. Secondly, it considers socio-cultural and environmental differences of the mobile individuals that until recently (Lopez, 2015, Grediaga, 2019), were not being considered in ISM research in Mexico. In this sense it also takes into consideration the cultural and HE institutional differences both, at home and in the destination countries.

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Therefore, the exploration of the international experiences of former doctoral students and of the individual meanings of their sojourn, are delineated incorporating key aspects found in the reviewed literature. The questions asked in this thesis are answered considering international students as agents, the individual, social and personal heterogeneities, and the possibility of reconfiguration of gender roles and identities. Further, they explore the ways in which acculturation processes are lived and the extent to which individual identities determine socialisation processes in the international settings. This research additionally provides insights into how geographic mobility influences and transforms the sojourners' families lives and their life trajectories, which has not been studied before in the Mexican context. Finally, the transformation of life paths is explored in terms of capabilities developed, their conversion into functionings and their contribution to individual and social well-being.

The following chapter presents the methodological approach followed to analyse the transformative experiences of ISM and their connections to the CONACYT programme´s objectives and the wider Mexican society.

IV. Research methodology: a mixed methods approach

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between ISM and the potential transformative experiences of the international sojourn of former Mexican doctoral students who were supported by CONACYT scholarship programme between 1997 and 2008. Additionally, the research aims to analyse to what extent do the experiences mirror CONACYT programme´s objectives and their implications for the wider Mexican society. The purpose of the study is to offer a contribution to the general understanding of the influence of ISM on Mexican peoples' lives through in-depth examination of the international experiences of key former awardees, that could additionally generate useful insights of other ISM cases. Section one of this chapter presents the mixed-methods design chosen to address the research questions and its epistemological underpinnings. Section two describes in detail the stages followed throughout the fieldwork process, and a reflection of the ethical considerations. These reflections mainly include on one hand my role as an international student and a researcher and on the other the awareness of preserving the anonymity and emotional integrity of the participants. Section three deals with the analytical process carried out in this research.

1. Research design

The research carried out followed a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. The mixed method approach has been in constant evolution since the 1960s in many disciplines in the health, social and behavioural science fields (Collins et al., 2006). There are several designs within this approach that have been developed based on four main components: the research objective, type of data and operations, type of analysis and type of inference (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009, Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2016, Creswell, 2014). The rationales and purposes for utilizing mixed methods vary depending on the perspectives of the researchers and have also changed over time (Collins et al., 2006). Johnson et al. (2007) provide a definition that incorporates the diverse researcher´s orientations on what is being

mixed, the stage in which the mixing occurs, the purpose and the drive for the use of mixed methods.

> "Mixed method research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breath and depth of understanding and corroboration" (p. 123)

Mixed methods designs have evolved in six complex typologies depending on the orientations listed above **Table 4** (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2016, Greene et al., 1989). In type II, typologies designs are classified based on the way in which the methods or data are combined. In general, these designs focus on collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study simultaneously or sequentially, are given a priority and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the research process (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2016).

Table 4. Detail of mixed methods design typologies

Basic mixed methods typologies	Key features
I. Strand/Phases of Research: Monostrand vs. Multistrand	Single vs. multiple phases, including single study vs. research progamme

II. Methods/Data
  a. Types of data
  b. Mixing/sequencing/implementation
  c. Priority/dominance
	Based on the types, mixing, and priority given to different methods/data:
	  a. Qual-Quan
	  b. Concurrent, sequential, embedded
	  c. Dominance of QUAL vs QUAN

III. Stage of the research process	Points within the research process-research question, sampling, data collection, analysis, inference-where mixing occurs; some models deal only with particular stage
IV. Integrated/interactive/systemic	Some combination of criteria related to precursors and/or basic typologies
V. Synergistic	MMR>QUAL+QUAN QUAL=QUAN QUAL~QUAN Researcher(s)~Design Researchers(s)~Participants

QUAL: qualitative QUAN: quantitative MMR: mixed methods research
Adapted from (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2016)

In the case of this research, a sequential explanatory design was chosen. From a unique larger sample, a smaller subset of participants was purposefully selected following a nested sampling strategy obtaining relevant data for this research and then, expanding the findings qualitatively (Creswell, 2014). This methodology also allowed flexibility throughout the research process in the number of participants that took part in the qualitative phase (Cara, 2016). There are several empirically derived rationales and purposes for using a mix methods approach (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). The rationales relevant to this study relate to instrument fidelity and significance enhancement. In the case of the purpose the significant components are triangulation, complementarity, and development (Greene et al., 1989).The overall goal of this type of research is to use the strengths of the methods chosen and reducing their limitations (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006).

Similar methodological approaches have been used in other studies exploring short term ISM and the influence on European identities (Van Mol, 2013), analysing long-term manifestations of global engagement influenced by ISM (Paige et al., 2009), exploring the transformative potential of ISM in enhancing work and community participation (Pham, 2016) and the retrospective examination of post-graduation experiences of African alumni from international universities supported by a USA funded scholarship programme (Marsh et al., 2016).

There is a general consensus that mixed research follows pragmatic epistemology (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). Pragmatism recognises the individual nature of meaning and emphasises the uncertainty and changing nature of our findings (Ormerod, 2006). Further, assumes learning as a process through which we acquire a "complex and flexible set of predispositions for action" and knowledge as both constructed and as a function of transactions between living organisms and their environments (Biesta, 2010, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, Greene and Hall, 2010).

Pragmatism emphasises the practical aspects of research: what is more adequate to answer the research question, the use of designs and criteria that are context appropriate and, potential consequences of the research (social and political implications) (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2016, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). Further, it recognises the possibility of generalisability and transferability of findings

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(Morgan, 2007). Portraying therefore the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative elements within mixed methods.

Pragmatism rejects the idea that quantitative and qualitative methods should not be mixed —the *incompatibility thesis*, because such methods stem from different assumptions about the nature of research (Bryman, 1984, Howe, 1988 cited in Onwuegbuzie 2007). Thus pragmatism advocates the idea that the strengths of both methods should be used in conjunction to better understand social phenomena (Sieber, 1973). Pragmatic researchers therefore, are able to combine empirical and descriptive precision at the micro and macro levels at different moments in a single study (Onwuegbuzie, 2003).

Finally, a pragmatic stance on research also considers some ethical aspects related to the researcher standpoint. Morgan (2007) asserts that our "values and our politics are always a part of who we are and how we act". Therefore, it allowed me to reflect on my positionality as a researcher and as an international student at the same time. Recognising that my own worldview has influenced the ways in which I have conducted this research and that my personal history, social background and cultural assumptions informed the way I have interpreted my findings (Ibid).

The sequential explanatory mixed methods approach designed was therefore the most appropriate to answer the research questions. To be able to make sense of the mobility phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to it and the ways in which the international experiences had influenced their lives, it was crucial to first understand who they were. The quantitative data thus provided insights about, sex, age, diverse educational trajectories, nationality and socio-economic backgrounds of the participants before studying abroad. This information shed light about the heterogeneity of the interviewees and the different opportunities and resources they had. Having this contextual data enabled the understanding in more depth through the interviews, about the nuanced experiences of the participants and why they attached diverse meanings to the international experience.

2. Fieldwork process

The research was developed from September 2017 to April 2020. Ethical approval was granted by UCL from the 2nd of November 2017 to conduct both the pilot study and the fieldwork. The pilot study was carried out in November 2017 in the UK. The fieldwork involved a visit to Mexico City from November 20th, 2017 until March 8th, 2018 and a short second trip to conduct an interview with a CONACYT informant in October 2018. This section starts by presenting the process of selecting participants before describing the design of the survey and the interview instruments. The last subsections explain how the pilot study was carried out, followed by the implementation of the survey and the semi-structured interviews and lastly, the ethical considerations of this study, paying special attention to the reflection of my role as a researcher and as an insider.

2.1 Selection of participants

The study population was selected from a database of ISM doctoral students supported by CONACYT scholarship programme between 1997 and 2008. This database was obtained through an information request submitted online on January 18th, 2017 to the Federal Institute for Access to Public Information and Data Protection (INAI) in Mexico[16]. It is important to stress that anonymity was a central concern throughout this research to protect the participants' confidentiality, which is further explained in the ethical considerations' section of this chapter. The database is comprised of 5379 doctoral international scholarship awardees, 65% males and 35% females and contains their full names, the university and country they attended to, the name of the course they were enrolled in and the academic field, and the duration and level of their studies between 1997 to 2008.

There were multiple reasons for focusing on this period. Firstly, there is evidence that tracing scholarships´ former awardees pathways after ten years enabled the evaluation of the potential outcomes and impacts of scholarships programmes beyond the individual (Martel, 2017). Therefore, to explore the implications of the

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[16] National Transparency Platform https://www.infomex.org.mx/gobiernofederal/home.action Last consulted 11/02/2017

mobility experience for social change it was essential that the participants had completed their doctoral studies at least ten years before the commencement of this study.

Furthermore, Lopez-Murillo (2015) found that the available data regarding the international scholarships was not reported in a consistent manner before 1997. For instance, there is not available information concerning the total expenditure on the programme, the number of new scholarships awarded every year are not dissected from the overall annual in force scholarships, and there is only annual information of countries of destination for new awardees. In this sense, Ortega et al. (2002) has reported that the information from 1971-1989 was not digitised and the one from 1990-1996 was recorded in an earlier computerised system different from the automated system that was used from 1997 onwards.

This period also includes the changes in the programme regulations described in chapter III, such as the transition from a loan-scholarship to a scholarship scheme and the currency of the stipends given to the awardees. The different experiences of former awardees associated with these modifications are discussed in chapter VIII. Finally, it is from 1997 onwards, that there is a noticeable increment of doctoral awardees, mirroring the policy changes which give preference of funding to this level over master´s studies (Centro Redes, 2008, Ortega et al., 2002).

The choice of selecting doctoral students exclusively for this research was twofold. Firstly, as explained in chapter III, CONACYT has supported postgraduate studies giving priority to doctoral studies from the 1990s onwards (Ortega et al., 2002). Secondly, and already identified by Bilecen (2013) the literature about ISM experiences has focused more on undergraduate students. In this sense, a recent research focusing on Mexicans´ mobility trajectories included interviews with undergraduate and master´s students (Grediaga, 2019). Therefore, there is not comprehensive research with an exclusive focus on the experiences of doctoral students. Filling that gap would be useful as some research have underlined some specificities regarding doctoral students which are worth investigating. For example, it has been argued on one hand that doctoral students´ motivations to study abroad are largely independent from their parents and on the other, they are in transition from consumers to becoming producers of knowledge (Rizvi, 2010). Thus, this

research seeks to add to the existing body of research about the transnational experiences of doctoral students.

Personal contact details of former awardees from CONACYT are not available however through such a database, since they are protected under article 117 of the Federal Law of Transparency and Access to Public Government Information (INAI, 2015). For this reason, a first exploration of the database was performed in order to determine the general characteristics of the population and the feasibility of finding their contact information online. From this descriptive analysis it was found that there were 5,379 individuals, in the programme divided among 33 countries, 5,174 of them were distributed amidst eight most popular destinations, and the courses across eight academic areas in the 1997-2008 period as seen in **Figure 4** below.

Figure 4. Most popular destinations of students in the 1997-2008 period and their distributions in academic areas for each country.

	GER	AUS	CAN	USA	SPN	FRA	UK	NLD
App. biol.	20	14	49	217	48	102	110	13
App. eng.	54	6	121	404	209	347	493	10
Exact	29	4	41	170	60	100	124	2
Nat. sc.	13	12	32	128	49	40	135	5
Behaviour	9	2	21	114	182	94	119	4
Health	4	1	2	41	18	9	31	2
Soc. sc.	15	3	38	395	290	151	316	9
Earth	4	7	17	57	24	19	24	2
Total	148	49	321	1526	870	862	1352	46

App biol: applied biology, App eng: applied engineering, Exact: exact sciences, Nat. sc:natural sciences,
Behaviour: behavioural sciences, Health: health sciences, Soc. sc.: social sciences, Earth: earth sciences
GER-Germany, AUS-Australia, CAN-Canada, SPN-Spain, FRA-France, NLD-Netherlands

After this examination, each of the countries was analysed exploring the division of CONACYT awardees in academic areas. For instance, there were 148 PhD students in German institutions during the period distributed among the eight academic areas. Participants, awardees both female and male were alphabetically selected for Germany and for each of these academic areas. In each case their contact details

were searched for online. If they were not found, a consecutive possible participant was selected until a list of 50 contacts was established**.**

Considering the results of the preliminary database search, a purposive sampling was employed to allow enquiry and to understand in depth the transformative experiences of ISM of information-rich cases, illuminating the questions under study (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the same empirical search protocol was used to look for contact details from the remaining five preferred countries of destination: Canada, France, Spain, UK and USA. In the case of Australia and the Netherlands, destinations which had less than 50 students registered in the period, all the potential participants were searched online providing a list of 26 and 33 contacts respectively.

Furthermore, maximum variation was used to have a sample of great diversity allowing through the data collection and analysis 1) high-quality detailed descriptions of each participant and 2) important shared patterns that cut across them (Patton, 2002). The categories for diversity were year of end of studies, country and city of residence, institution of affiliation and academic area.

To broaden the richness of the sample, deviant cases were included, such as individuals attending courses in atypical countries of destination such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, New Zealand and Puerto Rico. The logic of extreme case sampling relies on the lessons that might be learned about these cases that could be potentially relevant to the whole research (Patton, 2002). In these cases, all the potential participants were searched online providing a list of four contacts of individuals who studied in Argentina, three in Costa Rica, Czech Republic and Denmark respectively and two in New Zealand. The contact details of a total of 513 individuals, 321 men (63%) and 192 women (37%) were collected.

Additionally, non-random experts (key informants) were selected from the administrative staff of the scholarship programme, to obtain the views of the institution and to deepen the understanding of the internal administration of the scholarships.

This type of survey usually take a descriptive or exploratory form that sets out to describe behaviour or attitudes (Mathers et al., 2007). The aim of the survey was twofold. In one hand to provide quantitative descriptions of particular characteristics of the study population before they started the international PhD studies and on the other, following a nested sampling strategy, highlight the participants that met the selection criteria to be further invited to participate in the interview phase.

The selection criteria for the interview phase were Mexicans with no dual citizenship, who did not have an international family background and that the previous studies to the PhD were carried through exclusively in Mexico. This decision was taken since it has been found that there is a positive correlation between students who had taken part in short term overseas exchanges and had international family backgrounds (King, 2003). It has been argued that students who possess linguistic and cultural capital either from previous international experiences related to study or tourism or from an international family background are more likely to successfully adapt and to have further positive academic international experiences (Brown, 2009b, Grediaga, 2019, Lopez, 2015). Therefore, it was important to remove those variables from the sample that could interfere with the aims of the study.

The inclusion of questions about the parental level of education and occupation and the number of siblings and their level of education, was motivated by the idea to use them as proxies for the socio-economic backgrounds of the participants (Loeb et al., 2017). The survey also included questions about sex and age, and, to enable the selection of participants for the interview phase, place of birth of the participants and place of origin of parents and grandparents were also required. Moreover, to trace back the specific educational opportunities of each participant before their doctoral studies, they were asked to specify the type of institution attended (public or private) for each level of studies and the geographic location. In the case of undergraduate studies, additional information about the HEI and the programme chosen was required. If the participants had master´s studies, they had to additionally specify whether they were conducted in Mexico or abroad.

To explore their languages proficiency, the survey instrument comprised questions about the level of written and spoken command itemised by languages (English, French, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Mandarin, other) and the diverse ways in which they were learned. As part of the questions relevant to the selection criteria, the participants were asked to record if they had previous international experiences (credit/degree mobility, short stays) the length, and the country. For an initial examination of participants' work trajectories, they were asked if they had professional experience before the international studies, the length and the type of job performed. Finally, to complement the existing information from the original database regarding international mobility, participants were asked if they had concluded their doctoral studies and if they had additional funding to the CONACYT scholarship **Appendix 1**.

The survey questionnaire was designed in English and then translated into Spanish and uploaded as an online survey in google forms allowing sending a unique link via email to participants. In the introductory information of the survey, the specific aim of the instrument, the general aim of the research and a confidentiality clause highlighting aspects of anonymity of participation and data protection were included. The advantage of this tool was the collection of all the survey responses in a single platform that could be downloaded in an excel spreadsheet facilitating the descriptive analysis. It also allowed moving through the survey in a way that participants could not leave unanswered questions in order to progress. Additionally, participants were automatically directed to the following section without having to go through the questions that were not applicable. The online tool also monitored the date of completion and sent an automated notification, allowing me to build a record of participation.

2.3 Interview design

A semi structured in-depth questionnaire was written in English and then translated into Spanish. In-depth information from a small number people can be very valuable for a given research particularly if those cases are information-rich (Seidman, 2013). Particularly, phenomenological in-depth interviews have been used retrospectively to examine the concrete experience of people in particular subject areas and the meaning their experience had for them. Moreover, the experiences of different

people are bracketed, analysed and compared to identify the fundamental nature of a given phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Therefore, considering the core aspects of this approach was appropriate for generating questions that could help examining what the international experiences of participants were and their specific meanings, and if there were associations with their further life trajectories.

The questionnaire was designed to be conducted in a single meeting and the themes addressed were enclosed and divided into four main categories: the process and decision to study abroad, the overall international experience, the transition process from the doctoral studies and the meaning of the international experience retrospectively **Appendix 2**. The first part of the interview focused on asking who the participants were, what their jobs were and what they entailed.

The next phases of the interview consisted in reconstructing the key constitutive events (education, jobs, experiences) that led them to consider studying abroad in the context of their lives (age, family, state of origin), their expectations, and the whole scholarship application process. The following part was to encourage them to narrate the details of what were the most significant recollections of the international experience in context with their social settings (family, friends, colleagues, teachers, member of the community), the diverse countries, institutions and programmes. The final section enabled them to reflect on the meanings of the international experience, if it influenced their present lives and if so, in what ways (Seidman, 2013).

Taking into consideration the limitation of time and financial resources to carry out this research, a minimum expected sample was projected to participate in the interviews in order to achieve sufficiency (Seidman, 2013). The minimum expected sample (n=13) included: at least one person from all the eight academic areas; at least one person from each of the eight main countries of destination; at least one person from any given academic area from a non-traditional destination; at least one individual working in a non-academic institution and, at least one person who did not conclude their doctoral studies. Moreover, at least two individuals who have settled overseas were expected to participate.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to be conducted with key informants (Findlay et al., 2012). The questions were formulated first to expand the information gathered from official documents about the institutional processes of allocation of scholarships throughout time, what have been the efforts to expand their regional availability and the diverse international cooperation strategies that exist with other institutions worldwide. This questionnaire was refined after conducting the interviews with former scholarship awardees. It included questions intended to make connections between particular experiences of the participants and the diverse aspects of the scholarships (characteristics of the awardees, application processes, joint scholarships, support from CONACYT, stipends). Finally, the questionnaire gathered information about their opinions about the scope of the programme in terms of the wider benefits for the awardees and the country (employment opportunities, social mobility, experiences, development, availability for minority groups) **Appendix 3**.

2.4 Pilot study

The survey and interview schedules were tested in November 2017 for content validity and to detect possible flaws in the research instruments through a pilot study (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). This was performed to ensure that the research design was going to be effective in obtaining data to answer the research questions within the time, budget and the skills constraints (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005 cited in Dikko, 2016). For this purpose, only individuals whose place of residence at the time of the pilot study was the UK were selected from the main sample (Dikko, 2016) and invited to participate in the survey. All the contact with the participants was done directly via UCL institutional email.

Personalised emails were sent to seven individuals, explaining briefly the purpose of the research and were invited to participate in the online survey providing a link **Appendix 6**. From those, three answered the questionnaire and two met the selection criteria. Both of them were invited to participate in the interview phase and accepted. A consent form was electronically signed prior to the interviews. I travelled to Manchester, UK on November 17th, 2017 to interview Elvia and Ricardo. The interviews lasted an hour each and were conducted in Spanish in public places selected by the participants. The interviewees were asked for consent to record the

conversations and they were aware that their participation was anonymous and that they could stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. After each meeting I made analytic memos on a research log that were further analysed together with the transcriptions. The interviews were fully transcribed at a later stage with the aid of *Sonix* automated online transcription software[17].

As part of a reflective approach, during the pilot study I was aware about my own positionality as a researcher and as an international student supported by a CONACYT scholarship programme. Moreover, I considered that this was important information to share with the participants. This allowed me to build rapport and to get rich, specific and relevant answers. It also made me aware that the interviewees found our conversations as a reflective process of their own sojourn and thus I had to allow them to share their experiences with only little intervention from me asking specific questions that they had not touched in their accounts. This allowed me achieving greater breadth and depth. Finally, in one of the conversations I realised that I did not agree with what the participant was saying. Therefore, it made me conscious of not conveying my opinion either verbally or with facial expressions to avoid interfering with the participants points of view. Reflections of my positionality are explained in more detail further in this section. No modifications were made to the survey and interview schedules therefore the information retrieved in the pilot study was incorporated in the research.

2.5 Survey and interview implementation

The cross-sectional survey was sent via a link attached to personalised emails to a total of 290 individuals found through the empirical search protocol who lived at that moment in 16 out of 32 different states representing seven of the eight regions in Mexico **Figure 5.** The states were chosen by the feasibility of traveling to them in the interview phase taking into account distance and safety considerations. The possibility to obtain information from individuals from diverse regions of the country, was key in gathering quantitative data from a diverse sample. Additionally, it enabled

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[17] Online transcription software https://sonix.ai/

the possibility of recording experiences and meanings linked to particular social, economic, environmental, geographical and cultural characteristics of each region.

Figure 5. Map of Mexico divided by geographic regions and states where the survey respondents live
Mexican land total surface area is 1,964,375 Km2

REGION		STATES
Norwest	1	Baja California Sur
	2	Baja California
	3	Sonora
Northeast	4	Nuevo Leon
West	5	Jalisco
East	6	Puebla
	7	Veracruz
	8	Hidalgo
	9	Tlaxcala
North central	10	Queretaro
	11	San Luis Potosi
	12	Guanajuato
South central	13	State of Mexico
	14	Mexico City
	15	Morelos
South east	16	Yucatan
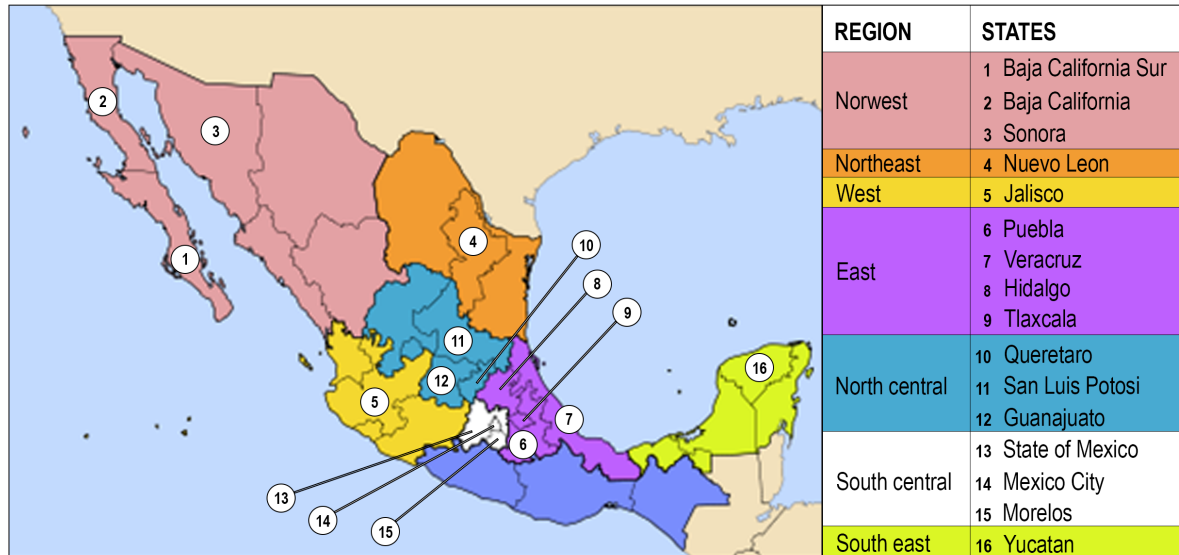
The invitation to participate in the survey was sent in several phases between the 9th of November 2017 and the 13th of February 2018 depending on the state of residence of the individuals. This allowed me to invite people to participate in the interview phase and schedule the interviews in an organised manner. Further and due to financial constraints, allowed to plan trips to different states in advance where more than one interview could take place on the same day.

The date in which the participants answered the questionnaire was recorded on a spreadsheet and whether they met the selection criteria. A single reminder was sent systematically to the individuals who had not yet filled in the questionnaire ten days after the first email.

The survey was closed on the 20th of February 2018 with a total of 120 individuals participating. From the 80 participants who met the selection criteria 48 were invited to participate in the interview phase following the protocol established in the pilot study. This decision was made based on financial possibilities to travel to conduct the interviews. In the particular case of individuals who studied in Canada, 12 answered the survey, only six met the selection criteria and two were invited to participate in the interview phase. These two individuals did not reply to the

invitation, therefore, experiences from people who had studied in this country were not obtained.

A total of 33 people from eight Mexican states from 5 different regions agreed to be interviewed. However, one interview was not carried out due to communication problems. The 30 interviews were conducted face-to-face between November 30th, 2017 and February 27th, 2018 and two over *Skype* in March and April 2018 **Table 5**. All the interviews lasted about an hour and were conducted in the participants' places of work in quiet spaces of their choosing. The main characteristics of the interviewees relevant to this study are showed in **Appendix 4**, all participants were identified with pseudonyms. During the interview phase, three participants rectified not meeting the selection criteria, one had Uruguayan parents and the other two had previous international experiences that they neglected to mention in the survey **Table 5**. Therefore, the information gathered from these three interviews was not analysed nor included in the findings.

Table 5. Interview participants by pseudonym, date and city where the interview took place

People interviewed	Date	State	Comments
Jorge	30.11.2017	Mexico City	
Paola	5.12.2017	Mexico City	
Mario	6.12.2017	State of Mexico	
Cynthia	8.12.2017	Morelos	
Nadia	15.12.2017	Mexico City	Nadia does not meet the selection criteria
Carlos, Gloria, **Maria**	16.01.2018	Morelos	Maria does not meet selection criteria
Julian	18.01.2018	Mexico City	
Jimena, Aldo	30.01.2018	Hidalgo	
Fabio	1.02.2018	Mexico City	
Rosa	6.02.2018	Morelos	
Alvaro, Cesar	7.02.2018	Mexico City	
Federico, Jaime, Arturo	8.02.2018	State of Mexico	
Humberto	12.02.2018	Quintana Roo	
Javier, Carmen	13.02.2018	Mexico City	
Jose, Juan	16.02.2018	Queretaro	
Fernando, **Ariel**, Adela	20.02.2018	Mexico City	Ariel does not meet the selection criteria
Hugo, Dinora, Galia	22.02.2018	Baja California Sur	
Raquel	27.02.2018	Mexico City	
Claudia	3.04.2018	Morelos	Skype
Victor	19.04.2018	Tlaxcala	Skype

The contact information from the CONACYT scholarship programme administrative staff was found on the official institutional website. Four key informants were contacted via email on February 14th, 2018 to invite them to participate in this study. As with the rest of the participants, the invitation included information about myself, the aims of the research and the confidentiality of participation. In this particular case, it was highlighted that I wanted to know their opinions regarding the scope of the international scholarships and the degree to which the objectives of the programme were met. Only one informant responded and agreed to participate. The interview took place October 15th, 2018 and followed the same protocol described for the rest of the interviews.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical compliance was considered in each step of the process. Participants were properly informed of the aims and scope of the research in the two phases of the research. Firstly, in the invitation sent to take part in the survey, I clearly explained who I was, the aim of the survey, how I got their information and contact details and encouraged them to contact me at any given time for the duration of the project if they had further enquiries **Appendix 6**.

In the second phase of the research, an email was sent to invite participants to the interview and provided an information sheet **Appendix 7**. Once the interview was scheduled all the participants were asked to sign an electronic written consent. At the same time, they were reassured that the information provided was going to be safely guarded and their identities anonymized throughout the duration of the research and during the dissemination and use of the findings' stages. Participants were made aware that they had the right to withdraw at all stages of the research.

It was also important that the participants understood that even when I am also an awardee from CONACYT international scholarship programme, I have no other contractual relationship or commitment with CONACYT. Therefore, all the data collected was exclusively for my own study purposes.

Throughout the whole research process I have been aware about my positionality as an "insider" not only because I share similar cultural, national and linguistic heritage with the participants (Ganga and Scott, 2006, Merriam et al., 2001), but also as an

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international student supported by the same international scholarship. The importance of recognising differences and asymmetries between the researcher and the participant such as level of education, socio-economic background and gender when conducting research has been pointed out in the literature (Chereni, 2014). Assuming positionality and making it visible and clear to the participants allows the collection and interpretation of reliable data (Ibid). Additionally, it creates awareness of the potential biases and is helpful to minimize preconceptions of the object of research (Gill, 2005).

During the pilot study the participants felt comfortable talking with someone who they could identify with and thus my own positionality became an important element in the fieldwork process to build rapport. The creation of a sense of community in the perceived homogeneity that can enhance trust and openness has been acknowledge in migration studies (Merriam et al., 2001). In general, my identity as a Mexican and an international student offered an advantageous position to better understand cultural aspects and traditions, meanings and experiences of the participants.

Several participants acknowledged that they found stimulating to be able to talk about their international experiences with someone that understood them and thus, they felt identified with me. Jorge for instance, who attended the former Wye College (owned by Imperial College London) used some "English" slang in our conversation and expressed his satisfaction in being able to do that. Some were explicit in saying that they felt "like they were talking to a therapist". In this respect Rosa, who did not finish her doctoral studies (Chapter VIII), explained that one of the reasons she was interested in participating in this study was to "vent that CONACYT did not care if she was happy or not" during her doctoral studies.

Since I interviewed people who did their undergraduate studies in Mexico and their doctoral studies abroad like me, there was no difference in the power relationship. For instance, when they spoke about the comparisons between HE systems, I shared with them when appropriate that I studied at UNAM, a Mexican public university, and thus they felt that I understood what they meant. In this sense, I became aware that being able to conduct the interviews in person in the institutions where the participants worked changed my own preconceptions particularly about Mexican HEIs. As an alumnus of UNAM and having worked at the administrative

level at that institution I realised that despite my working experience, I had a very narrow view about the economic struggles that public universities in Mexico face in general.

Both my parents did graduate studies in the UK and thus I am aware that taking part of their own international mobility experiences, informed my own sojourn. This aspect of my life separated me from the participants of this study because I did have international experiences prior to my doctoral studies. Nonetheless, it allowed me to understand better the stories about the participants who had children and the importance that those family relations signified to them. In my conversations with the participants who studied in the UK, there was a high degree of identification and understanding between us when they talked about peoples' behaviours, language, weather and food. However, when I interviewed people who studied in other countries, I became an "outsider" in some ways and thus I was able to ask questions that could further help understand the nuances of their experiences. Therefore, there was a constant tension between the way they lived, understood and made sense of their own experiences and my own personal experience.

Regarding social class, when I conducted fieldwork, during the analysis and almost all the writing phase, I was a single woman, who was brought up in a progressive middle-class family and the colour of my skin is generally associated with higher social classes. Both my parents are full-time academics in public universities (UNAM and UAM) in Mexico City. An important part of this research has been exploring the socio-economic provenance of the participants to analyse the educational opportunities they had and to what extent they influenced their ISM experiences.

Through the surveys, using their parents' level of education and occupations as proxies (Loeb et al., 2017) I inferred that at least one third of the survey respondents came from lower socio/economic backgrounds (Chapter V). Therefore, I had this information prior to the interviews. However, the interviewees shared, without me asking any questions, if their parents did not have formal education or when they came from working class families. I did not detect in any of the conversations while they took place nor when analysing the transcripts, verbal expressions that could have denoted discomfort in the participants by their perceptions of my social class.

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Through the conversations, issues related with gender became relevant aspects to be analysed in this study (Chapter VII). As a single woman I felt identified with the female participants who travelled on their own and developed further successful careers. It was also the case with the ones who confronted their preconceived ideas about gender roles. Even when I was brought up by liberal parents, I understand the cultural aspects related with traditional gender roles in Mexico. Therefore, I was aware of the tensions when there were views that I did not share with men and woman about related issues. In these particular cases thus, I was able to act exclusively as an enquirer and not express my opinions.

During the research design I was aware that since I was looking for personal experiences and meanings, there was potential risk to talk about issues that were likely to be sensitive or conflictual for the respondents. In some interviews the participants were moved to tears when they recalled specific challenging situations for them. In all the cases I paused the interview and allowed them to compose themselves. Then, I explained that they did not have to talk further about the issues if they did not wish to and they were asked if they wanted to stop the interview. In all the cases they were comfortable resuming the conversations.

In the case of the CONACYT informant I made sure that she understood that my interest in the interview was solely for research, that the information provided was going to be anonymized and not shared with third parties and only published for academic use. She was also informed that she could withdraw at any stage of the research.

3   Data analysis

This section addresses the analytical process followed in this research. First, it describes the way in which the information gathered through the survey was analysed. Secondly, the systematic process carried out to analyse the interviews.

3.1 Quantitative analysis

The survey instrument data was analysed using descriptive statistics and simple graphics analysis. This data included the responses from the pilot study and the overall answers from the survey. All the information collected with the survey in the google document was exported to an excel spread sheet and analysed in Spanish, some of the answers were then translated into English to build the graphics presented in this study. The aim was to establish the general socioeconomic, educational and professional characteristics of the population under study which was key when conducting the interviews. It also allowed the detection of patterns that informed the way in which the qualitative analytical chapters were constructed (Loeb et al., 2017). The occupations of the parents were classified using the operational categories from the National Statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SEC). The overall quantitative findings were compared with sociodemographic data retrieved from the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) and with existing literature. The complete analysis is presented in chapter V and further discussed in the qualitative analytical chapters where the quantitative results are used to contextualise some of the qualitative findings (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Qualitative analysis

Informed by grounded theory, systematic steps were carried out to generate the categories of information that could further help uncovering social relationships and behaviours (Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

Firstly, notes were carried out throughout the interviews when required. At the end of each interview, the recording was listened and analytic memos were performed in a research log (Miles et al., 2014) allowing the examination of the data, making comparisons, asking questions, coming up with concepts to stand for meaning and denote what seemed to be properties and dimensions of the codes (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). The memos were developed reflecting on participants´ perceptions and relationships, the emergent themes across interviews, possible connections around specific aspects of the experiences and outlining initial code choices and their operational definitions (Saldaña, 2016). Moreover, they identified some connections between the narratives and the existing literature providing some clues

to follow in consecutive interviews to help answering the research questions. Finally, they included my own reflections, attitudes and emotions towards the interviewees their narratives and if I encountered any dilemmas that should be further taken into consideration when analysing the data. Both notes and memos were hand-written in English.

As explained earlier, I fully transcribed the interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) in Spanish with the aid of *Sonix* automated online transcription software[17] after finishing fieldwork. This software first fully transcribes audio to a written form and then the recording is listened simultaneously while the corrections to the text are made word by word by the researcher. I maintained the repetitions, emphasis in intonation utterances and emotional expressions. A first cycle of descriptive coding was applied while I was transcribing each interview. This process was enriched with the analytic memos contributing towards categorizing the emergent themes across the transcriptions and the further development of a coding system. **Table 6** shows some of the most relevant themes, patterns and concepts identified through this process.

Table 6. Emerging themes and concepts identified in the first cycle of coding

Influencing factors	
City of origin/cultural background	Socio-economic background/external influences
Skills and knowledge acquired	
Independence, problem solving, learning to do things on their own, research freedom	Changing identities/degree of "Mexicanity"
Respect, tolerance, acceptance of other cultures, mastering a different language	Network building, recognition by the international community
Elements of social change	
Teaching, influence on students, influence on children (offspring)	International collaboration, research, students exchange, increase job opportunities
Working with vulnerable communities (indigenous women, urban farming), coastal sustainable management	Decrease gender difference/egalitarian societies, upward social mobility

The second cycle of coding consisted of an in vivo and inductive coding (Miles et al., 2014). In vivo coding was suitable since the participants' experiences and individual meanings were prioritized and enabled a summary of data segments (Saldaña, 2016). Moreover, inductive coding allowed the emergence of codes progressively throughout the analysis of the transcriptions (Miles et al., 2014).

This process allowed to develop a code key embedded in five major categories representing specific moments that were determinant in the participants sojourn. a) Decisions to study abroad b) Prior education and skills, and experiences related to the selection process of the scholarship c) International experience d) Experiences after the international experience, and e) Meanings of the international experience retrospectively. The emergent themes and the codes key were developed in English. All the codes have further explanations about their meaning and reasons to have been created. Once the code key was developed, it was introduced into NVivo software where a codebook was created **Appendix 5**.

Each transcription was then re-analysed using the codebook following an iterative, and systematic process. In the process of analysing the transcriptions and coding them, some new codes emerged, and additional meanings were given to the codes previously created. The quotes used in this study were translated to English until the writing process, being meticulous not to change meanings and in some instances, explaining the contextual meaning of particular expressions. The pilot study interviews and the interview with the key informant were also analysed following the process described above, and the findings discussed together with those from the rest of the interviews.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the rationale and pragmatic epistemology to have chosen a type II mix-methods design with a sequential data collection and a detailed description of the data collection methods and analysis. This methodology was the most appropriate to answer the research questions about what the experiences and meanings of the ISM sojourn were for the participants, and the extent to which they transformed their life paths.

Firstly, the quantitative data allowed the development of socio-economic, educational and professional profiles of former CONACYT international scholarship awardees. Secondly, the survey was key to purposefully select the participants for the interview phase and in providing key information about their heterogeneity and previous contextualised opportunities, suggesting that the mobility processes were experienced in different ways. This data was fundamental in the qualitative phase, to

gain deeper understanding of the individual experiences and meanings, and the ways in which diverse capabilities were developed through the mobility experience. Finally, the interview with the CONACYT informant provided supplementary valuable information to explore the extent to which the participants´ experiences and their achieved functionings mirrored the scholarship programme´s objectives.

Furthermore, this chapter has highlighted anonymity and emotional integrity of the participants as central aspects throughout this research. Additionally, it showed the constant consideration about my positionality as a researcher and as an "insider" reducing potential biases and gaining awareness of my assumptions of the object of research. The chapter that follows presents the findings of the quantitative analysis and further aspects of enquiry to be addressed in the qualitative chapters.

V. Quantitative findings: profile characteristics of Mexicans who studied abroad

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the survey. Section one deals with the age and sex of the participants, their diverse origins and backgrounds. Section two uses education and occupation of the parents as proxies suggesting the diverse socio-economic background of the study population. It additionally explores whether the parents had educational or professional experiences abroad. Section three shows that the majority of participants studied in public, free of charge Mexican HEIs, had master's degrees and further professional experience before their international sojourns. It further shows different levels of languages command and the association with their previous educational trajectories. Section four moves on to explore the preference of doctoral programmes, study destinations and any additional sources of funding for the international mobility journeys. Data about previous educational and socio-economic opportunities enabled the construction of the profiles of a sample of former mobile students supported by the CONACYT scholarship programme. These elements will help to understand the different experiences and meanings of the international sojourn and their further implication in the development of capabilities.

1. Who participated in the survey?

This section focuses on the residency of the respondents of the survey at the time of their participation making some connections with the characteristics of Mexican population and the location of Mexican HEIs. It then explores the age of former awardees at the time of studies and the diverse years they carried out their doctoral studies abroad. It finally explores the cultural diversity of the sample.

1.1 Place of residency

The survey was sent to 290 participants that were based in 16 different states in Mexico and seven who had their residencies in the UK as described in detail in chapter IV. From those, 120 responded to the survey, representing an overall 40%

response rate. **Figure 6** shows the number of people to which the survey was sent by states or country of residence and the response rate by state.

According to INEGI´s data for 2015, Mexico City is the second state most populous after the State of Mexico with approximately 9 million and 16 million inhabitants respectively, followed by Jalisco and Veracruz each with approximately 8 million, Puebla and Guanajuato each with 6 million, Nuevo Leon with 5 million and the Baja California peninsula (integrated by two states) with 4 million[18]. The rest of the 16 states included in this study, each have around two million inhabitants.

Figure 6. Number of people who were invited to participate in the survey, responses by place of residence and number of HEIs by state of residence

	Baja California	Guanajuato	Hidalgo	Jalisco	Mexico City	Morelos	Nuevo Leon	Puebla	Queretaro	San Luis Potosi	Sonora	State of Mexico	Tlaxcala	UK	Veracruz	Yucatan	Not known
Survey sent n=297	12	6	9	18	104	14	12	14	15	12	1	27	3	7	24	17	2
Respondents n=120	7	2	3	5	36	10	2	8	7	1	1	14	2	3	10	9	
Number of HEIs	115	111	60	201	340	86	101	226	68	93	114	242	40		208	78	

State of residency of survey respondents

What stands out from the results, is the high percentage of people that settled in Mexico City. This is predominantly associated with the centralisation of public HEIs, research centres and institutes and the availability of opportunities in the capital of the country compared with other states. In this sense, **Figure 6** additionally shows that the highest density of HEIs[19] are located in the central regions of the country

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[18] INEGI Mexico´s population information 2015.
http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/mex/poblacion/default.aspx?tema=me&e=15 Last consulted 03/09/2018

[19] The HEIs in Figure 6 include public and private universities, research centres and institutes, technological institutes and intercultural universities.

predominately in Mexico City, State of Mexico, Puebla, Veracruz and Jalisco. The availability of HEIs appears to be associated with the highest concentration of the population on those states. This also explains why there were more individuals from the study sample settled in those states.

1.2 Age and year of studies

The majority of the survey respondents (99) 82.5% were between 41 and 55 years old at the time of participating in the interview. Over one third (36%) of the respondents were between 46-50 years old and from those, over 40% carried out their doctoral studies in 1997. The 32 participants that were in the 41-45 age range were evenly distributed amongst the decade between 1997-2006 and were the second largest group of respondents with almost 27%. The third largest group of participants were from the 51-55 age range representing 20% of those who responded and more than half of them studied between 1997 and 1998 **Figure 7**.

Figure 7. Distribution of survey respondents by age and year of studies

	36-40 years	41-45 years	46-50 years	51-55 years	56-60 years	60 years or more
1997	1	3	18	8	5	
1998		4	10	6	4	
1999		6	4	5	2	
2000		3	3	1		
2001		2	1	1		
2002	1	3	4	2		
2003	1	3	1	1		1
2004		3	1			
2005	5	5	1			
2006	1					
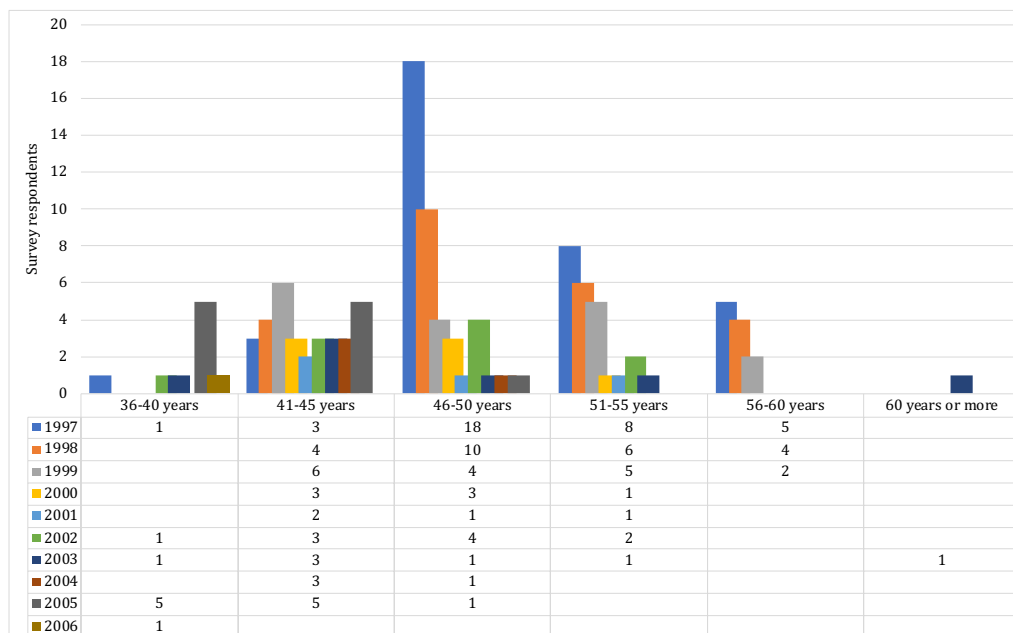
Over 60% of those who responded the survey were former awardees who studied abroad between 1997 and 1999. Grediaga (2019) explains that Mexicans who obtained international doctoral degrees in this period correspond with the accelerated expansion of HE in the country and the harsher entry and permanency requirements of Mexican HEIs. Further, and contrasted with the year of studies, it

can be observed that over half respondents travelled abroad for their doctoral studies when they were between 20 and 30 years old. Around 30% of the those surveyed were between 30 and 40 years old when they did their doctoral studies (see **Figure 7** above) suggesting that there was a high proportion of students carrying out doctoral studies later in life.

1.3 Sex

From the 297 individuals who received the invitation to participate in the survey,175 (60%) were males and 118 (40%) females. From the 120 of those who responded, 78 (65%) were males and just over one third (42) were females **Figure 8**. In the case of the interviews, the gender participation was 40% women and 60% men.

Figure 8. Distribution of sex among age ranges of survey respondents
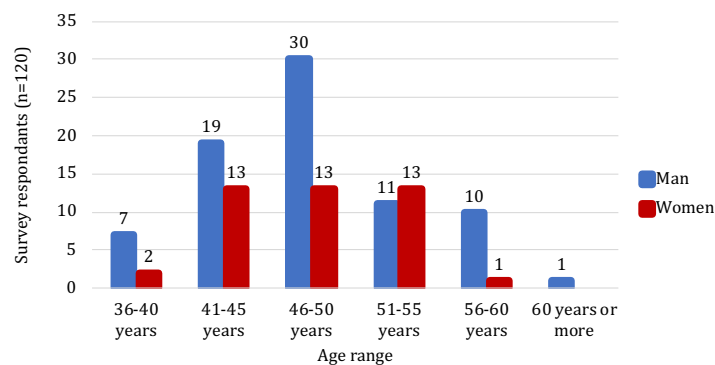
Throughout the different stages of this study the male and female ratio were constant. From the 8,626 students supported by the scholarships in the study period, 41% were women and contact details of 513 individuals were found with 37% of them being females. Ortega et al. (2002) reported an increase participation of women in the CONACYT scholarship programmes from 22% in 1971 to 38% at the beginning of 2000[20], which is consistent with the findings of this study. The OECD did not start recording participation in ISM by sex until 2014, therefore, there is not a clear picture of female participation in international programmes for the 1997-2006

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[20] Women participation was not disaggregated between females doing their graduate studies in Mexico or abroad.

period. In 2014, 48% of women were enrolled in international programmes worldwide (OECD, 2016).

1.4 Ethnicity and culture

The respondents were born in 21 out of 32 Mexican states and one in the USA (see **Figure 9** below), which, along with the array of states they currently live at **Figure 6** (p. 104**)**, confers diversity to the sample in relation to their social and cultural background. As described in chapter III, Mexico is considered a multicultural and multi-ethnic country with linguistic, social and cultural diversity. More than half of the participants (55%) were born in Mexico City, followed by the states of Veracruz (8%), Puebla (5%), State of Mexico and Sonora both with 3% **Figure 9**. Only one person from the survey respondents identified himself of Indigenous origin. The interviews were conducted with people born in eleven different states.

Ninety percent of the survey respondents had only Mexican nationality, the remaining 12 people had a second nationality, Spanish being the most frequent (6 people) which was acquired through parents or grandparents. The other six participants have German, British, Canadian, American or French nationality acquired by birth, through years spent in a given country, through their spouses or by naturalisation. Ninety five percent of former awardees´ parents were of Mexican origin, the other five percent are Argentinian, Cuban, Guatemalan or American. These findings show that even when the majority of former awardees had exclusive Mexican backgrounds, there was still a proportion of individuals with international ancestry who settled in Mexico. This can be compared with Grediaga´s (2019) findings who reported migratory antecedents in 20% of grandparents and 10% of parents of Mexican mobile students. They further associated these backgrounds with the acquisition of other languages and cultural diversity thus, they were not considered in this study for the interview phase.

Figure 9. Place of birth of the survey respondents
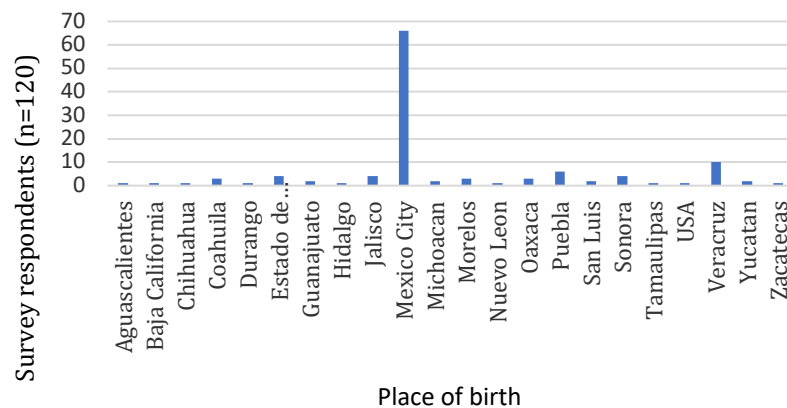
There is still greater participation in ISM supported by CONACYT of individuals born in Mexico City compared to other states. Efforts on decentralizing scientific and technological activities in the country started to be developed in 1996 and thus, equilibrium in the participation of different states was reported (Ortega et al., 2002). These findings seem to reflect those efforts inasmuch there was participation of people from states not reported previously. This was further confirmed by the CONACYT informant who mentioned that the Science and Technology Law[2] had clear objectives to decentralise the scholarships. This law paved the way for the creation of the Science and Technology State Councils and by 2012, CONACYT had agreements with the 32 Mexican states.

This section has shown that the participation of former awardees from different Mexican states provided an opportunity to explore and compare their diverse Mexican cultural backgrounds, place-based identities and ethnicity and the ways in which those influenced in one hand their decisions to study abroad, and on the other, their diverse international experiences (chapter VI, VII) (Leung, 2017). From a sociocultural perspective, characteristics such as age and gender also play an important role on learning processes, life experiences, values and learning outcomes (Ro and Knight, 2016). Therefore, these results incited to develop a further qualitative exploration of the different meanings of the interviewees experiences associated to their age and sex difference. Additionally, they opened the possibility of interviewing individuals who travelled alone and with their families (chapter VII). Further connections were also established between their different experiences and

the changing world economic and political circumstances of the years abroad (chapter VIII). The next section moves on to explore the socio-economic provenance of the participants.

2. Family socio-economic and educational backgrounds

This section presents the different levels of education and employment of the participants´ parents in order to determine the socio-economic characteristics of their households. It provides some evidence about the respondents´ siblings levels of education. The section finally unpacks the data about the educational and professional international experiences of their parents.

2.1 Parental levels of education and occupations

Regarding parents´ level of studies at the moment when participants were studying abroad, the pie charts on **Figure 10** shows overall that fathers had a higher level of education than mothers. However, there were still one third of fathers and almost half of mothers either with no formal education or with different degrees of education up to high school. Over a third of the fathers had undergraduate education compared to only 26% of mothers. However, the proportion of mothers with technical education was twice that of the fathers. There were less mothers with postgraduate studies and none with postdoctoral studies.

Figure 10. Survey respondents´ parents' level of studies
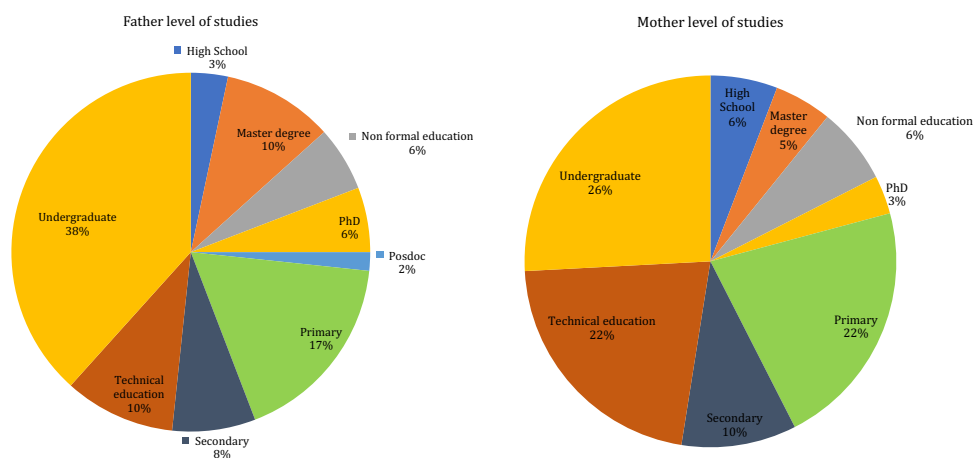
When comparing these results with the parents´ occupations, a direct correlation between the level of studies and the type of economic activity can be seen in the next figures.

Figure 11. Fathers economic activity and level of studies
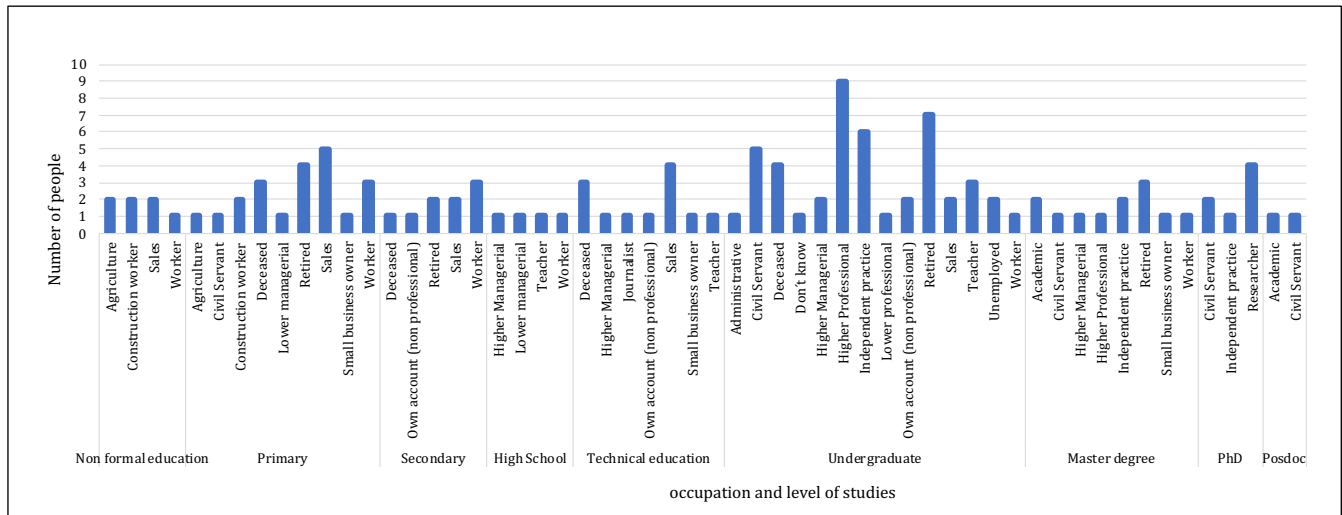
Figure 12. Mothers economic activity and level of studies
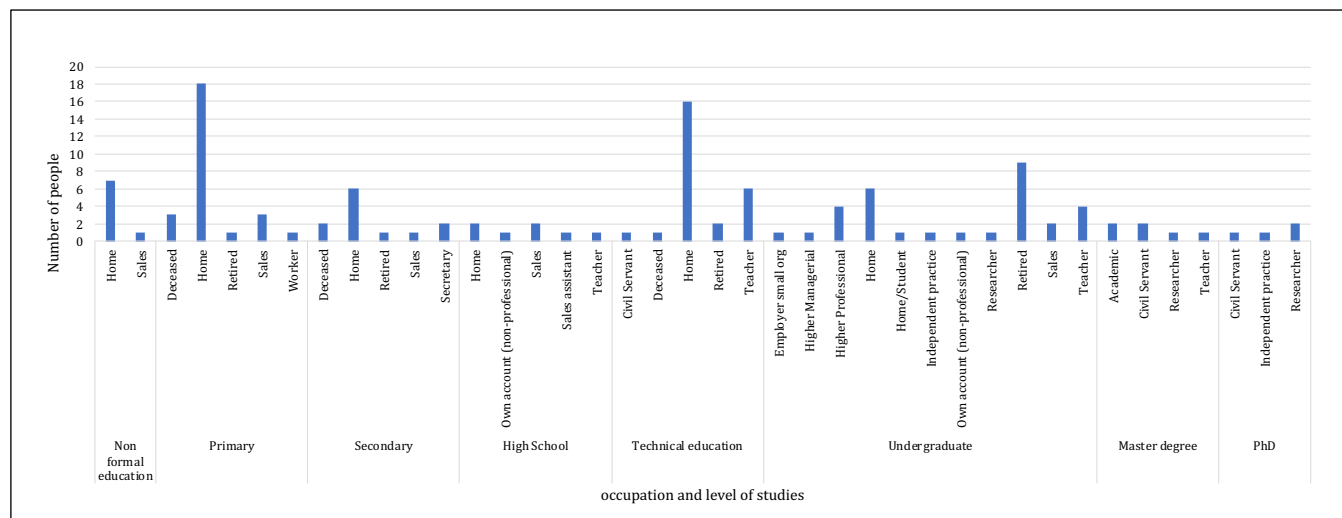
Several observations can be drawn from **Figure 11** and **Figure 12.** There are unemployed fathers accounted for, but none of the participants reported having a father with household related activities. Furthermore, there were no mothers reported to have been unemployed, and almost half of the total (46%) had a household activity. These women had different levels of studies, but primary or technical education were the most common level of studies for stay-home mothers. There were no mothers performing agriculture, construction, lower managerial or lower

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professional related activities. Women with master's degree or PhD levels did not have household related activities. These findings show that household work is not recognised as employment, is gendered based and is inversely proportional to the level of studies. Further, it can be seen that there is a direct proportional relationship between higher level of studies and higher skilled jobs.

For this work´s analysis purpose, INEGI census unit definition for a nuclear household is used[21]. When looking at both parents together, 31% of couples had lower levels of studies, 22% having only primary education, from these, the majority of mothers performed household activities and the fathers worked primarily in agriculture, construction (bricklayer) or in informal trade. This can be compared with INEGI census data for the year 2000[18], where 15% of the economically active population worked in the primary sector (agriculture, farming) and almost 30% in the secondary sector (mining, construction, manufacturing). Moreover, 30% of the population for the same year earned less than three minimum wages, and 17% were paid from three to five minimum wages. The daily minimum wage in 2000 was 37.90 Mexican pesos —less than three-pound sterling.

From the data, it can also be inferred that almost half of the households were economically supported only by the fathers. This claim can be supported by INEGI data where 83% of men were heads of the households and from the total of married women, only 25% had economically remunerated activities in contrast with 86% of married men[18]. Further, if both of the parents´ level of studies and their economic activities are considered together and using INEGI statistical data, it can be deduced that at least one third of the survey respondents came from a lower socio-economic background.

Almost two thirds of the fathers (79) had technical education or higher. When paired with the mothers, 63 (52%) had technical education or higher and only 22% were reported to have household activities. In the last case where the mothers stayed at home, the jobs of the fathers varied being the most frequent: civil servant, higher managerial, higher professional followed by academia and independent practices.

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[21] Two parent nuclear household: family household in which the head, spouse and children are present. http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/app/glosario/default.html?p=CPV1990 Last consulted 14.08.2018

The maximum level of education of the parents of almost half of interviewees was secondary school. Over a third of interview participants were brought up in families where the mothers had household activities exclusively and their fathers were farmers, workers or traders. The quantitative findings show that a high proportion of parents of this particular study population did not have undergraduate studies and performed low skilled jobs. These findings differ from previous studies were UK students were more likely to participate in Erasmus exchanges if at least one parent had higher education (Findlay and King, 2010).

Further, the data also shows that at least one third of the participants were brought-up in families from lower socio-economic strata, while half of them were part of families with breadwinner fathers and mothers with full-time household activities. These findings are contrary to prior studies which have noted that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds have higher participation in ISM supported by the Kazakhstan's Bolashak programme compared to students from working-class backgrounds (Holloway et al., 2012). Therefore, the findings presented in this thesis suggest the need to explore what are the motivations of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to study abroad and the ways in which class influences ISM in the Mexican context. Further if there are differences on the capabilities developed —before and during the mobility experiences, that could be associated with social class and cultural background.

2.2 High proportion of siblings with higher education

Ninety six percent of the survey respondents reported having at least one sibling, from those 14% have one sibling, 31% have two, 35% have three, 6% have four and five siblings respectively, and 8% have six (see **Figure 13** below). Moreover, 70% of the total number of siblings from the 120 participants were reported to have undergraduate studies or higher, 18% up to high school and 12% with primary or secondary education (see **Figure 14** below). Adding up the siblings' data to the household´s information it shows that one third of the households were constituted of three children and one third of four children.

Figure 13. Percentage of number of siblings of survey respondents
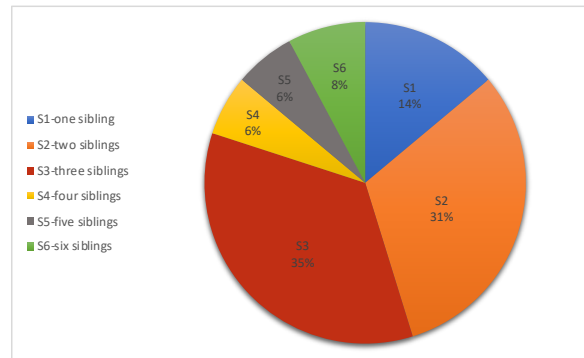
Figure 14. Percentage of level of studies of all the participants´ siblings
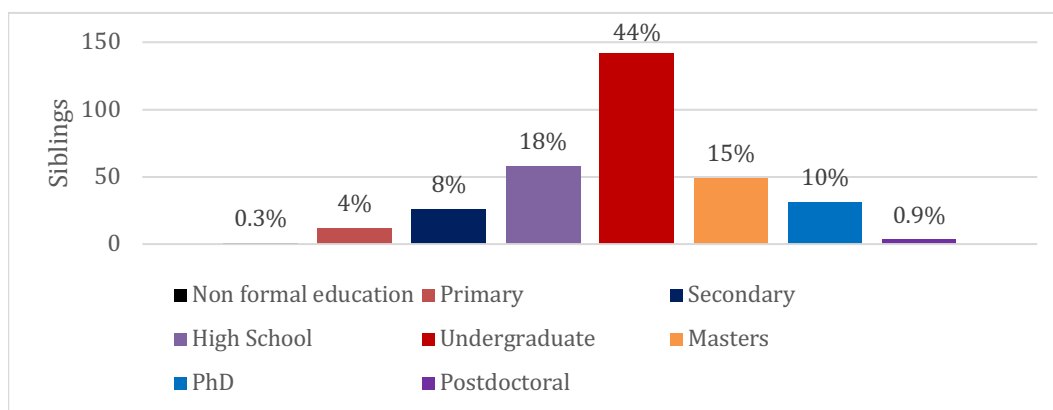
These findings mirror those of Grediaga (2019) who found an association between lower socio-economic strata and larger families. Moreover, that in those families there were some siblings without high levels of education.

2.3 Parents without international experiences

From the 120 participants, 75% (90) of both parents never lived abroad. From the 25% of parents that did, 12 (10%) fathers, and seven (6%) mothers lived in other countries and nine percent of both parents (11) lived in other countries. When looking at the parents who had international experiences it can be observed that only two had secondary education, the rest had at least high school education, and the most frequent level of education was undergraduate followed by PhD, master´s degree and technical education. The frequency of mothers with technical education was greater than of the fathers and there were more fathers with PhDs and master´s

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degrees than mothers. Almost 40% of fathers (11) studied abroad compared to only 14% of mothers (4), 17% of mothers (5) went abroad as their spouses´ companions. Only 17% of fathers (5) and 13% of mothers (4) lived in another country for employment reasons. The rest of the respondents answered "other" as an option; therefore, it is difficult to determine why they lived abroad. However, from the 27% of fathers (8) which answered "other", half of them were born in other countries; therefore, it can be assumed that living abroad for them means they have migrated to Mexico. The same is true for mothers, which from the 20% who answered "other" as a reason to live abroad (6), two thirds were born in a different country than Mexico. Thus, from the 30 participants that reported international experience of the parents, 25 fathers and 24 mothers were of Mexican origin and the remaining were from Argentina, Cuba, Guatemala, Spain and the USA.

Regarding countries of destination almost two thirds of the parents who lived abroad and were of Mexican origin went to the USA, 20% chose countries in central/south America or the Caribbean and 12% chose Germany and UK respectively.

Previous studies suggest that students who have parents or relatives with international mobility experiences are more likely to engage in ISM (Findlay and King, 2010, Brooks and Waters, 2011, Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014). From this data, it can be observed than a high proportion of parents did not have international experiences and thus, it does not seem to be a necessary requirement for Mexican students supported by the scholarship to have chosen to study abroad. It is left to be seen if the diverse international experiences of parents of Mexican origin could have informed the participants´ motivations to look for educational opportunities in other countries.

This section has established the socio-economic backgrounds of the families of the respondents using their parents´ level of education, their occupations, the number of siblings and their level of education as proxies (Loeb et al., 2017). A major finding from this analysis is that at least one third of the study population were brought-up in working-class families. Moreover, there was a high proportion of parents who did not have undergraduate studies or international experiences suggesting that there are other push/pull factors influencing respondents´ ISM participation. Much of the ISM literature looks at degree mobility at the undergraduate level and within push factors,

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the importance of the influence of parents, particularly of middle-class families, in the decision-making processes and financial capacities to afford sending their children abroad (Colclough and Arif, 2005).

The exploration of the associations between social and cultural capital and international mobility becomes crucial to understand the particularities of the study population (chapter VI). Further the extent to which parents influenced decisions to study abroad and supported former awardees. In the next section the key findings related to the different education trajectories of the participants and their if any, professional experiences prior ISM are presented.

3. Previous educational and professional trajectories of participants

This section first analyses the educational opportunities of the participants and whether they were enrolled in the private or public sector by level of studies. It further explores the distribution of the respondents by HEIs and the different Mexican states and their choices of undergraduate studies. It then presents the proportion of respondents who had graduate studies previous to the international mobility experience, the different levels of languages command and the ways in which they were learned. Finally, it looks at the proportion of former awardees with professional experience before their doctoral studies.

3.1 High participation in public HEIs and preference for engineering, chemistry and biology

Overall, 60% of participants attended public institutions up to high school. In the case of undergraduate studies, 86% were enrolled in 25 different public HEIs and the rest in seven private universities (see **Table 7** below). It can be observed that 45% of the survey respondents studied in HEIs in Mexico City, 10% in the State of Mexico, 8% in Veracruz, 8% in the states of the Baja California Peninsula, 12% in Puebla and the rest 17% is distributed across 13 different states **Figure 15** (p. 117). Almost one third of the survey respondents moved to another city to pursue undergraduate studies, from these, one fourth moved to Mexico City and one fourth to the Baja California peninsula, these last to study Marine Biology or Oceanography.

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Table 7. Distribution of survey respondents in Mexican public and private HEIs for undergraduate studies

Institution	Survey respondents	Institution	Survey respondents
BUAP	2	UAQ	2
Instituto Tecnologico de Celaya	1	UDLA Puebla	5
Instituto Tecnologico de Hermosillo	1	UNAM	33
Instituto Tecnologico de Orizaba	1	UNAM (ENEP, Acatlan)	1
Instituto Tecnologico de Veracruz	1	UNAM (FES Zaragoza)	1
Instituto Tecnologico del Mar	1	Universida Autonoma de Guerrero	1
IPN	5	Universidad Autonoma de Chapingo	7
ITAM	2	Universidad Autonoma de Coahuila	2
ITESM	2	Universidad Autonoma de San Luis Potosi	1
ITESO	2	Universidad de Guadalajara	3
ITSON	1	Universidad de Sonora	1
UAAAN	1	Universidad Iberoamericana	2
UABC	10	Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango	1
UADY	2	Universidad la Salle	3
UAEM	3	Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolas de Hidalgo	1
UAEMEX	1	Universidad Regiomontana	1
UAM	2	Universidad Veracruzana	8
UAM-Azcapotzalco	2	**Total of survey respondents**	**120**
UAM-Iztapalapa	5		
UAM-Xochimilco	2		

*Private institutions are highlighted in dark grey

Figure 15. Distribution of survey respondents by city of undergraduate studies and type of HEI
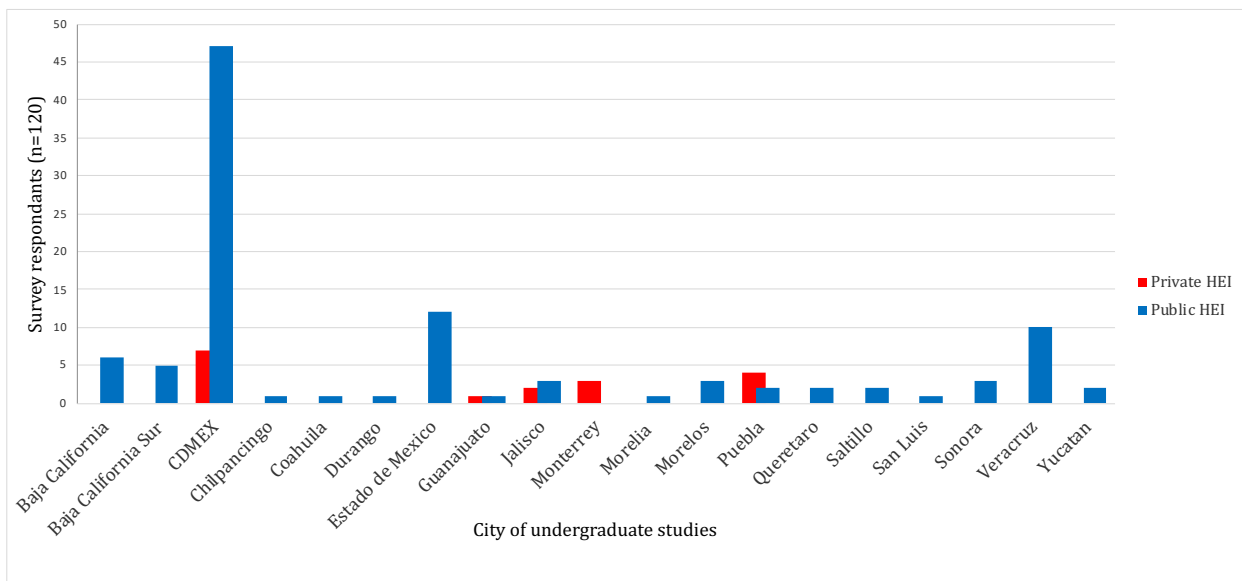
Moreover, in **Figure 16** it is depicted that biology and engineering were preferred undergraduate degrees followed by chemistry. However, when looking at the degrees clustered in knowledge areas it can be observed that degrees within applied engineering, natural sciences and social sciences areas had the same proportion of students, followed by exact sciences and applied biology areas. Earth, ocean and atmosphere degrees were less common among the respondents followed by health and behavioural sciences.

Figure 16. Distribution of survey respondents by undergraduate studies and CONACYT's knowledge areas

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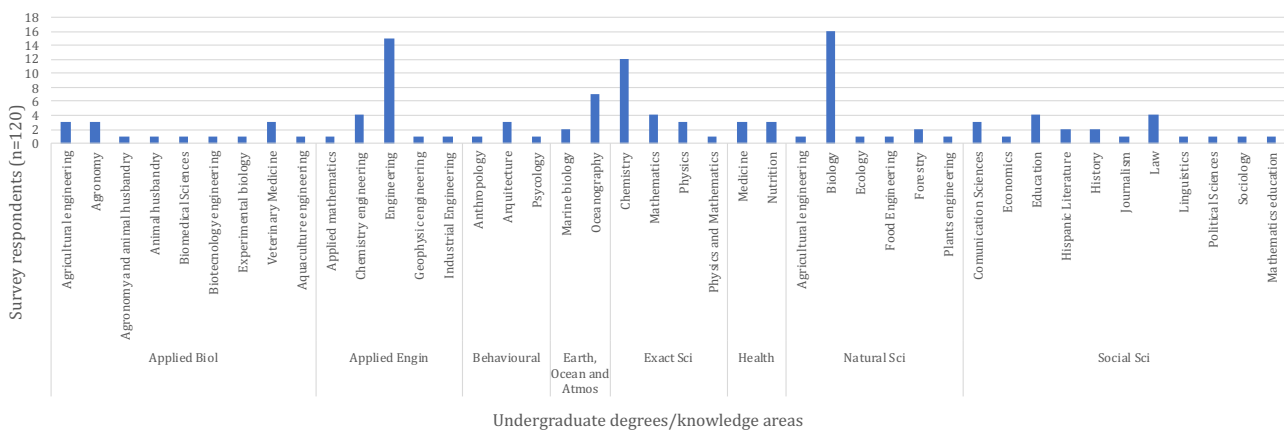
Ninety five percent (32) of the interviewees attended ten different public HEIs for their undergraduate studies in eight Mexican states. 26% chose degrees in natural sciences, 15% in applied biology and social sciences respectively, 12% in applied engineering and exact sciences respectively and the rest in other knowledge areas. Moreover, almost one third moved from their hometowns to other cities to pursue higher education.

These results show that the majority of respondents carried out their undergraduate studies in public, free of charge Mexican institutions and almost half of them in Mexico City, which is also associated with a high density of HEIs showed in **Figure 6** (p. 104). Additionally, even when the graph in **Figure 16** shows an evident preference for the specific subjects of engineering, biology and chemistry, if we look at the broader academic areas, there were similar participation of students in the applied biology, engineering and social sciences fields. However, in order to understand the needs of the society it is germane to explore the decision-making processes, if the choices they made were associated to particular regions of the country, or if students had to relocate to attend university owing to lack of provision in their own regions along with the personal implications to have done so. Together these findings led to develop an exploration of the ways in which diverse previous educational trajectories informed two fundamental aspects of the ISM experience. Firstly, students' choices of international programmes, institutions and destinations (chapter VI) and secondly, their influence on the international sojourn, with special focus on the academic realm (chapter VIII).

3.2 Participants with master´s degrees

Over 100 respondents (87%) had master´s degrees before their doctoral studies, from those, 75% studied in Mexico and 95% of them in public institutions. From the 25% of respondents that pursued these degrees abroad, 40% of them went to UK universities and 20% to US HEIs, the rest chose institutions in New Zealand, Germany, Canada, Spain and Sweden. In the case of the interview participants, 23 of them (68%) had master's degrees.

This reveals that the majority of respondents who carried out doctoral studies abroad had previous specialised training in their fields of interest. This could be largely

attributed to the propelling of postgraduates in Mexico discussed in chapter III. Further, and resulting from the latter, CONACYT started giving preference to doctoral programmes abroad over master degrees (Lopez-Murillo, 2015). It additionally shows a difference in the educational paths of Mexican students compared to the ones in the UK and Europe. In Mexico, undergraduate degrees take from four to six years to be completed and all master's degrees are two-year programmes. This finding incited the exploration of the different previous educational trajectories of the participants and to question to what extent they associated their academic performance in the international settings to the HE received in Mexico (chapter VIII).

3.3 Proficiency of English language

Almost 90% percent of the sample reported some proficiency in other languages in addition to Spanish. Among these 106 participants, all reported speaking English with different levels of command from basic communication skills to excellent command, however, only 75% of them reported having some form of writing skills. French was the second most popular language, 40% of participants with languages competences reported different levels of spoken French and 30% of them also registered varied degrees of writing abilities. **Figure 17** below depicts that regardless of the country of destination all participants had some English language competences, nonetheless English-speaking countries were the most popular. Knowledge of German was directly proportional in relation to the number of people that chose to study in Germany as shown in **Figure 17** below and **Figure 4** (p. 86). For instance, only 13% of participants with languages knowledge reported different levels of spoken German and 10% writing skills, however 7/9 of those attended German institutions.

Knowledge of Portuguese was also reported with 7% of the 106 participants with languages command, in this case all of them had English spoken and written abilities and almost all of them spoke French, therefore Portuguese was a fourth language for these participants. **Table 8** below, shows that private languages schools and tutoring were the most frequent paths for respondents to have learned other languages (66%) in addition to the foreign language instruction at different levels of their education paths.

Figure 17. Distribution of survey respondents by language proficiency and countries of destination
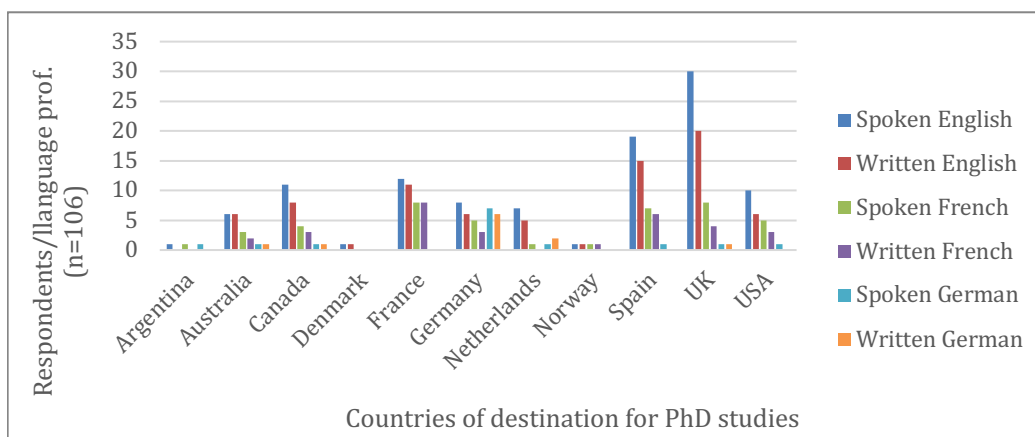
Table 8. Second language diverse education paths

Mode of learning	Language command
All schooling levels	4
All schooling levels/Mother tong	1
All schooling levels/Private language school	24
All schooling levels/Private tutor	1
All schooling levels/Public language school	2
High school	1
High school/Private language school	3
High school/Public language school	2
High school/University	2
High school/University/Private language school	3
Primary	2
Primary/secondary	3
Primary/secondary/high school	8
Primary/secondary/Private language school	1
Private language school	19
Private language school/Mother tong	1
Private tutor	6
Private/Public language school	1
Public language school	4
Public/private language school	1
Public/private language school/tutor	1
Secondary/High school/Private language school	3
Secondary/High school/Private tutor	3
Secondary/Private tutor/Public language school	1
Secondary/University/Private language school	2
University	3
University/Private language school	4
Total	**106**

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Equity and access have been critical issues raised when analysing which students obtain international scholarships. Of particular interest is their languages proficiency and the means of acquisition of those skills (Knight, 2014). Thus, the question resides on if those who cannot afford the additional training, have the same opportunities as the ones who can. Moreover, if the deficient language skills of the students that succeeded in getting financial support, were an obstacle in their doctoral programmes and in their daily lives and, the different ways in which —the students and the institutions, tackled those deficiencies. Finally, if people with poor foreign language skills looked for other education pathways, such as choosing destinations with the same language as their own, how different those experiences and social interactions were and their perceptions on how they could have influenced their international experience.

3.4 Professional experience before doctoral studies

Eighty percent (96) of the survey respondents reported having professional experience before their doctoral studies, from those 40% worked in Mexico City, 12% in the State of Mexico, 10% in the states of the Baja California Peninsula, 5% in Veracruz, 4% in Morelos. The rest had jobs in the states of Yucatan, Jalisco, Puebla, Querétaro, Tlaxcala, Sinaloa, Durango, Hermosillo, Nuevo Leon, Michoacán, Coahuila. Three people reported to have had jobs in Venezuela, Germany and Canada. These results can be contrasted with the ones reported by Grediaga (2019) who found that 60% of the students from their study had jobs prior to the international sojourn. They additionally enabled to explore in what ways the diverse professional trajectories influenced the international experiences of the former awardees.

Overall, the findings of this section show that the majority of the survey respondents were enrolled in different subjects from varied academic areas in public Mexican free of charge universities. Further, that a large proportion of participants additionally had master's degrees and professional experience before their international doctorates. These results allowed further exploration of the ways in which educational and professional paths informed the decisions to study abroad and the effects on the international experiences. The qualitative examination will broaden our understanding of the diverse backgrounds and individual heterogeneities of the

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population of study that could have played a part on how their life trajectories were shaped.

In relation to the socio-economic background of former doctoral students, and hand in hand with what already has been argued about equity and access to international mobility, it was worth analyzing the overall results obtained in the survey about family backgrounds along with what participants had to say regarding their family history, against the claims that affirm that only economically privileged students have access to this type of mobility (Walters 2012). Additionally, if the Mexicans educated abroad can be recognized tabula rasa as an "educated elite", if they considered having advantages in the labour market over the locally trained, or despite being highly trained scholars they have had experienced disadvantaged positions in view of the particular economic and political context and/or by having left the country (Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017). Nonetheless, this examination opens the discussion about the possibility that part of the Mexican society has been in fact experiencing social mobility through this scholarship programme. Moreover, it provided additional information at regional levels about the experiences of former doctoral students regarding labour opportunities that could better inform the design of internationalisation strategies for people to achieve the functionings they value. The next and final section moves on to examine what were the preferred knowledge areas, countries of destination and if the participants had other sources of funding for their international studies.

4. Choices of international doctoral programmes, countries of destination and funding

This section explores the preference in relation to subjects, doctoral programmes and study destinations, making some connections with the CONACYT programme regulations to award scholarships. It then examines the different additional sources of funding the respondents mentioned having to complement the CONACYT scholarship. Finally, it deals with the proportion of the study sample that successfully culminated the doctoral studies and the types of jobs they had at the time of the survey.

In the case of the chosen knowledge areas there was a clear dominance of respondents from programmes within the applied biology area followed by applied engineering as depicted in **Figure 18**. What stands out is the low proportion of people carrying out postgraduate studies in social sciences compared to their undergraduate degrees[22]. Ortega et al. (2002) recorded for the 1971-2000 period, over one third of studies abroad in business and social sciences areas, 29% in engineering and 20% for applied biology and natural and exact sciences respectively supported by the scholarship programme. In **Figure 4** (p. 86) there is a clear depiction that a high proportion of awardees were enrolled in programmes in the applied engineering area, therefore a high response from the biology area is only a characteristic of the sample population and cannot be considered as a trend. The choice of subjects from the interviewees was 29% (7) in applied biology, 15% (5) in applied engineering, natural sciences and behavioural sciences respectively, 12% (4) in Earth, ocean and atmosphere, 9% (3) in exact sciences and health respectively, and 6% (2) in social sciences.

Figure 18. Distribution of survey respondents by knowledge areas of doctoral studies
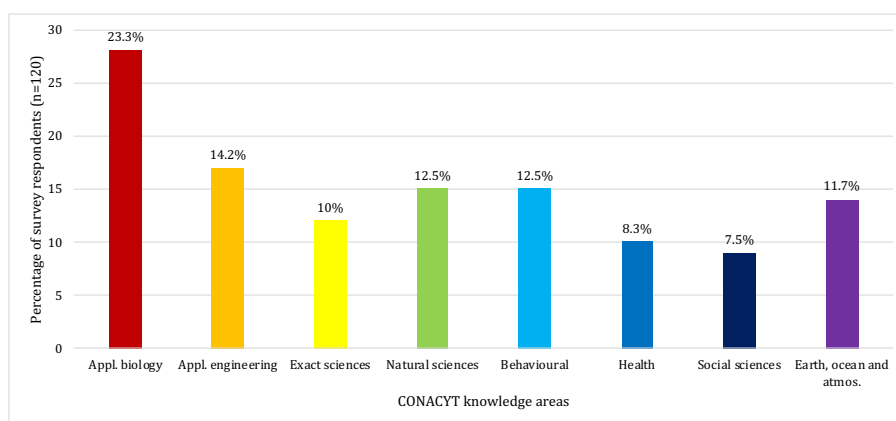
Further, comparing these findings with the data from **Figure 16** (p.117), it can be observed that there is an apparent movement of people among the knowledge areas from the undergraduate towards the postgraduate studies. The latter can be

[22] Humanities' programmes are included in the social sciences. The arts are supported by other CONACYT-FINBA and FONCA specific scholarships.

explained by three main factors: Firstly, the plasticity of the degrees that enabled movement across disciplines for example between the natural sciences and the applied biology, between natural sciences and earth, ocean and atmosphere areas or between exact sciences and applied engineering. Secondly, the subjectivity on which the programmes are classified within the areas and thirdly, the increased support of disciplines that were embedded in the strategic knowledge areas established in the PECYT in 2002[23].

4.2 High response from participants who studied in the UK, Spain and Australia

Figure 19 shows the number of people to whom the survey was sent and the proportion of responses by the country where the doctoral studies were carried out[24]. The response rate from people who studied in the UK was 64%, 50% from the Netherlands, 46% from individuals who attended Spanish and Australian institutions, 35% from Canada and 33% from Germany, 30% from USA and 29% from France.

Figure 19. Number of people who were invited to participate in the survey and number of respondents by country of destination for doctoral studies

	Argentina	Australia	Canada	Costa Rica	Cuba	Czech Republic	Denmark	France	Germany	Netherlands	New Zealand	Norway	Spain	UK	USA	Puerto Rico
Survey sent (n=297)	3	13	34	2	2	1	1	55	27	16	1	2	46	54	39	1
Respondents (n=120)	2	6	12				1	16	9	8		1	21	32	12	

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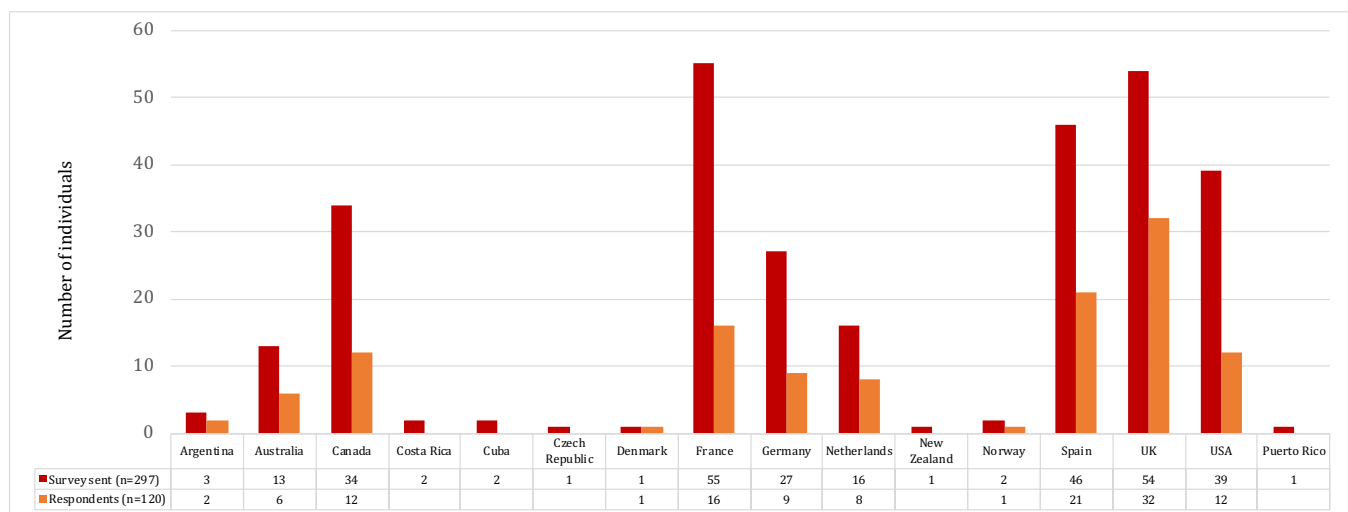
[23] PECYT 2001-2006 Strategic knowledge areas: information and communication technologies, biotechnology, materials, design and manufacture processes and, urban and rural development and infrastructure. http://www.siicyt.gob.mx/index.php/normatividad/nacional/programa-especial-de-ciencia-tecnologia-e-innovacion-peciti/2001-programa-especial-de-ciencia-y-tecnologia/621-programa-especial-de-ciencia-y-tecnologia-2001-2006/file Last consulted 19/06/2020.

[24] As explained in chapter IV, the invitation to participate in the survey was sent based on the former awardees´ current city of residence and the further financial possibility to interview them. Therefore, the countries of destination on this figure do not reflect the destination preferences of the population of study.

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As for the interview participants 38% (13) studied in the UK, 12% (4) in Germany, Spain and France respectively, 9% (3) in Australia and the USA and 6% (2) in the Netherlands. Recent data on ISM shows that the USA, UK, France, Germany and Australia are the destinations hosting the largest number of international students at the masters and doctoral levels (OECD, 2016), nonetheless this trend has been recorded for the past two decades where USA, UK and Australia have been recruiting a large proportion of Chinese and Indian students, France and Germany have been favourite continental European destinations and Canada gained popularity for international education at the beginning of the 21st Century (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007).

In the particular case of Mexico, and specifically looking at CONACYT former scholarships' awardees for the 1997-2008 period, the most popular destinations varied slightly from the overall trends. After USA and UK, the third most popular destination was Spain followed by France. Only 6% of the total of students who pursued doctoral studies abroad in this period attended Canadian institutions, 3% German and less than 1% Australian HEIs **Figure 4** (p. 86). It makes sense that 30% of the scholarship holders chose American HEIs, given the geographical location of Mexico, the economic and historical links with the USA, and the reputation of American institutions. Equally, the traditional reputation of UK institutions attracted a high proportion of Mexican students. Choosing Spain before other European destinations seems also evident given the colonial heritage, similar traditions, shared language and reputation of HEIs.

Before 2004, the CONACYT´s scholarship regulations stated that the applicants should be admitted in international accredited HEIs. It was not until 2008 when the graduate programmes had to be provided by universities recognised among the 200 best in the academic rankings (Lopez-Murillo, 2015). This explains why some of the respondents attended programmes at institutions with less academic reputation.

Participants were asked if they had previous international experiences before the doctoral studies. Only 29 (24%) reported different types of mobility: short experiences, credit mobility and degree mobility. In this case the US was the most popular destination with 40% whereas the UK had only 13%, the rest reported international experiences in Canada, Japan, Spain, France, Guatemala, El Salvador,

Honduras, Panama, Cuba, Brazil and Venezuela. As previously explained, this question identified people who did not have other international experiences, decreasing the possibility of the influence of this particular variable when attributing transformative forces to the international sojourn. With this data it was possible to pinpoint that there is still a low proportion of Mexican students who are able to engage in credit mobility or short international experiences. Moreover, it enabled the exploration of issues related to the reorganisation of pre-conceived structures and the negotiation of new environments (Hunter, 2008, Popov et al., 2017), the acquisition of cross-cultural skills, the acceptance of people with different attitudes and values (Gill, 2010, Robertson et al., 2011) and the associated challenges (Jackson and Heggins III, 2003, Tomich et al., 2000) during the international sojourn.

4.3 Complementary sources of funding in addition to the CONACYT scholarship

Over half of the participants did not have any additional form of funding to the CONACYT scholarship. The remaining 46% of the respondents reported an array of financial aid from the international agencies such as the DAAD, British Council, Fulbright, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECID); national bursaries provided by Canadian, Australian and French governments and a few Australian, American and German universities. Six percent had the highly competitive complementary scholarship provided by the Mexican Ministry of Education. Family support, part time jobs savings and bank loans were also reported. Finally, 11% reported having had financial support from their employers.

4.4 High graduation efficiency rate of doctoral studies

From the 120 respondents, two finished their doctoral studies without obtaining a PhD, and only two did not finish the doctoral programme. As previously discussed in the literature review, some scholars have addressed negative experiences of international students (Pritchard and Skinner, 2002, Furnham, 1997). It is likely that the rate of failure of doctoral studies registered through the survey instrument was low due to the lack of participation of people who experienced difficulties, associated to the distress of sharing those experiences.

The data shows a 98% completion rate which is consistent to the 93% reported for the 1971-2000 period (Ortega et al., 2002). It is worth mentioning that at least until

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2000, the completion rate was the main indicator to measure the success of the programme based on the theory that the source of individual and social welfare lay mainly in the yield from investment in human capital made by the individuals and the government (Ortega et al., 2002). Depending on the decade, the varied influence of three factors were linked to the success completion rates: scholarship features; academic profile; and sociodemographic and labour profiles (Ibid). Interestingly, the candidate´s personal qualities, work experience and socioeconomic situation were not relevant to success according to their results and more emphasis was given to the academic achievement elements.

4.5 Distribution of survey participants in the labour market

Finally, 47% (57) of participants were working in 16 different public HEIs at the time they responded the survey, however it should be taken into consideration that UAM has five different campuses in Mexico City and respondents from UNAM work in different faculties, research institutes and centres from four of the campuses located in different states across the country. Further, 29 participants (24%) were working in 13 different national research centres and 12 (10%) in seven diverse research institutes. The rest of the respondents were distributed as follows; ten (8%) in five private HEIs, three participants in governmental offices, two in NGOs, one in the private sector and two in UK HEIs. Three respondents reported to be self-employed. In the case of the 31 interview participants, 9 work in public HEIs, ten in National Research Centres, five in public HE research institutions, two in NGOs and foreign public HEIs respectively and one participant from a private HEI and a governmental office respectively. Only one person was self-employed **Appendix 4**.

The findings in this section provide evidence of the participants´ choices of academic programmes and countries of destination, which have been contrasted with ISM trends worldwide. This information further explains which are the academic subjects that CONACYT has been interested in funding in relation to science and innovation national strategies. It was interesting to find that there was additional financial support for some of the participants from other parties. However, it is relevant to broaden our understanding about what are the ways in which these programmes operate. The same question is raised about the professionals who were supported by the institution they were ascribed to before their ISM experience. The data

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gathered herein, provides a partial picture about the integration of former Mexican doctoral students into the labour market.

Conclusion

The results presented in this chapter have helped assembling the profiles of the former CONACYT international scholarship awardees who participated in this research. The survey designed for this purpose has proved to be a useful tool to gather valuable sociodemographic data of the study population.

Firstly, the quantitative analysis has allowed the identification of traits of this versatile group providing information about who were the individuals who looked for international education opportunities in the analysed period, their cities of origin and current places of residence, their education trajectories and an approximation of their socioeconomic backgrounds (see **Table 9** below).

Secondly, it has provided information about career choices and made some initial connections with HE provision in Mexico. From the results it can be inferred that there are still scarce opportunities of short and credit mobility available in HE in Mexico. The results have additionally identified the different levels of language proficiency reflecting the deficiencies that prevail in the Mexican education system in terms of the provision of a second language.

Thirdly, it has shown similarities with the international trends regarding programmes´ choices and preferred countries of destination, where the UK and the USA remain as the main receptors of international students. However, for this particular study population, Spain was the third preferred destination. Moreover, that there was a preference of doctoral programmes within the applied engineering and biology areas over the social sciences, consistent with the scholarship emphasis on financing STEM disciplines.

Table 9. Summary of main findings of the survey instrument including a breakdown for interview participants

	Main findings	
	Survey respondents n=120	**Interview participants n=31***
Age at the time of participation	**27% 41-45 years old** **36% 46-50 years old** **20% 51-55 years old** **9% 56-60 years old**	**42% 41-45 years old** **26% 46-50 years old** **19% 51-55 years old** **13% 56-60 years old**
Year of studies	62% 1997-1999	71% 1997-1999
Sex	**35% females, 65% males**	**39% females, 61% males**
Place of birth	55% Mexico City 8% Puebla 5% Veracruz	58% Mexico City 6% Oaxaca 6% Veracruz
Ethnic group identification	**1 person *Zapoteco***	**1 person *Zapoteco***
Nationality of parents/grandparents	94% Mex nationality 6% Spanish, German, Argentina, USA	100% Mex nationality
Higher Education	**86% public HEIs** **45% Mex city**	**94% public HEIs** **58% Mex city**
Master´s degree	87% yes 75% Mex 95% public 25% abroad	71% yes 100% Mex 100% public
Participants´ international experiences	**24% short, credit, degree mobility**	**no**
Foreign language proficiency	88%	74%
Professional experience before doctoral studies	**80%**	**81%**
Additional funding	11% employer 40% other sources	13% employer 48% other sources
Mothers´ education	**6% no formal education** **22 % primary** **22% technical** **26% undergraduate**	**10% no formal education** **22 % primary** **22% technical** **29% undergraduate**
Mothers´ occupation	46% household	55% household
Fathers´ education	**6% no formal education** **17% primary** **10% technical** **38% undergraduate**	**10% no formal education** **22% primary** **3% technical** **39% undergraduate**
Fathers´ occupation	6% semi-routine** 30% intermediate*** 39% higher professional****	13% semi-routine 35% intermediate 35% higher professional
Education/occupation parents (as a couple)	**31% low level education/low-skill jobs** **50% breadwinner fathers**	**39% low level education/low-skills jobs** **55% breadwinner fathers**
At least one parent lived abroad (work or study)	25%	19%

*The interviewees' data excludes information of the participants who did not meet the selection criteria and includes the participants from the pilot study

** Semi-routine occupations: agriculture, construction, low-skilled worker

***Intermediate occupations: lower managerial, lower professional, administrative, self-employed, small business owner, sales

**** Higher professional occupations: civil servant, managerial, private practice, professor, researcher, journalist

Lastly, this chapter has shown that there was a high graduation rate from the international doctoral studies amongst the study population and has provided some data about their diverse employment trajectories.

In summary, the findings on this chapter have shed some light about the outflow of Mexican doctoral students supported by the CONACYT scholarship programme and particular features associated with specific socio-economic contexts and differentiated regional HE provision in the country. Each section has additionally identified the aspects that needed further exploration through the perspectives of the mobile students as individual agents to understand the diverse international experiences and their particular meanings. Moreover, the chapter has provided elements that will help establish connections between different opportunities and freedoms and achieved functionings after the international sojourn (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007) that will be developed in the following chapters.

The central focus of this thesis is thus to look at the success of the scholarship programme through the evaluation of people´s political, economic and social freedoms and if they were expanded or reduced throughout the international learning experiences and social interactions. Further, how through the evaluation of these freedoms and considering social and environmental heterogeneities, conversion factors and particular social contexts of the population of study, it is possible to analyse the implications of former students' experiences in relation to the CONACYT programme's objectives and the wider Mexican society. The chapter that follows moves on to examine the associations between socio-economic backgrounds, diverse education trajectories and capabilities developed and the ways in which they informed interviewees´ decisions to study abroad.

VI. Diverse socio-economic backgrounds, HE trajectories in Mexico and decisions to study abroad

Introduction

As shown in chapter V, the survey respondents came from very diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, this chapter explores further those initial findings through the interviews and shows how CONACYT scholarships have been also supporting Mexicans with lower socio-economic possibilities. Secondly, it explores the different set of capabilities acquired through previous HE opportunities focusing on the participants who did their undergraduate studies in different Mexican cities. Together, these data will shed light to determine to what extent these diverse experiences and capabilities informed participants´ motivations to study abroad. Further, they will help understand the diverse adaptation processes in the transnational spaces, addressed in chapter VIII. Section three will then examine the findings about the push and pull factors and the actual processes of choosing institutions and destinations.

1. Diverse familiar socio-economic opportunities of students

State-funded undergraduate scholarship programmes that are awarded on the basis of academic achievement instead of financial need have been criticised due to the lack of evidence that they narrow the gap in college participation between low and high-income students (Heller, 2006). Further, in the case of international scholarship programmes which base their selection processes on academic achievement (high grades/scores, language proficiency, acceptance in high ranked universities) it has been argued that they perpetuate social inequality through the attraction mainly of privileged students (Andere, 2004). In this sense, Andere (2004) has argued against the state-funded CONACYT international programme, claiming that the students awarded might come from privileged backgrounds and who "would be willing to finance their own international education" (p. 72).

However, the survey data analysed in chapter V showed that at least one third of the participants came from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It also revealed that 60% of the respondents were enrolled in public and free of charge institutions from primary to high school and 86% in public and cost-free HEIs across the country.

Therefore, it was of interest in this research to analyse the survey findings together with the interviewees' narratives about their families´ socio-economic backgrounds. This section thus provides evidence of the diverse upbringings of the participants, including variations in the level of access to educational and professional opportunities of their parents and grandparents. It further explores their perceptions of their socio-economic conditions in relation to that of their parents as a result of their higher education and international studies. Their stories also offer elements to discuss in the subsequent chapters, about possible associations of their previous educational opportunities with the capabilities developed through the international sojourn. Further connections between international mobility and upward social mobility will be explored in chapter IX.

1.1 Working-class backgrounds

This section does not aim to make generalisations about the socio-economic backgrounds of all the former international CONACYT awardees. Nonetheless it provides evidence of the array of the socio-economic circumstances in which the participants were brought up. This highlights the importance of considering people's heterogeneities and diverse identities when exploring the outcomes of ISM to avoid oversimplifications.

Chapter V showed that the maximum level of education of the parents of almost half of the interviewees was secondary school. Over a third of the interview participants were brought up in families where the mothers had household activities exclusively and their fathers were farmers, workers or traders. The following quotes are examples of the narratives of some of those interviewees that clearly depict their challenging social background. In almost all these cases, the interviewees were the first generation to get a university degree. In their responses, there is an awareness of desires of social mobility and better labour market opportunities linked to the acquisition of education (Lorey, 1993, Cortés, 2014).

> "Both my grandparents were illiterate. My parents did not have higher education and thanks to CONACYT I have a doctoral degree abroad. Thus, what I am trying to say in the text I wrote is, if I think about an ideal Mexico, is a Mexico were education clearly promotes social mobility" (Adela, Boston College)

Fidel´s father did have a university degree; however, he had a job as a maths teacher in a public primary school, which in Mexico, is not a well-paid job.

> "My family is Mexican…. my father was first generation to go to university and myself to get doctoral studies. My grandfather was a farmer, and they were so poor that my father did not have shoes when he was a child. Thus, my father worked very hard to get ahead and give me everything so I could get as far as I got. He told me this story 20 thousand times, thus I understood it crystal clear" (Fidel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen)

The quotes above and below are consistent with the findings from the survey where parents and grandparents with lower levels of education performed lower skilled jobs. These situations can be explained by the literature which indicates that in the 1970s the majority of the labour force in crowded areas, such as Mexico´s metropolitan area were employed in these type of activities (Mungaray et al., 2010).

> "…. because my family did not have financial solvency, my father was a butcher. However, it also depends on what did you want. I did not see myself like that; I said, "I do not want to do that". And of course, that caused problems with my family, but then they realised that it worked" (Aldo, Alcalá de Henares)

Arturo was also first generation to obtain a university degree. He explained that his parents were from the rural area in the State of Mexico and were illiterate and his siblings had lower levels of education.

> "My parents are from the rural area; therefore, I am as well. They did not finish primary school. My siblings only finished primary school, therefore yes; there is a lot of difference" (Arturo, Iowa State University)

Cesar was brought up in Mexico City, however his parents did not complete their basic education and lived in a very deprived urban area.

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> "My mother did not finish primary school, my father barely did, thus from a negative sense, it is an incentive, I mean I lived in the Morelos borough, close to *Tepito*, thus the level of life was low. Therefore, you want something else; it is an inverse motivation…. hence there is a great social difference of course" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

These participants attended public institutions from primary school up to high school. At this point it is important to clarify that there is general academic underachievement in Mexican public primary schools. Therefore, their educational opportunities could have been limited by the socio-economic situation of their families.

1.2 Middle-class backgrounds

The next examples are from interviewees that came from middle-class families from Mexicalli and Chiapas respectively. I interviewed Elvia during the pilot study which I conducted with former awardees that stayed in the UK after graduation.

> "Economically speaking my father was a Civil Engineer. My mother was a lawyer; she later devoted herself to teaching. Therefore, in terms of social strata it is the same, I do not think I have moved a social stratum. I would say I am middle class in a developed country. To be middle class in a developing country is not the same. However, from my experience, here (England) there are more working opportunities than I would´ve had in Mexico, and way more development opportunities" (Elvia, UCL)

Javier studied in Argentina, an atypical country of destination. At the time of the interview, he was the head of a department of a very prestigious private university in Mexico City.

> "To have been able to study abroad gave me more opportunities than the ones that my parents had, in terms of the competitive salary I had in this institution in relation to others. Even when my parents studied at UNAM, however they did not finish their degrees" (Javier, Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Despite coming from better socio-economic backgrounds and having attended private institutions for most of their education, the characteristics of their households were different. Elvia´s parents had undergraduate degrees; however, they were still not able to afford a private university for her thus, she attended a state public

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university. Javier narrated how all his private education was supported by diverse scholarships he obtained, including his undergraduate studies.

Objective measures of social class such as parental education and occupation might categorise an individual in a particular class even when that person considers himself from a different class (Rubin et al., 2014). The literature suggests therefore the benefits of incorporating both objective measures and subjective self-definitions of social class in education research (Ibid). The respondents were able to reflect on the nuances of their family backgrounds, how these influenced their educational trajectories and the ways in which they participated in HE. Further, how they identified themselves in respect to their backgrounds and how they lived either circumstances of privilege or disadvantage. In this sense the literature suggests that some students are able to carve their way independently of their socio-economic constrains (Charles et al., 2020, Cortés, 2014).

These findings also highlight that regardless of their backgrounds, the participants identified ISM as an enabler of labour market opportunities, and in some cases as a mean towards social mobility. These findings mirror those previously reported where a high proportion of CONACYT scholarship awardees came from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds (Centro Redes, 2008). Finally, these recounts are also relevant since there are socio-economic differences within social classes which are dependent on cultural, political and economic contexts of the country (Jones and Vagle, 2013). Considering these diverse upbringings, the next section will further explore examples of different HE opportunities participants had, with a special focus on the capabilities acquired by the students that were mobile for their undergraduate studies.

2. Previous HE opportunities and experiences in Mexico

I have discussed the transformative power of HE. This transformation has been studied in terms of university being a space where students challenge their preconceived ideas about fundamental life aspects and interact with new people, ideas and subjects at the same time as they are adapting to a new phase in their lives. For students that for different reasons had to additionally move to another city, the university experience might have included developing other capabilities such as

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adapting to different cultures and behaviours, becoming independent or and broadening horizons. This section thus focuses on the experiences of participants who had to move to different Mexican cities for their undergraduate studies and compare the capabilities acquired against examples of students who had the possibility to study in their local universities. They have been pinpointed because of their relevance to further help understand the diverse adaptation processes in the transnational spaces.

2.1 Undergraduate student choice possibilities associated with the capabilities acquired

As described in chapter V, 30% of the survey respondents moved to other cities for undergraduate studies, a quarter of these relocated to Mexico City. One third of the interviewees took their degrees in a different city to the one they attended high school. The interviews highlighted key features about their life and HE experiences that contributed to their transformation and to their further decision-making processes to pursue international education. These themes were independence, adaptation to cultural diversity and economic challenges. Furthermore, studying in other cities brought to light identity aspects that either hindered or facilitated particular adaptation processes while studying abroad.

The statement below encompasses how moving to a different city for undergraduate studies, involved becoming independent from the family, which was expressed as a recurrent theme among interviewees with similar experiences.

> ¨When they asked me if it was not going to be difficult for me to leave, and if I was going to leave my family; I had left my family for a long time because I am from the province. When I came here to study at the university (Mexico City), it was the first detachment and then, going there (Barcelona), missing the family was not a problem because I saw them every year as I saw them when I was here¨ (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

Similarly, Jimena had the opportunity to experience a short stay in a research centre in Mexico City while she was finishing her undergraduate studies. On this matter, she said, "Wow, there is a world beyond Orizaba", denoting the possibility of broadening horizons within the same country. Furthermore, it can be seen how there were aspects of cultural identity that became evident when interacting with people from other cities in Mexico.

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> "I am from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where people are very warm and very trusting. So, I came here (Mexico City) and I wanted to do the same and here *chilangos* are super stressed, how awful" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

Carmen for instance, appropriated the characteristics of the people from her town of origin when she talked about herself. Moreover, it is common practice to refer about the inhabitants of Mexico City as *chilangos* and even when there is not yet an agreement of the origin of the word; it is used in many instances in a pejorative manner, particularly from inhabitants from other states in the country.

In other cases, economic restrictions shaped their university experience in a different way. One interviewee from the state of Hidalgo had the opportunity to attend a HEI in Mexico City; however, the economic possibilities of his family did not allow him to relocate. Therefore, he had to commute four hours a day from his town of origin and back throughout his undergraduate and graduate studies. Long commuting time has been shown to be an indicator of dropout from undergraduate studies in Mexico (Garay et al., 2016). Alvaro explained the difficulties to come from a household where his father was a former textile worker who later supported his family by doing bricklayer and farming jobs. His mother gave him money to pay for the transport fare that she earned from knitting and breeding birds. He explained how for his mother the important thing was to have money to be able to take the public transport, because there would always be food at the table "to fill the gut" when he went back home for dinner. "It was not easy at times".

The narrative of the interviewees suggests that having the freedom of choice to study in HEIs in a different city from where they were brought up, enabled them to acquire the capabilities of becoming independent, adapting to cultural diversity and broadening horizons. However, the opportunities available to them were different and therefore the achieved functionings varied between them. Alvaro for instance, did not have the same opportunity to relocate as Carmen did, hence, even when they both studied in a different city; Carmen was able to become independent and to adapt to a different environment. However, Carmen came from the state of Oaxaca —540km from Mexico City; therefore, she was forced to relocate. Alvaro on the other hand, did not have the opportunity to become independent due to economic constrains, however, through the available family support he was able to finish a

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university degree and achieved adapting to a different environment and broadened his horizons. In these three cases, the acquired capabilities contributed to their decision-making process to look for educational opportunities abroad and to ease the adaptation process inherent to the mobility process.

Comparatively, the interviewees who studied in the same city and stayed at the parental home throughout their undergraduate studies became independent later in life, and in some cases, not before they moved to a different country for doctoral studies.

> "I am an only child. Therefore, you might understand the type of pampering that one has as an only child. I was 27 years old, and up until the day I left for Germany, I used to come down and my mother would have breakfast and lunch served. They did my laundry and everything. I did not know how to use a washing machine" (Fidel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen)

In this example, a traditional Mexican family is depicted, where women are in charge of the housework and waiting on the male members (Gonzalez, 1982). Traditional mothers do not teach their sons to participate in house chores, because it is assumed that their wives would wait on them once they get married. Thus, Fidel´s particular familial structure prevented him becoming independent as Carmen did when she first attended university. When reflecting on his experience, he identified becoming independent during his time abroad, where he was presented with a disoriented dilemma, chose alternatives and thus changed attitudes that promoted an emancipatory change (Mezirow, 2000). The acquisition of independence through ISM will be further explored in chapter IX.

The following quote is also from a participant that was brought up in a household where her mother did all the house chores and thus, she did not need to perform household related activities until she went abroad.

> "I am useless in the domestic terrain. Thus, one day before I left, I asked my mother to teach me how to wash clothes. Picture this, I did not cook, to this day I do not cook, but I barely cooked then, therefore the personal aspect was tremendous because I had to cook, to wash, and with limited resources, do grocery shopping by bike" (Adela, Boston College)

This chapter has shown thus far that the interviewees who were enrolled in undergraduate studies outside their cities of origin, identified elements of their socio-economic upbringing and made connections with their HE opportunities and capabilities developed in contrast with students who stayed in their cities of origin. These findings support previous research indicating that students that move from the parental home, learned to live in different cities, established intercultural relationships and were able to mould their identities in different ways (Czarny, 2010, Giddens, 1991).

Individuals who moved to other cities for undergraduate studies learned how to be independent and adapted to other cultures before ISM, giving them an advantage point in the international milieus. They also were confronted to diverse economic constraints in contrast with people who stayed in their cities of origin and who developed those capabilities as part of the international experience. Having discussed how individuals with different backgrounds and educational trajectories developed particular capabilities, the next section moves on to explore the diverse push and pull factors in this heterogenic group to consider ISM for their doctoral studies.

3. International pathways and language skills

People who are interested in pursuing ISM, go through a similar process than students who make choices to apply to particular undergraduate courses and specific universities in their home country based on a number of common factors. These factors vary depending on the country of origin, whether they are choosing undergraduate or graduate courses, availability of degrees in the home country, prestige of foreign institution, individual language command and language of instruction, availability of economic resources, life opportunities and so forth (De Wit, 2008, Van Bouwel and Veugelers, 2009, Altbach et al., 1985). This section presents my own findings about the different motivations the participants had for pursuing doctoral studies abroad, together with their choices of degrees and countries of destination since they are intimately intertwined.

There are manifold reasons why Mexican students have chosen to look for educational opportunities abroad. In this regard, the CONACYT informant mentioned the following about Mexican candidates;

> "There are two types of applicants. The one who knows that the knowledge frontier in his area is somewhere, and he wants to be in that place. The students that are driven by scientific knowledge ambition. But there is another group, who wants an international experience because they know that it will improve their future possibilities. They want to work in a given company where they have to deal with Chinese, Japanese and Americans and they need those competences, those skills that you get while living abroad and interacting with other cultures, other ways of teaching, other academic traditions" (Adriana, Key informant CONACYT)

The analysis of the answers from the interviewees shows that their reasons to study in other countries were either related to their academic choices and their life trajectories´ aspirations, or with desires to travel and have international experiences. In other words, the motivations to study abroad were driven on the one hand by the capabilities they wanted to develop and on the other, by the different lives they aspired to and the functionings they wanted to achieve. Some participants mentioned a single reason, while others recognised several reasons why they wanted to study abroad. In this section, the framework proposed by De Wit (2008) (See **Table 10** below) was first used as scaffolding to identify the different educational, political/social/cultural, and economic reasons. **Table 10** only includes the push and pull factors from de Wit´s original table that were mentioned by the interviewees of my research. The additional factors identified by them were then added in bold.

Table 10. Drivers to study abroad based on participants´ interviews

Push factors	Pull factors
Educational	
Basic human resource capacity/**capacity building**	Higher education opportunities
Ranking/status higher education/**status acquisition**	Ranking/status higher education/**academic prestige**
Enhanced value of national versus foreign degree	
Researchers' influences	
Institutional development	
Strategic alliances with foreign partners	
Socio-cultural	
	Language factor
Cultural disposition/**Cultural experiences**	Lure of life/ **Cultural experiences, new horizons**
Diverse family aspirations	
Extended family and cultural influences	
Study opportunities for spouses	
Contribution to society	
Economic	
Employment opportunities on return	Employment opportunities after study
	Available economic resources abroad

*Adapted from table: *Push and pull factors for outward student mobility* (De Wit 2008, p. 28)

The next subsections present quotes exemplifying the most frequent push/pull factors mentioned by the interviewees. However, it is worth noting that the categories are not mutually exclusive and in many instances the factors are interrelated. For instance, the acquisition of a foreign degree, or learning languages might be driven by economic motivations.

3.1.1 Educational factors

The educational push/pull factors identified are related to the interviewees´ diverse interests in accessing international HE, programmes and qualifications. In these cases, the choice of institution, the research groups or the prospective supervisor determined the country of destination. All the respondents enrolled to traditional academic PhD programmes.

Fernando spoke about having the idea of pursuing a doctoral degree abroad while he was doing a master´s degree and that in that moment there were not recognised researcher´s groups in Mexico in his area. He chose a group in France that met those criteria.

> "My idea was to look for a good laboratory abroad, one of the best, that was my aim. A good laboratory to learn, to study in depth the topics I was interested in that moment" (Fernando, Université de Bourgogne)

Cesar and Jaime also mentioned that even when they had master´s degrees in Mexico they were looking for more specialised training focusing on learning how to conduct research in their particular areas. Jaime, talking about the institution where he did his graduate studies mentioned, "…in the Colegio de Mexico researchers´ endeavours are highly valued and that left a good impression in me to want to pursue a PhD abroad". Hugo in this regard mentioned choosing Australia because it was a country where there was more scientific production and Victor mentioned his interest in the USA because of the level of advancement in his particular field.

Javier wanted to pursue doctoral studies in the USA, however he wanted to attend prestigious programmes that required learning German and Latin, which he could not afford. Even when he had a middle-class upbringing, he faced economic constraints that limited his educational opportunities and he opted to look for other international programmes. This is the only case from the research participants who decided to go to Argentina, which in the case of Mexico, is as a non-traditional destination for international education.

All of these examples have in common the aspiration of the participants to get state of the art training to be able to become researchers in their fields. These results are consistent with the literature that have identified capacity building as a core push factor for developing nations where the availability of specialised programmes is limited or not competitive at an international level (Altbach, 2004).

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3.1.1.2 Academic prestige

Alvaro mentioned the importance of the prestige of the university and the researcher he wanted to work with. His choices were Germany, Japan and Holland. Dinora on the same lines mentioned the importance of attending a UK institution with academic reputation to get training in her particular field.

Carmen mentioned the worldwide prestige of the research group she worked with during the doctoral studies.

> "I studied in Barcelona, and thus, before going there I did some enquires and exactly what I wanted to do they were doing it. I started reading articles, they were a very consolidated group renown worldwide" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

Prestige of the institution and status of the researcher or research group were the main drivers to decide for specific institutions and therefore countries, as has been mentioned in other studies (Altbach, 2004, OECD, 2004, Brooks and Waters, 2009). These findings differ from the ones from Ackers (2008) where participants considered that the reputation of a researcher was not necessarily dependent to the prestige of the institution. Nonetheless, one of the constant conditions to apply for a CONACYT scholarship as was explained in chapter III, has been to be accepted in highly ranked institutions (Holloway et al., 2012). Therefore, the participants had to consider together the reputation of the researcher and the institution to meet the scholarship requirement regardless of their disciplines.

3.1.1.3 Enhanced value of national versus foreign degree

The respondents who mentioned pursuing ISM for the increased value of the international degree, often associated the educational mobility with the possibility of enhancing their opportunities in the labour-market upon return. For instance, Claudia thought that having a foreign degree would open her employment possibilities.

> "… And again, it served the purpose to get a better position because foreign degrees were better recognised" (Claudia, Imperial College)

Claudia explained that she was not inclined in pursuing an academic career and thus she always considered the doctoral degree as a "mean to an end" having a different vision of the life she wanted to follow after the postgraduate studies.

In Carmen´s case, she started her undergraduate studies in Mexico and then she realised that she wanted to pursue a researcher career, looked for advice and was told that she needed to get a PhD abroad to increase her chances to get a better job.

> "I began to get involved with people from the Institute and the Faculty of Engineering and I realised that what I wanted was to do geophysics research. I started enquiring about what I needed for that job and everyone told me "you need to get a PhD". To be a researcher you have to get a PhD and a lot of academic experience to build a strong curriculum. And in that time, it was popular to study abroad. We are a little bit *malinchistas*, and thus if you obtain the degree here is not as prestigious as if you get it in a foreign country" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

Carmen used the word *malinchista* referring to the attitude that denotes attachment to what is foreign and contempt of one´s own, suggesting that there were available consolidated doctoral programmes in her field at UNAM at the time. Carmen and Claudia´s remarks about international degrees having better value are consistent with other findings suggesting that international graduates have better employability opportunities than students that are locally trained (Wiers‑Jenssen, 2011). Recognition of international qualifications in the home country has been found to be a decisive push factor for students to seek international education (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Finally, and already pointed by Ackers (2008), there is an expectation of mobility as "a rite of passage" rooted in the academic progression systems and emphasised in particular academic areas, depicted in Carmen´s experience.

3.1.1.4 Researchers´ influence

In the case of some people who were either working or doing masters´ studies at Mexican institutions, they had particular influences from other researchers to pursue international education. This influence was from tutors that had previous international experiences themselves such as Alvaro´s supervisor. When he started his graduate studies, he originally wanted to work in the industry sector however, his tutor encouraged him to present his research in conferences and academic papers to gain academic experience.

> "In the robotics module I had a professor who just came back from Japan...and he told me "what do you think about doing a PhD?" and I said "well I think I do" now with the experience I had, I thought it was worth it and I liked what I was doing in the masters. He then told me what the programmes supporting international studies were, that the CONACYT scholarship was the most "immediate" and the idea was that I studied abroad. He never told me "stay with me" he encouraged me to go" (Alvaro, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven)

Similarly, Juan explained that all the staff from the IPN where he was doing his master´s degree, had doctoral studies, and some of them in foreign countries. He had a particular conversation with someone who went to Germany and he was the one who mentioned him the DAAD scholarship scheme for the first time.

Paola mentioned that she perceived through teachers and later through her work colleagues, that the international experience was not only academic training but a life experience, and this motivated her to look for international education.

> "When one studies biology, the undergraduate level is very broad and thus you start specialising and thinking about doing a PhD. And I was always interested in doing postgraduate studies abroad, because you know a lot of professors that have been abroad and that motivates you, and you learn that it is an experience that goes beyond only getting a degree" (Paola, University of Sheffield)

She later worked in an institution where her boss also studied abroad thus, he encouraged her to pursue doctoral studies in the UK. Social relations built at university and in the workplace have been found to be influential for Mexican international student trajectories (Lopez, 2015). These findings also support previous research showing that teachers and people working in the fields of interest of the students were fundamental in the decisions to study abroad (Beech, 2015).

Raquel, Aldo and Jorge had individual invitations to do their doctoral studies in their laboratories in France, Spain and the UK respectively, by international researchers while they were doing their master´s degree or already working in research institutions. There are similarities between these results and previous work where academics from UAM studied in France with renowned international researchers for the prestige that would be bestow to them and to learn specific ways of doing research. Further, through the establishment of networks with foreign researchers

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visiting Mexican institutions and through the influence of their tutors who had studied abroad. This was also associated to the French academic traditions and "school of thought" that have had great influence in the development of Mexican HEIs (Gérard and Maldonado, 2009).

3.1.1.5 Institutional development

Some interviewees were already working at COLPOS, UAM, CIBNOR and INIFAP —different Mexican HEIs across the country, when they decided to study abroad. The largest Mexican public universities have been supporting their academic staff to pursue international graduate degrees in the last decades (Gacel-Avila, 2007). In the particular case of COLPOS, all the individuals ascribed to that institution mentioned institutional development as the main reason to study abroad. Nonetheless, doing their doctoral studies abroad was a job requirement.

> "I started in this institution almost thirty years ago. And the dynamic here for someone that starts as an assistant is to climb the academic ladder. And one of the requisites is to keep studying, and thus you can stay in a category for a specific period of time and the moment came where I had to do the PhD. And the other requisite was that the PhD had to be done abroad" (Arturo, Iowa State University)

Similarly, other HEIs in Mexico have financial programmes available for the academic development for their staff. However, in these instances they are not enforced. This was the case for Dinora who already had a job at CIBNOR in Baja California and was aware that in order to aspire to a better academic position within her own institution, she needed to get a degree abroad. Another similar case was Cesar´s who had the opportunity to meet foreign researchers in a conference at his workplace. They brought up the possibility of signing an international agreement between institutions, which allowed researchers from UAM to get doctoral studies abroad and work in a joint project. In Cesar´s example an additional push factor considered was the strategic alliances with international partners.

Together, these examples show that educational factors play a decisive role in the choices of programmes and HE institutions. These factors can be solely associated with the aspirations to develop particular capabilities such as knowledge acquisition with leading researchers worldwide or to achieve valuable functionings such as

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climbing academic positions within institutions. However, they can also be attached to economic motivations such as increasing employability opportunities or maintaining jobs due to the value attached to international "prestigious" degrees. These findings also show how social relations and academic networks influence decisions to study abroad. These networks were also crucial in providing information and guidance about the CONACYT international scholarship programme, the DAAD diverse scholarships[25], and the Franco-Mexican doctoral programme in association with CONACYT (Lebeau, 2019).

3.1.2   Socio-cultural factors

The socio-cultural factors identified were associated to the individual motivations of the participants which were closely linked to the literature about human development. As has been argued by Wells (2014), these motivations are the most difficult to investigate and categorise because they are informed by "the visions of their the past, their perceptions of the present and their ambitions about the future" and they are also subject to multiple interpretations. Personal reasons can be multifaceted and are determined by the individual contexts of the students (Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014) and their personal aspirations.

3.1.2.1 Acquisition of foreign languages in Mexico and associations with choices of study destinations

Learning English as a second language in the public education system became mandatory at the secondary level in 1993 and was included in the official syllabus for preschools in 2009 (González, 2015). However, recent data shows that 97% of high school students have a poor command of this language (Martin del Campo et al., 2015). Considering this data, it does not come as a surprise that 60% of the survey participants reported having additional language instruction in private institutions, as described in chapter V. Moreover, when analysing the individual responses of the interviewees regarding their language proficiency, even the ones that mentioned

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[25] In the particular cases of Juan and Federico, they applied directly to a DAAD scholarship and then requested additional financial aid to CONACYT. Mario and Fidel in contrast, were supported by a joint scholarship CONACYT-DAAD.
DAAD scholarships and programmes available in Mexico https://www.daad.mx/files/2018/06/Becas-y-Programas-del-DAAD-en-M%C3%A9xico.pdf Last consulted 28/05/2020

having some form of private instruction throughout their life talked about the deficiencies of their English knowledge, which will be further explored in chapter VIII.

To apply for a CONACYT scholarship regardless of the country of destination, it is compulsory to demonstrate basic English command.

> "There is a special characteristic because it is people that for years has made an effort to learn another language. Not only reading skills, because there is already a lot of people who read because they have to do it at the graduate level…. But that is not enough to study abroad. You need to have a reasonable competence in speaking and writing skills…. Therefore, there is an intentionality of many of the candidates to master another language. Well, the English language and maybe a third language. Because if the programme is not in English, it is in German, they have to demonstrate German command as well…." (Adriana, Key informant CONACYT)

Some of the respondents mentioned the acquisition of language as an additional capability they were particularly interested in acquiring while studying abroad thus it was an important factor to consider when choosing institutions. For instance, Humberto and Paola were interested in mastering English.

> "My intention was always doing a PhD in an English-speaking country because the sciences are written mainly in English. I had some private language instruction because the English level in public schools is really bad. Thus, I wanted to continue perfecting the language" (Paola, University of Sheffield)

Claudia placed language in equal importance as academic quality and the prestige of the institution, arguing that English was the common language of instruction in the most renowned universities (De Wit, 2008).

In the case of the respondents that studied in Germany, there was a particular attraction to the culture in the first place. For instance, Juan was attracted to the idea of learning German through the DAAD, because it is a language that is not instructed at undergraduate level in Mexico.

> "I thought about going to the UK or USA, however I went to an informative talk with people from the DAAD and they offered the German course…. and a scholarship up to six months to learn German, I was already taking some lessons at the Goethe institute in Mexico" (Juan, Technische Universitat Hamburg)

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Moreover, if he had chosen an English-speaking country, he would have had to justify the language proficiency to apply to the university, which he did not have. Fidel was clear that he had to master another language besides his scientific training, and he was already satisfied with his English level, therefore he decided to go to Germany.

From the interviewees that were enrolled in Spanish institutions only Jimena, who went as a doctoral student but also as her spouse´s companion, mentioned that her husband had a poor English command and thus they did not consider institutions in English speaking countries.

> "For USA and UK institutions you had to show evidence of English proficiency. My husband did not meet the requirement…. Therefore, we ruled out those options because of my husband. That is how we ended up in Spain, because we thought they were not going to ask us to show English proficiency" (Jimena, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

This along with Juan were the only cases where the lack of English proficiency was a decisive factor when choosing a country of destination. Besides the aforementioned, the findings in this thesis show that the acquisition of a foreign language was placed as a determinant factor to choose a study destination. This outcome is contrary to Lopez (2019) study who found that learning languages was not a relevant factor in the decision to study abroad from a Mexican sample.

These findings suggest that language skills are very influential in the decision-making process of studying abroad. The participants linked their decisions to study abroad and the choice of destinations with previous language learning opportunities and to the extent to which they were —or were not, exposed to different languages throughout their life trajectories. In specific cases such as the ones interested in studies in France and Germany, there was a connection between the country of choice, the culture and the interest in learning specific languages. Linked to this is the interest in the available opportunities that specific scholarships provided to learn French or German through pre-established courses prior to the international experience. In other instances, the prospective students spent additional time mastering a language in order to attend specific institutions.

Finally, some interviewees also acknowledged their own learning limitations and fears of being confronted to languages they did not master, thus the lack of English command determined some of the participants international pathways. The results from this research do not show a strict correlation between social class and language command as has been found in previous studies (Lopez, 2019). These findings suggest a more complex relationship where previous experiences, personal motivations and capabilities dictate the extent to which the participants were interested in learning other languages as part of the international experience.

3.1.2.2 Cultural experiences and new horizons

Some participants mentioned socio/cultural motivations associated to the interest of traveling, "opening their panoramas", learning about other cultures and ways of being and doing and overall having new experiences. For instance, Carlos said that he wanted to have the experience of living in London to learn about other cultures.

> "… That is actually why I looked to go abroad. Because I wanted to "deconstruct the brain" and learn about other cultures and specially in London. I never consider going anywhere else, I had absolute clarity about that, and I was very eager to absorb" (Carlos, IOE)

Federico said that it was a dream come true being in Germany because of the language, the culture, the history and the food. Elvia on the other hand, mentioned getting interested in traveling while she was working, however this was always attached to the motivation of specializing in her field.

> "I studied Architecture, and I think there was the moment when I could travel to different Mexican states and meet people and to participate in a Latin-American conference in Guatemala. There, I got the taste for traveling and the interest to go to Europe, to Italy for the architecture" (Elvia, UCL)

Claudia also identified cultural aspects related to her motivations to study abroad instead of staying in Mexico.

> "I did not want to stay in Mexico and repeat the same. For me the international experience was very important. I wanted to go abroad and see how it was in other places" (Claudia, Imperial College)

These examples match previous findings where gaining life experiences was the third most important reason driving Canadian doctoral students to study abroad (Knight and Madden, 2010). Further, with other studies where the most frequent personal reasons to participate in credit mobility included experiential goals such as knowledge and understanding of different cultures, and meeting people from other countries (Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014, King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).

One third of the interviewees ruled out the USA as a study destination. In these cases, in contrast to the participants' interest in specific cultures, the most common reason for not considering the USA was an explicit dislike of the country and culture.

> …And this it became almost naturally for two reasons, in one hand I was very anti-*yankee* and thus I did not want to go to USA, at all, I did not like it, I did not want it, I disliked them…" (Claudia, Imperial College)

Cesar mentioned his preference for their children to grew up in a French society rather than in the USA. Fidel also mentioned being very clear that he did not want to go to the USA. Paola said that she also preferred the UK over USA because "it was very big, disperse and a society disconnected from the student life". These sentiments are strongly associated with anti-imperialist resentment for events such as the Texas secession, the Mexican-American War and to rejection of Western society itself and its values (Grandin, 2006). Similar feelings of dislike towards the USA have been reported from international Mexican students (Lopez, 2019).

The other reason to exclude the USA as a destination was from the participants that were born in states close to the North American border such as Elvia, Hugo and Humberto. In these cases, the interaction with the border states was part of the daily lives, therefore they wanted a different international experience.

3.1.2.3 Diverse family aspirations

Aldo said that he did not want to become a butcher like his father was and thus he always looked for educational opportunities. In contrast, Cyntia mentioned how there was a degree of influence from her father, who had a technical degree in design that drove her to look, since her undergraduate studies, for a degree in chemistry, because he perceived it was a better career opportunity than Biology, the subject

she was originally interested in. It was through the master´s degree that she became interested in pursuing doctoral studies abroad.

These two cases are related to familial aspirations: however, in the former, Aldo´s family could not understand his desire to study as oppose to run the family business, and in the latter, there was an aspiration from Cyntia' s father for her to have a professional degree that could provide her with better life opportunities.

Claudia also talked about her father´s aspirations for her to pursue postgraduate studies and specifically in the UK.

> "I think it was in one hand ingrained from the family part, my father´s desires of "postgraduate studies are the best, it is very important" and on the other because of my undergraduate studies. I studied biology and thus it was obvious. It was almost something you did without thinking it further. The family part was very important, and my father always encouraged me…" (Claudia, Imperial College)

Later in our conversation Claudia shared that her father died while she was studying abroad. Thus, it is possible that her reflections about fulfilling her father´s aspirations were also driven by the strong experience of loss. Despite these different familial aspirations for their children, a relevant finding is that there were no interviewees whose parents were directly involved in their decisions to study abroad. Similar findings have been recently reported in Mexican doctoral students (Lopez, 2019). In the case of the study population herein the individuals were pursuing graduate studies and almost all of them had different degrees of independence from their parents. This finding is also consistent with what has been said about doctoral students who are often driven by other factors such as age, familial obligations and economic conditions (Rizvi, 2010).

3.1.2.4 Extended family and cultural influences

Cesar has an older brother who also studied abroad, he also mentioned the influence of an uncle, who did not have a HE degree, to push him to learn French since he was young and thus made him dream of travelling to France someday.

Contrastingly, Federico said that he grew up in a house in Veracruz where there were several personal relationships with foreigners thus, he was constantly exposed to other cultures.

> "Some relatives were married to people from other countries. Thus, since I was a kid, other languages were spoken at home. I listened very interested the stories of those people. Further, there were German migrants in the region where I come from in Veracruz and we always saw them as very capable people, making us admire them" (Federico, Max-Planck-Institute)

These influences drove him to learn languages from an early age based on his aspiration to go to another country. In the case of Mario, his sister married a researcher who studied in Germany thus, while he was an undergraduate student, he discovered the world of academia and HE. He mentioned that understanding the language of the correspondence his brother-in-law received became a cultural challenge.

> "And I came here (Mexico City) with the objective of doing a master´s degree and to look for options to study abroad…I wrote letters to Italy, Germany, France and the UK….at the time, I was studying in the Goethe Institute and a professor from Stuttgart told me that she was going to enquire which were the best architecture schools. She told me about a university….and looking on the internet I found a professor that used to live in Mexico and had a lot of projects related to Mexico and thus I wrote to him…." (Mario, Universitat Stuttgart)

Fernando said that he was influenced from what he learned at school about French history and thus that was a determinant to choose the country to study. Similarly, Juan explained that he had information from Germany through movies and popular brands which made him curious about the culture and knowledge capacity. Humberto did his undergraduate studies in a town near the US border thus, they constantly visited US HEIs and renown researchers as part of their academic training. This results mirror previous studies where Mexican students chose specific destinations because they were attracted by the culture and the language of those countries since high school (Gérard and Maldonado, 2009). Family and friends have also been found to be important influences for students mobility at the postgraduate

level (Wadhwa, 2016). In some instances, because they have had their own positive international mobility experiences (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

3.1.2.5 Study opportunities for spouses

In the case of Gloria and Jimena, their husbands were the ones who aspired studying abroad and they decided to support them. As professional women they seized the opportunities and also decided to pursue doctoral studies at the same time.

> My husband got an offer to do his doctoral studies. Thus, I said "make the most out of the opportunity" because we are both academics… I told him "go and then I will follow you" He had an opportunity and thus I looked for mine…. And obviously I looked in the UK and I finally found something I liked" (Gloria, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)

These examples support the argument that among the heterogeneity of international students there are several identities that have to be considered when analysing the decisions to study abroad. This means that these students can be partners, parents, workers and students simultaneously (Geddie, 2013). Moreover, these findings are similar to other studies which have shown that female mobile researchers move following a male partner (Ackers, L (2000) cited in Leung, 2017, Brooks, 2015). The intersections between these diverse identities will be further explored in chapter VII.

3.1.2.6 Contribution to society

Another motivation identified was the interest in contributing in different ways with their societies. For instance, Jaime mentioned that the knowledge acquired in Mexico had a more theoretical approach and being able to study abroad gave him the opportunity to learn the practical aspects on his area that could contribute to his society and his country. Similarly, Victor said that he always had the idea to study abroad to come back to his country and his institution, to apply in Mexico what he learned, as a way to pay back what the country invested in him.

> Besides working at INIFAP and giving undergraduate lectures I started teaching at the postgraduate level…. And I felt that it was something good, something needed, because I have always thought that what the country invested in my education had to

be returned in every aspect, not only with my job but teaching and training people"
(Victor, Northern Arizona University)

Students supported by other scholarships programmes, expressed their interest to go back to their home countries and contribute to nation building efforts and development (Holloway et al., 2012, Marsh et al., 2016). Expressions of interest regarding personal contributions to society were mentioned by other participants. However, in these two examples they were directly related with motivations to study abroad whereas others were expressed in terms of the outcomes of ISM, which will be analysed in chapter IX.

As seen thus far, the socio-cultural motivations to study abroad were manifold and they were associated with particular life and educational experiences of the participants, their friends, family and spouses. They were also linked to their individual aspirations and those of their parents. Previous language learning opportunities and further interest in learning different languages was not only a strong motivator to study abroad but also a strong determinant of the country of destination. The scholarship programmes available offering language courses attracted the participants who were also interested in French and German cultures. A relevant finding are the motivations linked with the interest of experiencing other cultures, interacting with people from other countries and learning different ways of being and doing. Although this factor has been more frequently described in undergraduate students, it was of particular importance to some of the participants of this study. These motivations are also linked with De Haas´s (2009) argument of people´s desires to discover new horizons, but perhaps more sturdily, to the acquisition of capabilities that could potentially increase social, and economic freedoms.

3.1.3 Economic factors

As explained at the beginning of the section, some of the motivations to study abroad were interconnected, particularly the value of an international degree was often linked to broaden employment opportunities. However, some participants mentioned other push/pull factors driven by economic motivations.

In the particular cases presented herein participants were very explicit about being motivated to study abroad in order to get specific academic positions, better jobs or increase their career prospects. Fidel for instance said. "I always wanted to get the job I have, and I knew very well that the only way to get it was to get a PhD abroad". In the case of Dinora, who already had a job in a research institution in Baja California, getting training abroad meant increasing the possibility of climbing the academic ladder in her institution.

> "At the time, probably like in the rest of the country, there was always problems in the sciences, particularly in the biology area to get good jobs. The academic positions are very limited. I went through hell because I could not find anything in the area I was interested in" (Dinora, University of Stirling)

Fidel and Dinora mentioned choosing subjects for their doctoral studies that at the time were not being taught in Mexico. Claudia on the other hand mentioned that she thought that studying abroad would place her in a better position in the labour market.

> "Maybe this will open doors and if I have an international degree it will help me to have a position where I can influence and move things, to be heard" (Claudia, Imperial College)

Previous studies have highlighted the importance students give to the possibility of improving their chances to get better jobs after ISM (Holloway et al., 2012), often outweighing other personal interests (Brooks and Waters, 2011). For instance, Italian students contemplating credit mobility consider that the skills learned abroad might increase their job prospects (Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014). The literature also points out that for students from developing countries the economic factors are the main motivations to participate in international mobility (Wei, 2013). These results are in line with those of Lopez Ramirez (2019), where the motivations to study abroad in the 1990s for the majority of respondents were lack of job opportunities and professional development in Mexico.

In general, this was not described as a motivation but as a fact people realised once they were already abroad. However, Cyntia mentioned that she became aware that foreign institutions had more economic resources while she was doing her master's degree in Mexico, and thus, it became one of the main reasons to decide to go to the UK for her doctoral studies.

> "When I was doing the masters, I read articles and I wanted to conduct those experiments thinking that, and I still think that, I could replicate them better in a foreign university, because there are more resources in other countries. That was what drove me to go abroad from an academic standpoint" (Cyntia, University of Sheffield)

Raquel also mentioned that one of the problems she faced while doing her masters' studies in Mexico was the financial limitation that always interfered with conducting research. Therefore, even when she had the option of doing her doctoral studies at UNAM with internationally renowned researchers, she was pulled to study abroad considering the availability of resources in France. These examples confirm the association between educational mobility and access to large scale facilities with quality infrastructural resources that are often clustered geographically (Ackers, 2008).

Together these results show how the economic motivations are mostly linked to the possibility of increasing job prospects on return regardless of where the participants aspired to work or develop professionally. Therefore, these factors were more associated to the ongoing difficult economic conditions of the country and the lack of financial and infrastructural resources in general in Mexican HEIs compared to some international institutions. The latter taking into account that there are first vertical and horizontal differences between Mexican HEIs and further, between those and the international institutions.

This chapter has aimed to explore the narratives of the participants about their socio-economic backgrounds, particular undergraduate experiences in Mexico and aspirations to study abroad. Firstly, the findings revealed that the participants were brought up in families with diverse socio-economic backgrounds which determined to a great extent their educational opportunities. However, they also showed how despite diverse economic constrains, they had aspirations of better lives and professional opportunities than those of their parents. The interviewees revealed the different ways in which they were able to convert the resources that were available to them to obtain an international mobility scholarship.

Secondly, this chapter explored how the contrasting opportunities the participants had to participate in undergraduate studies provided them with a different set of capabilities. These opportunities were mainly determined by HE availability and economic possibilities. The students who relocated for undergraduate studies became independent, were able to adapt to cultural diversity and they broadened their horizons. These capabilities informed their aspirations for educational opportunities abroad and they further contributed with their adaptation processes in the transnational spaces.

Thirdly, using De Wit (2008) educational, socio-cultural and economic push and pull factors for outward student mobility, this chapter classified the individual motivations of the participants of this research and identified additional drivers for mobility (**Table 10**). However, some interviewees expressed different factors that were not mutually exclusive for instance the possibility of acquiring knowledge that could increase opportunities to get a job in academia. The diverse associations between factors were determined on their individual previous opportunities and their future life aspirations. Moreover, their initial individual language skills were a strong driver to pursue education abroad, but also, a strong determinant for choosing particular countries of destination. The different aspirations to engage in ISM were determined by the participants´ diverse freedoms (opportunities) to achieve the different valued goals of mobility (specializations, better jobs, language skills). The mobility experience therefore, was an integral part of the participants development for intrinsic and instrumental reasons (de Haas and Rodríguez, 2010).

In summary, the findings of this chapter have underpinned personal, social and environmental heterogeneities of the participants, such as different socio-economic backgrounds and diverse geographical locations which determined their educational opportunities (Walker, 2006b). Further, how those individual conversion factors informed their decision-making processes for educational outward mobility revealing a complex mix of drivers linked to particular life experiences and aspirations for the future (Wells, 2014). Through the analysis of peoples´ heterogeneities and the different life and educational opportunities before their international sojourn, it will be possible to understand in depth what were the particular international experiences and the capabilities developed in the international milieus. Further, it will allow the exploration of the different meanings the geographic mobility experience had for the participants looking at the capabilities developed and if they expanded their freedoms to choose the life they value.

The following chapter will move on to explore the different identities of the sojourners, and the intersections with cultural aspects, marital status, age, sex and gender roles, to understand how those influenced the way they adapted to the international spaces and therefore, informed their international experience.

VII. Different identities and their adaptation in the transnational social spaces

Chapter VI presented the array of personal, social, environmental heterogeneities of the participants to broaden our understanding about how the individual contexts of provenance influenced their diverse education opportunities. This chapter moves on to explore the interviewees' different identities and the intersections with the cultural and social heterogeneities, along with marital status, age, sex and gender roles. Section one examines how the participants were able to reflect on their perceived selves in the international setting and how this affected the way in which they interacted with others. Further, how those individual identities informed the type of social interactions and the forms of support they looked for, showing different degrees of socialisation with international, local or co-national otherness. Based on the intersections between their individual identities and the way they socialised with others, a typology of international students —*adapters isolators* and *integrators*, is proposed. Section two shows the importance of family and explore the implications of the international sojourn for accompanying spouses and children. Section three examines the international experience from a gendered perspective. These intersections will broaden our understanding on the ways the diverse identities influenced how the participants adapted to the international spaces and the different ways they shaped their international experience.

1. Individual identities as enablers or barriers for socialization with "the other"

In this section, examples to depict the diverse identities from the participants were put together. The exploration of the perceived identities was intended to further elucidate the possible acquisition of capabilities for cultural understanding. However, the analysis of the transcriptions provided rich data to investigate firstly if the participants reconstructed their identities towards an intercultural identity or if they reinforced their Mexican one. Chapter IX will further identify the acquisition of capabilities for cultural understanding and how this could have been shaped by these developed identities.

The following quotes are clear examples of the different perceptions the interviewees had about their Mexican identity, which was an emerging theme in the narratives. When they were asked if they considered a change in their identity as a result of studying abroad, they first reflected on who they were before the international experience.

> "When I speak about this, I summarise it in "you go abroad, and you discover your degree of Mexicanity" How Mexican you are. Because there are the ones that are very happy and want to stay and the ones like me that are always longing to go back… thus, that degree of Mexicanity prevents me to have German friends" (Fidel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen)

Fidel illustrated in this powerful sentence how the exposure to a transnational space confronted his previous identities and hindered the possibility of socialization with the other. In my conversation with him, he further explained that he felt more comfortable being around Latin Americans because of cultural similarities.

Similarly, the next quote reflects how when people are taken out of their social contexts, they have a new space to reflect who they are and how they identify themselves. Further, how they used to construct their relationships with the others in comparison to their social interactions in the international spaces.

> "I always say that we are very patriotic, but I was not aware about how patriotic I was until I left. And the way we are, I think we are very peculiar, it is so clear to me, we are like *muéganos*[26], we have a very strong sense of identity that other countries do not have" (Adela, Boston College)

Adela associated her patriotism as an expression of love for her country and attachment to Mexican values and culture (Adorno et al. cited in Blank and Schmidt, 2003). She used the term *muégano,* which is a common adjective used to describe close ties, or very close relationships between people. In this case, she additionally talks about her perception of a collective identity shared by all Mexicans.

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[26] *Muégano* is a typical Mexican sweet made from square pieces of fried dough that are placed together with a syrup, forming a tight cluster.

Paola´s comment resonates with Fidel´s and Adela´s in terms of the patriotic feelings and the awareness of the existence of a Mexican cultural identity. "You might take roots even more…. that sense of identity becomes stronger, to your country, your culture, and your traditions". In the narrative, it can be perceived that Paola´s cultural identity was present before the international experience, although like Adela and Fidel, she became conscious of who she was when she was confronted with a new social environment and with other cultures. Galia shared the same feeling of awareness about her Mexican identity. In her narrative she expressed a constant struggle when socializing with English people that made her appreciate her own culture.

> "I think that it makes you value more…. it reassures you who you are right? There is a paragraph from a book that says, "We Mexicans, feel more Mexicans when we are outside Mexico" and that is true" (Galia, University of Sheffield)

When people moves geographically and interact with other group´s cultural identities they become more aware of their own (Bilecen, 2013). In the four cases presented above, they showed a high identity centrality which in turn, delineated the ways in which they reinforced their Mexican identities (Sussman, 2000).

In addition to the patriotic feelings expressed by some participants, one interviewee also considered his ethnic identity. Approximately, 22% of Mexican population self-identifies as part of an indigenous community (CDI, 2006)

> "I have always been aware of my sense of identity, and I don´t think it has changed at all. At this point, I have to talk about two things: my identity as Mexican and my identity as part of an indigenous group. I am from Oaxaca, and Oaxaca has its own identity attached to the indigenous groups. I am from the south, where the *Zapotecas* from the Isthmus are, and I speak *Zapoteco* and I like it and I feel that identity very strongly and I have not lost it" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

Conversely, other participants identified themselves as less patriotic or not having a particular self of belongingness. This aspect is reflected in Carlos quote: "The matter of the nation has never moved me, and now it moves me even less… I do not feel more or less Mexican and neither international because it was a short stay". Carlos recognised his nationality; however, he did not express particular patriotic feelings as

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other interviewees did. Further, he had a perception that the length of time spent in the UK was short, however he spent over three years in London. Contrastingly, in the following case Elvia reflected about how "the others" made her feel foreign in her own country.

> "I am Mexican, because I was born in Mexico, I grew up and spent my formative years there, and my family is all Mexican. However, when I was in Mexico, even when I told people I was Mexican the people around me, my friends from school, my community did not believe me. I had farer skin and lighter hair. I had friends that used to tell me "I thought you were foreign". My social circle though I was foreign, and so I said well, if they do not believe, maybe I am foreign" (Elvia, UCL)

After her doctoral studies Elvia stayed in the UK to work. She currently lives in Manchester and she is married with a British national. Carlos and Elvia showed a low identity centrality that seemed to be determined by their particular upbringings and experiences prior to the international sojourn. Nonetheless, staying in a foreign country does not mean that the participants did not recognise having a strong Mexican identity (high identity centrality), which was the case for Ricardo who also migrated permanently to the UK.

> "I think your perspective changes the day you realise you are going to stay forever. Curiously enough, in your mind you never think you are going to die far away from Mexico. I do not know why. I am a British citizen, but I think that the place where I function better is in Mexico" (Ricardo, Imperial College)

Despite the different life opportunities that Ricardo had abroad, he explained that he would have been happier if he could have found a suitable job in Mexico. He felt Mexican and that it was easier for him to have daily interactions with people in Mexico in contrast with the UK.

The following case is particularly interesting because when I first met Javier my immediate impression was that he was Argentinian —due to his accent, and thus, it made me second guess about the reliability of the survey instrument. Throughout the interview Javier did not mentioned how he felt as a Mexican, as the examples I have shown those far, nonetheless himself; his parents and grandparents were all Mexican.

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> "I think that my identity changed radically and the reason for this is that I *mamé* (suckled) many Argentinian values and ways, more than I would have thought, I have to say. I did this radically from the culture, the language, the inflexions, the ways of reasoning and thinking" (Javier, Universidad de Buenos Aires)

In the example above, I have decided to leave the word in Spanish to avoid losing its strong connotation. According to the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, *mamar* (suckle) is used to describe the acquisition of a sentiment or a moral quality. This meaning for a Spanish speaking person gives more emphasis than the words assimilate, acquire or absorb would have in English. Javier clearly articulated how his identity changed when exposed to a different culture, elucidating why I had a wrong first impression. He further explained to me that he developed an Argentinian accent when he started teaching "It is very curious how the immersion reaches a point where I have a conditioning with the conceptual explanation". This example denotes therefore, an unpredictable and yet decisive change of identities that was brought about through the relation with "others" in the international experience.

Finally, issues of age were also brought about, particularly from participants who were mature students when they studied abroad. For instance, Cesar was in his late thirties and described how the age difference made him feel in disadvantage with the competitive young students. Paola was also more than 30 years old and felt judged by her international counterparts because of her age. Julian said, "I arrived at 37, I was already an old person for the standard doctoral student", he was married and had children, thus he considered his age and his marital status as an obstacle to develop relationships with younger students. These mature students looked to establish relationships with older students, professors or with people outside the academic community and the overall international experience had different meanings. In contrast, the participants who studied abroad at a younger age did not mention age as an obstacle for socialisation but associated the international sojourn as a space for personal growth and independence. Chapter IX will explore in detail the different meanings of studying abroad for these participants.

Taken together, these results support Sen´s idea of the possibility of developing several identities influenced by a multiplicity of factors. These identities are influenced by the individual histories, cultural traditions and professional ambitions

(Rizvi, 2005), they are moulded by the constant interaction with others and can be radically transformed through the international exposure. There is not a single Mexican identity but individual "degrees of Mexicanity" that are revealed in different ways when exposed to other cultures, people and circumstances and are further influenced by age. Through these social interactions, either international students reinforce their individual patterns of thinking and behaving, or they adapt and integrate new ones, adopting an intercultural identity (Sussman, 2000). The next part moves on to explore in more detail how these different identities influenced the socialisation processes in the international spaces.

1.2 Socialising with foreigners or with Mexicans: a choice that defines the international experience (the adapters, isolators and integrators)

In the interviews I found a clear difference between the participants who established friendships and social relations with locals and international students and the ones who felt the need to search for Mexican friends. Further, participants were able to discriminate the social interactions they had with people classifying them as colleagues, acquaintances, casual friends with whom they spent leisure time, and close friends. The different ways of forging social relations seemed intimately related with their own cultural identity, their "degrees of Mexicanity", the different needs of emotional and social support and degrees of interest in understanding other cultures. Therefore, I have categorised them in three types of students: *adapters, isolators and integrators*. However, as with any attempts to classify people, there would be other individual traits that could be overlooked by putting them into such categories. Nonetheless, this broad taxonomy is useful to explain the different ways in which students experienced the international sojourn.

1.2.1   The adapter

I first turn to Carmen´s example which depicts an *adapter* type of student. She was interested in making the most out of her international experience by learning the language, getting to know the culture and socializing with the locals.

Carmen explained how she was very open minded when she travelled to Barcelona and the first two years, she "immersed herself in the Catalan culture" but at the end of that period, she felt the need of "affection and hugs". This is associated with the

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"warmth" of Mexican culture, openness about showing affection and more physical contact.

> "I got an invitation from the (Mexican) embassy to an event. Therefore, I went and then I met all the Mexicans that were in Barcelona and in that moment, my life changed radically. We would get together the weekends at some one's house, we cooked Mexican food, we went to the "Shushi-itto" (restaurant) because it was as though we were in Mexico, the waiters were Mexicans and thus, it was like going back to the roots" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

She said that even when she got along well with the international students and a few locals from her academic department, she "emotionally needed" to be with Mexicans. This example shows how Carmen made an effort to interact and establish connections with the local culture. However, her own cultural identity and her need of identification with the social codes she was comfortable with, determined her further social interactions with people from her own country. She was able to get the emotional support she was longing for. Ultimately, the friendships she established with Mexicans had a profound positive effect on how she experienced her time abroad. Adapters showed high cultural identity centrality and moderate cultural flexibility (Sussman, 2000).

1.2.2   The isolator

The *isolators* are illustrated by the next example. These are the students that realised that their "degree of Mexicanity" was so profound, that they simply could not make friendships with the locals, and they kept making comparisons with "how Mexican people behave when they make friends". This type of student resonates with Bilecen (2014) findings where friendships with co-national were the most important ones.

> "I am a person that eats slowly and thus the Germans from the institute who asked me to come for lunch, they would eat in ten minutes and they were waiting for me. I chose not to have lunch with them. Therefore, in that sense, I started making friends, because in one hand, one looks for what it's your own. I found an advertisement "social gathering for Spanish speakers, exchange of Germans and Latin Americans". There, I made friends with Venezuelan and Colombians that became my circle of friends to go out on weekends. Because I was really never able to make a German friend. I had

acquaintances and we coexisted, but I was never able to make that contact" (Fidel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen)

In this case Fidel, similarly to Carmen, mentioned the need of recognition of familiar cultural codes and his inability to interact with the German culture due to the cultural differences. He was able to navigate in the international setting with colleagues however, he was not able to establish meaningful friendships with them. Previous studies have linked strong cultural identities with increased social difficulties in the host culture (Ward and Kennedy, 1993, Sussman, 2000).

Arturo had a similar experience mentioning that he did not make friends with the local students. "And thus, the interaction was very difficult, because they were a dominant majority, and white people did not interact with us". He explained that there was little diversity in Iowa State University, and that 90% of the students were "white, blond Americans". He then used the term "minorities" to refer about the rest of nationalities among which he mentioned Mexican, Chinese, Korean and black people. However, he further explained that it was not an issue of racism, that he never felt discriminated. He knew all the Mexicans in the campus, and they used to get together for the "important Mexican celebrations" where there was Mexican food and music. Moreover, he would spend holidays with another Mexican colleague who he knew from his job back in Mexico.

An interesting finding in this particular case was the fact that he did not only feel more comfortable establishing Mexican friendships, but he also expressed curiosity about how Mexican migrant community living in the USA.

> "I knew all the undocumented from there and they got together to drink beer to talk about things that had nothing to do with Academic stuff, such as how was their workday. I felt integrated with them. I felt appreciated in that group and there were new people arriving without jobs. Thus, sometimes they asked me to accompany them when they were looking for a job, because at the time almost no one spoke Spanish there. Now it seems that more people do, but then I used to accompany them and if they were hired, they had to take a small course and I came along as an interpreter. I felt very satisfied doing that" (Arturo, Iowa State University)

Arturo found an informal space seeking purposeful social interactions, developing friendships that were meaningful for him and that were completely alien to his academic endeavour. Throughout our conversation one of the issues he struggled with the most during his time abroad was mastering the English language, hindering his possibilities of interaction with Americans. However, once he felt comfortable speaking the new language, he provided aid to his co-nationals that were in the same situation he once was. This is an unusual finding that can be contrasted with recent findings were international students consider themselves "better class citizens" than migrants from the same country of origin (Bilecen, 2014) [27].

The establishment of meaningful Mexican friendships appeared as a recurrent theme amongst the interviewees that fall into the *isolator* typology, where they felt they had a space that provided emotional and social support. Further, they could articulate their cultural traditions such as food, music and celebrations and they felt comfortable speaking Spanish. There was also a sense of community offering supportive practices such as childcare, financial support, food and shelter, which they would have generally received from family members in Mexico. This type of student resonates with the affirmative sojourner which possesses a high cultural identity centrality and low cultural flexibility (Sussman, 2000).

1.2.3 The integrator

The last type of students identified among the participants were the *integrators*, exemplified by the next quotes. These are students who, neither possessed particular attachment towards Mexican culture nor a strong Mexican identity. Thus, they were able to navigate successfully the international spaces through building meaningful relationships with the local community and other international students. These students showed low cultural identity centrality and high cultural flexibility (Sussman, 2000).

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[27] Turkish diaspora and Turkish international students in Germany: A mixed blessing. Oldac, Yusuf I, Chankseliani, Maia (2019) Paper presented in the Conference Diaspora and Internationalisation in Higher Education 10.05.2019

Claudia went through a stressful adaptation process because even when she was ascribed to Imperial College, due the nature of her studies she was placed in a workspace in the Natural History Museum. She explained how challenging this was because she did not have much interaction with other students, and so she had to search for alternative spaces for socialisation. She was eventually able to build good friends from Spain and the UK within the museum.

> "And finally, when I was able to enter another circle, was when they organised a course at the museum… for a week they would take you across all the departments to get to know what each researcher was doing. It was not my turn to go, but it was for my Spanish friend and thus, I asked if I could come along and they said yes. And I said, "how cool, because all the new employees who work at the museum will come along" and there were younger people and we were able to get along with them…. And there is where I actually met my husband…. all the people that came to that course became really good friends…. Thus, I was almost moulded in the English way" (Claudia, Imperial College)

In this case, Claudia was able to find a "third space" (Elliot et al., 2016) where she interacted with local people, developed meaningful relationships and enhanced her intercultural skills in an informal setting. She further explained how she was able to participate in traditional English social activities and adopt the host culture customs, values and behaviours. This finding likewise mirrors other studies where it has been observed that cultural adjustment is enabled by frequent voluntary interaction with host nationals (Ward and Kennedy, 1993).

The next quote belongs to Elvia, who felt foreign in Mexico. She also portrayed her first year as a difficult one in terms of finding friends, however through the diverse places she lived in, she was slowly able to expand her circle of friends. In contrast with the examples provided above, she found the emotional and social support she needed with people from other cultures.

> "I shared a flat with a Brazilian woman… And there I met more people because she liked to go dancing and invite people over. Socially speaking the second year was easier…. And then I found a space in the University and through that I created my social circle with other students that were doing PhDs…. And I moved again now with two Greek guys and made a much nicer social circle, we got along really well…. Months

later another friend left, and we met this other Greek girl. That was, I think my family. We are still in contact; they were my base. And then I met the one who became my husband, we were both doing the PhD and we started going out. Thus, the emotional and social support was there" (Elvia, UCL)

Integrators, in contrast with *isolators*, *adapters* and Bilecen´s (2014) findings, were very vocal about not being interested in engaging with Mexicans.

"To this day I do not have relationships with Mexicans. I have Mexican acquaintances, but not life friends as the ones I had in Mexico. Because I have not found Mexican people with my same values, or that I like, or that we can get along well. Thus, I am not desperate to have a Mexican community" (Elvia, UCL)

In the next case, Jose articulated very clearly the difference between the types of students and questioned why other Mexican students' go abroad and replicate their local social patterns.

"I thought "I did not come here to meet Mexicans" just like that. Thus, I made friends that I still maintain, I have a very good friend, he is Austrian, but he is in Germany, a couple of Catalan friends, a French and two Australian couples. That was my central group of friends, all of them from the university and essentially, we were from the same research group…. Curiously enough, many of the Mexicans who arrived there, they were looking for other Mexicans. Why do you go to Australia to look for Mexicans? I do not know. There are people that do not make it, and then you say, why do you go to the other side of the world to see a different experience, if you can have it in Mexico, if what you are really looking for is people" (Jose, The Australian National University)

He acknowledged the international experience as a space where he could also meet different people with whom he was able to establish meaningful social relations. However, his international friends were people who he spent a lot of the time with throughout the doctoral studies. Bilecen (2014) has described these attitudes of preference of foreign friends despite the presence of co-nationals in the international setting. She has attributed them to similar lifestyles and shared experiences and thus, a shared nationality was not an important factor shaping friendships.

In summary, these findings show that the students can be identified in three categories: *adapters*, *isolators* and *integrators* based on their individual perceptions

of their cultural identities and on the ways in which they interacted with "the others" in the international milieus. As explored in section one, the diverse "degrees of Mexicanity" were determined by people´s previous capability set. Chapters VIII and IX will explore how these students negotiated their lives abroad and whether the characteristics associated to the typologies hindered or contributed to the development of capabilities. Nonetheless, regardless of the type of students and the type of friends they chose to have, a commonality between all the participants was the importance of developing friendships and social networks for emotional and social support, which will be explored next.

1.3 The importance of friendships and social networks

International doctoral students spend at least three years away from their home countries, their friends and their families. As seen in the examples above, participants mentioned the different ways they forged their social circles with diverse individuals depending on their identities and personal needs. Moreover, they explained the different types of support they had from these friendships, from companionship to emotional support.

The following quotes reinforce the need of socialising with the other in the international setting and the meanings of these social interactions for the participants. Carlos travelled abroad together with his partner. He first explained how they already had friends living in London that were crucial for their establishment in the new city. Further, he narrated how developing meaningful foreign friendships was a pivotal aspect for their adaptation process in the international space.

> "In the first stage we met some Spanish people that became friends forever. Then we had a house that was for graduate students living with their partners of with families. There were a lot of Argentinian, Chilean, Mexican and others. Therefore, the family part, you substitute it with these mates, therefore, is also the issue of adapting and not feeling so alien and far away" (Carlos, IOE)

In this case, he acknowledged how these relationships were comparable to family, and the geographical proximity gave them a sense of belongingness and eased the feelings produced by being away from his biological family. In the next example, Javier was able to socialise with very diverse people and therefore, he built different

friendships. In his narrative, he described with a lot of detail the type of relationships he developed with each of them.

> "I had those two groups, the circle from the university, the society of philosophical analysis, the social life with the elderly, my supervisor, plus Gabriel and a younger life…. I think I felt less of a foreigner when I moved in with my partner…. My third house was a flat…. where we had a space to build together. There was an established routine where I was teaching and when I went back home, my social and cultural life was around her, her friends, my friends, the area, the neighbours. When that routine was established, it seems to me that I never looked back because I did not have strings attached…. Emotionally, I see myself in retrospect being able to find people and to get close to people who offered me a containment space. My supervisor´s wife, her indirect friends, people in the university, their families, people that in turn introduced me to more people and all of a sudden, I was strong and agile enough to make affective networks" (Javier, Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Both Carlos and Javier mentioned how their strong social ties, made them feel less foreigners abroad. Moreover, Javier reflected how his ability to develop these friendships offered him the possibility to navigate more comfortably through the international setting. In his narrative, there is an evident involvement of emotions.

In the next quote, Paola mentioned as well how close friendships in the international setting become a substitute family.

> "I value the experience very much, not only at an academic level, but the personal aspect was also very strong. I do not know if that happens to everyone. But I made a community which, to this day, two years ago I went to Brazil to see some friends…. And there were the Greeks, Spanish, Italians, we had a community dynamic of meeting every Friday, we had a bar where we met, and we did a thousand things together. Thus, in a way they become your family" (Paola, University of Sheffield)

Paola reflected on her own sojourn as a meaningful one because the long-lasting friendships she was able to forge. She further explained how through meeting these different people she was able to "make community outside the university" which also resonates with finding a "third space" for growth and development. In her narrative, she also mentioned how valuable it was to meet locals and making strong affective connections with them.

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The friendships established in the international setting for many of the participants played a role of a substitute family, where social and emotional supportive practices took place (Bilecen, 2014). Overall, building different social connections with "the other" was fundamentally meaningful for all the participants. With the aid of these affective networks, they were able to navigate and adjust to the international spaces more comfortably. Friendships provided a sense of belonginess, a space for leisure and emotional support. In the case of foreign friendships, they additionally promoted intercultural understanding. The establishment of these friendships were equally important for all the participants. However, the narratives from the interviewees who travelled on their own revealed a different level of emotional support involving stronger affective ties. The next section will explore in more detail the different types of friendships and social interactions of the participants who travelled with their partners and with their families.

2. Marital status as a factor that shapes the international experience

Through the interviews, I learned that almost half of the participants (14) were married or had relationships at the time they decided to pursue international studies. Each one of them had different experiences; however, in the majority of the descriptions their partners played a fundamental role in their decision-making processes and in their further international sojourns. Some of them also had children, which added a layer of complexity to the experiences. In this section, I take examples of the sojourners that had partners or families and show the nuances of their individual experiences associated with their familial dynamics. Further, what were the interviewees perceptions on how partners and children experienced the international sojourn.

2.1 The difference between traveling alone or with family

When I designed the interview schedule for this research, I included a question regarding the marital status at the time the participants did their doctoral studies. However, I did not foresee how important these relationships were for the interviewees in shaping their international experiences. Through the analysis, issues associated with marital status became a recurrent theme and thus, a relevant finding of this research.

For instance, Julian narrated his whole experience very closely to the one of his wife and children. He was the one who wanted to study abroad in the first place and thus, his wife decided to pursue doctoral studies as well. However, they could not travel at the same time. Julian was on his own for several months before he was reunited with his family in the UK.

> "The internet was not like it is now, it was still the one with the little noise, it was very slow, but I could communicate with my wife more or less regularly. Therefore, I knew what was happening with her and thus that helped a lot because I really did not feel so very alone" (Julian, Queen Mary University)

He explained how during his first eight months in the UK he was fully immersed in his studies and because of his shy personality, and because he was "old" (37) and a married man, he did not socialise with others. When he remembered being reunited with his family, he was moved to tears.

> "When my wife arrived was very exciting, to tell you the truth. Because I had not seen my daughters in a long time, thus it was…. but everything went really well, and it was a very nice time because they arrived in the summer. Thus, it was like our vacation… It was awesome when the kids arrived and we started looking at schools, it was very pleasant" (Julian)

The rest of his narrative related with the friends he made and the activities outside his studies, which were completely attached to his familial dynamics and particularly around his daughters´ daily lives.

> "And the relationship with the parents started happening slowly. But we did get to attend some of the children's parties, and we also had the chance to throw one the English style. Thus, it was very interesting because we had the opportunity to learn what many students do not, which is immersing in the society through the children. Normally, they stay with their friends from university and many of them are international students and they do not get to know any English people" (Julian)

Similarly, one of the relevant experiences Cesar remembered was to look for schools for his children. Further, how through their kids, they were able to socialise with their community.

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"As with the decision for our kids to get immersed in the language, we made French friendships exclusively because we thought it was important to learn. In addition, we found very warm people…. Therefore, we felt integrated" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

Both Julian and Cesar reflected on the opportunities they had to get involved with the local societies and learning different ways of being and doing. Moreover, the following quote from Arturo resonates with what Julian mentioned about not feeling alone because he was with his family.

"I was already married, and I had two kids… the third one was born in Iowa. Thus, that helped me a lot with the cultural shock. It is not the same being alone as being with your family" (Arturo, Iowa State University)

Similarly, Raquel mentioned being one of the lucky ones who went abroad accompanied. These findings can be contrasted with those of interviewees who travelled on their own, whom in several instances expressed feelings of loneliness, about how hard daily life was on their own, or how much they missed their lives back in Mexico. Chapter VIII will address issues associated with these emotional difficulties.

Thus, the presence of spouses and children eased in different ways the adaptation processes in the international settings. However, these presences involved additional responsibilities and concerns for the participants such as the well-being of their families, as depicted in the following quote.

"I think that at the end, I had the emotional stability to get the PhD because of my wife and kid. Thus, that was fundamental…. that they were in a place where they felt happy. I am aware that if they had been in a place where they could not get adapted, that would have been detrimental in my performance. What I want to say is that the adaptation is important but not only your own, but of the family" (Jaime, Wageningen Universiteit)

Finally, for couples that travelled with their partners but did not have children at the time, there was a sense of an enriched shared experience, learning to live together and daily life negotiations in an unusual setting, but also about enjoyment. Previous

studies have shown that the family plays a fundamental role in "educational migration" (Brooks, 2015).

> "Even the stability we have today as a married couple was because of that. We left as newlyweds and we did not have any influence neither from his family nor from mine, nor from friends and the Mexican environment. Thus, we learned, because it is always a learning experience when you start a life with someone, we learned the Spanish style" (Jimena, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

In the quote above, Jimena emphasised how the international experience was very positive for her marriage. As I will present further, her international experience allowed her to reflect in several aspects of her gendered identities as a wife, a mother and a professional woman. As explained in chapter VI she went abroad initially as her spouse companion, and then decided to study abroad. However, in other cases, the spouses supported their partners without having particular life plans in the international settings. Some of their experiences are highlighted next.

2.1.1 Experiences for spouses

The following examples are the views of the participants about how their spouses lived the decisions to study abroad but also how the international experience was for them.

> "My wife also has a PhD, and I think it was very frustrating for her, because like everybody else, she had professional aspirations and she went only supporting me…. Thus, so many years it is tough, and you have to deal sometimes with those things, because your partner is not always in good spirits as I was in the professional sense…. She looked for activities, she made relationships, overall I think it was very agreeable" (Jaime, Wageningen Universiteit)

In the quote above Jaime explained how his wife decided to pause her professional career so he could pursue his academic ambitions. He acknowledged how difficult it was for her as a professional woman to be exclusively a companion of her husband; however, she was able to make the most of her experience. Myers-Walls et al. (2011) have described similar findings of male students expressing concerns for their wives who paused their professional lives in the home country and who had exclusive household and childrearing responsibilities while abroad. Equally, Victor´s

wife had a professional career and a good job in Mexico. She managed to get a leave of absence from her job and support her husband in his international academic pursuit.

> "There is where the tortuous path started for my wife, because it came as a surprise for her, even when I had told her about the idea…. She was very settled in here (Mexico) she had a good job that she did not want to quit, obviously. But she agreed at the end that it was an important process for all the family" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

In this particular case, the pause in her career, allowed her to learn English and get involved in activities that most likely, she would not have had time to do in Mexico.

> "Even my wife who was supposedly going as a housewife had the opportunity to do things. Go to activities, she volunteered, at the end she had a remunerated job because her English level improved a lot. Thus, I think it also opened the panorama for her" (Victor)

Sakamoto (2006) and Brooks (2015) have described similar findings where "female spouses´ decisions were generally determined by their male partners´ decisions". Jaime and Victor´s acknowledged that their wives were the ones who took almost all the housework and childrearing responsibilities. Nonetheless Victor was vocal about sharing parenting with his wife. This findings are contrary to previous studies where accompanying female spouses have been the sole carers of children (Brooks, 2015).

Finally, Raquel was invited to do her doctoral studies in France. She explained that when she discussed with her husband about this possibility, he supported her fully. He had a steady job back in Mexico, which he quitted to accompany her. He had the opportunity to learn French and get further education.

> "Thus, "I went to Montpellier with my husband and he quitted his job and went without speaking French…. He enrolled in the university and in fact he got a postgraduate degree as well…. He did not apply for a scholarship, he accompanied me" (Raquel, Université de Montpellier II)

it is considerably more likely that the mother, rather than the father, will give up their employment to facilitate such international mobility (Huang and Yeoh 2011; Waters

2002). Therefore Raquel´s situation is an unusual finding where the husband was supporting the academic career of his wife.

In all the examples above, despite the difficulties of being in unfamiliar settings, the partners showed different degrees of agency and intentionality in their daily lives' negotiations in the international spaces. Therefore, my findings are of special significance since the studies about international students often focus only on them as individuals and do not consider the implications the international sojourn might have had for companions. For instance, the accompanying partners of international students in New Zealand are not even accounted for in higher education statistics (Anderson, 2012). In this regard scholars have been paying more attention to studies focusing on parenting practices and the nuanced experiences for the sojourners' spouses (Brooks, 2015, Myers-Walls et al., 2011, Loveridge et al., 2018, Phelps, 2016). Some aspects of the international experience for children will be addressed next.

2.1.2   Experiences for children

As previously described, some sojourners had particular experiences attached to their children's lives. Based on their decisions regarding their kids' schooling, they also shared their perceptions about how the international experience was lived by them.

> "And when the kids arrived, my wife and I decided not to enrol them in an international school where they slowly learn the language. We met many doctoral Mexican students that did that. We decided to better immerse them completely and after four months, they were speaking French. They are twins, they were three and a half years more or less, it was very difficult for them as well but after four months they were integrated" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

In Cesar´s case, his children had already started speaking Spanish, thus, they had to go through the acculturation process to a different language and culture. He described this period as a challenging one for his children. On the same lines, Arturo expressed a degree of culture shock experienced by his son.

> "My oldest was six years old and he was at school, and over there (USA) there are no bilingual schools, just English. He was the only Mexican in his school. It was also a shock for him, but he overcame it easily" (Arturo, Iowa State University)

Contrastingly, Dinora did not mention any acculturation problems with his son, however, he had not yet developed his mother language and thus, it was easier for him to adapt to the new environment.

> "What I can tell you is not only what you contrast and live, but also what I lived with my son. My son arrived without knowing how to talk. He left when he was two and a half years and started speaking in English, thus, his mother tong is English…. Over there (UK) the education is to read, read and read. When my son came back, he knew how to read. Over there they also give importance to critical thinking, to think and to read" (Dinora, University of Stirling)

She explained all the advantages her son had while studying in the UK in comparison with the formative years he would have had in Mexico. Similarly, Julian talked about the capabilities acquired by her daughter at a public school.

> "My youngest had the opportunity to learn violin, which in England something that has to be acknowledged is that they have an impressive music education…. She learned a lot and became part of the borough´s orchestra… we liked that she was able to have those additional activities" (Julian, Queen Mary University)

In Mexico, she would have needed private lessons in order to learn to play a specialised instrument. Further, she was able to participate in local activities and interact with children from other cultures, enriching her schooling experience. This findings are consistent with the existing literature where international students acknowledged that their children had their own linguistic, cultural, social, educational and emotional experiences in the international spaces (Loveridge et al., 2018). Chapter IX will expand on the meanings of the international experience for these children in terms of the transformation of their adult lives.

This section has shown how the international experience unfolded in contrasting ways for students who travelled with partners and children. For them, the different levels of support of the family were determinant for their sojourns. They provided companionship and emotionally supportive practices and further, they promoted

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different socialisation practices particularly with the local communities. The spouses and children of the students were presented the opportunity to live their own international experiences, forged independent friendships and developed new sets of capabilities. Section three moves on now to consider the implications of the international sojourn from a gendered perspective.

3. Gender identities challenged by international mobility

This section explores the international experiences of some participants from a gendered perspective. The extracts of the interviews revealed issues related to gender that were pinpointed as critical aspects of the acculturation processes and understandings during the sojourn and in their subsequent life trajectories. These were further analysed against their life histories and those of their parents and identified as enablers or constrains of gender equality. These findings will help to understand how gender roles, familial dynamics and expectations shaped the experiences of the participants and their developed capabilities. Further, they seek to contribute to the exploration of the different meanings and challenges of ISM from a gendered perspective.

3.1 Mexican women gendered roles confronted by ISM

The quotes below from Jimena, are a good example of the gender experiences of a woman from a working-class traditional Mexican family from Minatitlan, Veracruz, a provincial city. Her parents managed to finish primary education later in life as adults through a national educational programme. She explained how she decided to study overseas because her boyfriend wanted to study abroad. However, instead of going solely as a spouse companion, she decided to pursue doctoral studies as well.

> "I was a newlywed. Culturally speaking, well you know, here (in Mexico) you have to be the wife, you have to cook and be the housewife and so forth….and I cooked a little bit. I knew more or less how to cook. Therefore, my mind set was that I was going to cook" (Jimena, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

Throughout this conversation, Jimena reflected on her preconceived ideas about her role as a wife and what she thought was expected from her. She looked after her husband and took over the responsibility of performing the house chores.

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"It was so different, for instance once having a conversation with my laboratory colleagues I told them that I used to get up to prepare breakfast for my husband. In addition, my friend Yolanda asked me "is your husband stupid or impaired or what?" and I said no —why are you saying that? She replied, "well then you are the idiot". I was shocked by the reaction —why are you saying that to me?" I asked. She continued —isn´t he able to prepare something to eat for himself? Why do you have to get up? Don´t you want to stay longer in bed? I replied —poor him, how is he going to have breakfast by himself? And she finally said, "Nothing is going to happen to him"" (Jimena)

When Jimena confronted her points of view with those of women from more egalitarian societies, she was able to challenge the validity of the gendered roles she was engaging with.

"Men and woman are equal, there is no room for "I will serve you, you are my husband and the head", no, over there is very different. That part was extraordinary for us…. I learned how to be Feminist over there (Spain), definitely. Otherwise, I would still think that on top of having to work eight hours and do it to the best of my abilities and consider contending to be part of the National Researchers System and publish and all the things that are expected from a person that has a researcher position. I also would have thought that it was my obligation to keep a clean house, to cook, to iron, bring up children, look after my husband …. Meaning that if I had not gone to Spain, I do not think I would have been able to finish a PhD because of the emotional and physical challenges. However, over there is different, an egalitarian contribution is expected. This means that the fact that I am a wife does not mean I have to work more, and it does not mean that I have to fulfil gendered roles" (Jimena)

Because of this confrontation, she was able to negotiate her role as a research student and a wife, critically self-reflecting about her values on gender and family, and ultimately changing her point of view. Currently, she considers her-self as an equal with her husband. Previous studies have shown that through study abroad experiences women from traditional upbringings were able to reshape their professional aspirations (Holloway et al., 2012).

Contrastingly, a quote from Dinora, a middle-class woman from Mexico City who moved to the Baja California peninsula, denotes how gendered roles are so ingrained in some Mexican middle-class women and very difficult to modify.

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"My husband and I decided to study abroad together. The problem that I had was more in the personal realm. Why? Because we come from a *machista* culture and from a culture where gendered roles are well defined. Thus, even when my husband is an educated person and that he was well aware that we were both studying, the moment he had problems with the food, his first reaction was to look at me and ask me —what are you going to do about it?....initially, we were eating at the university canteen, but the food was unsettling his stomach…. When they allocate you in a family flat, the cleaners of the accommodation do not cook for you, they only clean. Thus, the answer was very simple, you will have to cook the way you had been doing it all those years as a married couple right? Regardless of my research student status. Therefore, I took on the task to organise my time more efficiently because I had to cook for my husband….and of course you feel like "argh" and you want to kill him, but it also comes from a place of love and caring, therefore you say —OK I will cook for you….and so I ended up cooking. I was doing my PhD and cooking and I was supposed to be completely focused on my studies, but I was never able to do that…. And with the culture that one has as a Latin American, that is the way I was brought up. When you establish your priorities in first instance is your family and then is everything else. So even when you are abroad and you are doing your PhD, your family is still your priority" (Dinora, University of Stirling)

Dinora´s example also reinforces other research findings suggesting that regardless of their position in the labour market women generally do not abandon their jobs at the household and, as child bearers, effectively performing two jobs (Torres Velázquez et al., 2008). This is also true for women in academia where personal and marital stress have been reported as a result of the "second shifts" that females perform even when both partners have careers (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Jimena and Dinora were exposed to more gendered equal societies, and both came from families with similar ideas about gendered roles. However, Dinora was not able to challenge those ideas the same way Jimena did. Dinora recognised that she came from a *machista* society and explained the gendered roles she performed but did not question them; she simply accepted them as facts. Thus, she perpetuated gender asymmetries. One of the reasons behind this could be that Jimena was younger and a newlywed when she went abroad. Dinora on the other hand was older, was already married and had a child, job experience and a secured employment back in Mexico. Another influencing factor could be their different socioeconomic

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backgrounds. Jimena came from a working-class family from a Mexican province with parents with minimum education. Whereas Dinora came from a middle-class family from Mexico City and her parents attended university. The individual construction of Dinora´s gendered roles as a mother and wife were defined a priori, perhaps through her particular social interactions with her family and society.

Thus, Jimena since the moment she moved to a different city to attend university, was presented with a wider set of social opportunities that she could not have had if she has stayed in her town of origin and therefore, she was able to further renegotiate her pre-migration gender ideologies while she was abroad. However, Dinora´s social position, marital status and intra familial dynamic prior to her experience abroad might have been determinant in her inability to modify (or choice to not modify) her gender practices. Indeed, being a housewife in Latin America has been recognised a sign of middle-class status (Willis, 2000).

These two examples provide rich information about the nuanced international experiences of women. It could have been assumed that the international exposure to more equally gendered societies could have automatically led to transformation of preconceived gender notions. However, they support the importance of considering women´s heterogeneities and social class and the complexities of simultaneously experiencing diverse identities when evaluating outcomes of international mobility. Moreover, how social norms and families influence our ideas of a good life. In this sense the perpetuation of traditional gender roles should not necessarily be considered an unfreedom but a choice to live a particular valued life (Robeyns, 2005). The following section will explore motherhood as an additional identity to consider when assessing the meanings of the international experience.

3.2 Doctoral students becoming mothers abroad

The following quotes belong also to Jimena. When reflecting on her experience abroad the focus of her narrative was the birth of her son, during her first year as a doctoral student.

> "My academic department had an exclusive area where my child could be left without any problems. Actually, since I came to Mexico for the scholarship interview, the woman that interviewed me asked me questions about what I was going to do with my baby.

> She recommended me to leave my baby in childcare as much as I required because I needed to be hundred percent focused on my work. She said if I did not do it, I would have had a low performance both as a researcher and as a mother…. and I thought no!... And it was very difficult. I consider that culturally speaking this is an issue that other cultures do not have. We are taught in different ways that you have to be with your child. And that is not necessarily true. Or if you are not with him, it does not mean that you are not looking after him. Thus, we tried to put him in a nursery, and everything was great, as it should have been" (Jimena)

Jimena was very eager to share her experience with me; at all times she expressed an overall satisfaction from the international sojourn. However, while she was explaining the recommendations she got about leaving her son in childcare, the memory of the struggle this decision represented for her, moved her to tears.

> "Likewise, the birth of our child over there where we were practically on our own was incredibly good and valuable. That does not mean that is wrong that your family is near you. But we live in a paternalistic culture and sometimes certain boundaries are crossed. Grandparents often intrude in some decisions that fall exclusively on the parents, particularly if it is their first time as parents. We did not have that because of the geographical distance. Therefore, it was incredibly enriching for us. However, is difficult, the ideas are different. There is also a generational abysm that becomes more evident when you studied abroad because you come with other ideas that maybe for our environment are very progressive in all aspects" (Jimena)

Through this reflection, Jimena was aware of her pre-conceived cultural ideas about motherhood. She expressed very clearly how she was conflicted by the idea of "neglecting her child". Women who decide to pursue doctoral studies and motherhood, have expressed feelings of strain of being a "good parent" and guilt for not spending enough time with their children or having to leave them in childcare (Trepal et al., 2014, Brown and Watson, 2010). However, she also talked about the conversations she had with her husband and how he supported whatever decision she made. This result support the idea that headship roles and the marital decision-making dynamics influence women´s position in the familial domain and promote decrease in gender asymmetries (Tienda and Booth, 1991).

Contrastingly, Raquel was brought up in a middle-class family in Mexico City and her parents had university education. Her husband quitted his job to go as her spouse

companion to France. Raquel who also became a mother while she was doing her doctoral studies, was not conflicted by the idea of having her baby in childcare, affirming that she knew her child was perfectly safe. In our conversation, she always expressed an equal gender dynamic with her partner.

So far, it can be seen that the gendered identities of women were associated with their upbringing and are further negotiated or reinforced with the dynamics they develop with their partners. Depending on who they were before the international sojourn, was the level of reflection and (re) configuration of their identities when they were exposed to more equal gendered societies. The next section explores if this is also true for Mexican men.

3.3 Mexican men gendered roles confronted by ISM

Gender roles and gender relations have been perpetuated in Mexican culture. A nuclear family as explained in chapter V, is formed by a father a spouse and children. The traditional division of labour is based on gender where the male is the breadwinner, and the female is in charge of bringing up the children and performing all household activities. When analysing the interviews, it is evident the degree of influence that the education received at home had over the interviewees. Of special interest are the responses of diverse masculinities referring to their upbringing, particularly from their mothers, and how their lived experiences in foreign countries were confronted with their previous gender ideologies.

The quote below belongs to Fidel from Mexico City, who explained before how he came from a house where his mother used to cook and do his laundry for him before he went to Germany. Further, how he was able to become independent abroad.

> "I learned how to cook. My wife says that if I would not have gone abroad, that if I was the way I tell her how I used to be, she would have never taken notice on me. Because…. for instance, I go to the supermarket, many times on my own. I am the one that cooks in many occasions. Now that I have an eight-month-old baby, I carry her, I took her today to her music lessons. Those things make people talk. On Monday for instance, I went to the ISSSTE (health system) with my baby because my wife works on Mondays. Therefore, people were looking at me in a weird manner, as thinking, "Why he is a man and he is carrying a baby", they were looking at me like a weirdo. It was a

life experience that I would not have had any other way" (Fidel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen)

The manner in which Fidel expressed the way he engages with cooking, grocery shopping and parenting activities, along with his narrative about his familial interaction pre-migration, illustrates how he previously understood those as female activities. Moreover, he was not brought up in a house where he had to get involved in the household activities and it was normal for his mother to do them for him, reinforcing the fact that parents are responsible of perpetuating gender stereotypes. However, he reflected on the way he learned to perform household chores in Germany and now he accepts those activities as part of his normal routine back in Mexico. Fidel further recognized the symmetry of his partnering relation and bestowed this change in perspective to the international sojourn. However, he also expressed his perception of people´s disapproval or surprise towards his attitudes in particular Mexican environments.

The following quote is from a man from Mexico City with a Mexican traditional upbringing and his confrontation with a woman with liberal ideas about partnering.

> "That was another shock when my now wife told me "let´s move in together" and I thought she was joking. I was concerned about what her family could think…. —is your family really not going to say anything? My fear was that I had to confront her family, they did not know how I was…. Her sister did the same, the one that has not left the house is her brother…. Thus, the women were the ones who decided to leave the house, and as far as I understand many people around them did the same, and it is fine…. It has to do with the education you received at home. My mother was very strict, and everything had to be done the right way…. It had to do with what I saw happening with my sisters, they could not leave the house just because…. And probably we are heading towards that in Mexico. For instance, I have a daughter and if she decides to move out of the house too, what am I going to say? If that is what she wants I am not going to lock her down or beat her, if that´s her desire, what can I do? .... even when internally I can´t accept that situation so easily" (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

In contrast with Fidel´s perceptions. Aldo expressed a sentiment of cultural shock against his girlfriends´ gender identity and her ideas about partnering. He immediately confronted those ideas with those related to the way his mother brought

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up his sisters and himself, questioning their validity. In his narrative, he had not fully reconfigured his preconceived ideas about partnering, this is depicted in the conflict he manifested when talking about the possibility of his daughter replicating his actions. However, there was a negotiation about gender roles influenced by a more equal power relation with his wife. When I asked him if he considered if he would have had the same way of thinking if he had stayed in Mexico for his graduate studies, he answered that probably he would have perpetuated with his children the education he received at home.

The literature suggests that males can effectively transform their identities in complex and conflicting ways when they migrate (McIlwaine, 2010). Equally to females, when men move geographically, they can also be exposed to different understandings of gendered lives in the domestic domain, the labour market and the state (Ibid). However, these studies underpin the importance of the intersection of social relations such as class, sex, gender, nationality and individual agency, and consider individual experiences when trying to make sense about the different meanings, challenges and outcomes of migration from a gendered perspective (Mahler and Pessar, 2001). The outcomes of the international experience can thus be multifaceted where gender norms and ideologies can be either reinforced or be questioned to create spaces for the democratisation of gender relationships (McIlwaine, 2010, Mahler and Pessar, 2006).

Finally, the quote below from a man from Queretaro illustrates the cultural shock when exposed with a culture of more gender equality and with different masculine behaviours and social codes.

> "The first time that my friend Mark invited me dancing I thought —what? hang on, but that is the way it is. You dance with other men, but you mind your own business. And there is when I realised how progressive German culture is. How there is so much respect for females however, I can see how that causes them a lot of problems to find partners, to be able to coexist…. Women are too forward" (Juan, Technische Universitat Hamburg)

When Juan narrated this experience, he first inferred that his friend could have been homosexual and had an interest in him, making him feel uncomfortable with the idea. Mexican hegemonic masculinity is distinctly heterosexual and thus discredits

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homosexual behaviours (Melhuus, 1998). Juan did not declare his stance regarding homosexuality; however, he acknowledged his acceptance of the local behaviour and took part with dancing with other men. Moreover, he reflected on different women´s behaviours both, in the quote above and throughout my conversation with him. He expressed conflict when describing German women´s different femininities. The literature suggests a link between sexuality and morality and that women´s liberty can often be mixed-up with sexual licentiousness (McIlwaine, 2010, Melhuus, 1998). Further, how sexuality is relevant for male and female identity (Bartra (1992) cited in Melhuus, 1998).

These views depict how men also confront their preconceived ideas about gender in front of more progressive societies. Interestingly, in many cases their prior gendered notions were learned through their mothers. Along with gender identities, cultural identities are important to take into consideration to be able to understand the way people interact with others abroad.

In summary, ISM enabled participants of this study to be exposed to more gender equal societies. Through their narratives, different levels of confrontations of the gendered identities were revealed. Furthermore, how through the interaction with members of these societies they were able to identify their pre-conceived gendered identities and, in most cases, adopt positive gender attitudes contributing to the reduction of gender stereotypes.

This chapter has dealt with the different identities of the participants of this study and how the intersection of these identities influenced the ways in which they established social relations with others in the international spaces. Further, the different ways in which their cultural and gendered identities were reinforced, shaped or transformed contingent to their social interactions.

Through the analysis I was first able to identify individual "degrees of Mexicanity" that were associated with the participants different national identities and cultural heritage. The stronger these national feelings were, the more difficult it was for them to navigate across cultures and thus, they reinforced their Mexican identities.

The second finding of this chapter relates with the socialisation processes of the participants, contingent with their cultural identities. Therefore, I have identified three types of students; *adapters*, *isolators* and *integrators*. *Adapters* are students that identify themselves as possessing a strong latent Mexican identity which is brought to the foreground when they are taken out of their social contexts and have contact with the new cultures. They are open to establish relationships with host nationals and other international students, nonetheless their cultural identity limits their socialisation process with these groups to instrumental support related to everyday life and academic tasks. In order to adapt to the international spaces, they seek to establish relationships with co-nationals with whom they share cultural understandings such as traditions, behaviours, language and who offer emotional support and the possibility of leisure time.

Isolators similar to *adapters* possess a strong Mexican identity however they recognise their inability or their unwillingness to establish relationships with individuals from cultures different from their own. This is based on their preconceptions, knowledge and individual perceptions of those cultures. Often, *isolators* establish contact with co-nationals, frequently students, in the study destination whom they were acquainted with from home or who are friends from someone they know. They do not express particular interest in learning the local ways of being and doing and they forge further relationships with people from their same country or from similar nationalities. These friendships can be other students

or individuals who previously settled in the host country with whom they share, language, traditions, food, values and who provide emotionally supportive practices. These students seek to reproduce in the host country, the lifestyle that is familiar to them.

Integrators are individuals who do not consider having a strong Mexican identity. They are interested in establishing relationships with other international students and host nationals which frequently become close friends. These friendships offer emotional support, companionship, shared social activities and in some cases, they are referred to as substitute family. This does not exclude them from forming relationships with co-nationals, however they do not represent their main circle of friends. In some instances, they avoid social interaction with co-nationals and criticise fellow nationals who reproduce patterns abroad. *Integrators* are highly interested in understanding the local ways of being and doing, the culture and assimilating the nuances of the language, traditions and behaviours and often search for other spaces to socialise away from the academic realms.

A third relevant finding relates with the previous relationships of the sojourners. I found in the narratives of the participants a special meaning about being able to travel with partners and children. Partners provided emotional support, companionship and in the case of young couples, they acknowledged having been able to learn to live together in societies that are more egalitarian. Moreover, through their children, the sojourners were able to establish social relationships with the local communities and immerse themselves in the international settings. Furthermore, this chapter presents some implications that the international experience represented for the spouses and children, which has been neglected in the literature. Partners and children were able to develop agency, adapted to the international settings in different ways, and developed new capabilities.

Finally, the findings show how men and women challenged their gendered roles contingent on the degree of gender symmetry and power relations, with their partners and friendships. Through the interaction with more egalitarian societies, they identified their pre-conceived gendered identities and, in most cases, adopted positive gender attitudes and gender stereotypes. In the case of women becoming mothers abroad, there was a connection of the expectations and upbringing from

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their families, which made them experience motherhood in different ways. Furthermore, the ways they negotiated maternity was also determined by the gender symmetries with their partners.

Overall, the findings of this chapter provide evidence about the different identities of the participants associated with the personal, social and environmental heterogeneities discussed in chapter VI. These individual identities either hindered or obstructed the possibility of developing diverse social interactions with others, which in turn, offered the possibility of adopting new identities or reinforcing the previous ones. Together these findings will help to understand how these participants were able to negotiate and navigate the international spaces and their different acculturation processes. Moreover, what were the challenges they faced both, in their everyday lives and in the academic realm. These aspects will be addressed in the next chapter.

VIII.   Negotiating living abroad: the international experience

"I always say that studying abroad is romanticized. Therefore, people think "it must be fantastic, it is incredible, the schools look amazing" But the daily life is very difficult, to get up, to be alone, to do things, financially, is very hard. That is the part that people do not see" (Adela, Boston University)

Introduction

Chapters VI and VII have constructed the participants' individual profiles and nuanced identities based on their personal, social and environmental heterogeneities. Further, how their different identities and personal circumstances influenced the socialisation processes with others in the international milieus. This chapter, informed by the typification of students: *adapters, isolators* and *integrators* —explores the question about what the experiences of the interviewees were, and the differences of their adaptation processes to the international spaces. Section one addresses themes that were frequently raised by the participants associated with their socio-cultural adaptation and daily life practices. Section two focuses on the manifestation of psychological and health issues linked to acculturative stress. Section three deals with academic experiences, educational stressors, and different degrees of adjustment to new academic cultures associated with previous educational opportunities and capabilities **Table 11**.

Table 11. Acculturation experiences of Mexican students in the international spaces

Sociocultural/environmental/economic
Cultural understandings and practices
Cultural acceptance-integration/discrimination
Language barriers and facilitators
Food identities
Meteorological conditions
Financial difficulties
Psychological
Loneliness
Depression
Stress and health
Educational
Educational pedagogies/doctoral programmes/teaching styles
Support from supervisors
Realisation of domestic HE quality in contrast with international education
Academic failure

1. Sociocultural, environmental and economic factors

The level of adaptation of participants to international settings was always in tension with their "degree of Mexicanity". In the same way that their different identities determined their social interactions, they also informed the diverse ways in which they navigated through their new environments. Each story was different because their individual perceptions were informed by their previous life experiences, their socio-economic opportunities, the information and cultural references they had about the places they chose, and the social and cultural differences between their countries of destination. In other words, their experiences were determined by their individual frames of reference and worldviews (Mezirow, 2000).

This section explores firstly how the participants experienced cultural differences in everyday life and how they developed varied social- skills to "fit in". Secondly, the attention turns to the ways in which they perceived cultural inclusion and discrimination. Thirdly, the section examines how participants experienced the adjustment to language, food identities and weather. Lastly, it investigates the financial difficulties associated with global economic changes and how they influenced the sojourns.

1.1 Cultural understandings and practices

It was the first time that one fifth of interviewees had travelled abroad. The experiences of participants from border states, were limited to visiting the USA a few times. However, even the ones that reported having some traveling experiences mentioned being impressed by the new cities, the transport systems, the cleanliness and the order. Cesar who studied in France and Aldo who went to Spain both said, "It was a completely different world".

Adela, an *adapter*, came from a lower socio-economic background and she described herself in retrospect as being very patriotic. As explained in chapter VI, her patriotism was associated with her attachment to the Mexican culture and values (Blank and Schmidt, 2003). She was politically active in the UNAM student strike in 1999, which started as a response to the proposed tuition fees by the administration (Rhoads and Mina, 2001). Her determination to pursue an academic career, made her realise that she needed to study in the USA.

> "Cultural shock since I arrived. I used to look at the little streets of Boston, as a miniature model "it was clean, there was no chaos, there was no smoke, people don´t pile up" And I came from UNAM and from the strike and I said "this does not have to do anything with me, or with where I come from" particularly at the beginning, and the cultural shock, well yes, because people is different. Therefore, I learned, I acquired a lot of things" (Adela, Boston University)

Being a student who was fighting to maintain UNAM as a tuition free university that was accessible for students regardless of their economic position, she described the cultural and socioeconomic clash she experienced arriving at a "very expensive private school where there was a lot of free food". She was particularly stunned to have been served lobster in an induction week for international students. She explained at length all the economic sacrifices she had to endure; however, she received a lot of support from different people of diverse nationalities throughout her stay. She built a network of Mexican friends but was able to socialise with international students and the local community, these social interactions were determinant in her adaptation process.

Carmen, also an *adapter* explained how she adjusted to a different city where daily life activities worked differently from what she expected. As described in previous chapters, Carmen moved to Mexico City for her undergraduate studies where she developed a degree of intercultural understandings. Therefore, she arrived in Barcelona with the intention of immersing herself in the culture, however, she had a preconceived idea about how Catalan people were before going there.

> "When I arrived the first year was difficult because people are tough, it is not like in Mexico. In there you go to the convenience store and they throw you the money, they close early, and that was traumatic because I came back from university and everything was closed. Therefore, I had to change my habits to adapt to their opening hours. On Saturdays they only opened very early and I had to run to the supermarket in the morning to be able to have groceries. It bothered me terribly that they closed in the afternoon like in the province. I am from the province; I am from Oaxaca and that is also the way things are in my hometown. Well, Barcelona was the same and I used to say "but this is Barcelona! Why do they close? Sundays everything was closed, only the Pakistani stores were open, thus, I made friends with them because they would open the weekends and the others did not. And one sometimes is very intolerant to those

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things. Evidently, I learned afterwards that they have other working policies" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

She confronted her preconceived ideas and learned how to negotiate her needs against the available resources by observing different ways of doing in the host country. However, she was vocal about her negative experiences that were strongly associated with disappointment because her cultural expectations were different from her actual experiences (Ward et al., 2001).

Galia falls into the *isolator* type of student. She was born in Mexico City but has spent most of her life living in La Paz, Baja California. She felt scared because she had never travelled on her own. She was received by another Mexican woman she contacted through her supervisor, who helped her settle in the UK. Further, her social and academic network was mainly conformed by co-nationals. Throughout her narrative she repeated several times how difficult it was for her to adapt to the British ways because she constantly made comparisons with how things worked in Mexico.

> "I still think that if opposed cultures exist, they are Mexicans and English. I cannot think of a greater polarity than to be Mexican and having to socialise with an English in any given condition…. I was never comfortable with that way of socialising. But it is a cultural issue that I could never get rid of. To tell you the truth, I hated to be told "we will meet at the Pub" and I thought with whom are you going to go? who do you know there? However, if you think about it, it was a good opportunity to meet other people, but it was very difficult for me. To tell you the truth I missed a lot living in the coast" (Galia, University of Sheffield)

Galia further reflected that students abroad change the way they interact with the others and she considered having modified her behaviour and becoming more "dry" and "cold". There was a constant struggle between acknowledging that in general the local people were very polite towards her and the difficulties to adapt to the culture, the ways of being, the food, the schedules, the weather and the landscape. She acknowledged that it must have taken six months to feel relatively comfortable.

These cases illustrate different ways the *adapters* and the *isolators* negotiated their new lives abroad. They were presented with a disoriented dilemma which was self-examined, critically assessing their assumptions about their cultural paradigms. For

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Adela the recognition of a feeling of discontent in the adaptation process was not as strong as for Carmen and Galia and thus, they explored the different options regarding their relationships and actions. They all took a conscious decision to build closer relationships with co-nationals, however, the understanding and assimilation of the new paradigms varied depending on the level of constraints they faced when they confronted them. They expressed that the adaptation process was very challenging, however Adela mentioned having been able to integrate comfortably to the society whereas Carmen and Galia were able to function but never felt part of it. These findings are consistent with Brown and Holloway (2008a) who observed different degrees of emotional and sociocultural challenges associated both to their individual identities and to the characteristics of the host country.

The next examples are from *integrators* for whom it was easier to adapt to the different international settings associated to their high cultural flexibility. The case of Federico denotes a few key aspects. Firstly, he described how in the town he grew up there was a lot of migration and thus, he was exposed to people from other nationalities since an early age. This exposure made him interested in learning other languages. In fact, one of the main reasons for him to study abroad was to have cultural experiences. Secondly, he was supported by a joint scholarship with the DAAD and his experiences were very similar to other participants that as him, went to Germany. They felt supported by the organisation throughout and thus, they narrated that their adaptation processes were not that appalling despite the great differences from living in Mexico. However, they were initially attracted to the culture and the language.

> "I saw that very few universities spent time dealing with the culture and daily life like our German universities did. You arrive and understand what you want, however you can. Finally, is the law of life and the one who has the skills is the one that succeeds. I think that dealing with those issues would help a lot of people that has the level but does not have the language.... Because you lose the opportunities. For instance, I saw people from Latin America and Africa dropping out, because they could not adapt, they did not speak the language, they did not master the laboratory techniques, because they clashed with the culture" (Federico, Max-Planck-Institute)

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The quote above denotes how important the accompaniment of the DAAD was for the participants in the day-to-day practices. They knew what to expect, how to navigate in the contrasting culture and they learned how to communicate effectively. It is true that there are soft power benefits for Germany through the investment on international mobility. Nonetheless, when contrasting the international experiences of these participants and those of the ones who lived in other countries, *adapters* and *integrators* supported by the DAAD were able to establish meaningful relationships with international students and the local community and further, they all found their individual "third spaces" (Elliot et al., 2016).

Javier, an *integrator*, regardless of coming from a middle-class environment, having attended a private university and speaking the same language of the country of destination, adapting to a Latin American country was equally challenging.

> "Argentina was difficult because I arrived to live in a world, I would say incredibly familiar and yet completely different. Words had different meanings, people did not think the same way, the ways in which you understand customs and forms. The cultural barrier was surprisingly immense" (Javier, Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Javier faced a similar disorienting dilemma when he first arrived at Argentina. However, the acculturative stressors presented were greater than expected, depicted in his critical reflection of a familiar and dissimilar context at the same time. As described in chapter VII, Javier´s identity and socialisation capabilities helped him successfully navigate through the international space and acquired culture-specific behavioural skills enabling his social adaptation (Ward et al., 2001).

Paola when describing her own adaptation process in the UK argued "Once you find the way, to understand the ways of being and the differences, you read them, you adapt, and you build a support community". In fact, the majority of the interviewees described the different ways in which they learned to navigate the international spaces hand in hand with the social relationships they established.

These examples show that regardless of the type of student and their previous life experiences and opportunities, all the participants faced different acculturative constraints. Further, how their diverse identities, the opportunities presented and the social networks they established in the international settings, enabled or hindered

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the development of strategies to overcome those constraints, ultimately leading them to different degrees of sociocultural adaptation. Let us now to consider how the participants experience acceptance from the host culture.

1.2 Levels of cultural inclusion by the local community

International students settle their residencies for at least three years in a foreign country and thus, they interact with the local community on a daily basis. These activities involve opening bank accounts, deciding on living arrangements, grocery shopping, using the transport, registering their children in school among other activities. Additionally, the contact with the local community is also contingent on their HE participation; in some cases, there were national citizens enrolled in the same doctoral programmes as the participants. In others, some interviewees were interested in developing social interactions outside the academic realm.

As has been shown in chapter VII, the participants developed individual abilities to establish different social interactions with the host culture which were fundamentally contingent to their particular interest of interaction and were determinant for their adaptation processes. However, an important independent factor from their own capabilities of interaction, was the level of acceptance by the local communities. This integration was also influenced by the country, town, culture and HEI.

Taken from the participants' perceptions about the level of acceptance it appeared that there were countries that were more receptive and inclusive of foreigners than others. It has been argued that the meaningful interactions with the host culture are largely dependent upon cultural distance (Ward et al., 2001, Ward and Kennedy, 1993). However, the findings presented herein suggest that it might be determined by the association of two main factors. Firstly, by the diverse cultural identities and the attached capacity and willingness to adapt to the host culture and secondly, to the perceptions of the hospitable particularities of the towns and cities.

Adapter students like Carmen for instance, never felt integrated to the society and struggled constantly with what she perceived as lack of empathy from the Catalan culture towards foreigners.

"But I later understood, I became aware that the people in the academic realm are different from the locals. People in academia are more well-mannered because they have travelled and had other experiences and had multicultural contact, they know people from other countries, with other customs, with other ideas…." (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

One might argue that there is cultural proximity between Spanish and Mexican Culture and yet Carmen never felt welcome in Barcelona despite having an initial interest to interact with the host culture. She further added that she would have possibly adapted to the culture if she had gone to Granada or another eastern city because of their different personalities. She was able to adapt through socialisation with co-nationals and academic Catalans however, she made a conscious decision to marginally interact with the locals. Adela on the other hand, despite describing several co-national interactions, was able to establish meaningful friendships with Americans and she felt accepted by the community.

Isolator students such as Arturo, did not establish meaningful local friendships arguing that it was due to lack of interest from the USA students to interact with foreigners. However, he always acknowledged that the people from the town, the police, and the shops assistants were in general friendly and polite, describing the town to be "living from the University and for the University". The ones who had more interaction with locals were his children. Nonetheless as explained in chapter VII, Arturo felt most comfortable establishing co-national relationships with whom he shared cultural identification with.

Integrator students able to adapt to the international settings rationalised their perceptions of the hospitality of the host communities differently from *adapters* and *isolators*. Hugo and Pablo for instance, described Australians as having limited interactions with foreigners and that they had obvious preferences to establish exclusive "regional" friends. However, they said that at the end of the journey they made good Australian friends.

Aldo on the other hand explained that from his experience it was more about understanding the host culture and establishing social networks to help with the integration process to the new environments.

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"After that time, a period of two or three months where the adaptation to everything that implies living abroad was very difficult. I think that I changed a lot when the relationship with my laboratory colleagues became more intense. When you go out with them, you get to know new places. It is the shock. I did not like to go out a lot, I did not know many places. But when I started having these relationships with people that had more time living there, I started to see the advantages that living the way they do have, which was something I could not do here (Mexico). That helped me to be able to interact with others and to have relationships with Spanish people…. In fact, my main circle of friends was Spanish…. I knew their customs, their way of being, I understood what they were telling me, they also understood me." (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

He further explained that the laboratory he was ascribed to, was formed by a majority of foreigners, however, he was able to establish strong friendships with the Spanish students, who ultimately became his most important social circle. Aldo married his Spanish girlfriend who he said, "she introduced me to the Spanish idiosyncrasy". There is a realisation of a learning process, a reflection of the self and the individual worldviews, but most importantly, the presence of the other.

Federico speaking about German culture, explained that he always felt integrated and developed prevailing local friendships. Cesar also mentioned that despite his perceptions about the racist culture, they established meaningful friendships exclusively with the French. Jaime described Holland as an inclusive culture. Tomich et al. (2000) have pointed out that the degree of host country openness has an impact on the sojourners experience. Moreover, each culture has its own rules and conventions and part of the challenge of sojourners is to decode those behaviours — on their own or with the help of others, and develop relevant social skills to navigate or thrive in different societies (Ward et al., 2001).

1.2.1 Issues of racism

Some international students experienced discriminatory behaviours during their time abroad. These events seemed to be associated with less socially inclusive communities within the host countries and outside the academic institutions. Cesar particularly expressed his perception of racist attitudes in Dijon, France from which he and his family suffered at the beginning of their sojourn.

> "A lot of distrust in the stores. Well, I used to have a very long beard and the colleague I was with had brown skin and was hawk-nosed; therefore, we looked suspicious, either Arabs or I do not know what. Thus, when we entered a store, particularly towards him, we were watched, or sometimes they would accuse us for nothing" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

He did not spend more time explaining if these were isolated events or if the hostility associated with his perceived race was assimilated and normalised. Alvaro also mentioned two incidents involving physical abuse and discriminatory mistreatment in Germany, while he was visiting.

> "Not in Holland but in Germany. Traveling in two occasions, once towards me and another time towards another Mexican friend they threw us beer cans from a car. And in another occasion towards a friend from India, we wanted to get into a discotheque, and they did not let him in, therefore we left" (Alvaro Technische Universiteit Eindhoven)

Finally, Carmen experienced verbal assault from a civil servant from the immigration office and from an underground employee. She mentioned "I felt vulnerable in two occasions while in Barcelona for racism issues" where she was called "*sudaca*" which is a pejorative adjective used in Spain referring to people from South America. Contrastingly to Cesar and Alvaro, Carmen confronted her aggressors by expressing her discontent towards the inappropriate remarks. Moreover, she articulated feeling angry and upset after the discrimination episodes and uncomfortable by the general racist stereotypes formed by the Catalans. Carmen's perception of the Catalan culture was negatively impacted by the racism observed and experienced to the point to have said "When I left Barcelona, I hated it, I hated the attitude".

These examples are consistent with neo-racist behaviours that have been previously described in the USA, towards international students from Middle-East, Africa, India, Latin America and attributed to skin colour, culture, national origin and relationships between countries (Lee and Rice, 2007). Racist abuse has been further associated with skin colour where "non-white" students have been found to be more susceptible to discriminatory attacks (Marginson, 2010, Brown, 2003, Tomich et al., 2000). However, it is important to highlight that these were isolated events and in general, the interviewees did not experience discrimination attitudes. None of them reported any incidents in the academic realms.

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Thus far, this section has shown how the socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural references, and previous life trajectories of the participants delineated the ways in which they experienced sociocultural dissimilarities. To these individual aspects the external factors related to the cultural distance of the societies and countries and the level of acceptance and inclusion —or discriminatory attitudes from the hosts have to be added. The convergence of these aspects ultimately determined the ways in which *isolators*, *adapters* and *integrators* understood cultural difference and the diverse skills they were able to develop to acculturate. The next part moves on to consider the adaptation of participants to different languages.

1.3 Language as a barrier or enabler of adaptation

As explained in chapter VI, all participants had to prove command of English language and of the language spoken in the country of destination. However, all the participants talked about the different challenges faced and the strategies developed related to their communication skills.

1.3.1   Language barriers

Of particular interest are the cases of interviewees choosing Spanish speaking countries, where they never imagined they would struggle with the language as shown earlier in Javier´s quote "words had different meanings". The next extract from Aldo depicts how his acculturation process started with having to learn the regional Spanish of Madrid.

> "But all that cultural shock, because even when we speak the language, we are completely different. In fact, I remember when I arrived, they would be speaking in their jargon, in the way they speak, I did not understand a thing. And you say, "what are they talking about? .... After some time, you start to understand, you start understanding words" (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

Aldo pointed out how different everything was compared to his frame of reference, despite several cultural similarities between Spain and Mexico. In fact, the individuals who chose Spain as a destination, mentioned that their initial thought was that they would have an advantage point because they spoke the same language.

The next quote from Cesar illustrates the process lived by the participants who had previous language courses.

> "Well, it was complicated. I remember for instance when I arrived that the French I had learned in Mexico was very different to the one that is spoken in the streets. Therefore, I suffered, I had to make myself understood, that was part of the adaptation process" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

This was not exclusive of participants who went to France. The students who had good command of German and English mentioned having to get used to accents, learning new vocabulary and colloquialisms. These participants revealed frustration of realising that they could not understand fully and that it took them between three to six months to feel more comfortable with the language. In other cases, the participants realised that their level of language command was not as good as they thought and did not expect having to struggle so much to understand and making themselves understood. This is depicted in Alvaro´s quote.

> "…. when I started to loosen up both speaking and writing, a lot of people would correct me, thus, the first times they would tell me that I was wrong. And I hated it because I thought they felt superior, they were criticizing me or making fun of me. But then you realise that that is the way they are, and they do not do it to bother you like one does here as a Mexican. They do it because they are really interested in helping you. That was also a shock, to learn that they say things straightforward (Alvaro, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven)

In his narrative, Alvaro expressed how after overcoming the shock of getting into a plane for the first time, the second most difficult thing was dealing with the language. He faced an additional challenge because he went to Holland, he explained that despite everybody being competent English speakers, he still had to learn basic Dutch to be able to do grocery shopping and to use the transport. Previous ethnographic studies with international students have found similar expressions of fear, embarrassment and confusion and self-doubt when exposed to a different language (Brown and Holloway, 2008b).

The only student that was vocal about her difficulties with a local community was Carmen. She was able to communicate efficiently; however, she constantly expressed her frustration about the way the Catalans refused to speak Spanish.
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> "And in particular, the language issue was curious. Before I left, I took Catalan lessons in Mexico…. And there you also learn a little about the Catalan culture….and my first shock was arriving because I thought that people was bilingual and they are, but they do not bother on being bilinguals. They speak to you in Catalan and they do not care if you speak or not the language" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

This cultural clash made her acculturation process difficult, because despite learning to effectively navigate in the host culture, she was never able to fully interact with, and did not feel comfortable in it. Previous studies have found that language barriers can impede international students attempts to make friends and interact with locals (Chen, 1999).

All participants who studied in non-Spanish speaking countries, mentioned different levels of difficulty mastering the local language. One of the frequent reasons hindering the acquisition of language was related to their social interactions with Spanish speaking students. Later, some of them, regretted not having forced themselves more in that regard when they had the opportunity.

1.3.2   Language facilitators

Almost all the participants expressed how the locals and other international students were always helpful, respectful and polite when they were trying to express themselves. Moreover, they described different strategies they used to learn the local language. Arturo´s supervisor for instance, suggested him to start reading English literature to improve his vocabulary. Carlos mentioned that the writing skills courses were really helpful because it "helped me with argument construction and to have order and clarity in my writing". He also acquired language skills through reading fiction in English. Mario explained how he was able to find strategies on his own.

> "In Germany I discovered that I learn through listening, therefore, I started listening to music, radio and television…. I looked for ways of getting close to the culture…. Thus, I went to the cinema, I watched a lot of German movies, I think that is how I learned the language" (Mario, Universitat Stuttgart)

Raquel also mentioned getting used to the language through the radio and television. These findings differ from the ones from the study of Kormos et al. (2014)

where students from different backgrounds described their contact with television, radio and books mainly for entertainment and not as a way of improving language skills. In contrast with the students who developed strong relationships with people who they shared a common language with, Elvia avoided those interactions as depicted in the next quote.

> "…. the first thing my supervisor told me was not to hang out with Mexicans or Latin Americans "you have to submerge in the culture, in the language, because is the first thing you need to improve" and it was the best recommendation he gave me because effectively, I only listened and spoke English, I did not speak Spanish…." (Elvia, UCL)

Similarly, Juan mentioned socialising with the "Nordics" instead of people from Latin America because they were also interested in learning German. Development of language skills through interactions with other international students has been previously reported (Copland and Garton, 2011). Juan additionally decided to take his "homework" from his German course to the bar which he used as an excuse to socialise with the locals who helped him learn German, adding; "languages are about talking and practicing". English proficiency has been positively associated with social interactions with locals (Smith and Khawaja, 2011).

Federico explained how through the language courses provided by the DAAD, they were taught to perform daily tasks in Germany, thus, he faced less acculturation stressors in his adaptation process.

> "Everything was completely organised. In fact, to learn the language, both in Mexico and in Germany the teacher was German, and they would prepared ourselves "alright, how are you going to shop?" and we would do mock-ups and thus, everything was easy" (Federico, Max-Planck-Institute)

These findings provide a deeper insight about the diversity of language-learning attitudes and motivations. They additionally show a complex relationship between previous language skills, types of intercultural contact, and learning disposition in the development of further language capabilities. They also highlight the advantages of acquiring previous knowledge about the host country and communication skills to ease the acculturation processes (Kormos et al., 2014). The next part moves on to discuss the importance of food identities.

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Some interviewees mentioned having to learn how to shop groceries attached to the specificities of the countries, getting used to the local food language and searching for flavours that they could recognise. Alvaro mentioned that there was limited availability of Mexican products in Holland and they were very expensive, therefore he learned to find affordable "substitutes" in the Chinese, Pakistani and Indian shops. Jimena also said that she cooked Mexican dishes with Spanish ingredients, and after some time other Mexicans "taught" them where to shop Mexican ingredients. This has been previously documented as a common practice in Chinese students in the UK (Yen et al., 2018). Jimena and Fernando expressed that at the beginning of the sojourn they missed the food a lot, which can be explained by the association between familiar taste and nostalgic thought of home and belonging (Locher et al., 2005).

Claudia mentioned feeling depressed because she was not eating healthily at the beginning of the sojourn in the UK. Galia said that she could never get used to the different food schedules compared to the Mexican customs. In both cases it was difficult to adjust to eating a light lunch at midday. Jaime for instance, recalled that people from Holland used to drink milk and eat bread and cheese for lunch adding "that is not proper food". In Galia´s case she recalled having gained a lot of weight due to the change in her diet, which resonated with Rosa´s weight gain also associated with an increased consumption of carbohydrates in Spain and, in both cases, to having late and heavy dinners. It has been argued that excessive preoccupation with food is a common symptom of culture-shock (Brown et al., 2010). Contrastingly, Juan said that because he stopped eating Mexican street food and spicy food, his gastritis symptoms disappeared and was able to lose weight. He only complained that the food tasted bland in Germany.

Some participants who stayed in student accommodation where they had access to communal kitchens such as Fidel and Alvaro, mentioned getting together with other students to share regional meals.

> "There was a lot of camaraderie. In fact, once a week we organised international meals, where each one prepared a dish from their country, placed a tag with the ingredients, how it was prepared and why…. different flavours, different foods, some very strange,

even for a Mexican. You said, "is this edible?" (Alvaro, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven)

Other interviewees such as Jimena and Raquel mentioned sharing their regional food with friends in informal gatherings.

> We made a very close friendship with some French girls and we saw each other very often…we learned a lot of French cooking and we practiced a lot of recipes. They loved Mexican food and we French food. Thus…. we constantly had meals together" (Jimena, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

Food identities therefore, enabled socialisation processes with the others and served as a path for sharing and learning different cultural traditions. Carlos, Alvaro and Hugo mentioned being interested in trying foods from other parts of the world and adapted well to eating what was on offer. However, Victor even when he was open to try different foods highlighted his preference for the Mexican diet.

> "At the beginning we did not know, and we had to get used to what was available. My wife tried to look for ingredients similar to ours but obviously you could not find *tortillas*. Fortunately, our friend showed us a supermarket where products similar to Mexican were sold, and there we found corn flour therefore my wife was able to make *tortillas*. We eat *tortillas* and *salsas* every day, but we were open to try the local food" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

Brown et al. (2010) described similar findings where international students were hesitant to stop eating their regional foods nonetheless, they were open to try foods from other cultures.

Overall, there was a major consent from the participants of adjusting to the local foods after a few months depicted by Gloria´s comment "When you adapt, is because you start liking fish and chips. When you want chips with vinegar then you say, "you are adapting to this culture"". It has been argued that international students ultimately change their food habits overtime (Brown, 2009a). However, the findings from this research show a strong association between attachment to food cultural traditions and changes in diet. After food, the most recurrent theme amongst the challenges in the transnational spaces was the adjustment to weather conditions, which will be discussed next.

From the participants who travelled to the USA and Europe 12 mentioned different difficult experiences with their adjustments to the weather conditions. The recurrent themes were the cold and the lack of light during the winter months and they were frequently acknowledged as the hardest adjustments during the sojourn. This finding is consistent with Brown and Holloway (2008b) study, where weather was recognised as a key obstacle to adjustment for international students in the UK. In the following examples, the geographical latitude and annual temperatures are included for reference. Dinora for instance, lived in Baja California Sur (N24º), where the annual average temperature oscillates between 18 and 22ºC and is predominately dry, before she moved to Scotland (N56º).

> "We are a culture of sun and cuddles. My husband for instance started to have a lot of problems with the weather, every winter his skin would get very damaged. For me it was the lack of light. Because on top of everything else that bloody island where of sun you have what? One week? And closer to the north and then when it is not cloudy is raining, and when it is not raining is cloudy. And we are people of sun and exteriors and cuddles and kisses and that started to affect me" (Dinora, University of Stirling)

In the quote above, she distinguished her husband´s physical afflictions related to cold conditions from her need of affection. Dinora made a simile between the weather and Mexican people´s personalities, which was previously mentioned by Carmen. For Jimena, who lived in Veracruz (N18º) with an annual average temperature of 28ºC, it was also very difficult to adjust to the weather conditions in Spain (N42º).

> "The weather was very inclement, and it was very depressing, all grey and cold, all people wearing dark clothes. Very boring and depressing. And it was a complicated stage because I was missing everything, the weather, the food. That was the most difficult for me. In fact, after four months I said, "I cannot anymore, this cold is going to kill me" (Jimena, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

Jimena, in the same way Dinora did, referred feelings of homesickness and nostalgia for familiar elements. Jimena in the quote above and Raquel in the quote below, travelled with their husbands and recognised how lucky they were to be accompanied; however, they still associated the lack of light with feelings of

loneliness and depression. Further, several participants associated feeling depressed due to the lack of sunlight over winter.

> "The first winter was the most horrendous thing in the universe, horrendous. It is cold in Montpellier, not much, the lowest is minus two. The trouble is the wind because cold wind comes down from the Alps. Thus, sometimes there are winds of 80Km an hour and when it is minus 2°C, it takes your soul away and is dark at four a clock. It was depressing, horrendous…. That lack of sun, the lack of heat, it made you feel loneliness. At the end I was not alone, I was one of the lucky ones that was accompanied, but the lack of sun was horrendous" (Raquel, Université de Montpellier II)

Raquel lived in Mexico City (N19.4°) with an annual average temperature of 16°C, before moving to France (N43.6°). The same was true for Fidel who also disliked the lack of light in Germany (N48°). However, he also mentioned being uncomfortable with the extreme temperatures during summer because that was not the weather he was used to.

> "Another factor that I did not mention is how much I hated darkness. Not so much the cold but November darkness, where at five o clock there is the moon. I never got used to that, I always hated it. And then the issue of the warm weather, because during the summer, that year 2003 I think it was the summer of the century. It was 40° in the shade in Munich. And the worst part is that they told me "but you are from Mexico" One moment, it has never been so hot in Mexico City" (Fidel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen)

Carlos made similar remarks about cold and darkness and how he experienced those during his daily activities. Carlos lived in Morelos (N19°) with an average annual temperature of 21.5°C.

> "The cold, the weather. In Mexico the sun heats you up even if it is cold. Over there, there is no sun and if there is, it does not heat you up, the cold it is complicated. Darkness too…. I do remember ranting because it was cold, and the bus would take an hour to show up…The weather was an issue. but I got used to it…. In the first stage we lived in that big flat but without central heating and the cold was painful" (Carlos, IOE)

There is a popular belief that weather affects mood in healthy people however, associations between better moods with more sunlight and higher temperatures are not yet clear (Klimstra et al., 2011). Nevertheless, there is clinical evidence about

Seasonal Affective Disorder which in general is characterised by mood disorders related to changing seasons (Ibid). Likewise, there are studies that link the vitamin D_3 produced when individuals are exposed to sunlight, in changing serotonin levels in the brain. Thus, lack of sunlight could be a factor provoking tiredness (Denissen et al., 2008). For instance, Galia said that she felt terribly affected by the weather and found out that there was a "depression because you did not get enough light" and thus she decided to buy a UV lamp.

However, 18 participants who studied in the same latitudes did not mention any difficulties associated with the weather. Therefore, they might have experienced the adaptation to weather conditions in a non-disruptive manner. In fact, three interviewees expressed their fondness for cold weather. The fact that not all the participants recalled bad experiences associated with climatological conditions suggests different degrees of how external influences affect individual personalities and diverse ways of adjusting to new situations. All these feelings reflected subjective states of mind and moods that influenced the international experiences. The last subsection deals with the financial stressors.

1.6 Financial difficulties associated with economic changes in the World

Despite being supported by a scholarship, some interviewees faced different financial challenges depending on the year they travelled abroad, the country of destination and the economic and political turmoil of that decade. In 1999, the international financial and economic crisis which started in East Asia, affected Russia and several Latin American countries amongst which Argentina was, experiencing declines in its nominal currency value (Kamin, 1999). On this particular matter, Javier said "I experienced a difficult time because I had limited resources when I arrived. Argentina was so expensive that I went through severe scarcity".

Furthermore, in 1999 the international crisis of the US financial system affected the world economy. Finally, in 2002, the euro was introduced as a new single currency in 12 countries including France, Spain and Germany. These worldwide economic changes affected in different ways the stipend´s amounts the interviewees received and therefore, their financial stability.

Aldo and Carmen who lived in Spain, described how they were initially benefited by the adoption of the euro. They were both abroad when the stipend was issued in dollars regardless of the country of destination and further exchanged into the local currency.

> "At the beginning I was a rich girl because the stipend was in dollars and it was when they went from pesetas to euros. Thus, the dollar was considerably higher than the euro and I was receiving 1400 euros and I had money. However, from the second year it was horrible because my 1000 dollars became 600 euros and it was when I went to live on my own and the flat was very expensive, it was terrible, terrible, terrible. I had to apply for a complement from the Mexican ministry of education" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

The economic volatility affected these participants who additionally to their individual acculturation processes, had to adapt to receiving an unknown amount of money each month.

1.6.2   Before and after the change of the scholarship stipend from dollars to local currencies: the benefited from and those affected

Hugo who travelled in 2001 to Australia and still received the stipend in USD mentioned having been privileged by the exchange rate. Javier, who struggled initially, explained how during the Argentinian devaluation he was still receiving dollars and thus, he became someone with a better quality of life.

Contrastingly, Elvia´s time abroad coincided with the world economic crisis of 1999 and thus, the stipend amount was severed in half when she had to exchange dollars for pounds.

> "The food was not that of an issue, because I cooked…. the issue was what could you afford. Because the scholarship was barely enough. At the end of the month I would be counting cents because we were given a thousand dollars a month and at that time (1997) the dollar was two per one. I think more than half of my stipend was to pay for rent. Thus, I learned very quickly to manage my finances. I became vegetarian because I could not buy anything more. Sometimes I had the luxury to buy chicken" (Elvia, UCL)

To overcome her insufficient resources, Elvia took an evening shift as a door guard at the University for two years. Nonetheless, she complained about having to spend half of her stipend in rent and to have lived in precarious housing conditions. Humberto was also affected by the economic crisis of the time and experienced similar cuts.

> "I arrived in 98. The stipend was in dollars and it was when the dollar devaluation and they would always receive 1000 dollars. And when I arrived in the UK, the exchange rate gave me 700 pounds, and at that time it went down to 500 pounds and it did affect me. The first movements requesting to CONACYT to deposit a fix amount in the local currency started with the students that were in the UK" (Humberto, University of Aberdeen)

He explained how since he was in the UK, and derived from the economic crisis, Mexican students in the UK got organised to request receiving the stipend in the local currencies because the significant losses with the exchange rates. Carlos, who arrived at the end of 2003, mentioned having also been involved in such movement.

> "When we first arrived (2003), there was a devaluation of the Mexican peso in relation to the pound. Before that, you would get 1000 dollars that ended up being 700 pounds. When we got there the devaluation was of about 30%, thus, the stipend was not enough. Therefore, we formed an association of scholarship awardees in the UK demanding to CONACYT to give us the equivalent amount of 1000 dollars. And living in London was much more expensive than in other places. And we got a stipend raise, because of a joined effort…. Because the economic issue is fundamental to have a good experience" (Carlos, IOE)

In fact, Fidel who studied in Germany, said that he went to CONACYT offices in Mexico as a spokesman of the students who were in Europe. There is no clear information about when this change was made official, however it seems to have been put in place in 2004, when the loan-scholarship scheme was modified to scholarships. Experiences of financial problems by international students have been reported previously in the literature (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). These results provide additional evidence that despite the advantage of having financial support, practical stressors are also context contingent and they are appraised and coped with according to individual possibilities. Further, it shows how the provision of

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governmental support is constantly affected by economic changes in the world and thus, the necessity of being constantly reassessed to effectively support international students.

This section has shown the multifaceted experiences and adaptation processes of the sojourners in the sociocultural domain during their cross-cultural transition. The different degrees of acculturation were influenced by the diverse identities of the participants and their individual abilities to establish social relations in the international milieus. They were further determined by factors at the macro level such as the socio cultural, economic and climatological characteristics of their home and host cultures and the salient attitudes towards cultural out-groups (Ward et al., 2001). Finally, they were also influenced by important key features at the micro level including language skills, cultural identity and the strategies developed to either adapt, adjust or integrate to the new environments. These findings also show a learning process, the possibility of understanding other cultures, value other ways of being and doing, an exposure to different outlooks on social living and other forms of non-expert knowledge. The next section moves on to explore the less positive impacts of acculturative stress and severe psychological manifestations in absence of adequate coping strategies.

2. Psychological adaptation

All the interviewees expressed different levels of personal distress during their adaptation processes to the international spaces. In most cases they experienced feelings of sadness and loneliness, however those were often attributed to adjustment to climatological conditions and to the first months in foreign countries where social relationships were not yet fully established. Nonetheless, there were some cases were the participants mentioned diagnosed physical and psychological illnesses associated with the individual challenges of living abroad. These dynamic experiences and emotions have been identified in immigrants, sojourners and refugees, who have undertaken cross-cultural long-term relocations (Ward et al., 2001). This section explores the psychological and emotional adjustment and the associations with mental wellbeing, stress and coping mechanisms.

Different from loneliness triggered by climatological conditions, feeling lonely was a recurrent theme brought about by some participants. Alvaro Fernando and Carmen, associated it to the initial stages of the international sojourn where they were adjusting to the new environment, feeling nostalgic for their home countries and developing new social relations. Javier described arriving to Argentina as "terrifying and lonely". Alvaro mentioned the first year being particularly challenging to be on his own during Christmas celebrations, missing big family gatherings.

Rosa in her narrative expressed several times to feel very lonely which had a negative influence in her overall stay and academic performance. Galia explained that loneliness is experienced differently in familiar spaces in contrast to being abroad.

> "In reality no one that has not experienced it can say "I felt alone", anybody can say "I have also felt alone" but it is not the same. It is different to live breakups, to be ill…I cannot explain it, but it is not the same" (Galia, University of Sheffield)

Almost all the participants who expressed loneliness overcame it through the establishment of meaningful social relationships and in general getting used to their new normalities. Julian and Mario attributed their loneliness to their individual personalities and difficulties in establishing social relationships. However, Julian had some communication with his family who arrived in the UK after eight months. Mario on the other hand, even when he was able to forge social relations to cope with loneliness, showed a constant emotional struggle.

> "I have to say that I had girlfriends as a way of anchoring, as a way to connect. It was paradoxical because in one sense I was very disconnected and alone, but on the other I had strong relationships……that helped me balance the risk of going crazy due to isolation" (Mario, Universitat Stuttgart)

Similar findings have been reported by Sawir et al. (2008) identifying emotional and social loneliness in two thirds of oversea students living in Australia. Loneliness was mainly associated with the lack of cultural fit and absence of close relations during the first months of their stay and was overcome trough the establishment of personal and social networks and getting involved in diverse activities (Ibid).

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It is important to differentiate these symptoms, most likely associated with a transition period, from those that reflect physiological illnesses (Yea (1976) and Golden (1973) cited in Brown and Holloway, 2008b). That was the case of some participants who shared having depression that physically impaired them from functioning.

Fidel reflected on how difficult it was to move to a different country and leave his life and relationships in Mexico. As explained earlier, he was an only child who lived in the family house until he moved to Germany and was never able to socialise with the local community.

> "…. Maybe because I was shy, maybe because I was depressed, because I was depressed. Why? Because as I have already told you I had a supposedly good relationship in Mexico that was quickly destroyed, and it was very painful. And then the attachment issues, right? Of going from the family home of seven years to a room in a strange country in a strange place in a strange language. And the routine in Mannheim was from eight to one…. It's summer, the sunset is at ten. What do you do? … I slept because I was depressed, and I was not the only one" (Fidel, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen)

Elvia also expressed physical impairment due to depression at the beginning of her second year. Similar to Fidel she said that she slept long hours and that she was going to the library but was not able to make any progress with her work. However, she associated her lack of energy with self-doubt and confusion about her academic abilities, which was a feeling expressed by other participants at different stages of their doctoral studies.

> "And in that moment, I think I was depressed for a month, because I did not know what to do, what was I doing? I did not know if I was capable. The doubts of what am I doing? But I cannot go back, what am I going to do? Thus, I was in bed for a month" (Elvia, UCL)

She did not seek professional help, however, she said that after finding a part time job and a space to work at the university she was able to overcome the depression. Galia on the other hand, expressed throughout the interview how difficult it was for

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her to adapt to the UK in every way. When she was explaining what is presented next, she was moved to tears.

> "And then I said "how did I get here? Who sent me here? In what moment did it occur to me? Who do I blame for felling this way? Well, nobody, I decided to come here on my own, I said that I wanted to come with this professor. Thus, either you throw in the towel or you hang in there…. All of those inconveniences, all of the adversities, it will never, never be the same, not even in your country, even if you live on your own, as when you are far way, never. The weather does not help, the food does not help. …. And only the people that have experienced can understand to what extent is not the same" (Galia, University of Sheffield)

Galia explained that she had several personal problems for which she was sent to see a counsellor from the university while she was writing her thesis. Ultimately, she was able to use multiple coping strategies to facilitate her psychological well-being. The literature suggests that student counselling services are a potential positive coping resource to deal with acculturative stressors (Smith and Khawaja, 2011).

2.3 Stress and health issues linked to the incapacity to acculturate

There are circumstances where diverse acculturative stressors overwhelm the international students and thus, psychological adaptation is impeded. This was the particular case of Rosa who went back to Mexico after a year into her doctoral course. She arrived at Madrid with a Mexican friend she met at the embassy with whom she shared accommodation and with who she developed a strong friendship.

She expressed similar experiences as other participants who studied in Spain such as disliking that "people shouted a lot", the opening times of the shops, not being able to go to the public library on Sundays and suffering from weight imbalances due to different food cultures. Further, she added "I thought they spoke the same language", which was also a commonality with other interviewees who went to other Spanish speaking countries and had to get used to the nuances of the language.

Rosa did not establish local friendships because "they had their families and their own thing". She did express however, being able to forge some relationships with Latin American friends with whom she spend time with. Nonetheless she also mentioned several times feeling very lonely. When students are moulding their

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identities in the international milieus, they face value conflict, identity threat and are likely to experience rejection. These stressors are gradual, long-lasting and have been associated lack of self-confidence and depression (Liu et al., 2016).

Besides the cultural difficulties she encountered, after a few months into the doctoral programme, Rosa presented psychological and psychosomatic symptoms as she described in the next quote.

> "…my fingers started to peel off and they stung, even more when they were in contact with liquids, and thus it affected my ability to write. Everything started with one finger in the left hand, and it spread out to all the fingers and then both hands. I was diagnosed with a very severe atopic dermatitis and the doctor warned me that it could have been emotional. I went to see an acupuncturist and everything, and it did not disappear until I went back to Mexico" (Rosa, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

She was disappointed from the beginning and she used to write emails to her friends and family telling them that she was not feeling well. She additionally expressed having gone to group counselling and to a psychoanalyst. Rosa said that she felt emotionally bad the whole year. Sleep, appetite disturbance, fatigue, helplessness and similar manifestations have been described in international students who have not been able to develop mechanisms to acculturate to the host countries (Mori, 2000).

This section has shown that some participants experienced stress and anxiety generally associated to the transition to the new environments that manifested in emotional and psychological imbalances. In most cases they were able to find and develop coping mechanisms to deal in constructive ways with the life and academic hurdles of living abroad. However, the findings of this research stress the importance of identifying psychological stress and depression amongst international students to help them develop coping strategies and promoting their well-being. Section three moves on to consider the experiences of the participants in the academic environment.

3. Educational factors

This section explores the students' perceptions about the HE obtained in Mexico and their reflections about the academic abilities vis-à-vis their international peers. Further, it addresses acculturative stress and inability to develop coping mechanisms that lead to academic failure. The exploration of these aspects is key to understand the academic experiences and challenges in the diverse international milieus, including the adaptation to different ways of teaching and learning and to other educational cultures. These experiences were also determined by the vertical and horizontal differences between HEIs such as the size, areas of specialisation, programmes offered, resources and type of the international institutions, language of instruction, disciplinary traditions and academic cultures (Marginson and Wende, 2007, Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007, Jary and Lebeau, 2009). Finally, by the different levels of engagement of HEIs with internationalisation processes.

3.1 Academic cultures and doctoral studies

In the narratives there was an association between the comparison of academic styles and the previous educational capabilities with the participants adjustment experiences to the doctoral programmes and their realisation of the objectives of the PhD.

> "It was very formative "scratching with your nails" is what you have to do as a researcher. Everything you have to learn in a doctorate, to do research, to have the ability to delve into a topic, which until you are in the PhD you do not have to do, to leave the superficiality and go deep, to be able to say something new. That is the objective and it is achievable, but the pressure is great" (Julian, Queen Mary University of London)

Galia expressed having to learn to do things on her own and that she discovered that she was capable of doing them. On the same lines Jimena acknowledged independence as one of the most valuable things she learned abroad.

> "We are used to an education system that takes us by the hand. They tell us to study from a specific book, and from there you will be evaluated. In Spain I told my supervisor that I did not anything about a technique. And I was shocked that he sent me to the library and read journals to soak up the topic. Our culture is insecure in general and I

wondered "no one is going to explain it to me? No one is going to tell me where to look? Unfortunately, in Mexico we are used to be handled since we are little, autonomy and independence are not promoted" (Jimena, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

Similar feelings were expressed by Federico who mentioned that the independence lived in Germany made him feel lost at times. Alvaro and Paola used the expression "paternalistic" to describe their perceptions of Mexican HE in contrast with the freedom they experienced in Holland and the UK respectively.

In Mexico, the tutor does not tell you "you are doing this wrong" …. I remember my supervisor (UK) telling me about my first manuscript "write it and if it is good we will send it to a journal" I thought I did brilliant and he returned it without corrections and a note "you can do it better". They are not paternalistic like in Mexico. Here (Mexico) I see in many universities where tutors want to write their students´ thesis" (Paola, University of Sheffield)

These experiences depict the occurrence of two simultaneous processes. Firstly, the transitional experiences of doctoral students towards research independence, which has been studied in individuals enrolled in USA institutions (Gardner, 2008) and secondly, the adaptation to unfamiliar educational systems. Similar experiences of adaptation to more rigorous, individualistic and autodidactic systems coming from "paternalistic" systems have been described in Mexican international students (Maldonado, 2019).

Jaime expressed being used to a different learning system that clashed with the one in Holland. He learned how to develop his research proposal through analysing the way the local students were developing theirs. Mario recognised that he was very free in Germany, which he felt it was positive because some learning processes for him did not happen in traditional ways therefore, he was able to conclude the PhD at his own pace. Fidel made similar remarks about the liberty he experienced in Germany that fitted the autonomy he experienced at UNAM.

On the other hand, interviewees that had academic jobs in Mexico compared their perceptions about academic rigidity in their specific institutions with their international experience. Arturo for instance described the American system as more rigorous and traditional than his experience at COLPOS. Fernando on the same lines asserted;

> "My tutors were a British and a Swiss working in France, very renowned and very strict. My biggest challenge was to work with them, it was a lot of pressure. I had to adapt to the European personalities, the discipline, the way of doing things. It is difficult to be abroad doing the PhD with different rigour to what I was used to, what I have lived. It was very stressful" (Fernando, Université de Bourgogne)

Fernando articulated aspects of socialisation and cultural adjustment together with educational stressors. The literature suggests that academic socialisation processes in doctoral students are key to develop values, skills, attitudes and knowledge needed for membership to specific groups (Gardner, 2008). International student´s stress intensifies because they have to juggle educational and sociocultural adaptation at the same time.

Overall, these examples resonate with the literature where students are presented with academic stressors such as new educational traditions, research independence and problem solving, diverse teaching styles and a critical thinking approach to learning (Smith and Khawaja, 2011, Zeng, 1997, Lee, 2008). Further, they show the confrontation with different ways of teaching and doing research in varied institutions and countries and the diverse learning and adaptation processes. The international academic experience fostered the expansion of adaptive capabilities related to autonomy, independence and specific professional abilities (Martínez-Usarralde et al., 2017). The nuances of the diverse pedagogies students are exposed to in the international setting, are intrinsically linked with the dynamic with the tutors, which will be discussed next.

3.2 The key role of the supervisor

Jimena, Alvaro, Adela, Julian, Arturo, Carmen, Carlos, Fernando, Galia and Hugo had good academic relationships with their tutors, who were open to guide them solving problems and offered regular supervision. Javier commented that in Argentina "the student ends up being trained in an artisanal way by the Professor" referring to a close relation student-supervisor where the student works on reviews, reports, and seminars hand in hand with the tutor. Carlos expressed satisfaction on the way he was tutored;

> "I saw my two supervisors every fortnight in 1.5 hours meetings to discuss my work and define together the next steps. I had to write all the time and submit what was agreed in each meeting four days before our reunions" (Carlos, IOE)

Carmen and Carlos where able to recognise their good experiences compared to the ones of some of their peers who had supervisors who did not have time to see them on regular basis or did not read their work. They recalled people who were not able to graduate due to the lack of guidance.

Aldo mentioned that he did not have much contact with his supervisor, however, he was working in a laboratory where there was a good sense of collaboration and between him and his peers, they were able to find solutions for their problems in light of the supervisor´s absence. Aldo and Cesar recognised the lack of supervision as "formative". Dinora revealed that her supervisor was a highly recognised Professor in his field, and thus he did not have time to spend with his students and thus, the assistants were the ones who had that responsibility. She added: "At the end of the day you have to look for a solution on your own, you are on your own". Fidel had a similar experience explaining that he never saw his supervisor and the one who helped him through the process was an assistant. These experiences resonate with scientific discipline cultures characterised by collaborative work aiding the transition towards independence (Gardner, 2008).

Cyntia revealed that she was the one that constantly looked for her supervisor´s guidance.

> "I used to pressure him because even when I had enough results, I did not have published work. And I needed that because back in Mexico all doctoral students have to publish in order to graduate and I was going to be at a disadvantage…. I would have liked to have had more…. more support from my supervisor, in this sense I felt a little abandoned" (Cyntia, University of Sheffield)

Gardner (2008) has previously reported feelings of abandonment amongst doctoral students. Gloria had a bad relationship with her supervisor which she recalls as one of her greatest challenges during the doctoral studies. Previous research conducted with students from non-English speaking-backgrounds has highlighted the tensions between different linguistic, educational philosophies and cultural backgrounds of the

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students and supervisors (Wang and Li, 2011). All together, these findings mirror other studies where doctoral students have expressed different levels of satisfaction regarding their supervisors (Ives and Rowley, 2005). Amongst the experiences reported were personality clashes, the need for more guidance, better feedback and more structure to their supervision (Ibid).

Another emergent theme was the perception of equality among tutors and students compared to Mexico. Victor and Jimena said that regardless of the hierarchy of the supervisors, they could address them by their first names, whereas in Mexico there is a tradition of addressing professors by their degree titles (master, doctor) or in a more formal way, emphasising respect and acknowledging their different hierarchy. Elliot et al. (2016) have found students coming from more hierarchical academic structures, feeling empowered by "down to earth" and less conservative attitudes from supervisors in British universities.

From the narratives it can be drawn that the relationships constructed with the tutors were fundamental in shaping the overall international experience of the participants. Despite the academic challenges faced, they were able to develop diverse adaptive capabilities to succeed in their doctoral journeys. The next section moves on to examine the degree of success of the participants in the academic realm contingent to their previous academic skills.

3.3 High quality of undergraduate and graduate training in Mexico leading to good international performance

In general, even when the interviewees came from quite a diverse range of public Mexican HEIs, there was an overall sense of high quality of their undergraduate studies, which was reflected in their academic performance in the international institutions. As explained before, even when there has been an important increase in HEIs across the country, there is still a strong preference to study in Mexico metropolitan area at UNAM, IPN and UAM. This can be seen through the information obtained from the interviewees where 47% were enrolled at UNAM metropolitan area campuses and 9% at UAM. The remaining were distributed in seven different institutions from six different states. Only two participants attended private

institutions. Finally, 68% of the interviewees studied master's degrees before their doctoral studies.

Carmen, Aldo and Julian who studied at UNAM and UAM mentioned for instance, that they had very particular skills that other students lacked, which was noticed by their tutors. Julian was asked to teach formally those skills at the undergraduate level in Queens College, London. Aldo and Juan attributed several of their laboratory skills with the "hands on" approach in Mexico where students are taught to prepare all the chemical solutions in contrast with foreign institutions where they have technicians to do it. Aldo also linked it to the lack of resources in Mexico, where students learn how to be creative and dare to try unusual alternatives to substitute equipment or techniques.

Alvaro who studied at IPN revealed that before going to Holland, he questioned himself whether he was academically prepared because of Mexican *malinchismo* which as explained in chapter VI, is an attitude that denotes attachment to what is foreign and contempt to one´s own. However, he was able to recognise that he had the same academic level. Carmen made a similar remark;

> "I perceive that the level of education in Mexico is very good. I compared myself over there and realised that I was not too bad. In fact, I was quite good, and it was not difficult academically speaking" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

Several participants mentioned that the general perception from the tutors was that Mexican students arrived at the international institutions with high academic skills. In this sense, Galia, who attended UABC for her undergraduate and ECOSUR for her master studies said: My supervisor used to tell me "when Mexicans arrive to the PhD you have amazing academic skills that English students do not have".

Other participants who studied at UV and UABC in Mexico and conducted their doctoral studies in Germany and the UK recognised their struggles with their academic deficiencies and laboratory techniques. Arturo who studied in UACh, highlighted the lack of knowledge particularly in molecular genetics that he faced while studying abroad in the USA in the 1990s and recognised the improvement on that area in Mexico nowadays. Outstandingly, Javier, who studied in a very prestigious private university in Mexico, was the only one who reflected about the

"deplorable academic level" of ITAM and that nothing what he learned at the undergraduate level, was useful in his doctoral studies in Argentina, he acknowledged nonetheless, that his field was "hyperspecialized". These findings support the idea that the participants made undergraduate choices based on their constraints. However, even when apparently they all had "equal" opportunities to go to university, the vertical and horizontal differences of the institutions, programmes and disciplines influenced the capabilities the interviewees were able to develop (Bridges, 2006). Interestingly, some students were able to convert limited available resources into valued capabilities whereas others despite apparent advantage, were not offered the resources needed to develop the abilities they needed (Walker, 2006b). In this sense there might be unequal developed skills that fostered other capabilities such as educational resilience. This is depicted in Hugo´s remark "I think it is not so much about what you know, but what you do with what you know".

Nevertheless, the reflections about prior academic training echoed a high degree of satisfaction about their higher education in Mexico. In my conversations with them about their academic performance during their doctoral studies, 50% felt that they had the same level of, or higher academic skills than their international colleagues. A good proportion associated them with their masters' training, particularly since in Mexico master studies are two years long and involve the acquisition of complex scientific, methodological and research skills.

> "I consider that the master´s in Mexico gave me all the tools to be able to have a good doctoral performance. I saw that when I compared what other doctoral students were doing and I perceived important differences. I felt solid in methodological and theoretical aspects" (Carlos, IOE)

However, the ones that did not have graduate studies perceived likewise, that their education was at the same level. In the next part of this section and linked to the individual experiences in different countries and institutions, the perceptions of the participants regarding their international education experience will be discussed.

3.4 Better academic performance driven by higher economic resources?

The interviewees who pursued education abroad for academic reasons, were mainly driven by their expectations of excellence in programmes, state of the art facilities,

resources and knowledge and worldwide renown supervisors. As we have seen so far, some of the narratives revealed difficulties related to the doctoral supervision where the expectations of the students were not met. In here, some participants shared their perceptions about other aspects of the academic international experience.

> "What I cannot guarantee is if I had stayed, I would've learned the same. I think I have learned more or less the same that I could have learned in Mexico. What I can tell you is that is less stressful there (France) than it is here (Mexico). In Mexico, you are thoroughly evaluated by a committee every six months. On top of that, you do not have resources. Over there you have all the money in the world, a lot of money and nobody is constantly evaluating you …. "Academically speaking I thought that I was going to find fantastic things however, I found basically the same as in Mexico. I was not greatly surprised" (Raquel, Université de Montpellier II)

This quote shows how certain destinations might be overrated in terms of the quality of particular programmes, furthermore how in Mexico, there is still a tradition to consider international education as better than the one acquired locally. This is mainly attributed to the research capacity of foreign universities, status and resources and also to the correlation between nation´s overall economic capacity and the standing of its research universities (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007). Raquel studied, and currently works in a very prestigious institute at UNAM, and through the experience abroad she was able to recognise the academic and research quality of her institution despite the constant struggle to get economic resources.

Fernando, Juan, Alvaro and Aldo agreed that "not all international doctorates are good" and that there are highly skilled researchers trained in Mexico. Juan, who studied in Germany, had the impression that people who were trained in Spain did not have good academic level compared with some people trained in Mexico. Javier reinforced this perception stating that there was a risk of choosing poorly the programme and destination, and going back to Mexico afterwards with deficient training, as if never gone abroad. Nonetheless, as explained before this is dependent on the individual academic trajectories, disciplines and institutions. Knight (2011) has argued that there is a false notion that a strong international reputation is a proxy for

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quality which is enhanced by the questionable measurements of the league tables that support the academic rankings. In this sense, ranking systems do not give a complete description of the reality of research-intensive universities (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007)

Some participants valued the acquisition of other capabilities in the sense of opportunities rather than skills, which were often attached to increased economic resources compared to their HE experiences in Mexico. For instance, Raquel, Adela, Galia, Victor, Aldo and Federico acknowledged that one of the main advantages of the American, French, Spanish, British and German institutions was the availability of resources. Among the resources described were economic, electronic, biographical, educational, facilities and laboratory equipment.

> "…. You can do whatever you want. Is a marvellous Institute with all the money and all the infrastructure in the world. Whatever I ordered, if it did not arrive that day would arrive the next one" (Federico, Max-Plank Institute)

Enhanced academic experiences and the abilities developed of working in well-equipped laboratories have been described by Mexican international students (Maldonado, 2019). Similar findings have been reported in Spanish international students spending time in universities abroad, emphasising on their impressions about high quality libraries and modern and sophisticated laboratories (Groves et al., 2018). Other valued academic achievements mentioned were associated with the acquisition of capabilities of social relations and social networks, including different ways of working (Walker, 2006b). Adela mentioned that she could not have learned in Mexico what she did in an American institution, not because what is done in Mexico is not good, but for the other possibilities that are presented. This was echoed by Cesar and Aldo in terms of the importance of the exposure to different academic cultures.

Contrastingly, Elvia complained about the lack of study spaces in London, where she had to hold on to a space in the postgraduate room of her University. Javier recognised the scarcity of bibliographical resources of the University of Buenos Aires. Moreover, Hugo explained that the laboratory equipment in Australia was not state of the art as the one found in the marine research institutes in Baja California,

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Mexico. No information was found addressing dissatisfaction of international students due to scarcity of resources in foreign institutions. Next, the sociocultural and psychological factors associated with academic withdrawal are considered.

Rosa´s narrative points to a strong relationship between the inability to acculturate and the academic pressures of the doctoral studies. From the beginning she expressed that she could not understand the language at the lectures and that the readings were too complex. She started feeling academically insecure and inferior to other students. The language was far too complicated for her and she felt anxious about the possibility of failing even though she was studying all the time. It has been acknowledged that the relationship between the psychological and the sociocultural adjustments relies on the individual´s capacity, need and, opportunity to integrate to the host culture (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). At the end of the academic year Rosa expressed feelings of emotional exhaustion.

> "The pressure was far too great, and I felt that I could not make it. I had to read a lot, I barely understood, and I was afraid to lose the scholarship if I could not maintain good grades. At that time my sister decided to go and visit me. I was concluding my final submissions and I did the best I could, but I was not satisfied with my performance. My sister saw that I was desperate and anguished. We talked and she said that if I really did not want to finish the PhD that I should drop it, that the important thing was for me to feel good. And then I felt great relief" (Rosa, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

Rosa came to the conclusion that neither doctoral studies nor becoming a researcher was what she wanted for her life. Thus, after careful consideration, she decided to go back to Mexico. Later in the conversation Rosa explained that she always had trouble to adapt in school and that she was never an outstanding student.

Rosa went to Spain when CONACYT support was still under a loan-scholarship scheme, therefore, when she returned to Mexico, she was obliged to pay the loan. She explained how difficult it was to get a job when she went back and that she could only pay a few instalments. Further, she resented that CONACYT did not care

about whether she was happy, "I found it inhumane". On several occasions throughout our conversation she said, "it was not what I wanted".

Rosa's narrative is consistent with other studies reporting that acculturative stress negatively impacted upon students' psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). However, from her narrative it could also be assumed that her previous academic skills were poor, contributing with her academic failure in the international setting. Lack of self-confidence and academic unpreparedness have been associated with high levels of acculturative stress (Yu et al., 2014). Rosa decided to participate in the interview phase as a way to give vent, even when it had been a long time since she went abroad, denoting an unresolved issue. From all the survey respondents, only Rosa and another participant reported not having concluded their doctoral studies.

Overall, this section has shown that the interviewees adapted in different ways to the array of educational traditions and PhD life. However, the majority of participants possessed capabilities previously developed throughout their educational trajectories, which enabled their adaptation to the academic environments. Effective relationships with tutors reduced academic stressors, nevertheless, despite lack of supervision in some cases, participants were able to successfully complete their academic programmes. Finally, there was some level of disappointment regarding the expectations of the quality of the international education. However, there was a general consent about the greater available resources in international HEIs, which in turn contributed to the positive academic outcomes and capabilities developed. The confrontations between the array of academic experiences, the development of new capabilities and the social interactions in the academic realms, ushered the renegotiation of diverse academic identities (Phelps, 2016, Bilecen, 2013).

This chapter has explored the different international experiences of the participants and the ways they lived their adaptation processes in the diverse international environments. Its key contribution is to show that the individual identities of the participants along with their frames of reference and worldviews were crucial on how their adaptation processes unfolded.

The first relevant finding is that notwithstanding the social provenance, previous education, training and traveling experiences, all participants faced similar acculturative stressors. However, their cultural identities, the diverse opportunities presented and most importantly, the social relations they forged, shaped the way in which they developed an array of strategies that aided their adaptation. Further, how through recognising the cultural and idiosyncratic differences and similarities, they were able to reflect on their own identities within the new culture. The latter relates with the findings in chapter VII, where the interviewees who reinforced their Mexican identities learned how to navigate the international settings without necessarily accepting or understanding the new culture. On the other hand, the participants who integrated more successfully to the new cultures were able to mould their identities and developed social skills to "fit in".

The second relevant finding associated with the acculturation processes suggests that the interactions with the host culture were influenced by the different cultural identities and willingness to do so. However, the degrees of sociocultural and psychological adaptation were also strongly shaped by the cultural, economic and environmental characteristics of the towns, cities and countries. Among these characteristics were the openness to receive and integrate foreigners into the culture, the economic and political circumstances on the time of the sojourn, and even diverse climatological conditions. In this sense the findings showed situations where students could not develop mechanisms to overcome acculturative stress and were not able to adapt to the international spaces.

A third relevant finding relates to the adaptation to the academic realms highlighting the association of two main factors: the previous HE opportunities in Mexico and the adjustment to the diverse educational traditions in the international setting. The

different academic experiences, both in Mexico and in the international spaces, were determined by the vertical and horizontal differentiation of the institutions, programmes and disciplines and the tensions at the intersections of individual cultural and academic identities (Phelps, 2016). The responses echoed a high degree of satisfaction with their high quality undergraduate and postgraduate education in Mexico vis-à-vis their international academic performance. The participants who mentioned educational lacunas however, were able to overcome them through the development of diverse capabilities.

The narratives further showed the pivotal role of the supervisors depicted in the interviewees´ perceptions about their academic experience. However, and despite the negotiations of power relationships with tutors, the majority of participants developed individual skills to complete their doctoral studies. Finally, the international educational provision did not meet the expectations of some of the participants. However, there was a general consent about the availability of economic resources in most of the international destinations, which upon reflection enhanced their academic experience. The findings additionally showed a strong relationship between failure to acculturate and poor academic performance. Moreover, how the lack of affective relationships and effective counselling in front of acculturative stressors can lead to academic failure, psychological distress and psychosomatic symptoms that have further negative implications in the students´ life trajectories.

In summary, the findings presented herein provide evidence of the array of the participants´ international experiences both, in their daily life practices and in the academic spaces. Further, how these experiences were determined in one hand, by the personal, social and environmental heterogeneities of the participants and on the other, by the social interactions established depending on their individual cultural and academic identities. International students thus navigated the international spaces in complex ways developing different degrees of sociocultural and psychological adaptation and constructed multiple identities. The dynamic negotiation between individual identities and the level of adaptation and involvement with the other determined the ways in which the international sojourn became a transformative experience for the participants, which will be explored in the next chapter.

IX. The meanings of the international experience, life trajectories, well-being and the implications for Mexican society

Introduction

This work started by unpacking the different personal, social and environmental heterogeneities of the participants and their previous educational opportunities. It then showed how these heterogeneities and conversion factors were fundamental in the decision-making processes to pursue educational mobility and intimately connected to expectations of upward social mobility and future life aspirations. Thirdly, the research examined the diverse identities of the participants allowing the identification of three different types of students: *adapters, isolators* and *integrators*, which determined their socialisation processes and the ways in which they navigated the international spaces. Finally, this work has found the possibility of identity plasticity, enabled or hindered by the socialisation with "the other", the confrontation with their preconceived ideas and the different ways they negotiated the disorienting dilemmas in the international milieus. This chapter draws together these findings to explore the different ways in which ISM transformed the life of the participants —and of their families, and the personal meanings and understandings of the international sojourn.

Section one identifies the acquisition of some capabilities associated with the exposure to different cultures and understandings; widening individual worldviews —including the perceptions about own cultures; and the possibility of personal growth and independence. Further, it explores the influence of the international experience on the participants children´s identities, and the ways in which they developed their own set of capabilities through the opportunities that were presented to them. Section two addresses the diverse opportunities that became available for the doctoral graduates and to what extent they were able to exercise their agency to choose what was of value to them associated with the accessibility of resources. Section three reflects on ISM as enabler of social mobility and presents the contributions of the international sojourners to social change in their diverse spheres of action.

1. Transformative experiences of the international sojourn

As has been shown thus far, all the participants adapted in diverse ways to the new international environments strongly influenced by their individual cultural identities and their worldviews. Their individual adaptation processes involved developing capabilities which allowed them to have different types of interactions with the others and to negotiate their everyday life. This section explores the participants´ reflections about the meanings and diverse transformative learning experiences associated with those interactions and negotiations. Firstly, it suggests a connection between personal growth and independence with transformation and identity development that is not exclusive of ISM but related with HE experiences in a broader sense. Secondly, it deals with their views about intercultural traits acquired and how living abroad expanded the way they perceived the world. Next, it identifies on one hand, an increased level of criticality about the Mexican ways of being and doing and on the other, a sense of awareness and appreciation of Mexican culture both attached to the expansion of their frames of reference. Lastly, it highlights the interviewees´ perceptions about the opportunities that became available to their children and the ways in which living abroad impacted their own lifepaths.

1.1 Personal growth and independence

Chapter VI showed how the interviewees that moved to other Mexican cities for their undergraduate studies mentioned becoming independent early in their lives, which, was seen as an advantage in their international sojourn. Contrastingly, the participants who lived in their family homes before moving abroad were forced to become independent at the same time they had to acculturate to different countries. Adela, Fidel and Hugo for instance mentioned growing at a personal level through the international experience. Adela even argued that it was better for her to become independent that way "in one go, quickly". Adela and Fidel came from traditional working-class families where their mothers were in charge of the households.

Carlos came from a middle-class family where he also stayed at the family house for his undergraduate and graduate studies. However, his dad died when he was young, and thus he expressed having a cooperation dynamic with his mother particularly contributing with the household expenses. Nonetheless, he also mentioned that the

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international sojourn was his first experience away from home where he learned to manage his day to day at a personal level.

Juan and Mario, who gained independence during their undergraduate studies living in different cities, still expressed having left the country very young and through living abroad, they were able to obtain maturity. Elvia´s quote encompasses quite clearly the different levels of personal development that some of the interviewees narrated.

> "You grow, you mature, you learn about yourself, your strengths and your weaknesses. You spend so much time on your own, your only companion is you. Therefore, you learn to know you much better in all aspects, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, which is a great advantage" (Elvia, UCL)

It is worth highlighting that almost all the participants who expressed personal growth through the international sojourn moved from the family household directly to their international destinations either on their own or as new couples. Therefore, it is possible that their lived processes of personal and cultural maturation were closely associated with *Bildung* and the development of their identities through the interaction with "the others" and the HE experiences (Bengtsen, 2014) rather than being an exclusive outcome of ISM. Moreover, Jimena and Carlos for instance, who lived abroad with their partners for the first time, associated their growth and independence to additionally being away from their families. Hence, personal growth and becoming independent might be processes enhanced by the international experience and geographical distance from home additionally to "moving out" from the family home. Participants who engaged in ISM at later stages of their lives did not mention personal growth and independence in the same way, which also explains that personal growth and independence are not exclusive consequences of ISM but of adulthood. These results therefore are relevant since most of the literature dealing with the acquisition of autonomy and independence through ISM have been frequently conducted with younger participants (Murphy-LeJeune 2003 in Gill, 2010, Gua et al. (2010) in Robertson et al., 2011).

1.2 Intercultural understanding

As explained in chapter VI, Federico, an *integrator* student, had a particular upbringing in a town where there was German migration; therefore, his contact with

people from other nationalities made him interested in traveling abroad and learning languages. The next quote incorporates Federico's perception about the differences between people who study in Mexico versus the ones who study abroad. Further, what he considered having learned during his time abroad.

> "Studying abroad improves your personal and human development which I think is what is lacking in Mexico. People grow academically speaking but you grow more with what you have learned abroad…. The gain is the language, the culture, living together with another world, going out of your country gives you a particular knowledge that you would never learn here" (Federico, Max-Plank Institute)

Federico's reflection about the capabilities he developed in the international sojourn include language skills and the opportunity to gain abilities of intercultural communication and open mindedness. It is likely that Federico's previous multicultural experiences and curiosity towards other cultures promoted his cultural empathy throughout the international sojourn. For instance, he expressed his interest to interact with others and explained how he became a "mediator between cultures" because he acquired good German command and was able to understand the differences between Latin and non-Latin cultures. Through this attitude, he earned the appreciation and lasting friendships with his German tutor and his colleagues from Syria, Egypt and Iraq. Federico mentioned that was a determinant "international life lesson" where he "was attached to the institute, the culture and the research" long after he went back to Mexico, "They are stays that brand you for life".

Jaime, also an *integrator* student, spent one year in Canada and then decided to move to Holland because the programme was more suited to his academic needs. Related to his interaction with other nationalities, he acknowledged that in the academic realm the cultural diversity in the classroom enriched the discussions about given problems.

> "It changed me. The life as a student has disadvantages, but also wonderful things. The interaction with other cultures, with other people, learning another language, reading in English, see the world with a different mentality. It helps a lot. At the end I think it changed a lot of aspects in my life" (Jaime, Wageningen Universiteit)

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Jaime respects more other people's values, their personal spaces and privacy after the international sojourn. He expressed that the international experience changed the way he interacts with other people and made him more tolerant.

These examples show how the capabilities developed were a result of individual abilities and the opportunities created by a combination of those personal capacities and the associations with the diverse societies they came from and the ones they settle in for their studies (Lozano et al., 2012). Further, how the development of abilities related to intercultural interaction and understanding were dependent on how valuable they were for the participants. Their reflections were often linked to the interaction with other cultures and languages, different ways of thinking and doing and diverse understandings. The intersection of these elements led to moulding their diverse identities.

1.3 Broadening perspectives

Regardless of the type of student and the country of destination, a recurrent theme among the participants when asked how they remembered the international experience or what it meant for them, it was how it expanded the ways in which they perceived things in different realms. Some talked about diversification of worldviews, others about learning different approaches to academic tasks, or simply, how they were able to "open their minds".

Victor came from an indigenous rural working-class family where his parents did not finish primary education. He first moved to Tlaxcala, a bigger city than his town of origin, to study. Victor travelled to the USA with his wife and children and explained that those "good" memories from when he lived abroad were not only his but from all his family.

> "The balance is absolutely positive in every way. My children broadened their panorama immensely in the sense that they saw more things than they could see in this environment. Tlaxcala is a very small city and we feel very fortunate to have had that experience, because it opened the panorama, the perspective" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

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He further explained that when he left, he was only pursuing an academic degree and that in retrospect besides the difficulties they had to face, particularly at the beginning of the acculturation process, the overall international experience for him and his family was very enriching. He emphasised that living in another country and contrasting different cultures enabled them looking at things differently. Changing perspectives and change in cultural outlook and their associations with Mezirow´s perspective transformation has been previously described as transformative outcomes of ISM (Brown, 2009b).

Aldo, who also came from a working-class family, positioned his perception of the sojourn in contrast with his experience in his current workplace where according to him; academics who are trained locally are not able to develop different ways of looking at things as the ones that are trained abroad.

> "If you compare, the one that goes abroad has always a different perspective of life, of what he wants to do. Is what I have seen at a personal level" (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

Victor and Aldo´s comparisons between the local and the international students´ diverse understandings, mirror findings described in Chinese international students where they identified differences between them and those who did not go abroad. Additionally, these students also indicated to have acquired different thinking patterns and perspectives after the international sojourn, elements that have been described by other researchers (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015, Robertson et al., 2011). In the case of Adela, she mentioned not only broadening her viewpoint but her possibilities of jobs and collaborations with people from other parts of the world.

> "I am convinced that I would not be sitting here today as a researcher, if I had not been trained abroad…not because what is done in Mexico is not good, it's because of the other things that you get, and the other possibilities and the doors that open to you" (Adela, Boston College)

Both Adela and Aldo emphasised that the changes associated with the international experience were at a personal level and not exclusively in the academic realm, acknowledging at the same time that the research conducted in Mexico can be of great quality. Elvia on the same lines as Adela explained how she was able to

consider other perspectives and additionally, that the international experience broadened her employment opportunities.

> I think studying abroad opens doors. You get to know different cultures, different ways of looking at the same problems, different points of view. And you learn to respect other people´s opinions. In Mexico is not like that" (Elvia, UCL)

These reflections are consistent with other studies that have identified changes in the worldviews of international students who experienced different ways of doing things in the international settings and became more aware about them when they returned to their home countries (Butcher, 2002). Further, international education enabled sojourners to get better jobs which were valuable to them, showing the instrumental values of education (Walker, 2008).

1.3.1 More appreciation of Mexican culture and increased awareness of its shortcomings

Jimena argued that it was impossible not to compare her own culture while being involuntarily in contact every day to different ones. However, the international exposure enabled her to identify diverse live aspects that she wanted to adopt because for her, they were better than the ones she previously had in Mexico. Throughout her narrative, it was clear that her reflections of her opinions after the international sojourn regarding Mexican ways of being and doing, were intimately related with her widening of her worldviews.

Victor had similar remarks when talking about the international experience in the USA, emphasising how the frames of reference of the people that do not have opportunities to travel, stay static and represent their normality.

> "I think that the people that study abroad have different visions and attitudes. The vision towards things, contrasting cultures, see other people's attitudes, it changes you, you see things differently. You value more the things you have here (Mexico) and therefore, you take care of them and you also become intolerant towards the bad things. Only when you are abroad you are able to contrast those things. Everything is normal for the people that live here ordinarily, because that is the way it has always been" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

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Cesar also mentioned that through the international experience he broadened his worldview and thus, he was able to appreciate his own culture and workplace from a different perspective.

> "I see a difference between the ones who studied here (Mexico). Academically speaking there are good doctors trained locally, but there is something missing. Perhaps being submerged in a different society, or in the academic environment outside Mexico, is very different. And culturally speaking it shows as well. You get certain maturity and experience because you went abroad. You see your country and your workplace, you have another vision, you see things from far away and therefore, it also influences that general appreciation of the country as a Mexican" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

Cesar's quote also depicts issues of personal growth and broadening perspectives. He, the same way as Aldo and Adela, mentioned his perceptions about the academic quality of Mexican doctoral programmes.

When I asked Cyntia about what she learned during her time abroad, she spoke about aspects of widening viewpoints along with her appreciation for characteristics about her culture and the acquisition of more critical standpoints.

> "Personally, a lot. You appreciate more what you have. You can be more critical by you also appreciate other things that you have not seen before. It is eye-opening. I tell everyone I can to go abroad and live another experience, it is very enriching" (Cyntia, University of Sheffield)

Juan said that he learned to appreciate the things that are well done in Mexico, trying to improve in the areas where he could have influence and learning to live with the ones where he could not do anything to change them.

Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) found that when Chinese students returned home after studying abroad, they had a strong awareness of their cultural backgrounds and at the same time, an "emergent self-consciously international outlook". Moreover, the returnees expressed more appreciation of their own cultural traditions and values (Ibid). On the same lines, students who have engaged in credit mobility have expressed gaining new perspectives on their home country (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). Thus far, the findings suggest that the broadening of world views and frames

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of reference played a fundamental role in shaping the participants' perceptions about other countries, the ways in which they interact with "the others" and further, in enriching their opinions and understandings about their own culture.

1.4 The influence of the international experience for the sojourners' children

As chapter VII presented, a relevant finding of this research was that the participants had specific experiences attached to their family presence in the international milieus. Additionally, their children had their own individual international experiences that were available to them through the doctoral students' mobility experience. Through the narratives, the interviewees articulated what they perceived living abroad meant for their children and the influence it has had over their individual life trajectories. It is worth mentioning that these interviewees shared their point of view about those influences without me asking them specifically.

1.4.1   Available opportunities: schooling, languages and intercultural relations

The common themes that were brought about regarding the outcomes of the sojourn for their children were mainly associated with the schooling opportunities and the possibility of mastering additional languages, aspects that were also explored in chapter VII. Gloria expressed her thoughts about how the additional language open educational possibilities for her daughters' university studies.

> "And I think for them the effect that the international experience had was really good. In fact, one is a mathematician from UNAM who is in Germany and she already has two postdocs and got a grant to develop a project.... And she is already thinking of coming back to Mexico. And thus, the language made it easier for them, that and that they were not afraid to go to a different country.... And the other one just finished a master's degree in Canada.... Perhaps the experience of meeting girls from all over the world, because that is what England is, a multicultural place. They never felt discriminated" (Gloria, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)

In her narrative there is also the recognition of acquisition of intercultural skills and cultural tolerance that seemed to have contributed to their desire of having their own international experiences as adults. It has been suggested that it is more likely, for students who had international mobility experiences at a younger age, to pursue ISM for HE studies (Brooks and Waters, 2010).

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Dinora strongly attributed his son's achievements and future educational aspirations to the international experience. She further explained how the education he received in Britain promoted his critical thinking and reading skills.

> "I gave my son the tools to have other options. My son speaks fluent Spanish and English and he is about to finish his French course in Montreal. Therefore, we were able to give him other elements…. And that experience transformed his life, because he remembers a lot that period of his life. And I think that in contrast with other children that have been trained here, my son sees other horizons. He wants to go do a master's degree either in Holland or in the UK" (Dinora, University of Stirling)

Victor did not share particularities of his children´s current life trajectories. However, he mentioned that they have travelled abroad and have considered the possibility of studying in another country. He remembered all the activities and possibilities his children had while they were abroad in contrast with what they could have had in Mexico. He additionally mentioned the cultural competence they were able to develop while in contact with other cultures. He also acknowledged the importance of having learned another language fluently.

> "If you transfer the experience to the familial terrain, I also think that it went really well for my children. They had access to many things, such as libraries, extracurricular activities that I think they opened a huge panorama. They had everything at school, food, security, control. Overall, the available resources that you see in those countries in contrast with Mexico opened our panorama and we learned a lot" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

The three quotes presented herein also depict how living in other countries contributed to widening the children´s worldviews from an early age allowing them to expand their future educational possibilities. Phelps (2016) have found that international students considered advantageous for their children to have had the opportunity to engage in multicultural societies. Waters (2006) has argued that international education provide skills and educational opportunities for children, which are highly valued when they return home. In the case of Mexican sojourners, they did not mention their children´s education as part of their plan of studying abroad. However, they recognised with hindsight their acquired capabilities as an additional benefit of the international experience of the family unit.

Another unexpected finding of this study was the adjustment process of going back to Mexico that the interviewees´ children had to go through. These issues were brought about when I asked the participants to narrate their personal experiences when they returned. Cesar for instance said that it was particularly difficult for his children because they developed French identities.

> "We faced the problem that they had to break their world, we pulled them out. If we waited longer, we would not have been able to bring them back, they would have stayed. That was very painful for them, and until now that they are young adults. One of them still has that problem, he felt French, he was French…. They felt French and even when we spoke Spanish at home, they could not remember their previous life in Mexico, therefore, they did not understand why we had to return" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

Victor, on the same lines, mentioned that his daughters also had a difficult time when they went back to Mexico. He explained that his older daughter made strong friendships and the youngest developed a North American identity.

> "My oldest daughter did not want to go back. She was very comfortable over there, she used to say, "dad I am going to stay here, I do not want to go back to Mexico" and the youngest used to cry because her home was over there. She grew up and started talking over there, she always said she was from there" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

There is scarce information about the acculturation problems sojourners' children experience when they go back to their parents' home countries. I make this distinction because, as explained in chapter VII, the majority of the interviewees' children arrived at the host countries when they were very young, or they were born abroad. Fear of rejection, ridicule for being "foreign" and school phobia have been reported as shock-related adjustment problems amongst international sojourners' children upon return (Enloe and Lewin, 1987). In the case of adolescents, separation and loss, discomfort and dissatisfaction with their lives and nostalgia for lost lifestyles have been also described (Werkman, 1983). More recently Loveridge et al. (2018) found how children from international students experienced fear, difficulties to adapt to the home country schooling system and longing for their school in New Zealand.

Gloria mentioned that one of the main reasons her husband and herself did not consider staying in the UK, even when they had work opportunities, was identifying a change in their daughters´ identities.

> "Look at your children becoming something that you do not recognise as Mexico. Because they were little, they started acquiring gestures like the other girls. I did not like that my daughters were becoming girls that I could not identify as Mexicans" (Gloria, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)

She said that she is "proudly Mexican" and thus for her, it was very important that they grew up with a Mexican identity. She explained that for them the readjustment process to the new Mexican reality was equally challenging because they did not want to speak Spanish. Further, the youngest had an accent speaking in Spanish and thus, she was bullied at school. The acquisition of foreign patterns of behaviours has been associated with alienation attitudes from other children and even teachers in the homeland (Enloe and Lewin, 1987). Threat of identity loss and confusion about the meaning of home have also been described in international students´ children (Phelps, 2016).

This section has explored the meanings of the international sojourn in terms of the transformative learning experiences and capabilities acquired strongly associated with the broadening of worldviews. Further, it supports the findings of chapter VII where the international experience has also the potential to transform the lives of sojourners' children, expanding the ways they perceive the world, moulding their identities and expanding their capabilities. It has also pinpointed the challenges they had to face upon return and their own re-acculturation experiences. The following section will investigate the participants´ reflections about their life transitions linked to the end of their doctoral studies.

2. The end of the sojourn: available opportunities and challenges for international students

Chapter VIII showed the different acculturation processes that the sojourners experienced, influenced by their individual frames of reference, their cultural identities and the social relationships they forged. However, all the interviewees recognised that their time abroad was finite and that they would eventually go back to Mexico. This section explores the different ways participants experienced the end of their doctoral programmes, their decisions to return to Mexico and the obstacles to do so. Secondly, the negotiations between available employment opportunities, personal aspirations, what was "best" for their families, and patriotic sentiments. Finally, how their different life paths unfolded with particular focus on the prevalent economic and structural challenges of Mexican HEIs.

2.1 The shock of returning versus the joy of "going back home"

Some participants expressed how they experienced re-entry shock because they had to adapt once again to live in spaces where they no longer felt comfortable in or that they no longer recognised. These sentiments were particularly attached to have broadened their worldviews and therefore, becoming more critical about what before going abroad, represented their normality. Adela for instance, mentioned having acquired habits and learned other ways of being and doing that had to be modified again when she went back to Mexico.

Javier's quote is the one that best describes this feeling of alienation in the home country.

> "I felt like a foreigner again. Because I think that the experience was so strong that obliged me to become camouflaged and had a way of living which made me feel more Argentinian than anything else. And when I came back to Mexico, I felt foreigner amongst my co-nationals. But it was more about the forms I did not like…. the lack of honesty and sincerity, the decadence of the public systems, the lack of public life and active citizenship…. You realise that here in reality there is an individual decomposition that is translated in lack of welfare. Therefore, I felt not only foreigner, but I was angry from what I was seeing, the social indifference, the inertia, the lack of professionalism. There was a lot of social hypocrisy and that made me feel very foreign" (Javier, Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Jose made similar remarks of a re-entry shock due to lack of social responsibility, where Mexicans accept several social behaviours that would not happen anywhere else. Alvaro in this regard said that there were things that did not made sense anymore and in the same lines as Adela, the reason behind those feelings was to have been immersed in different cultures and societies. Fernando said he was very happy to go back to Mexico although it took time to get used to living there again, because everything was different. Cesar added that he suffered from severe depression for a year after he went back home. Some studies have reported depression and anxiety associated with difficulties in the re-entry process (Ward et al., 2001).

Amongst the difficulties experienced by returning sojourners, communicating with friends, uncertainty about their cultural identity, social disengagement and relationships´ dissatisfaction have been described (Enloe and Lewin, 1987, Şahin, 1990, Wilson, 1993, Robertson et al., 2011). These issues have been reported in international students, re-entering migrants and high school exchange students. The causality of the problems experienced by returnees have been associated with a) the unexpectedness of re-entry problems, b) the unawareness of the influence the international experience, c) the attitudes of friends and family towards those changes, d) the belittlement of the experience by the home culture and, e) the obliviousness of the sojourner of the changes of the home town (La Brack, B (1986) cited in Şahin, 1990).

In contrast to the quotes above, Arturo expressed feelings of relief when he went back to Mexico saying, "I felt liberated to go back to Mexico, it was simple". He mentioned being "euphoric" to go back and eat all the local food and socialise with his friends. He acknowledged that academically speaking it most have been easier for him because he had a job even when it took time to establish himself as a researcher.

Carmen equally, mentioned that it was very easy to go back to Mexico and recognised her appreciation of daily life aspects such as transport. Both Arturo and Carmen, —an *isolator* and an *adapter* respectively, as shown in previous chapters, possessed a strong Mexican identity, had more difficulties in their acculturation processes and never felt fully integrated to the foreign cultures. Interestingly,

Ricardo, who had to go back indefinitely to the UK for professional reasons, described the year he spent in Mexico after his doctoral studies as "spectacular". He mentioned freedom, easiness of doing things and living close to his job. Ricardo did not express having problems adapting to the UK, however, a strong Mexican identity was evident throughout his narrative. These results are consistent with those of Robertson et al. (2011) where some international students described going back to Singapore as a "true homecoming". These students expressed not making meaningful social connections during their time abroad due to strong ties to their country through social networks, national identity and family (Ibid).

Therefore, re-entry is not an isolated process and it is in fact the culmination of the international experience. Moreover, all the considerations of the initial acculturation process (Şahin, 1990) —and the strong connection with the individual multiple identities, are relevant in explaining the diverse re-adaptation processes.

These different experiences of re-entry show that the further life trajectories of the participants were shaped by a complex interplay between their "moulded identities", the individual international experiences and additional external forces. Among these are the economic circumstances of the countries, secured jobs upon return, different HEI capacity and resources, available information regarding job vacancies, available jobs and networks built both, in the home and the host country.

2.2 Staying abroad: by choice or by force

None of the participants mentioned using the opportunity to study abroad as a steppingstone to permanently migrate to other countries. In general, all the interviewees had the desire to go back to Mexico. Dinora did not even consider staying abroad because her and her husband had jobs and a home in Mexico, and they were not interested to "start from the beginning". However, the participants narrated individual circumstances, which determined the prolonged stays abroad, or definitive migration.

Hugo and Adela had the opportunity to expand their stays abroad by working for American universities, but they also acknowledged them as temporary jobs while they could get something more permanent in Mexico. In fact, both of the

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interviewees who stayed in the UK explained that they actively looked for professional opportunities in Mexico when they finished their doctoral training.

 "I was looking for jobs in Mexico…. I was decided to go back if I could find an opportunity because they invested so much in me. I wanted to go back to Mexico and contribute. I looked for jobs for a year and nothing, I remember getting in touch with people from CONACYT to see if they could help me. I do not think they were interested…. And with that attitude I thought I could stay in the UK. I looked for a job in the UK in two different places and I got accepted in a research project, similar to a postdoctorate. It was with the University of Manchester, but I could work from London" (Elvia, UCL)

Elvia's narrative showed an interest in finding a job in Mexico but feeling inadequately supported by CONACYT to do so. She further explained that because she was away for a long period and did not have any networks established in Mexico it was a difficult task. She was finally able to find a job she was interested in in the UK and where she could grow professionally speaking. Elvia also decided to get married and start a family; "I am never going back to Mexico". Ackers (2008) and Cannon (2010) have pointed out that the international sojourn might be disadvantageous in the maintenance of local networks hindering future job opportunities upon return.

Ricardo on the other hand found a postdoctoral position in Mexico in his area of expertise. However, he arrived in a moment where there were some contractual restrictions as he depicts in the next quote.

"When I finished the PhD, I went back to Mexico. There was a law to prevent researchers to take advantage of their students asking them to do all their research work and adding their names in every publication. Therefore, that law stipulated that if you signed a contract with one of the UNAM institutes, you could not renew it, to prevent those abuses from happening. It was exactly the year I went back to Mexico and they told me that I could never work in the same institute again, and there is only one in Mexico, the Atmospheric Sciences Institute. And thus, I thought I could not sign a contract that would not allow me to work in the only institute that does what I do. I think the law changed soon after, buy I could not stay longer waiting to see what was going to happen. Therefore, I came back to the UK to look for a job. And since 2005 I work in the

Metropolitan University of Manchester looking at the interaction between clouds and radiation" (Ricardo, Imperial College)

Due to the hyper-specialisation of his professional skills and the scarce institutions where he could develop them, Ricardo was forced to look for employment opportunities back in the UK even when he would have preferred to stay in Mexico. At the time, he already had a British partner and a child.

Conversely, there were other participants who for different reasons, had very clear that they wanted to go back to Mexico, even when some of them were offered academic positions in research and academic institutions. That is the case of Carmen, who had the opportunity to go to Italy to continue her training.

"I never thought about the possibility of staying. In fact. When I was about to finish there were a few opportunities to stay, to go to Pisa to do the postdoctorate. They offered it to me, but I never considered it. I wanted to go back to Mexico" (Carmen, Universidad de Barcelona)

Julian had a similar experience, where he, along with his wife, pondered the different options and decided that they wanted to continue their life in Mexico as opposed to having to start from scratch in a foreign country, even when they had the opportunity to do so. Adela, Cesar, Julian and Victor added that for them, it was important to go back to Mexico to reimburse with work what the country invested in them. These sentiments of "patriotic loyalty" have been found in Kazakhstan returnees who were interested in bringing back their experiences to their country (Holloway et al., 2012). Further, Marsh et al. (2016) findings showed students expressing commitment to "go back and contribute" with their country´s development and social transformation.

Finally, there were some interviewees who were interested in staying abroad but for contractual commitments with their institutions and shared decisions with their partners, they decided to go back to Mexico.

"I would have stayed without a doubt. However, we had commitments. In one hand we went abroad supported by COLPOS and CONACYT, and to have had to pay back, it would have been a lot of money. And on the other hand, my wife was very dependant of her family, therefore she could not wait to come back. Even when she was very happy,

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she was very attached to the family. But if the situation would have been different, I would not have doubted, I would be there" (Federico, Max-Planck-Institute)

Similarly, Raquel who also had a postgraduate opportunity abroad, decided to take a job in Mexico, because she considered that it was going to be more advantageous for her professional development.

"Before finishing the doctorate, I was offered a postdoctorate in the USA. And it seemed a good idea. But at the same time, they offered me a job here in the Biomedical Institute, and thus between a postdoctorate and a job I chose the job" (Raquel, Université de Montpellier II)

As seen thus far, all the participants had the desire to go back to Mexico at the end of their doctoral programmes. However, not all of them were presented with the same opportunities to do so. Moreover, their general experiences abroad, their acculturation processes, the interactions with the host culture and their cultural identities were determinant in their further life choices. Some revealed an intentionality to prolong the international experience that was facilitated by their marital status and the absence of professional commitments back in Mexico. For others, that intentionality had to be weighed against future opportunities and decided together with partners and family. Others had secured employment in Mexico and the rest were determined to find it. The next section deals with the nuanced experiences of those who returned to Mexico.

2.3 Returning to Mexico: labour market opportunities for the educated abroad

As has been explained, some participants had jobs in research and academic institutions in Mexico. However, the rest of the interviewees had to look for employment opportunities after being away for several years.

Fidel and Raquel explained having maintained close contacts with the Mexican institutions and therefore, they were able to create a local network for when they had to return. This is depicted in the next quote from Carlos, who had a similar experience.

"They looked for me because I never lost contact with the Institute. Besides my fieldwork I was linked to a project here (Mexico) and when they went to visit, we would

get together. Therefore, when the academic position opened, they called me and told me to apply. I applied and I got the job" (Carlos, IOE)

Julian also maintained contacts with his colleagues at UNAM and because there was a job opening, he was able to go back to Mexico supported by the CONACYT repatriation programme[28].

> "I spoke with the professor who originally supported me and asked him what the possibilities were…. it was also luck because an academic position became available because a researcher died, thus, those were life coincidences. If there is a position in the institute and someone wants to support you, they consider you because they trust you as a student and as a researcher, thus, they help you if they can. That is perhaps the natural way in which researchers integrate to this institution, because they had an initial contact with someone who was their student who went abroad and comes back…." (Julian, Queen Mary University of London)

One of the main problems regarding the scarce academic positions available in some HEIs such as UNAM, has been the persistent lack of regulations for a decorous retirement, pushing Faculty to work indefinitely regardless of their age, health status and productivity (Gil-Anton, 2003).

Carmen went back to Mexico also supported by the repatriation programme; however, she took a postdoctoral position knowing that it was going to be very difficult to obtain a researcher post afterwards. She similarly to Julian, mentioned to have been extremely lucky because a position became available in very favourable circumstances for her.

Adela and Hugo, who after the doctoral studies had other work opportunities in the USA equally continued building contacts in Mexico because they both wanted to return. They went back to Mexico when they were able to obtain the jobs they currently have. Social networks have been acknowledged as a strong influence in shaping post-studies employment opportunities not only upon return but extending

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[28] The main aim of the repatriation programme is for Mexican HEIs to bring back their researchers who were doing doctoral studies abroad. CONACYT financially supports one year and then the HEI has the compromise to hire the researcher. This programme is part of the Science and Technology Infrastructure Programme (PACIME) funded by CONACYT through financial aid from the World Bank (Izquierdo, 2010).

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migratory journeys (Collins et al., 2017). Social networks of friendship and belonging for learning support and leisure are part of the capability list (Walker, 2006b), however for international doctoral students they additionally became a fundamental component for professional development.

For Galia and Hugo, who currently work in institutions in Baja California it was difficult to find employment. Gloria first worked in other Mexican states and finally had the opportunity to go back to La Paz however, she only has teaching hours at the UABC and the rest are external research projects. Contrastingly, Hugo even when he works in a research public institution, he does not have a researcher position. He argued that the reason behind the latter, are the lack of opportunities for doctors of their generation, where there are limited academic positions available due to the same reasons provided earlier where academics stay very long periods in the jobs. Galia added that the academic positions are highly competitive, and the academic demands are greater. She further added how nowadays, is getting more difficult to work and do research due to lack of economic resources and adequate networks. The lack of employment and professional opportunities in Mexico for individuals from the same generation as Galia and Hugo have been previously reported (Lopez, 2019).

The next subsections address some of the challenges that the participants identified to be the most important ones associated with going back to work in research and HEIs in Mexico.

2.3.1   The Mexican economic context

Raquel explained that in general she had not had problems getting funding for her projects until the last few years, emphasising about the reductions in research funding in Mexico.

> "I have been very lucky and in reality, I never had problems to get money from CONACYT, until the past three years that the economic crisis has been horrendous. You receive the project evaluation, and they say that your project is wonderful but that there are budgetary problems…. right now, this year there is not going to be money available. The ones that get funds will be more for political reasons than for merits.

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Nonetheless, we are all like crazy writing proposals to try at least, but this year is going to be very, very hard" (Raquel, Université de Montpellier II)

Galia reflected that in comparison, she earned better as a waitress than as an academic in La Paz. She mentioned that she had to have several jobs to be able to support herself including, teaching, consultancy, administrative work at the university and external projects. She further explained that it was a generational issue where people her age with doctoral studies were not able to find good academic positions, which echoes what Hugo explained before.

Gloria made similar remarks regarding the fewer economic resources available in the country to conduct research.

"And I can tell you that it opens the panorama of the things you can do; you can do almost whatever you want. Not everything you want because you cannot do things without resources, and there are fewer resources in Mexico. Since I came back, there is less available money and it is more difficult to sustain yourself" (Gloria, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)

Jose reflected that the Mexican society and the government consider research funding "a luxury" and that, in his view, is why there is less economic resources in research and HE institutions.

The efficient productivity and operation of HE and research public institutions and the associated science, technology and innovation activities (STI) still depend a great deal on public funding. In 2017, the public share for the development of STI was 63% of the total gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD). Moreover, the gross domestic product (GDP)/GERD ratio was 0.48%, the lowest it has been in the last decade (CONACYT, 2017). Therefore, the economic situation in Mexico is reflected on the narratives of the participants, where they have to adapt and function in an unequal research world where they often have to fight their way through with scarce resources and limited social benefits in comparison to more developed nations (Altbach, 2003).

The scarcity of academic positions nowadays has also been the result of the unregulated expansion of the HE sector in Mexico that took place between 1960-1990. This model was focused on hiring academics to meet the social demands of

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HE to meet expectations of social mobility. Nonetheless, due to lack of effective strategies and the economic crisis of the 1980s the system underwent a crisis where salaries dropped and the resources of public HEIs where exhausted. In the 1990s, four out of ten new academic positions were created in the public sector and the ones created in the private sector were mainly part time jobs largely focused on teaching activities (Gil-Anton, 2003). Moreover, the tenure track positions have promoted academics overstaying their jobs for over three decades because retirement conditions are not good enough. This in turn has prevented the possibility of opening new academic positions for younger generations of graduates.

2.3.2 Learning to work with less available resources in Mexico

Chapter VIII showed that several interviewees expressed that they had good availability of resources in the foreign institutions. In this regard, they mentioned that the limited economic resources they have in Mexican institutions was one of the main challenges hindering their research activities. Carlos for instance, explained that as a doctoral student in the UK he had his own office, technological and digital resources and when he went back to Mexico he worked from home for a few months because the research institution he joined, did not provided him with adequate resources. It was not until he was able to find external funding that he was able to work, "Is money that the institution receives, but it is not provided by the institution".

Julian described mirroring situations to other returnees when they joined institutions for the first time or re-joined the ones they were previously working for.

> "I had the normal problems of an institution like UNAM. I had to share initially an office with students, it was a very slow process. You do not arrive and have an office; the integration is slow. There is also an expectation of what is you can do. The academic integration is very complex" (Julian, Queen Mary University of London)

Cyntia also mentioned all the difficulties that she has had to endure as a researcher at UNAM in Morelos related with less economic resources.

> "It has not been easy…I had ups and downs and is still not easy because the situation for doing science in Mexico is complicated, things are expensive, they take long to arrive, there are not enough students, there are less available scholarships, you ask for

resources and you don´t get them. What keeps me going is doing my job with passion"
(Cyntia, University of Sheffield)

Juan, who works in a smaller public university in Queretaro, even compared the fewer resources he has, not only with German institutions but with bigger research institutions in Mexico City.

"When I came back to Mexico a former tutor from the IPN asked me to go and work with them, where I did my master´s degree. And I did not want to because I still think that there are opportunities to develop in the province…. I wished that here in Queretaro we had all the equipment that they have in the IPN…. And I am aware that we have a lot of deficiencies, because it is not the same to be in a laboratory in Germany than the one I am in now. I can see that with my students' dissertations, it is very difficult…. We do not have a budget" (Juan, Technische Universitat Hamburg)

Federico highlighted that when he returned to Mexico in 2005, the president at the time wanted to close several research institutions including the one he works for. He added that he went "from a world of opulence" in Germany in all respects, to a situation so precarious in Mexico that he did not even had resources to get photocopies.

"It was very difficult. The conditions are very different. My laboratory is very simple compared to the one I was in (Germany). There are no research technicians, in here I have to do everything even the cleaning" (Federico, Max-Planck Institute)

When I asked Raquel if she considered if studying abroad had any disadvantages, she replied that it was very challenging to have learned to conduct research with unlimited resources.

"You lose sense of the Mexican reality because you get used to work with money and when you come back, is very difficult to get every *peso* to be able to keep working" (Raquel, Université de Montpellier II)

This was echoed by Ricardo who said that people who study in the UK become used to institutions that work efficiently. These narratives are equally associated with the insufficient investment on GERD in Mexico in comparison to developed countries. Surprisingly, lack of facilities in experimental sciences upon return were also mentioned by Spanish academics who had international experiences in the USA

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(Groves et al., 2018). This suggest that unequal resources are also experienced in developed countries, associated with the vertical and horizontal differences of the institutions.

2.3.3 Lack of institutional support for returnees

There was a general consent among the interviewees who maintained their jobs while abroad, of not being adequately supported by the institutions they worked for when they came back with their doctoral degrees.

Jaime said, "one of the hardest things to realise is that you do not have the possibility to get off the ground, they do not help you". Cesar mentioned to have returned with a lot of ideas and wanting to develop projects and feeling neglected by the institutions and their peers.

> "You feel as if you have lived many things, you are bringing many things, and no one listens to you. People receive you as if you have never left, as if you have seen them yesterday and there is no value in anything you brought back with you" (Cesar, Université de Bourgogne)

Dinora mentioned that due to lack of institutional support, it took her longer to be able to develop her research lines even when she already had an academic trajectory in the CIBNOR in Baja California. She added that this was also a result of being away for a long time in contrast with doctors trained locally. This finding echoes other studies that have highlighted a delayed career ladder as a disadvantage of ISM (Cannon, 2010).

Victor, who also returned to the institution he was working before his doctoral studies, made similar remarks regarding the lack of economic and structural resources and having to start from the beginning. Which was a recurrent theme amongst many participants.

> "Perhaps the most difficult thing when I came back was to return to the work environment, the institutional issues where you realise that things are different from abroad. And that was quite dramatic, I did not have a desk to start with, when I returned there were no resources, nothing. Without a place to be in, that is the way I reincorporated to the INIFAP, as if I was starting all over again. It was very hard and

that lasted probably a year, until I was able to keep pace, to do things. I would say that the process was very tortuous at the institutional level" (Victor, Northern Arizona University)

It is clear that the economic disadvantages between HEIs in Mexico and more developed countries is reflected in the experiences of the returnees who had permanent positions in public research in Mexico. Nonetheless this cohort of graduates who were trained abroad at the end of the 1990s, had the opportunity to do so supported by their institutions and additionally, had job security.

In summary, this section provides a snapshot about how the participants imagined and shaped their lives after the end of their international mobility experiences. First, the narratives revealed complex intersections between the interviewees´ cultural and academic identities, the degrees of acculturation to the international settings and their adaptation processes during the re-entry experiences. Second, it shows a high degree of intentionality to go back to the home country that unfolded in different ways depending —additionally to the identities and international experiences— to previous professional careers, keeping networks and the further possibilities to stay abroad. Further, the importance of the role of partners and children —or the absence of, in the decision-making process. Finally, the complexities and struggles of pursuing academic careers in Mexico, fundamentally attached to the economic deficiencies of research and HEIs, and the increasingly competitive conditions for fewer academic positions, that have been previously reported (Lopez, 2019). The final section of this chapter moves on to consider the meanings of the international sojourn in terms of the distributive and social roles it enables.

3. Valued achievements: different life paths after the international sojourn

Chapters V and VI provided elements to examine the participants socio-economic profiles, to unfold previous educational opportunities and to unpack the bundle of push and pull factors that informed the decisions to study abroad. This section proposes to connect those issues by exploring the associations between upward social mobility and the opportunities made available by international education.

Further, the section connects the participants previous social opportunities, original life aspirations, their reflections about the values attributed to their international education and the meanings of their lives in terms of their contribution towards the social good.

3.1 ISM as a driver for upward social mobility

Adela, who shared her point of view as an ISM researcher as well, highlighted the importance of the scholarships in supporting "people like her" who attributed her upward social mobility with the employment possibilities that were enabled through governmental support. This was echoed by all the participants who came from working class families who shared Adela´s assertion about their increased job opportunities and climbing the social ladder.

Alvaro, who came from a working-class family from Hidalgo, mentioned that having a foreign degree placed him in an advantaged position versus doctors trained in Mexico when applying for jobs. He also considered that his current academic life-path and social position was enabled by studying abroad.

> "Socially speaking I go back to my town and my parents are proud of me. And the neighbours "Oh, Alejandro went to Holland, how great that he has come back" everybody expects that you are going to have a better job, a better life, a lot of things that come with it. As I wrote in the survey, my mother was a housewife who did not finish primary school and my father worked in a textile factory and when he retired, he did bricklayer works and some agriculture activities" (Alvaro, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven)

Aldo, from Mexico City, had a similar familial background than Alvaro where his parents did not finish primary education.

> "It had a great impact on my social mobility compared to my parents. In fact, from all my family I was the first one to get a master´s degree and a doctorate. They actually see me as an example that through studying you can accomplish other things. Therefore, it did impact quite strongly. Now my nephews are getting better prepared. A lot of the times my cousins used to criticize me for studying "why do you study so much if you are not going to do well" and time has given me the reason…. This is not to become a

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millionaire, but it allows you to have a decent life" (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

Federico also came from a working-class family from Veracruz where his mother was a housewife, and his father was a trader.

> "I am in a much better position than my parents, definitively. In academic and economic terms, in terms of relations, I am definitively better, and I associate that to a great extent to the international experience. If I had stayed in Mexico, I could have escalated probably less quickly, possibly with less opportunities…. The international experience accelerated my ascent and things were easier and faster" (Federico, Max-Plank Institute)

On the same lines as the examples above, Adela and Cesar from working-class families from Mexico City and Arturo from the State of Mexico, also acknowledged that there was a social difference between them and their parents and associated their upward social mobility with the international mobility opportunities. These findings suggest the possibility of upward social mobility to the accumulating effect of the acquisition of HE of first-generation students in one hand, and the increased opportunities associated with the portability of an international degree on the other. Higher Education in this sense is considered as a capability in itself that enabled the sojourners to expand other capabilities and opportunities which in turn expanded their freedoms to choose what they valued (Sen, 1992). In contrast, their parents´ choices and the opportunities to convert their resources into capabilities were limited to their constraints (Bridges, 2006). As discussed in chapter III, university education in Mexico has been one of the most important symbols of social mobility (Lorey, 1993) and further, ISM recognised as a driver for the same social opportunities (Beck (2006) cited in Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017, Fry, 1984, Leung, 2017).

On the other hand, the interviewees who came from middle class households considered having stayed in the same position and in some instances, to have more economic difficulties than their parents did. Carlos for instance, mentioned that through his academic work he was able to remain in a middle-class position, the same way as his parents, who were both paediatricians. Humberto equally said that even when his parents did not have postgraduate studies, he stayed in the same social position as them. Claudia, Gloria and Julian described their parents being of

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modest background, nonetheless through hard work they were able to provide them with middle-class living when they were younger. They consider having stayed in the same social position than them. Nonetheless all of them expressed satisfaction in the way they life trajectories unfolded and also recognised the international sojourn as an opportunity that enabled them to develop their professional careers.

Elvia who lives in the UK, added that she has a better economic position that the one she could have had in Mexico being an academic due to more development and employment opportunities in the UK compared to Mexico. However, she did not consider to be better off than her middle-class parents.

Javier similarly to Alvaro, also considered that studying abroad put him in a more advantageous position than their parents, and as a result of this, he was able to get a job in a private institution with a good salary. However, he came from a middle-class household. Interestingly, Ricardo considered that his parents at his age had a better social position in Mexico than the one he currently has in the UK as an academic.

> "There has been a huge generational change. Half of the people my age in the UK cannot even buy a house. Our parents´ generation at my age even in Mexico, they already had a flat, a house and then moved to a bigger house. In the UK, Germany and Australia you can be a bricklayer and have a better socioeconomic position than an academic in the UK. Thus, it is a generational and a country specific problem. The socioeconomic level of my parents was ten times better than mine" (Ricardo, Imperial College)

These results are consistent with the literature that highlights the association between international degrees, increased labour market opportunities and career advantages (Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017, Cannon, 2010). However, as can be retrieved from the interviews and recent studies (Cuthbert and Molla, 2015), there has also been a decrease in the available academic positions in HEIs worldwide and thus an increase competition for jobs.

Moreover, regardless of the socio-economic origin of the participants, none of them would have been able to participate in ISM without the economic support of the scholarship, which has been previously reported (Centro Redes, 2008). This finding

is contrary to that of Andere (2004) who had argued the allocation of scholarships were exclusively supporting students from privileged backgrounds. Further, these findings also offers different conclusions from previous studies identifying former CONACYT awardees pursuing international doctorates, coming exclusively from middle-class households (Lopez, 2017).

3.2 Social participation and social change: the different ways returnees contribute to their societies

Another key finding from this study was to unpack the different ways former international students contribute to their societies. The academic and non- academic capabilities the participants acquired through their international sojourns expanded their social and education opportunities and enabled the development of rational choices and freedoms to choose a life that was valuable to them (Walker, 2008). The next subsections show the recurrent themes retrieved from the narratives about the participants work trajectories and the value they granted to their professional endeavours.

3.2.1 World-class research in Mexican HE and research institutions

As shown in chapter V, from the 31 interviewees 9 were working in public HEIs, ten in National Research Centres, five in public HE research institutions, two in NGOs and foreign public HEIs respectively and one participant from a private HEI and a governmental office respectively. Only one person was self-employed **Appendix 4**. From the descriptions of their research activities and their academic trajectories, it can be drawn that these PhD holders trained abroad, are contributing with STI activities and developing international quality research on their areas of expertise.

For instance, Federico has the highest researcher's category in a national research centre specialized in agricultural, agronomy and food sciences in the State of Mexico. He explained that in order to get to that level, he is constantly evaluated on the basis of having doctoral students, publish in peer reviewed journals and have projects funded by international organisations.

"I currently have the role of deputy director at the *Agroproductividad* journal and I am also helping with the editorial endeavour; publication, arbitration, scientific papers edition of three different journals: *Agro ciencia* which is an ISI JCR journal owned by Clarivate Analytics. Also, *Agricultura y Sociedad* and *Desarrollo* y *Agroproductividad* which are also journals recognised by CONACYT. We publish around 20 books in the Agricultural and food science areas, and we have international agreements with Spanish speaking countries. Our books are published and sold from Spain all the way to Argentina" (Federico, Max Planck-Institute)

Federico explained that his doctoral thesis was evaluated by a professor from the John Innes Centre in Norwich "one of the most prestigious institutions in plant physiology" who offered him a job after he graduated.

Gloria is the director of the department of chronic diseases in a national research centre in Morelos. The focus of her research is the identification of risk factors of breast cancer and she has over 30 papers published in peer reviewed journals including Nature Communications, Nutrition and Cancer from Taylor & Francis online and the American Journal of Preventive Medicine from ScienceDirect, all of them with high impact factors.

Jose is a scientist in a research centre from UNAM in Queretaro. His research focuses on the utilisation of a highly specialised technique that he learned in his doctoral studies. "I am the only one who has experience in that type of spectrometers in Mexico". Carlos is part of a public research institute in Morelos and he conducts research in migration and health, migration and human rights and social aspects of HIV epidemics. Carmen is a geophysicist in an institute from UNAM in Mexico City. She explained that her expertise is focused in geothermic and research on clean energies which is an area that is not extensively developed in Mexico. These findings mirror Marsh et al. (2016) where the majority of their participants worked in academia or research institutions when they returned to Africa.

The existing literature regarding the contributions of returnees focuses particularly on knowledge transference and scientific advancement. Examples include knowledge production through publishing in journals with high impact factors, international partnerships and collaboration (Jonkers and Cruz-Castro, 2013), use of state of the art knowledge and techniques, research independence (Groves et al., 2018) and

international collaborative research networks (Murakami, 2014). Andere (2004) had argued that the resources spent in academic mobility should be spent on public infrastructure, public health and sanitation and environmental restoration. These findings suggest that the investment on training through public funds is in fact supporting these areas. The participants of this study have great influence in the applied research carried out in areas such as public health, agriculture, geophysics, education and environmental conservation.

3.2.2   Teaching and positive influence over local students

Almost all the participants who work in research and HEIs mentioned to have had teaching responsibilities. Adela for instance considered that the area where she has a tangible contribution is in the classroom "is a little complicated because is very time consuming, is a lot of work and really bad payed, but I think is the direct way of contributing…is the only real sphere of influence".

Some mentioned that they learned different teaching traditions abroad and that they apply them into their everyday teaching practices. Arturo and Jimena for instance talked about how they encourage students to be independent learners. Aldo in this regard said:

> "They arrive to the laboratory, they know what they have to do, if they have a problem, they do some research and if they cannot solve it they come to me and we try to solve it together" (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

Others such as Fernando, Juan and Jaime explained that their main activities are focused on teaching and administrative responsibilities rather than research. Fernando for instance mentioned "teaching is my passion, so being able to contribute in this way was fulfilling". Mario equally mentioned:

> "It is very fulfilling… I arrived when the institute was trying to push forward the quality of postgraduate courses… And I have been able to work a lot in the reformation of the programmes, restructure them in pursue of quality" (Mario, Universitat Stuttgart)

Fidel expressed a sentiment of discontent because his teaching endeavours, graduated students and publications focused on teaching were not evenly recognised and economically remunerated as if they were published papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Paola on the other hand has a directorate position in a governmental institution where her main occupation is recommending strategies for the analysis and conservation of Mexican biodiversity. Nonetheless she is quite involved in teaching and human resources development as can be appreciated in the following quote.

> "I am going to give a course next year. I have taught in the postgraduate for free because I am passionate and because I like it. Today I was in two VIVAS, one from a doctoral student and another from a master student in Geography at UNAM. But I have been also invited to tutorial committees in the Ecology Institute in Xalapa and Nuevo Leon and in other universities. Therefore, even when is extra work I do it, but I do it because I like it and because at the end, is part of my duty" (Paola, University of Sheffield)

Many of the participants also talked about their influence over students in terms of encouraging them to look for education opportunities abroad.

> "There are opportunities to emigrate to Canada or Australia. However, I am happy here. I also think and I have told this to my German friends; I am not needed in Germany. I am a doctor, I have a special training, that does not mean that I am going to be Nobel prize, but my knowledge allows me to help the students to do more things, that is my feeling. I think my lectures are not boring and we talk about so many things. When there is extra time, I tell them to look for opportunities abroad, I talk to them about the DAAD. If I was not here, there would be no one to tell them those things" (Juan, Technische Universitat Hamburg)

Adela for instance, said that if her students want to pursue a career in academia, she encourages them to get international experience. This is linked to what Alvaro and Javier mentioned about having an advantage point when competing for academic positions in Mexico.

> "When you look at the last Faculty recruitment in this institute, the majority studied abroad, which is a paradox since we are also trying to propel national postgraduate studies" (Adela, Boston College)

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Aldo mentioned in a similar way how he constantly pushed his "brilliant students" to look for scholarships to study abroad, sharing his own experiences. This view was echoed by Alvaro who tells his students that they have the capacity to succeed in international academic realms. At the CINVESTAV they economically support students to present in international conferences.

> "Go away, temper yourselves, present your work, you will see that your confidence is boosted, that your work is as good as anyone and that you are at the same level of others around the world" (Alvaro, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven)

Cesar, talking about the international experience and his relationship with his students had similar opinions, "In that sense it leaves a mark. Being able to share the experience and push the ones that come behind you. You have arrived, now push the rest". There is limited literature exploring how ISM changed sojourners´ teaching practices, and the subsequent ways in which these doctoral returnees have a positive influence on their students. For instance, Paige et al. (2009) revealed that former international students contributed with the creation of courses related to global citizenship in a Japanese university and encouraged their students to study abroad. Spanish academics recognised the influence of their international mobility experiences in the USA on their teaching practices (Groves et al., 2018). Similarly, American female educators who had work experiences abroad transformed their practices fostering new ways of learning, critical thinking and cultural awareness. They also encouraged students and their children to look for opportunities to study abroad (Hamza, 2009).

3.2.3   Working with vulnerable communities and sustainable development

The two interviewees who work in NGOs in the states of Morelos and Quintana Roo mentioned to have looked for jobs in academic institutions when they returned to Mexico. Humberto complained that there were not academic positions available therefore, he was forced to work in other specialisation areas. Since 2015 he was able to move to an NGO that has a philanthropic endeavour focused in social welfare associated with environmental conservation.

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Claudia also failed to obtain a job in Academia however, this made her reflect that what she really wanted to do was to "do things to contribute to the conservation of the forest".

> "Last year I was finally able to create my civil association…. with the implication that the money is not always available. However, I have been working in sustainable development for 15 years. I have recovered a tradition of eating a seed from the Rain Forest, that was no longer being eaten and thus, trees are taken down and the Rain Forest disappears along with that food source. Thus, the need to go back to a virtuous circle, to eat, to grow and generate an income. And is also a project to empower women…. Thus, I train women to remind them how to eat the seeds, to grow them, what to do with them and then sell them" (Claudia, Imperial College)

She similarly to Fidel, criticised the lack of recognition of teaching and other activities, such as what she does for the conservation of the Rain Forest and her contribution with the communities, over publishing in academic journals. Claudia, as many of the participants were grateful that through this research, their contribution towards society was taken into consideration.

At the HE institutional level, Aldo, through his research at a polytechnic university located in a rural area of the state of Hidalgo, contributes to applied research in benefit of the community.

> "Currently we are focusing on the development of processes to make the most of agricultural residues. Particularly in developing new processes that are attractive for the regional people. If you have paid attention this is a marginal region. Therefore, we are trying to make the most of those residues that have low nutritional value for the cattle, to used them elsewhere" (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

He added that through his broadened perspective acquired abroad, his ambition was to be able to provide the national students with a "first world laboratory" with state-of-the-art reagents, equipment, and infrastructure.

Javier, who works in a prestigious private university in Mexico City, explained that one of the activities he got involved with at his institution, focused on helping vulnerable members of the community.

"The person that invites me to work here left, and all of a sudden, the great
responsibility fell on me to take charge along with another professor of the legal clinic at
the ITAM, which offered free legal advice for people with scarce resources…. I started
focusing on the students… because I realised that the students who had a social
vocation and wanted to provide help, in reality they could not because they knew little or
nothing about the law" (Javier, Universidad de Buenos Aires)

These two aspects of mobility, influencing students and working with vulnerable
communities, echoes Rizvi´s (2009) discussion regarding the effects of mobility upon
those who are not geographically mobile. This suggest the recognition of space
produced through socio-spatial relations and the connections between everyday
practices, social relationships and collective actions (Rizvi, 2009). Therefore, it could
be argued that the classroom and the community where the former international
students interact become in some ways, transnational spaces. Previous studies have
shown the involvement of former international students in social entrepreneurship
and the ways in which they have contributed to public service and the public good
attributed to ISM (Paige et al., 2009, Marsh et al., 2016).

3.2.4   Network building, international academic recognition and collaboration

The last recurrent theme among the participants regarding their contributions to
society associated with their international experience is mainly related to network
building. Javier´s quote clearly depicts the importance of network building as one of
the advantages of studying abroad, which echoes the perceptions of other
participants.

"And what gave me an advantage in my academic and administrative management role
was the networks I developed throughout the doctorate. I think that was the most
valuable thing. Because even when I was in South America, my network was mainly
formed by European people, the most prominent in the field. Therefore, what made me
relevant at ITAM was to constantly bring guest speakers and at the same time,
becoming a leader in the field and getting the recognition of my peers. What is worth is
that you place your self at the top of the wave where all the important groups are as
well. Who fails doing this, misses the opportunity to detect where the new currents
are…. Belonging to this groups is what becomes valuable" (Javier, Universidad de
Buenos Aires)

Adela and Fernando in this regard mentioned the importance not only of network building but also of being recognised by the international academic community as specialists in their specific areas at a global scale.

> "I was in a world-renowned research group in my field. Therefore, besides learning, I had interaction with all the European colleagues, and I became part of the specialists' circle. When I came back to Mexico everybody recognised me as part of the international group" (Fernando, Université de Bourgogne)

Respect and recognition have been previously brought about as recompenses of international education (Cannon, 2010). Aldo added the importance of international research collaborations which were also enabled by ISM. Further, how these interactions with "the other" were a positive influence at a personal level "the links with other people help you grow in deeper ways".

> "I arrived with other ideas, eager to do other things…. you develop links with other researchers that you met abroad and now they are working in other countries. This has allowed me to grow quickly, generate research networks at an Ibero-American level. I also work a lot with Europeans why? Because I had that contact that you only get when you get out of your country" (Aldo, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares)

Cesar explained the latter as acquiring a global perspective on his area of expertise, through meeting several researchers from an array of institutions "it is very enriching". Javier described it as an "added value because you strengthen your networks and learn different ways to do academia that you cannot learn if you stay in your home country". Gloria said that she learned to build relationships with people through her mobility experience. She has taken advantage of that skill to build further networks with researchers from other latitudes.

Cyntia´s quote encompasses what other participants such as Alvaro and Federico shared about the possibility of student exchange between institutions.

> "A year ago, we had a problem with an experiment that was not working and therefore I enquired who was working with that. I found a group in Scotland and I wrote to the researcher and asked for their help. I asked if I could send one of my students, therefore Tatiana went there for three months and came back. We are still in contact and we just wrote a project for a grant together. And now we are focused on the

students' mobility. I already have ideas to do some experiments in collaboration"
(Cyntia, University of Sheffield)

Other participants such as Carmen and Alvaro, have kept in contact with their doctoral supervisors not only at a personal level, but they have pursued research collaborations. The construction of transnational networks has been previously recognised as an important outcome of international education for the possibilities it offers in terms of knowledge exchange, development of partnerships and further student exchanges (Baláž and Williams, 2004, Li et al., 1996, Marsh et al., 2016).

Finally, Mario, Victor and Julian for instance expressed feelings of satisfaction, and fulfilment about their daily activities but most of all, because they have "given back" something to their country that invested in their international education.

Section three has provided evidence about the possibility of upward social mobility through an amplifying effect of higher education and ISM expanding people´s opportunities and freedoms. In this regard, it additionally shows the relevance of the CONACYT international scholarship programme as an enabler not only of international education but also of other ways of understanding the world. Furthermore, and linked with the desires of some participants to study abroad looking to contribute to their societies in diverse ways, this section has shown how the interviewees were able to attain those objectives, not only through research activities but through teaching, being a positive influence over students and via social participation.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented and analysed examples of the different individual meanings that the international sojourn had for the participants and the ways those meanings influenced their life paths. As discussed throughout this study, the types of students: *adapters, integrators* or *isolators*, and the interactions with "the others" determined the various ways in which they adapted to the international spaces. The levels of adaptation further defined the extent to which their international experiences transformed their lives.

First this chapter provided evidence suggesting that the participants developed diverse capabilities for cultural understanding. Amongst these the most frequently mentioned were associated with cultural empathy and tolerance, learning other languages and the possibility of interaction with cultures different to their own. Nonetheless, the development of these capabilities was determined by their identities, their social interactions and how valuable they were for the participants´ reflexive understanding of themselves in the wider world (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015).

Second, this chapter shows how the broadening of worldviews, might have been one of the most significant capabilities acquired through ISM. The exposure to different cultures, languages, ways of living and understandings changed the participants' frames of reference. They were not only capable of reflecting on the ways of being and doing of other countries, but they also became more aware and critical about their own cultures (Brown, 2009b). The change of perspectives made them appreciate in different ways their own cultural traditions and values (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015)

Third, the chapter builds on the findings from chapter VII suggesting that the international experience shaped children's identities and expanded the ways they perceive the world. Moreover, it enabled them to develop other capabilities and expanded future opportunities that would not have been available to them if they had remained in their home countries. However, it also highlights how the international experience could have negative impacts, particularly in the re-adaptation process upon return to the home country. These findings extend Phelps (2016) argument about the benefits of a multicultural upbringing of children expanding their social imaginaries. Further, how children negotiate their sense of belonging and identity reconstructions. This is a fruitful area for further research.

Fourth, this chapter provides evidence suggesting that the conclusion of the doctoral studies was experienced differently depending on diverse internal and external factors. These factors include the sojourner´s identities, previous professional aspirations and opportunities, the professional networks built throughout live, specific familial circumstances and further life and professional opportunities and desires. The chapter revealed a strong relationship between the participants cultural identities

and their adaptation processes in the international milieus which, further determined the ways in which their live trajectories unfolded. These findings support Şahin´s (1990) argument indicating that the re-entry experiences should be considered as part of the whole ISM experience. Moreover, and building on the findings of chapter VII, it highlights the importance of partners and children in the decision-making processes of life after ISM. This finding is relevant since many of the ISM literature focus on younger sojourners and does not often deal with mature international students´ identities as partners or parents.

Finally, this chapter has shown that for some participants the international experience meant the possibility of upward social mobility, mainly through the diversification of future professional opportunities. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study are the different live paths the sojourners chose after ISM and the ways in which they contribute to social change.

Overall, this chapter has shown the array of meanings associated with ISM at personal, professional and familial levels. Further, it highlights the importance of considering the personal, social and environmental heterogeneities of the sojourners to deeply understand the ways in which the international sojourn has the potential to transform people´s lives. It brings to the foreground the consideration of multiple identities and how they can be moulded mainly, through the interactions with "the others" in the international spaces. Moreover, the chapter emphasises how the widening of worldviews has to be considered as a pivotal element of the transformation, but also as an enabler of social change through the positive influence the former sojourners and their families have over their societies. The CONACYT international scholarship programme, however, does not include the acquisition and development of any of the capabilities presented in this work, as part of the outcomes of the ISM that it promotes.

X.   Conclusions

In Mexico, there has been a long tradition of granting international scholarships for the training of human resources. In the 1970s, national policy documents stated that 6,000 international scholarships would be granted through the newly created body, the National Science and Technology Council (INIC, 1970). Pursuing the training of human resources in general was informed by the "spontaneous growth" [Sic] achieved by advanced economies under the premise that science and technology increased the productive capacity of humans (INIC, 1970, p. 98). Therefore, the reasons to support ISM throughout the existence of the programme have been largely the same; to increase the country´s human resources to cover the demand of the productive, academic, governmental and social sectors of the country (Luchillo, 2008).

Most research specifically on CONACYT scholarship programmes has been carried out within governmental boundaries to evaluate their impact although some have included masters and doctoral studies supported by national and international scholarships (Luchillo, 2008, Ortega et al., 2002). Employability, salaries and academic production post studies have been the focus of those reports. Luchillo (2008) has highlighted that "impact on equity" [Sic] referring to social mobility and gender equality, has not been a central objective of the programme since the criteria to allocate the scholarships have been based on merit. Nonetheless he found elements of social mobility and participation of students from less privileged backgrounds. He also emphasised the high impact in the transference of knowledge through former awardees´ teaching activities. Then again, the results were not disaggregated in separate outcomes from national and international scholarships. In regards of ISM, he concluded that the programme might have a relevant contribution of social and cultural modernisation based on the diverse new experiences that the sojourners might have had. Nonetheless he mentioned these aspects as difficult to measure and which "manifestations are not frequently visible or noteworthy" [Sic].

This research thus stemmed from an initial interest in understanding how the ISM experience was lived and if it meant the same to all the former CONACYT doctoral scholarship holders interviewed. The idea was to explore the wider benefits of

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geographic mobility from a human development lens moving beyond the human capital approaches that have focused exclusively on the economic opportunities enabled by ISM. This study set out to explore the different meanings and understandings of ISM for former Mexican doctoral students who were supported by the CONACYT scholarship programme. Specifically, it aimed to analyse the individual international experiences to understand the varied capabilities acquired, to determine whether those experiences were transformative and if they had implications over their further life trajectories and for social change. I examined the perceptions of the international experience and the meaning made out of it from former awardees that had not had previous outward mobility experiences and that did not have dual citizenship through their parents or grandparents.

The main questions this research addressed were the following:

1. What were the experiences of the ISM sojourn of former doctoral students supported by CONACYT's scholarship programme?

2. What are the meanings associated with these experiences in terms of transformation of their own life paths?

This led to develop a sequential research based on three key moments in the mobility process. Firstly, the reasons for the participants to pursue geographic mobility opportunities, and how their lives unfolded before leaving the country. Secondly, how the different mobility experiences were lived, the ways in which they negotiated everyday life, academic life and leisure. Lastly, how they chose to live their lives and what were the opportunities that were available to them at the end of the sojourn. This final chapter presents the dimensions of the empirical and theoretical contributions highlighting the key findings of this research. It concludes by acknowledging the limitations and considerations for further research.

Empirical and theoretical contributions

One of the main findings of this research was the identification of the diverse socio-cultural, gendered and academic, identities of the participants. The intersection of their individual identities, their socio-economic backgrounds and their previous HE opportunities were determinant in how their aspirations and experiences unfolded. The participants first explained the different drivers to participate in geographic academic mobility and how they were able to convert their previous bundle of resources into capabilities that aided their adaptation processes abroad (chapters VI, VII). Secondly, the participants shaped the ways in which they adapted to the international spaces and the social interactions they were able to establish (chapters VII, VIII). Thirdly, they determined what aspects of the international sojourn were important to integrate into their lives and thus became transformative (chapter IX) (See **Figure 20** page 278).

Based on these findings, this thesis proposes a typology of students based on their individual cultural identities and the ways in which they established friendships and social relations with others in the international milieus. The findings show that irrespective of age, sex, gender, marital status and class, the participants fell into these broad categories, *adapters, isolators* and *integrators* (chapter VII). This typology helps to understand how the international experience is shaped and negotiated, how individuals are willing to consider new points of view and ideas and the extent to which they are internalised. This does not exclude that within the categories, the other identities play an important role informing the international experience and as previously argued, they are circumscribed by external forces such as the institutional differentiation and the particularities of home and host countries. Regardless of the type of student, these findings support previous studies which have demonstrated that social relationships and friendships forged in the international settings play a fundamental role in the adaptation process, satisfaction of the overall experience and well-being (Bilecen, 2014). This typology, and further associated research based on them, might be helpful to explore how doctoral international students from different nationalities negotiate their relationships and the ways in which they adapt to diverse international settings.

Another major finding of this study was the fundamental role that family plays in the international sojourn (chapter VII). The participants who had partners, who were married or who had children placed these relationships in the foreground of their international experiences. These relationships informed in different ways the decision-making processes to study abroad and eased the adaptation processes. Further, they were extremely important in providing emotional support, companionship and an alternative space for leisure and socialisation outside the academic environment. Enrolling children in school provided an additional opportunity for parents to get involved with the local community and socialise with people outside the university. In this sense, the sojourners perceived that their accompanying partners and children lived individual transformative experiences and developed their own set of capabilities associated with ISM (chapters VII, IX). There is scarce research dealing with international students that are also parents and the ways in which the international experience unfolds for the family (Brooks, 2015, Loveridge et al., 2018, Phelps, 2016). This study thus contributes to this literature by broadening the spatial frame in the research of ISM and examining familial dynamics of international students from different contexts and socioeconomic circumstances traveling to different nations.

Within the familial dynamics another relevant aspect was the possibility of reducing gender inequality by being exposed to more equal gendered societies. In these cases, the intersections of age, sex and social class were determinant in the ways in which the participants understood and negotiated gender roles and parenthood and to the extent to which they configured or reconfigured their identities. In 2016, over 30 million women (66%) aged 15 or over reported having experienced at least one incident of gender violence in Mexico. The violence episodes were evenly distributed across the country and included emotional, sexual and physical assaults from partners or from other aggressors, economic violence and employment discrimination. The number of women murdered in 2018 was 3,752, the highest registered in the last three decades[29]. Therefore, the possibility of the reduction in gender inequalities through ISM earns special relevance.

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[29] INEGI statistics international day for the elimination of violence against women https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/aproposito/2019/Violencia2019_Nal.pdf Last consulted 13/04/2020

This study also shows how for the participants, the obvious outcome of their international mobility was in general, associated with employment opportunities. However, upon reflection, they were able to identify the acquisition of capabilities for intercultural understanding (chapter IX). Again, this was contingent to the intersection of their manifold identities and to the extent to which those capabilities were of value to them. From the narratives, it becomes clear that one of the main valued capability from the international experience was the diversification of worldviews and the ways in which this influenced their life and academic trajectories. In this sense, all the participants were able to reflect how the international experience transformed them in different ways and how those changes rippled outwards into their daily lives and professional endeavours. These findings additionally contribute strengthening the literature that highlights the importance of considering the array of transformative educational and personal experiences of international doctoral students (Phelps, 2016).

These findings show how the synergistic use of the capabilities approach and transformative learning theory provide a useful tool to explore the implications of the ISM experiences of CONACYT scholarship awardees in relation to the programme´s objectives and the wider Mexican society (chapters I, II). As has been shown, the transformative learning is not restricted to the different academic practices of international education, but it is comprehensive of the personal learning in every-day life. However, the transformative learning is possible by the interaction with different cultures in unfamiliar settings where the preconceived paradigms are broken. In this sense, the transformation only occurs if the individual values that knowledge and considers that it will enrich their live.

This work offers valuable insights and provide a distinctive lens to evaluate the outcomes of ISM supported by the CONACYT scholarship programme. The objectives of the programme are limited to the training of human capital and to promote the participation of Mexicans in the global knowledge economy, increasing technological and scientific innovation for the economic progress of the country. However, as some participants recognise, some of this knowledge is already available in HEIs in Mexico and state-of-the art applied research is being carried out. This was possible to a great extent to the continuous support of ISM since the 1970s

in which CONACYT has contributed a great deal. In this sense CONACYT has observed and modified throughout the years the priority areas where specialised training is needed and have spent the resources accordingly (chapter III). However, this study suggests that there is a plethora of non-economic gains fostered by ISM which are focused on individual agency and well-being with positive ripple effects on the Mexican society, that are not being considered.

The traditional ways of evaluating the impact of the scholarship programme through employability and economic production need to be complemented with other lenses such as the one that is presented in this thesis. As has been shown in this work, it is true that individuals recognise that the academic mobility increased their employability opportunities. Nonetheless, they also acknowledge that activities such as teaching, working with communities, free-lance and work outside public and private HEIs are not appropriately recognised. Additionally, they reflect that the lack of economic resources in the country has limited on one hand, research activities and on the other, the capacity of the labour market to incorporate new graduates having a negative impact in their professional development and well-being (chapter IX). In this sense, employment might not be the most adequate tool to measure the outcomes of the programme because as has been shown in this work, this is dependent on the interplay of additional external forces. Among these are the economic circumstances of the countries, secured jobs upon return, different HEI capacity and resources, available information regarding job vacancies, available jobs and networks built both in the home and the host country. These aspects are independent of the capabilities acquired abroad by the former awardees.

Another relevant aspect found in this study is that despite being a single country, the geographic conditions of Mexico make it a country of economic, cultural and social contrasts with an uneven distribution of resources. Therefore, this supports the need to evaluate the programme considering these aspects and understanding that Mexican doctoral students are a heterogeneous group (chapters V, VI). This contributes to the argument about the importance of recognising the complex identities and socio-cultural backgrounds of international doctoral students that shape their individual experiences in unique ways (Phelps, 2016, Gargano, 2009). This study makes an important contribution by exploring the outcomes of ISM

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supported by CONACYT from a broader perspective, showing how the former awardees contribute to the social and cultural modernisation of different states of the country. These contributions are associated, to a great extent, with the possibility of challenging preconceived ideas in different realms. In the academic milieu subject to different ways of teaching, learning, conducting research, the construction of networks and collaborative work and learning different ways of being and doing (chapter VIII). Socially, it enables observing how different societies deal with mundane aspects such as transport, health, conviviality and social order recognising what works and what are the aspects that could be improved (chapter VIII). Culturally, the preconceived ideas related with gender roles, different forms of violence or gender equality are challenged and transformed when there is a realisation that there are alternative behaviours that can be incorporated encouraging social change (chapter VII). All these aspects can be assimilated in to the economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions of life and be shared with family, friends, colleges, students and the community in general. These findings thus show that the benefits accrued through the ISM promoted by the scholarship transcend the objectives of the programme and have important implications for Mexican development.

Additionally, this study albeit in a limited manner, identifies some social and economic constrains that restrict the well-being of former awardees after the conclusion of their studies (chapter IX). Therefore, in order to maximise the social cost-benefit of the programme the methodology used in this study could be a useful tool to inform the development of policies. These policies could on one hand promote the human development aspects of the programme and on the other, enable a more suitable distribution of the country´s economic resources. The latter in relation to the creation of diversified employments and better support of research and teaching activities articulated with the former awardees developed capabilities and the priority areas identified in different regions. This could also offer options to attract the students that, due to scarce opportunities in Mexico, decided to stay abroad after the conclusion of their doctoral studies (chapter IX).

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This study was conducted during the presidential transition in Mexico between the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the National Regeneration Movement (Morena). During Enrique Peña Nieto´s presidency from 2012-2018 the GDP/GERD ratio remained in average in 0.43%, when the goal of his campaign was to reach 1%. Nonetheless it showed an increment versus previous presidencies. At the end of 2019, however, the presidential report of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador announced a 0.31% of GDP/GERD (Presidencia de la Republica, 2019). The financial resources for the CONACYT programme are included in the country´s R&D expenditure, this could be the reason why in 2017 there was a drop of 28% of new international scholarships (chapter III).

The findings of this research provide evidence that the investment on ISM contributes to a great extent in enriching the lives and liberties of the participants with a potential distributive effect of these benefits across societies. Therefore, this work could contribute to the development of comprehensive policies that continue promoting governmental financial support of academic geographic mobility for additional human development purposes. This acquires particular relevance in the current Mexican presidential administration where the importance of increasing financial aid towards ISM as part of the international cooperation policies, is no longer mentioned as part of the PROCID internationalisation strategies[30].

Figure 20 displays the empirical findings of this study embedded in the theoretical framework presented in Figure 1 (p. 21). It shows the importance of the diverse identities that are constantly (re) shaped by the combination of personal, social and environmental conversion factors and previous capabilities (Rizvi, 2005, Sen, 1985). Before the international sojourn those identities are additionally moulded by diverse socialisation processes in the national settings (e.g., friends, family, university).

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[30] Programme of International Development Cooperation PROCID draft 2019-2024
https://infoamexcid.sre.gob.mx/consejo/media/documents/sI7kq_PROCID%202019-2024%20%20V1%201.pdf
Last consulted 14/04/2020

Figure 20. Capabilities/transformative learning theoretical framework and empirical findings
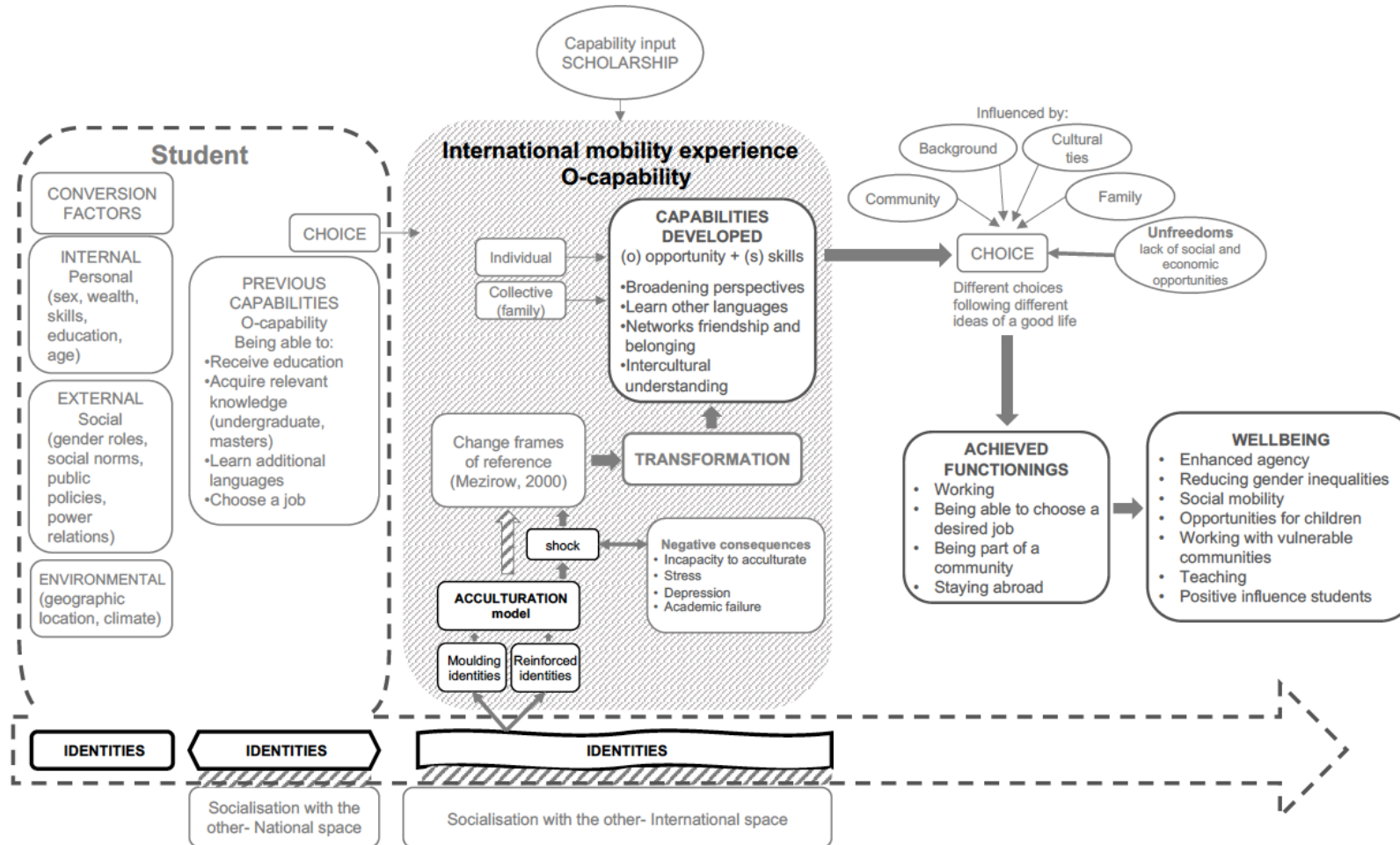
During the international experience the social interactions are diversified, and the perception of one´s own cultural identity becomes more evident (Bilecen, 2014, Sussman, 2000). It is at this point where the conversion factors and freedoms influence the individual´s agency to negotiate those identities and different interactions occur.

The student might reinforce their cultural identity and thus the cross-cultural transitions could become more challenging, and in some instances lead to negative consequences. In extreme cases, the sojourner fails to acculturate, and transformation does not take place. Alternatively, the sojourner is capable of incorporating elements of other cultures moulding their identities and easing the acculturation process. In both instances there are different degrees of transformation and development of capabilities, depending on the willingness, possibilities and previous capability set to engage with the disorienting dilemmas. Individuals achieve different functionings following different ideas of a good life and influenced by their community, background, cultural ties and family, but also by the lack of social and economic opportunities or unfreedoms (Robeyns, 2005).

As discussed in this study, these transformative experiences and development of capabilities were also lived by partners and children (chapter VII). Finally, the framework shows the diverse ways in which the developed capabilities and the achieved functionings enhanced mobile students' agency and examples of the social and well-being contributions (chapter IX).

Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study has not addressed brain drain and brain circulation aspects of ISM deliberately because it was not central to this research and due to financial and time restrictions. Nonetheless it is important to highlight that both interviewees who settled in the UK mentioned having done so due to the lack of available professional opportunities in Mexico. In this sense, it would be relevant to conduct further research on this specific group and understand what are the driving forces and the individual experiences that lead them to choose different lifepaths after ISM.

One important limitation of this study was obtaining contact details of potential participants online. This methodology thus, does not considered contacting former scholarship awardees who did not have public profiles or contact details online. Therefore, there is a portion of the study abroad population whose experiences and life trajectories were not accounted for. Therefore, future research needs to be conducted with the aid of funding bodies to allow including a broader population in the sample. In this sense it will also help understand to a greater extent what the professional trajectories of these graduates are.

Further research increasing the study sample not only in number but with participants from more Mexican states from all the regions is needed. This will largely contribute to strengthening the findings of these research and would possibly provide insights about additional implications of ISM that could be associated to specific regions. Moreover, the findings of this study related to gender suggested a traditional identification of females and males based on the expressions and behaviours of the participants. A further area of research would be to explore how the ISM experiences unfold for students with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities.

Another fruitful area for further research would be exploring in depth the transformative experiences of accompanying children and partners. The findings presented in this research were limited to the perceptions of the interviewees and thus marginally studied. Therefore, a design focusing on these individuals specifically, would expand our understanding in the ways in which these experiences are lived and the extent to which their lives and professional trajectories are being influenced by ISM.

NB

These conclusions were written amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Quarantines imposed in all countries have forced universities to shut their doors and to migrate, to the extent of their abilities, to online instruction delivery. Geographic mobility restrictions will not only affect institutions financially and force them to rethink recruitment strategies and delivery modes. It is likely that this pandemic will affect the HE industry in yet unknown ways and with stronger repercussions than the 9/11

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attacks in the USA, the SARS outbreak in 2003 and the several global financial crises from the last decades. This pandemic will also have a profound effect on the way students experience their international sojourns. Several students have interrupted their international studies, and some dropped out of their programmes. Others have opted to go back to their home countries while many have been stranded overseas. Students have experienced reduced social protection, and additional financial and emotional hardships to the ones explored in this work.

Moreover, some international students have been subject of harassment, discrimination, social exclusion and xenophobic attitudes. These different situations will hinder their intercultural interactions, the development of several capabilities associated with the international sojourn and the possibility of expanding their world views. In light of this global event further research should be carried out to establish the new ways students will be interacting and the ways in which ISM will move forward.

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Appendix 1. Survey schedule

1. What is your sex?

Male	Female
☐	☐

2. What is your age? (years)

3. Do you have indigenous background?
☐Yes (if yes, please specify which one)
☐No

4. Do you speak an indigenous language?

5. Which city and country where you born in?

6. Do you have dual nationality?
☐Yes (if yes, please specify which one other than Mexican, how you have it and from what year)
☐No

Mother	Father	Grandparents	Other (please specify)
☐	☐	☐	
Nationality:			
Date of issue:			

7. What are your parents' nationality and city of origin?

Mother	Father

8. What are your grandparents' nationality and city of origin?

Grandmother 1	Grandfather 1
Grandmother 2	Grandfather 2

9. What were your parents' level of studies at the time you undertook doctoral studies?

	No formal education	Primary	Secondary	High school	Technical studies	Undergraduate	Graduate
Mother							
Father							

10. What were your parents' occupation at the time you undertook doctoral studies?

11. Have either of your parents ever lived outside Mexico?
☐Yes (if yes, please specify where and why)   ☐No

	Country	City	Reasons	Length of stay
Mother				
Father				

12. Have you got any siblings?
☐Yes (if yes, please specify level of studies for each one)☐No

	Gender	Age	Primary	Secondary	High school	Undergraduate	Graduate
Sibling 1							
Sibling 2							
Sibling 3							

13. Where did you go to primary school?

Private ☐	Public ☐
Name of institution:	
State and country:	

14. Where did you go to high school and what degree did you obtain?

Private ☐	Public ☐
Name of institution:	
State and country:	
Degree obtained:	

15. Where did you undertake your undergraduate studies and what degree did you obtain?

Private ☐	Public ☐
Name of institution:	
State and country:	
Degree obtained:	

16. Did you undertake graduate studies?
☐Yes (if yes, please specify)   ☐No

Private ☐	Public ☐
Name of institution:	
State and country:	
Degree obtained:	

17. Did you learn languages other than Spanish (either at school or by other means) before studying abroad?
☐Yes (if yes, please specify which and rate level of command)   ☐No

Language (list below)	Speak			Write		
	Excellent	Good	Basic	Excellent	Good	Basic
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Where did you learn the language (s):						

18. Did you participate in a school/university exchange to another country before your doctoral studies?

☐Yes (if yes, please specify country and approximate length of stay) ☐No

Country:	Length of stays (in weeks/months):

19. Have you had additional financial support for the international studies other than the CONACYT scholarship?

☐Yes (if yes, please specify, you can tick more than one box)   ☐No

Self-financing	Parental support	Employer	Bank loan	Part time job	Other (please specify)

20. Did you have professional experience before your doctoral studies?

☐Yes (if yes, please specify)☐No

Job description:	
Job role:	
State and country:	
Length of employment:	

1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself and what do you do in your current job?

Process and decision to study abroad
2. How old were you when you studied abroad?
3. How many years did you spent on doctoral studies?
4. Can you tell me how did you come to the decision to study abroad?

5. Could you tell me if other people, contacts, events or experiences were important in helping you to decide to study abroad?
   i. Family
   ii. Friends
   iii. School (or previous university if studied before),
   iv. Particular teachers or guidance / career staff,
   v. On-line sources including on-line international student communities, recruitment event by the university

6. What can you tell me about your decision to study in that particular country/city/institution?

7. What were your initial expectations from studying abroad?
   i. Personal
   ii. Academic
   iii. Professional
   iv. Other (migration, marriage, travel)

8. Did your family play any role in your decision-making process?
How?
   i. Their expectations
   ii. Level of support
   iii. Criticism
   iv. Other

9. Did you have a partner/children at the time?
If yes, could you tell me about their level of involvement in the whole decision-making process?

10. Can you tell me how the whole application process was?
   i. Choosing the subject area
   ii. Language
   iii. Administrative process
   iv. Applying to the university/CONACYT)
   v. Applying for other type of funding
   vi. Time spent between decision and starting the sojourn
   vii. Preparation process (VISA, house, family, finance)
   viii. Emotionally
   ix. Challenges

The international experience as a whole process
11. Please describe your initial experience abroad, what do you remember the most?
   i. Living arrangements
   ii. Managing finances/money/living costs
   iii. Arriving to the city

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    iv.   First weeks at university (teachers, classes, laboratories, facilities, assignments)
     v.   Language
    vi.   Food/grocery shopping/cooking
   vii.   Different cultures/nationalities/racial differences/traditions/practices
  viii.   Religion
    ix.   Transportation
     x.   Leisure activities
    xi.   Traveling
   xii.   Friends
  xiii.   Challenges
   xiv.   Other

12. Do you remember comparing particularities of the whole experience with what you were used to in Mexico? What can you remember about that?
     i.   Housing
    ii.   Transportation
   iii.   Traditions
    iv.   Friends
     v.   Racial differences
    vi.   Religion
   vii.   University (teachers, classes, laboratories, facilities, assignments)
  viii.   Language
    ix.   Leisure activities
     x.   Other

13. What can you tell me about your finances at the time?
     i.   Managing scholarship stipend
    ii.   Part time job
   iii.   Other funding resources

14. What can you tell me about how you adapted to the new environment?
     i.   How long did it take?
    ii.   How did you do it?
   iii.   How easy or difficult it was?

15. Please describe your further experience abroad (after the adaptation period), what do you remember the most? (following answers from question 10)
     i.   Living arrangements
    ii.   Managing finances/money/living costs
   iii.   Life in the city
    iv.   University life
     v.   Language
    vi.   Food/grocery shopping/cooking
   vii.   Different cultures/nationalities/racial differences/traditions/practices
  viii.   Religion
    ix.   Transportation
     x.   Part time job/teaching or research assistant/volunteering
    xi.   Leisure activities
   xii.   Traveling
  xiii.   Friends
   xiv.   Challenges
    xv.   Other

16. Do you consider having learned new things while doing your doctoral studies?
If yes, could you describe, what are the things you remember being the most important ones you learned at the time?
    i.   Non-academic
    ii.   Academic
    iii.   Other

17. Do you consider that your sense of identity changed while studying abroad?
If yes, could you describe in what ways?
    i.   More aware of cultural similarities or differences
    ii.   Socializing with other Mexican students
    iii.   Feel more of a national or international identity outside Mexico

18. Did you try to stay abroad?
If yes, what can you tell me about it?
    i.   Reasons/expectations
    ii.   Process
    iii.   Difficulties
    iv.   Success

The transition process from the doctoral studies
19. What can you tell me about the time you finished your doctoral studies?
    i.   Going back home
    ii.   Perceptions
    iii.   Adjustments
    iv.   Family/friends relationships
    v.   Ways of thinking
    vi.   Beliefs and values
    vii.   Relationships/network with friends from abroad?
    viii.   Job hunting/how long did it take you to find a job?
    ix.   Salary (expectations vs reality)
    x.   Challenges

20. Did you have your current job before going abroad?
If yes, please could you tell me how you got it and what were the conditions for your return?
If no, how did you get it, how long after finishing studies and how connected is with your doctoral studies?

21. Is your present job the one you hoped to get as a result of an overseas education?
If yes, could you tell me in what ways?
If no, could you tell me more about it?

Meanings of the international experience now
22. Do you associate your international experience with your current job?
If yes, could you tell me in what ways?
If no, could you tell me more about it?

23. Do you associate your international experience with your daily activities/life/social engagement?
If yes, could you tell me in what ways

24. How do you remember the whole international experience? What does it mean to you?
Emotionally
Academically
As an experience

25. Were your initial expectations changed after studying abroad?
    i. Personal
    ii. Academic
    iii. Professional
    iv. Other (migration, marriage, travel

26. Do you consider that the international experience had an effect on your social condition in respect to the one of your parents?
If yes, could you tell me in what ways?
If no, could you tell me more about it?

27. Do you consider that your life has been influenced by the international experience
If yes, in what ways?
If no, why?

28. Has your perspective of the lessons learned (coming from yes question 13) changed from the time you were abroad in relation to your perspective today?
If yes, in what ways?
If no, do you consider you are exactly the same person as you were before studying abroad?

29. What is your opinion about peoples' perception regarding international educated Mexicans?

30. In your view, are there any social and/or cultural differences between people who have studied abroad and those who are locally trained?

31. Drawing on your own experiences, which will you say are the advantages of an international education?

32. Drawing on your own experiences, which will you say are the disadvantages of an international education?

33. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

1. In your opinion and based on your experience, who are the individuals who decide to apply for a CONACYT international scholarship? Do you consider they have special characteristics?

2. Which are the evaluation mechanisms to grant the scholarships?

3. There are people who consider that there should be a quota system put in place to allocate the scholarships. What are your opinions on this regard?

4. Are there mechanisms to promote the international scholarship programme?
If the answer is yes, what are those?

5. Which have been the efforts to expand the scope of the programme to other Mexican states? What are the allocation criteria in the different states?

6. Since when the joint scholarships with the DAAD and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs exist?

7. From 2017-2018 there was a 25% decrease in the allocation of scholarships and the withdrawal of the support to master´s degree programmes. What were the reasons behind this decision?

8. Derived from interviews that I have conducted and comments from awardees and former awardees, the stipend given to the scholarship holders is not enough to cover living expenses. How are the stipend amounts determined? How have the criteria changed over time?

9. Do you consider that there are additional benefits to academic training in studying abroad?

10. Do you consider that geographic mobility is a mechanism of social mobility?

11. Are there mechanisms to follow work trajectories of former awardees?
If the answer is yes, what are those?

12. In your opinion, what would be the ideal labour market destination of Mexican returnees?

13. Is there available information about the students who remain abroad after their doctoral studies?

14. What is your opinion about the former awardees who remain abroad because they were not able to find labour market opportunities in Mexico?

15. In your opinion, are the objectives of the international scholarship programme met? In what ways?

16. In light of the change of government and the rumours about the termination of the programme, what is the future of the programme and in your opinion, what would be the consequences of stopping granting international scholarships?

17. What are the mechanisms that exist to evaluate the international scholarship programme?

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Appendix 4. Characteristics of the interview participants

Pseudonym	Sex	*Age	*Marital status	*Children	Undergraduate HEI	Master's degree	University of doctoral studies	Year of studies	Country
Javier	M	41-45	Single		ITAM		Universidad de Buenos Aires	2000	Argentina
Hugo	M	41-45	Married		ITMAR	Yes	James Cook University	2001	Australia
Jose	M	46-50	Single		UNAM	Yes	The Australian National University	1999	Australia
Cesar	M	56-60	Married	Yes	IPN	Yes	Universite de Bourgogne	1997	France
Fernando	M	46-50	Single		UAM-Xochimilco	Yes	Universite de Bourgogne	1998	France
Raquel	F	46-50	Married		UNAM	Yes	Universite de Montpellier II	1997	France
Federico	M	46-50	Married	Yes	UV	Yes	Max-Planck-Institute	2002	Germany
Fidel	M	41-45	Single		UNAM	Yes	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen	2000	Germany
Juan	M	41-45	Single		UAQ	Yes	Technische Universitat Hamburg	1999	Germany
Mario	M	41-45	Single		UASP	Yes	Universitat Stuttgart	2002	Germany
Alvaro	M	41-45	Single		IPN	Yes	Technische Universiteit Eindhoven	1998	Holland
Jaime	M	41-45	Married	Yes	UACh	Yes	Wageningen Universiteit-Plantenwetenschappen	2005	Holland
Aldo	M	51-55	Single		UAM-Iztapalapa	Yes	Universidad de Alcala de Henares	1998	Spain
Carmen	F	41-45	Single		UNAM		Universidad de Barcelona	2001	Spain
Jimena	F	41-45	Married		UV		Universidad de Santiago de Compostela	1999	Spain
Rosa	F	46-50	Single		UNAM		Universidad Autonoma de Madrid	1997	Spain
Carlos	M	41-45	Partnered		UAEM	Yes	Institute of Education	2003	UK
Claudia	F	51-55	Single		UNAM		Imperial College of Science Technology & Medicine	1997	UK
Cyntia	F	46-50	Single		UNAM	Yes	University of Sheffield	1998	UK
Dinora	F	51-55	Married	Yes	UNAM	Yes	University of Stirling	1998	UK
Elvia	F	41-45	Single		UABC		University College London	1997	UK
Galia	F	41-45	Single		UABC	Yes	University of Sheffield	2005	UK
Gloria	F	56-60	Married	Yes	La Salle	Yes	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	1998	UK
Humberto	M	46-50	Single		UABC		University of Aberdeen	1999	UK
Jorge	M	51-55	Married		UAM-Iztapalapa		Wye College-U. of London	1997	UK
Julian	M	56-60	Married	Yes	UNAM	Yes	Queen Mary University of London	1997	UK
Paola	F	51-55	Single		UNAM	Yes	University of Sheffield	1999	UK
Ricardo	M	46-50	Single		UNAM		Imperial College of Science Technology & Medicine	1999	UK
Adela	F	41-45	Single		UNAM	Yes	Boston College	1999	USA
Arturo	M	51-55	Married	Yes	UACh	Yes	Iowa State University of Science and Technology	1997	USA
Victor	M	56-60	Married	Yes	UNAM	Yes	Northern Arizona University	1997	USA

*Age at the time of survey submission November 2017-February 2018
*Marital status at the time of the international studies
*Children at the beginning of the international studies

Pseudonym	State of provenance	State of current residency	Type of Job	Institution	Area of work	Country
Javier	Mexico City	Mexico City	Private HEI	ITAM	Social Sciences	Mexico
Hugo	Sonora	La Paz, Baja California	National Research Institute	CIBNOR	Applied Biology	Mexico
Jose	Mexico city	Queretaro	Public HEI/Research	UNAM	Exact Sciences	Mexico
Cesar	Mexico City	Mexico City	Public HEI	UAM-Azcapotzalco	Exact Sciences	Mexico
Fernando	Michoacan	Mexico City	Public HEI	UAM-Xochimilco	Natural Sciences	Mexico
Raquel	State of Mexico	Mexico City	Public HEI/Research	UNAM	Applied Engineering	Mexico
Federico	Veracruz	State of Mexico	National Research Institute	COLPOS	Natural Sciences	Mexico
Fidel	Mexico City	Mexico City	Public HEI	UNAM	Exact Sciences	Mexico
Juan	Coahuila	Queretaro	Public HEI	UAQ	Applied Engineering	Mexico
Mario	San Luis Potosi	State of Mexico	Public HEI	IPN	Behavioural	Mexico
Alvaro	Hidalgo	Mexico City	National Research Institute	CINVESTAV	Applied Engineering	Mexico
Jaime	Mexico City	State of Mexico	National Research Institute	COLPOS	Social Sciences	Mexico
Aldo	Mexico City	Pachuca, Hidalgo	Public HEI	IPP	Natural Sciences	Mexico
Carmen	Oaxaca	Mexico City	Public HEI/Research	UNAM	Earth, Ocean and Atmos	Mexico
Jimena	Veracruz	Pachuca, Hidalgo	Public HEI	UAEH	Exact Sciences	Mexico
Rosa	Mexico City	Cuernavaca, Morelos	Free-lance		Behavioural	Mexico
Carlos	Morelos	Cuernavaca, Morelos	National Research Institute	INSP	Health	Mexico
Claudia	Mexico City	Cuernavaca, Morelos	NGO		Natural Sciences	Mexico
Cyntia	Mexico City	Cuernavaca, Morelos	Public HEI/Research	UNAM	Natural Sciences	Mexico
Dinora	Mexico City	La Paz, Baja California	National Research Institute	CIBNOR	Applied Biology	Mexico
Elvia	Mexicalli	Manchester, UK	Public HEI	University of Manchester	Behavioural	UK
Galia	Mexico City	La Paz, Baja California	Public HEI	UABC	Earth, Ocean and Atmos	Mexico
Gloria	Mexico City	Cuernavaca, Morelos	National Research Institute	INSP	Health	Mexico
Humberto	Mexico City	Akumal, Quintana Roo	NGO		Earth, Ocean and Atmos	Mexico
Jorge	Mexico City	Mexico City	Public HEI	UAM-Iztapalapa	Applied Biology	Mexico
Julian	Mexico City	Mexico City	Public HEI/Research	UNAM	Applied Engineering	Mexico
Paola	Mexico City	Mexico City	Federal Agency	CONABIO	Natural Sciences	Mexico
Ricardo	Mexico City	Manchester, UK	Public HEI	Manchester Metropolitan U	Earth, Ocean and Atmos	UK
Adela	Mexico City	Mexico City	National Research Institute	CINVESTAV	Social Sciences	Mexico
Arturo	Zacatecas	State of Mexico	National Research Institute	COLPOS	Applied Biology	Mexico
Victor	Oaxaca	Tlaxcala	National Research Institute	INIFAP	Applied Biology	Mexico

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Pseudonym	Mother level of studies	Mother economic activity	Father level of studies	Father economic activity
Javier	Undergraduate	Own account (non-professional)	Undergraduate	Sales
Hugo	Technical education	Home	Undergraduate	Higher professional
Jose	Undergraduate	Teacher	Undergraduate	Unemployed
Cesar	Primary	Home	Primary	Sales
Fernando	Technical education	Home	Primary	Sales
Raquel	Technical education	Home	Master's degree	Worker
Federico	Primary	Home	Primary	Sales
Fidel	Undergraduate	Teacher	Undergraduate	Teacher
Juan	Primary	Home	Primary	Construction worker
Mario	High school	Teacher	High school	Teacher
Alvaro	Primary	Home	Primary	Construction worker
Jaime	Technical education	Home	Undergraduate	Higher professional
Aldo	No formal education	Home	No formal education	Sales
Carmen	Technical education	Home	Master's degree	Private practice
Jimena	Primary	Home	Primary	Worker
Rosa	Undergraduate	Home	Postgraduate	Civil servant
Carlos	Undergraduate	Higher professional	Undergraduate	Higher professional
Claudia	Undergraduate	Retired	Master´s degree	Retired
Cyntia	Primary	Sales	Undergraduate	Higher professional
Dinora	Undergraduate	Retired	Undergraduate	Private practice
Elvia	Master's degree	Academic	Undergraduate	Higher professional
Galia	Secondary	Retired	Undergraduate	Retired
Gloria	Undergraduate	Sales	Undergraduate	Own account (non-professional)
Humberto	Technical education	Retired	Technical education	Journalist
Jorge	No formal education	Sales	No formal education	Worker
Julian	Secondary	Home	Secondary	Deceased
Paola	Secondary	Home	Secondary	Sales
Ricardo	Undergraduate	Retired	Undergraduate	Retired
Adela	Technical education	Home	Secondary	Worker
Arturo	No formal education	Home	No formal education	Agriculture
Victor	Primary	Home	Primary	Agriculture

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Name	Description	Files	References
ACADEMIC CHALLENGES	freedom writing skills experiments (laboratory) adapting to teaching and learning traditional (paternalistic vs independent)	29	94
ACADEMIC LEARNING OUTCOMES	skills academic "equality" independence/freedom acquired knowledge "from the best" confidence prestige increase productivity/other ways of working	25	64
ACADEMIC NETWORK BUILDING		16	38
ACADEMIC REASONS-ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT	knowledge generation state of the art in the world	21	28
ACADEMIC REASONS-ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE	mainly English	5	6
ACADEMIC REASONS-STATUS ACQUISITION	subjective perceptions	1	1
ACADEMIC RECOGNITION	what does the ones that stay say or think	17	24
ACADEMIC SUPPORT	economic resources recognition of capabilities supervisions relationship with peers	29	79
ACCULTURATION PROCESS	positive-open minded negative-cultural shock	31	144
ACKNOWLEDGMENT-RECOGNITION OF QUALITY OF HE PHD IN MEXICO	PNPC recognition of the areas where Mexico is far behind	19	30
ADJUSTMENT TO CLIMATOLOGICAL CONDITIONS	Light, weather	17	27
ADOPTION OF FOREIGN	food/ingredients familial habits (gender, equality) overcome preconceived	18	52

Name	Description	Files	References
HABITS	gender conceptions of motherhood gender equality language (acentos)		
AGE AND MATURITY-PERSONAL GROWTH		14	21
BAD EXPERIENCES	health system stress never adapting to the weather and the different culture	9	23
BRAIN DRAIN-BRAIN CIRCULATION	brain gain as well.	8	15
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CITY OF STUDIES	cosmopolitan small-town university city	16	24
COMPARISONS AND RE-LEARNING		4	8
COMPLEXITITES OF MEXICO	size multicultural/multiethnic climatological conditions issues of insecurity/security	17	32
CONACYT SUPPORT	repatriaciones postdocs catedras	5	6
CONTRASTING USA WITH UK EUROPE IN TERMS OF CULTURE	Culture appropriate for family/kids Preferring European culture versus USA Prejudice Living in a neighboring city and therefore preferring going somewhere else	9	11
CULTURAL DIVERSITY	cultural differences	30	83
CULTURAL INCLUSION	inclusion or exclusion from locals	26	72
CULTURAL INTERCHANGE	Adoption of habits and ways of doing things both ways. Cultural expansion. Mexicans also leaving part of their cultures in the host culture	5	9
CURRENT JOB	area associated contribution to society research teaching ONG freelance government DRIVE	30	64
CURRENT JOB-DRIVE	coming back from the international experience wanting to develop ideas to do things, excitement economic/ academic challenges to do so, facing a wall	12	18

Name	Description	Files	References
DAILY LIFE ADJUSTMENTS	transport food finance (scholarship)	30	78
DEPRESSION, LONELINESS, ISSOLATION ISSUES		18	33
DISADVANTAGES		2	2
ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOLARSHIP	without it people could not go abroad retribution/research groups consolidation improvements in jobs advertisement (through CONACYT channels)	22	43
ECONOMIC SITUTATION IN MEXICO	lack of jobs low salaries institutional/economic resources CONACYT/government detachment/indifference of former awardees Government support	26	75
ECONOMIC-POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE WORLD	Currency adoption (euros) Crisis (Argentina) Associated with the scholarship stipend and how those issues in the countries privileged or hindered the international experience	4	5
EXPERIENCE FOR CHILDREN	language acquisition acculturation process	9	30
EXPERIENCES FOR SPOUSES		4	13
FRIENDSHIPS-PERSONAL SUPPORT	differences between having Mexican friends or foreign friends and the dynamics derived from becoming friends with Mexican migrant to overcome cultural exclusion?	29	103
FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN	nationality language international/cultural exposure equality future study opportunities soft power	7	10
GENDER ISSUES	job opportunities associated to being a woman	9	14
HEALTH ISSUES		4	11
IDENTITY ISSUES	maintaining owns habits/traditions	23	48
INFLUENCE OVER LOCAL	encouragement to study abroad short stays or degrees teaching in different	19	63

Name	Description	Files	References
STUDENTS	ways less hierarchy equality independence/critical thinking trial vs error (when locals don't adapt to freedom and independence)		
INSTITUTIONAL-SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT	having a secure job and maintaining salaries scholarships international agreements DAAD, Fulbright	21	65
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION	(myths) certain aspects of the education that are not that useful, or that good, bad classes lack of spaces university bureaucracy the case of the universities that are not used to receiving international students and they don't provide adequate support	11	26
INTERNATIONAL TOURISM	prior international exposure for many this was the first experience	14	15
ISM over time	How the interest of going abroad has changed and now more people want to experience living and studying abroad	1	1
ISSUES ASSOCIATED TO MARITAL STATUS	Singles, couples, parents	17	70
ISSUES OF RE-ACCULTURATION	Mexican ways of working (different) owns perceptions of Mexico challenges food gender issues-going back with new gender behaviors that are different from the ones in Mexico local traditions	23	57
ISSUES OF SOCIAL CLASS	cultural capital economic capital support network to study abroad social capital educative capital	18	38
JOB EXPERIENCES		6	11
LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES	disadvantage of detachment of the Mexican systems more opportunities less opportunities Posdocs opportunities moving/ geographic relocation to other Mexican states overqualified perceptions vs reality	29	106
LABOUR MARKET REASONS-ECONOMIC RESOURCES	more in other countries	2	2
LABOUR MARKET REASONS-	forced to study abroad	4	4

Name	Description	Files	References
INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT			
LANGUAGE SKILLS	challenges language programmes influence of selection of destination self-taught	20	30
LANGUAGE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	learning the language while at the international sojourn "in situ"	23	41
LEISSURE ACTIVITITES, TRAVELING		20	29
MORE AWARENESS OF MEXICAN SITUATION	looking at the country from outside	24	46
NATIONAL HE MOBILITY	short term mobility-"estancias de investigacion" people moving to other states to study	10	20
NON-ACADEMIC CHALLENGES	losing job owing money loans, scholarship SELF DOUBT ICTs developments people who had limited access to be in contact with their families leaving family, relatives, previous life behind	21	49
NON-ACADEMIC LEARNING OUTCOMES	tolerance towards the host culture exposure to different cultures language change of mindset CHANGING PERSPECTIVE curiosity about migrants abroad international "competition"	28	114
OPPORTUNITIES TO STAY ABROAD	Posdocs "the good and the bad of getting a posdoc" Academia Other jobs	21	35
PERSONAL REASONS-ASPIRATIONS	Not wanting to follow parents´ path To be "something better" Social mobility To offer better opportunities for children/alternatives/get close to particular societies	10	16
PERSONAL REASONS-BECOME INDEPENDANT		1	3

Name	Description	Files	References
PERSONAL REASONS-CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY		2	2
PERSONAL REASONS-EXPERIENCE AND OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD	PhD, but since there has been prior working experience there are other opportunities taken into consideration	4	4
PERSONAL REASONS-EXTERNAL INFLUENCES	movies, brands, perceptions of the world, friends with foreign experience´s recommendations	8	11
PERSONAL REASONS-INTEREST IN OTHER CULTURES		11	15
PERSONAL REASONS-INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE	More interest in traveling	1	2
PERSONAL REASONS-OTHER RESEARCHERS INFLUENCE	mentorships	13	20
PERSONAL REASONS-SPOUSES COMPANION	as a companion to study abroad as well	4	7
PRIOR HE ACADEMIC TRAINING	good-better than peers in the PhD lack of knowledge in certain areas Mexican HE is competitive	23	41
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-ACQUIRE OTHER PERSPECTIVES	"desestructurar la cabeza"	3	4
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-AGE AND JOB EXPERIENCE	people that have job experience and have lived as an "adult" and did not go to the PhD straight out of university not young and inexperienced"	3	3
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOUSEHOLD-PARENTS	travelers within Mexico or other countries never left their city education of parents job of parents RELATIVES-UNCLES´ influence	21	33

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Name	Description	Files	References
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-CITY OF ORIGIN		3	7
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-FAMILIAL SUPPORT	spouses, children	10	12
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-NETWORK SUPPORT	KNOW HOW People with the experience and the contacts to help others look for the right paths and scholarships to be able to pursue international education	10	26
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-OWN MONEY	savings loans economic stability	6	8
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS-WORKING IN THE PRIVATE OR THE PUBLIC SECTOR	Analysis of the path you want to pursue after finishing the PhD particularly if they had working experience already	3	3
PUSH-PULL FACTORS TO GO BACK OR NOT ACADEMIC LIASONS	ACADEMIC REASONS keeping in touch with former HE institutions, maintaining contacts	8	9
PUSH-PULL FACTORS TO GO BACK TO MEXICO OR NOT	personal reasons-personal relationships (partners) children's opportunities/changing identities decisions taken with partners desire to go back "to the homeland"	22	38
RACISM AND GENDER ISSUES	preconceived gender roles FOR MEN AND WOMEN understanding with other mothers´ women of other cultures more progressive empathy with other cultures women mothers and academics at the same time discrimination for being Mexicans	19	63
REASONS FOR PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW		3	3
RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING		4	4

Name	Description	Files	References
RESEARCH-ACADEMIA SITUATION IN MEXICO AND IN THE WORLD	bureaucracy SNI rivalry academic hierarchy teaching "does not count" for researchers age lack of jobs in HE institutions	28	117
SCHOLARSHIPS	meritocratic process affirmative action associated problems opinions national scholarships and how they are allocated debt-failure of completion	13	25
SELECTION PROCESS	gender issues-motherhood-empathy learning process challenges/MONEY	17	24
SOCIAL MOBILITY	downward upward previous social class (of parents/household) stagnation (HE is supposed to help people upward social mobility compared to parents)	25	33
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	helping the migrant Mexican community jobs towards conservation (environmental)	13	30
SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME	graduated people research groups training locally challenges social mobility diminution of scholarships/less economic resources	14	21
TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE		22	46

Experiences of Mexican doctoral students supported by the CONACYT international mobility scholarship programme
November 20th 2017- March 8th 2018

Sample e-mail request to participate in internet survey

Sender information: From:
                     Sent: Day, Month 2017, time
                     To: participant email

Informative Subject: Subject: Survey about CONACYT awardees between 1997 and 2008.

I am writing to you to request your participation in a brief survey. I know your time is very valuable therefore it will only take a couple of minutes to answer. I am a research student at the IOE, UCL and I am doing a research exploring the international experiences of Mexican students who studied abroad between 1997 and 2008 and who were supported by a CONACYT scholarship. This study has only research purposes part of my doctoral studies and my interest in international education. I am a CONACYT awardee myself however I do not have any contractual relationship or commitment with CONACYT. Through an official request to the INAI I had access to the names of all CONACYT awardees since 1994. Further, through an online search I found your contact details in publicly available institutional websites.

Through the survey I'll gather basic statistical information that will be very helpful for my research. Furthermore, with this survey I am also looking for participants who meet the selection criteria and invite them to participate in an interview.

This type of research has not been performed in Mexico, therefore your participation will help broadening our understanding of the different ways studying abroad have influenced CONACYT awardees' lives. Further, the results will offer an alternative approach to assess governmental international student mobility programmes and their influence over society.

Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary and all your responses will be kept confidential. This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL, IOE Research Ethics Committee.

Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at

Institute of Education

Experiences of Mexican doctoral students supported by the CONACYT international mobility scholarship programme
November 20th 2017- March 8th 2018

Information sheet for participants

You have been invited to take part in the doctoral research about the transformative experiences of international student mobility. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, please take some time to read throughout the document and please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know. I very much hope that you would like to take part.

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Karla A. Lopez Murillo and I am inviting you to take in part in my research project, "Experiences of Mexican doctoral students supported by the CONACYT international mobility scholarship programme". I am currently a research student at the Institute of Education, University College London, UK. My doctoral studies are supported by an international scholarship awarded by CONACYT. However CONACYT does not have any involvement in this study and does not have access to any of the information collected.

Why are we doing this research?

I am hoping to find out what were the array of experiences that you had as an international student and if the exposure to the international environment and education has influenced in any way your life path. I will also explore the implications of these experiences in relation to the CONACYT programme's objectives and the wider Mexican society.

This type of research has not been performed in Mexico, therefore your participation will help broadening our understanding of the different ways studying abroad have influenced CONACYT awardees' lives. Further, the results will offer an alternative approach to assess governmental international student mobility programmes and their influence over society.

Why am I being invited to take part?

Based on the survey answers you have met the selection criteria to be interviewed. I am particularly interested in former Mexican students, without dual nationalities and who had not had previous international studying experiences. I will be interviewing former doctoral students that did their doctoral studies in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, UK, USA and a couple of people who studied in other less popular destinations. Among these are people who studied an array of subjects from all the CONACYT academic areas.

What will happen if I choose to take part?
We will schedule together the time and place to perform the interview in person. It will take up to one hour.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

All the information provided will be treated as confidential and will be stored on the basis of the articles 210 and 211 of the Mexican Federal Criminal Code. Names will be anonymised by using a pseudonym for identification therefore no one will know about your participation in this research.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

Since the questions are related to personal experiences there is always a risk to touch some areas that are likely to be sensitive or conflictual. If you present any discomfort throughout the interview or you feel you are being asked sensitive issues that you do not wish to answer please let me know. You can stop the interview at any time.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results and data extracts from the survey and the interviews will be part of the research thesis and relevant academic publications. They will also be shared in academic conferences and seminars. Once more, all personal data will be treated as confidential and all the names will be anonymised by using a pseudonym. I will store the data in my password protected personal computer and external hard drive. Only I will have access to the data. The data will be kept for three years after the end of my doctoral studies and will be deleted.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. We hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience. Participants will have the right to withdraw at all stages of the research.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to by November 24th 2017.

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.