Discovering self and 'home' abroad: international student mobility from Canada to the Global South

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Laura Prazeres, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date:

Abstract

This thesis explores how international mobility and place influence international students' sense of self and 'home'. The study contributes to the literature on mobility and self-discovery and an emerging body of work on international student mobility, emotional geographies and mobile geographies of home. In doing so, it explores the *process* of young people's search for self-discovery and their (re)discovery of 'home' through the contextual lens of international student mobility. More specifically, it critically examines the predominant trope of self-discovery and self-change within young people's mobility narratives. Drawing on a qualitative longitudinal approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted over time (i.e. pre-departure, mid-point and return) with Canadian exchange students studying or interning in the Global South. Photo-elicitation was also combined with the final return interviews through the use of participant-directed photography.

Analysis of the empirical qualitative material reveals the role of comfort, familiarity, everyday life, social networks, place and temporality in enabling and facilitating students' self-discovery, (re)discovery of 'home' and distinction. Leaving the comfort zone is a predominant motivation for mobility and this thesis demonstrates how feelings of (dis)comfort are productive for self-discovery, home-making and distinction. The findings reveal that 'home' is an idea and feeling that is (re)discovered during the sojourn abroad. The thesis supports a notion of self-discovery as processual rather than an ultimate 'true' discovery. The findings suggest that the return to the place of origin is a process of showcasing self-discovery and self-change and performing distinction and difference to validate the sojourn and personal changes. I also develop and propose the notions of collective and individual distinctions whereby students navigate and negotiate a tension between these two competing forms of distinctions. I thus argue that international exchanges and international mobility away from a (home)place of origin allow students to engage in a particular process of self-discovery, distinction and (re)discovery of 'home'.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I met Rachel, a Humanities Master's student, three years ago at a university pre-departure orientation for outgoing Canadian students in Ottawa. After I had given a presentation to recruit participants for my PhD research project she immediately sought me out to express her interest in the study. While Rachel's own research for her Master's thesis meant that she understood the challenges of recruiting participants for research purposes and was thus happy to volunteer for my study, it was the international mobility focus of my research project that really captured her interest. Having lived and studied in three countries between two to eight months at a time and visited over a dozen countries in the Global South, Rachel was well-versed on the topic of international travel and eager to strike up a conversation on this subject. Much of our informal conversation that day and our formal interviews later that year centred on her 'really positive experiences' studying in different countries both during secondary school and her undergraduate program. Rachel's upcoming exchange in India would mark her third international study exchange – one for each of her levels of education since high school. These previous experiences travelling and studying abroad were not only a precursor to her upcoming year-long study exchange at a university in Pune, India, but instilled her with the infectious 'travel bug' whose symptoms are characterised by an impulsive desire to remain mobile beyond a place of origin. Indeed, her motivation to study abroad based on previous experiences parallels my own journey to the PhD.

I chose to research the experience of international exchange students largely because of my own exchange experiences abroad (in France and Brazil) and my volunteer work experiences of mentoring incoming and outgoing university exchange students in my Canadian hometown. My undergraduate exchange year (2005-2006) in France left an indelible mark on how I perceive myself, but also on how I perceive others. It led me, for example, to volunteer as a mentor for incoming and outgoing exchange students at the University of Ottawa from 2006 to 2011. During those 5 years, I not only mentored students but befriended them[1]. By following their experiences in situ (for incoming students) and maintaining contact and friendship upon their return, I was struck – much like the narratives of Canadian friends returned from abroad – by their tales of their new

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[1] One of them, coincidentally, came from Royal Holloway, and when two years later I moved here for my doctoral studies, she then unofficially took up the role of my mentor on campus.

'home' and of self-transformation. Even my mentions of volunteer work with international students to new acquaintances elicited similar narratives from those who had previously studied or worked abroad. This led me to question what is it about mobility to a different place that stirs such transformative narratives? Thus, as I embarked on my own academic journey as an international PhD student in the UK, my decision to convert my volunteer work and previous exchange experiences into a PhD research project was a natural choice.

Through the narratives and photographs of Canadian exchange students in the Global South, this thesis explores the intersections between mobility, self and 'home' within short-term international student exchanges. While research on internationally mobile students has established itself as a topical field within geographical scholarship, some key areas remain under-researched; notably, those of self-discovery and geographies of 'home'.

International student mobility and a search for self and 'home'

Travel is more than just movement towards a destination; it is often regarded as a journey of self-discovery, personal development and self-change (Crang, 2004). Tourism, travel and mobility – regardless of their context and definition – are commonly used by individuals to challenge, discover and/or change their sense of self (Crouch, 2004; Wilson and Harris, 2006). Although self-growth and self-discovery are well documented in the literature on travel and tourism, it is less discussed within the area of international student mobility. Yet, despite differences, the experiences of internationally mobile students can parallel those of travellers and tourists. International student mobility is growing within global mobility flows as well as in academic interest. Waters (2012) and King et al. (2010) highlight that the dearth of work on international student mobility is finally being addressed within geographical scholarship (Collins, 2012; Findlay et al., 2010; King and Raghuram, 2013). Nonetheless, King and Raghuram (2013) remind us that much work is still needed regarding theorisations and empirical contributions within international student mobility. This thesis thus attends and contributes to a dynamic and growing literature on internationally mobile students by considering notions of the self and of 'home' and more specifically, how these intersect and change through mobility.

International student mobility is framed in the literature in terms of career development and benefits for prospective employment (Maiworm and Teichler, 1996; Robertson et al., 2011) but also as an opportunity for adventure (Findlay et al., 2010; King

et al., 2011; Waters and Brooks, 2010) and for personal development (Gmelch, 1997; Haines, 2013; Pope et al., 2013). Since the term 'international student mobility' can be subdivided in a number of ways, a more detailed description of the two main categories (i.e. degree or diploma mobility and credit or short-term mobility) is presented in Chapter 2. Academic and professional goals are often cited as secondary to personal development within short-term student mobility (Van Mol and Michielsen, 2014) and this study is no different. As Erichsen (2011) points out, the international study experience "is bound to challenge a person's understandings and notions of self" (p. 128). Even one of the key motivators within volunteer tourism – a field commonly regarded for its altruistic motives – is centred on the self (Sin, 2009). Among the main forms of mobility listed by Urry (2007) in his *Mobilities* book is the bullet point: "discovery travel of students, au pairs and other young people on their 'overseas experience'" (p. 10). While Urry indicates that the international mobility of students and young people should be explicitly considered as an experience of 'discovery', I will also refer to ideas of *re*discovery in the thesis; that is, discovering anew aspects of the self and of 'home' that were taken-for-granted. Discovery is a broad term that can encompass a number of things. Young people can discover places, cultures, activities, people, friends and of course the self through their mobility abroad. Despite self-discovery and self-development as motivations for travel being established in the literature, they have not been sufficiently engaged with in the mobility of international students. Indeed, van 't Klooster et al. (2008) suggest that future research should examine these notions in more depth with respect to educational travel. This thesis therefore seeks to further unpack the trope and ubiquitous notion of self-discovery and personal development frequently expressed within international student narratives. Such travel discourses and study abroad rhetoric have generated popular assumptions that international educational sojourns result in self-discovery and self-development (Bishop, 2013). This study thus excavates assumptions and notions of self-discovery and self-development within international mobility in order to unearth the underlying core motivations and meanings of students' mobility. It further explores the main motivations and home-making experiences of international exchange students prior to and during their sojourn abroad. However, rather than focus on their educational experiences of interning or studying abroad per se, most participants discussed their experience within predominantly non-academic contexts. As such, this thesis critically examines experiences of self and 'home' – as expressed by participants – within everyday public spaces in the city.

Moreover, mobility is not only a search for the self but also for 'home'. In an era marked by global mobility, scholars have reassessed traditional assumptions of 'home' as fixed and stable (Chambers, 1994; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Larsen et al. (2007) point out that "recent work has begun to challenge the traditional distinctions between home and away" (p. 248). In turn, 'home' has been reconceptualised as fluid, malleable and mobile (Blunt, 2005; Mallett, 2004). Geographies of 'home' now denote both physical and emotional dimensions (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Indeed, 'home' is a term that evokes a complex register of feelings and meanings. Belonging is also a concept imbued with emotions and is often used synonymously with 'home' in the literature. Although both 'home' and belonging are present in this thesis, participants in this study not only referred more to a sense of 'home' than to a sense of belonging but they also brought up the notion of 'home' without provocation. Since geographies of 'home' is a well-established body of literature with a particular set of im/material meanings, its value to mobility scholarship should not continue to be overlooked within student narratives. In fact, 'home' is a feeling that is closely interrelated with the sense of self (Blunt and Varley, 2004; Mallett, 2004). Yet if 'home' and self are entwined, then how does mobility between places influence this interrelationship? Allen (2008) notes that despite the everyday use of the term 'home', "its complexity has presented numerous challenges to scholarly inquiry" (p. 86).

While the interrelationship of 'home' and self is not new within the literature, conceptualisations of the self as processual and developmental are more recent (Wearing and Wearing, 2001). Identity and self are no longer seen as stable and rigid but rather, much like 'home', as fluid, malleable and "always becoming" (Erichsen, 2011, p. 128). The term 'sense of self' (rather than identity or self-identity) is used in this thesis as it privileges a student-centred approach and places the emphasis on how students not only perceive but *sense* and, hence, *feel* about themselves. If the self and 'home' are processual and susceptible to changes through experiences of mobility, then what is the process of such changes? This is a question that this thesis endeavours to respond to within the context of short-term international student mobility. Waters and Leung (2013) point out, for example, that "international students have been perceived as interesting and remarkable precisely because they are temporarily 'out of place', away from and yet constantly evoking 'home'" (p. 607). Despite this statement, the notion of 'home' remains under-researched within international student mobility.

Moreover, if emotions and feelings foreground and underpin concepts of 'home' and self, then researching changes to these within mobility should take emotional geographies into account. Conradson and McKay (2007) assert that emotions are a pivotal

aspect of international mobility, yet emotional geographies remain virtually absent within international student mobility scholarship. While this thesis takes steps to address this lacuna, it does so by considering emotional geographies a posteriori in the research; that is, the role of emotions and feelings emerged through the research analysis and, more specifically, through the theme of comfort (see more detailed discussion in Chapter 2). It is in fact the inductive approach of this study that allowed for the prevalence of comfort as an emotion to emerge and subsequently led to the consideration of feelings and emotions within this thesis. As such, rather than set out to explore multiple emotions, this thesis focuses on the theme of comfort as a prominent feeling within the narratives of Canadian exchange students in the Global South.

Student mobility from the Global North to the Global South[2]: a Canadian case study

Mobility flows of international students to and within the Global North, particularly the Western world, are well-represented in the literature (for examples within the Global North, see Long et al., 2010; within the Western world specifically, see King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Pineda et al., 2008; and from the Global South to the Global North, see Brown and Aktas, 2011; Sherry et al., 2010). Outgoing students from the Global North typically remain within countries of the same socio-economic status. Degree-seeking students from nations in the Global South set their academic aspirations and mobility paths towards countries with higher economic standings (Wei, 2013; Zheng, 2013). Woodfield (2010) states that the scarcity and unavailability of institutions of higher education and academic reputability in certain countries incite students from the Global South to seek out greater quality education in the Global North. Yet this does not paint or represent the full picture of student mobility. Global mobility flows of students are intricate and the reasons propelling their movement to and from particular places are heterogeneous and complex. In fact, Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) suggest that young people have played a significant role in redistributing tourism and mobility flows from Europe to the Global South. Countries in the Global South are increasingly regarded as the next frontier for international student exchanges due to their uniqueness and distinctiveness (Desforges, 1998; Diprose, 2012; Munt, 1994; Noy, 2004) and precisely because they is perceived as challenging, "risky and rewarding" (Elsrud, 2001, p. 598; Ansell, 2008; Snee, 2013). Indeed, participants in this

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[2] This study adopts the term 'Global South' defined broadly by the United Nations Development Program (2004) as countries in Africa, Latin America, Caribbean and Asia with a range of different social, economic and political contexts but with a "shared set of vulnerabilities and challenges" (p. 2).

study share these popular representations of the Global South and tend to perceive it as a homogenous space. In other words, countries in the Global South have become the 'go-to' or 'must-have' destinations. Indeed, Breen (2012) highlights that students from the Global North are increasingly heading to the Global South within the context of short-term mobility exchanges (i.e. internship placements and study exchanges). This is particularly the case for students in Canada in which bilateral agreements between universities in Canada and the Global South seem to be increasing and in greater numbers than in the UK. The University of Montréal, for example, has bilateral agreements with universities in South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Kyrgyzstan (among many others). Universities in Ontario send and receive students to and from partner universities in India through the increasingly popular Ontario/Maharashtra–Goa Student Exchange Program. Despite these new mobility channels and the growing body of work on volunteer tourism in the Global South (e.g. in Africa, see Barbieri et al., 2012, Lepp, 2008, Sin, 2009; in South America, see Simpson, 2004, 2005; in South-East Asia and the Pacific, see Hudson and Inkson, 2006; Zahra and McIntosh, 2007) student mobility from the Global North to the Global South has been remarkably ignored within the study abroad literature. Indeed, much of the literature on international student mobility has focused on longer-term degree mobility (i.e. for the entirety of a degree) from the Global South to the Global North, rather than on the reverse within short-term credit exchanges of one semester or one year.

This thesis therefore takes the necessary steps to correct this lacuna by exploring the short-term mobility experiences and motivations of Canadian university students interning *and* studying in the Global South. Moving beyond the privileging of student mobility within the Global North, the distinctive empirical and geographical focus of this thesis in the Global South seeks to extend existing scholarship in the field of international student mobility. In comparison to UK institutions of higher education, Canadian universities seem to have established a greater number of bilateral agreements with countries in the Global South. As such, the Canadian perspective offers a diverse and dynamic context to examine international student mobility to the Global South. Yet, Canada has received considerably lesser attention in the realm of international student mobility than its Anglo-Saxon counterparts (i.e. US, UK, Australia and New Zealand). While the low numbers of Canadian students participating in international student mobility have likely contributed to the relative invisibility of Canadian exchange students within the literature (3.1% for 2012-13 according to a report from Universities Canada, 2014), this points to a need for mobility scholars to turn their attention to the Canadian context. Indeed, Canadian university leaders and politicians are advocating for greater Canadian

participation in study abroad programs (Bradshaw, 2012; Douglas, 2012). If political and academic leaders in Canada are eager to increase Canadian numbers in student exchange programs, then more attention should be given to understanding the experience of Canadians who do participate in these programs and what motivates their interest in international studies. So far, studies with a Canadian perspective have focused mainly on incoming students from the Global South rather than outgoing Canadian students to the Global South (Chirkov et al., 2008; Madgett and Bélanger, 2008; Waters, 2006) or Canadian students' intent to study abroad generally (Trilokekar and Rasmi, 2011). Although Tiessen and Heron (2012) and Tiessen and Kumar (2013) examine the mobility of Canadian students to the Global South, their studies seem – like most studies on Global North to Global South mobility – to limit their samples to students from international development studies, while work on Canadians as well as other students from the Global North on various study exchange programs at universities in the Global South remains neglected within the literature.

Positioning the research and its objectives

This thesis aims to address some of the lacunae in international student mobility research by focusing on the experiences of Canadian university exchange students interning and studying in the Global South. More specifically, I explore how students' sense of self and of 'home' is influenced by their experiences of mobility and place(s), both in Canada and abroad. I draw on conceptualisations of 'home' and self as fluid, malleable and emotional to understand the motivations and experiences of exchange students as well as the ways and process in which their experiences of self and of 'home' are changed by international mobility. This thesis therefore contributes to debates on 'home' as a feeling and process (Ahmed et al., 2003), and on self-discovery as developmental and processual (Li, 2010). It also advances more recent debates about international migration (Benson, 2009), intra-national student mobility (Tindal et al., 2015) and international student mobility (Findlay et al., 2012) as a pursuit and form of distinction.

In positioning itself within mobility as a meaningful movement, this thesis also fits in with recent work on experiences of home-making and self-discovery with expatriates (Benson, 2009), overseas experiences (Conradson and Latham, 2007), gap years (Snee, 2013) and volunteer tourism (Sin, 2009). While international exchanges share similarities with these forms of mobility, they differ institutionally (through the university system) and socially (via a network of students) in that they are short-term educational sojourns within

the context of higher education. Since universities promote exchanges as an opportunity for personal growth (Bishop, 2013; Forsey et al., 2012), researching the experience of exchange students can allows us to understand how young people use short-term university exchanges (instead of long-term mobility for an entire degree) for self-discovery and self-development rather than primarily for academic or educational development. International exchanges therefore provide a complex and unique context to examine overlapping and underlying sets of motivations and processes within mobility, as well as add breadth and depth to conceptual inquiries on 'home' and self. In doing so, it reveals the ways students waver and alternate between different forms of distinction by strategically using different narratives to maintain their claim to distinction and remain competitive and relevant within the hierarchy of mobility experiences.

Based on my experiences abroad and those of fellow international students and building on the literature within international student mobility, I developed my research questions for this study:

1) How do mobility and place influence students' sense of self and of home?
2) How do different places (both 'at home' and abroad) mediate the sense of self and 'home'?
3) How and why do students' sense of self and 'home' change over time as part of international mobility?

This thesis seeks to respond to these questions as part of a deeper inquiry into the role of place and mobility in influencing the sense of self and of 'home' of Canadian exchange students in the Global South.

Conceptually and methodologically, this thesis contributes a unique focus on change. It therefore employs a qualitative longitudinal approach to investigate the changes to students' sense of self and 'home' over time by conducting three sets of semi-structured interviews. These three stages of data collection – pre-departure, mid-point and return – also frame and structure the empirical findings of this thesis. Change in this thesis is considered as a temporal, non-linear process in which students' pre-departure expectations and motivations influence their sense of 'home' and self while abroad and, likewise, these temporal segments can affect both self and 'home' upon return. It also contributes to visual methodologies by incorporating participant-directed photography as part of the final interview stage. Furthermore, this thesis makes an empirical contribution by considering the experience of Canadian students both studying and interning in the

Global South (i.e. countries in Latin America, Africa, South-East Asia, and parts of the Middle-East). Rather than separate study abroad students from volunteer or intern students as the literature has done, I consider both student groups and argue that despite their differences, they share a predominant and common motivation for self-discovery and self-development. The purpose of this study is not to compare student groups, nor to generalise or homogenise mobility experiences but, instead, to scrutinise the tropes of international mobility for self-discovery and self-change. The study unpacks the notion of 'comfort zone' to examine students' motivation for going abroad. The notion of comfort zone has been overlooked by geographers despite its potential for understanding and influencing geographical notions of space, boundary, 'home' and identity.

I argue that comfort is an emotion that is productive not only for self-discovery but also for feelings of 'home' and for distinction. The thesis broadly argues that students seek out encounters with difference abroad in order to feel or become different and finally to showcase difference to friends, family and peers as a marker of distinction. This thesis also suggests a more sharpened and refined conceptualisation of distinction by putting forward the notions of *collective distinction* and *individual distinction* to understand the complex and contradictory process of differentiation and distinction.

Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the notions of mobility, place, self and 'home' that structure the conceptual framework of this study. Given that the aims of my thesis are to explore how mobility and place influence students' sense of self and 'home', this chapter reviews the literature from the fields of mobility, travel and tourism rather than just international student mobility. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first discusses the conceptual underpinning of this thesis through the notions of mobility and place, as well as time and self. I follow recent conceptualisations of place and self as fluid and malleable. The second considers the motivations for mobility centred on the self and argues that self-discovery is processual and developmental, a perspective shared in the third section on mobile geographies of 'home'. The fourth section then takes up the field of emotional geographies and discusses motivations for international student mobility specifically.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological framework that was selected for this study. It begins with a consideration of emotional geographies within research and a review of research on mobility, self and 'home' that highlights the predominance of qualitative

methodologies and particularly semi-structured interviews for addressing the meanings and experiences of mobile individuals. The use of participant-directed photography through photo-elicitation is also discussed as an insightful yet neglected method within international student mobility. I argue that qualitative longitudinal interviews are best suited for capturing the process of students' meanings and experiences of self and 'home'. The research questions are reiterated before turning to the methodology that addresses the where, who, why and how of the study. The chapter concludes with personal reflections on relations of power and positionality within the research process.

Initiating the empirical part of this thesis, **Chapter 4** draws mainly on pre-departure interviews and some return interviews to explore the mobility motivations of leaving the comfort zone for self-discovery and self-change. It scrutinises the tropes of self-discovery within travel and study abroad narratives and works through the conceptual boundaries of the comfort zone to argue that a reflexive self is aligned along the geographical and imaginary borders of the Global South. In particular, the chapter reveals how familiarity, comfort and everyday practices constitute the comfort zone and are productive for self-discovery and self-change. It reveals that mundane practices abroad are used at first to leave the comfort zone and subsequently to rebuild comfort and familiarity as a means to integrate with the local culture and to extend the boundaries of the comfort zone as well as the sense of 'home'.

Chapter 5 follows along the notions of 'home', everyday life, familiarity and comfort to reveal how these are central for recreating a sense of 'home' abroad. Based on mid-point interviews and some return interviews, the chapter first explores how 'home' is reassessed, reconfigured and rediscovered through mobility and suggests that one of the notable discoveries for participants is that 'home' is in fact a *feeling*. Mundane practices, as this chapter shows, are used as a way to access insider knowledge and ultimately lay claims of belonging, but also to create a new comfort zone and sense of 'home'. More importantly, I argue that social networks are central to not only enabling a (re)discovery of 'home' but also a process of self-discovery.

Drawing on mainly return interviews and some mid-point interviews, **Chapter 6** considers the new personal attributes discovered and perceived by participants. It suggests that popular assumptions and rhetoric around study abroad is used to attest and justify a 'new' and improved self. The chapter reveals the role of social networks in enabling and disabling the self-development process. I suggest that family and friends are key to enabling and facilitating an ongoing process of self-discovery and personal growth. Narration is necessary to reconcile the different socio-spatial temporalities and maintain a

modified sense of self. I also argue that social networks are integral to a process of distinction. Indeed, the chapter contends that the return to Canada is in fact a process of narrating and performing difference and distinction. I propose a refined conceptualisation of distinction into two overlapping parts, whereby students negotiate a tension between a need for *individual* distinction and co-validating a *collective* distinction. I conclude by arguing and asserting that, rather than a final 'true' discovery, the international exchange is part of an ongoing process of transformation and self-discovery.

      Chapter 7 summarises the key findings and arguments of the thesis. It discusses the conceptual and empirical contributions of the study and outlines the central argument that comfort, familiarity, social networks and everyday life play a central role for self-discovery, home-making and distinction. I argue that these concepts offer valuable contributions to research on identity and international student mobility and more specifically to emotional geographies and geographies of home. This chapter argues that self-discovery and 'home' are processual and that international student exchanges are part of this ongoing developmental process rather than an end-product. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Mobile discoveries of 'home' and self

"Travel is a way of moving into something different, an intense temporality which carries the self" (Fullagar, 2002, p. 67)

This research project examines the role of mobility and place on the sense of self and 'home' of Canadian students in the Global South. Although there is much work on the relationship between mobility and identity, there is far less in the context of international student mobility and even less on the intersection of 'home', self and mobility within international exchanges. While the majority of the research on international student mobility is focused on mobility to and within the Global North, study exchanges to the Global South remain an overlooked area of student mobility.

Studies on the motivations for mobility abroad have, among many others, centred on the self and more specifically, individuals' expectations and perceptions of what mobility can offer for the self (Li, 2010; Marginson, 2014; Milstein, 2005). However, much of the work in this area is concerned with identifying motivations rather than critically examining their basis (Lesjak et al., 2015). While self-discovery, self-development and self-change are popularly identified as reasons to travel abroad, very few studies seem to have investigated the mechanisms for achieving such ends. In fact, recent work within the literature on the self has argued that self-identity is processual and developmental rather than static, and this study contributes to fluid and dynamic conceptualisations of self and 'home'.

Along with the mobility turn, 'home' has established itself as a topical and growing area of inquiry. While research continues to feed into geographies of home there are a number of conceptual and empirical pathways that remain unaddressed within the literature. How mobility, self and 'home' intersect within international student experiences continues to escape geographers' notice. 'Home' is both a place and a collection of feelings (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). The literature often notes that people *feel* 'at home' and yet, the emotional dimensions of 'home' and mobility are underdeveloped within this body of work. Likewise, despite the importance of emotions for international mobility and experiences of 'home' (Conradson and McKay, 2007) emotional geographies are still

largely neglected within international student mobility. These are but some of the lacunae that this thesis will address and which this chapter will discuss in more detail. More specifically, the conceptual framework presented in this literature review seeks to examine the interplay between emotions and mobility, and how experiences of international mobility and time influence students' sense of self and 'home'.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. It begins by presenting the conceptual framework that underpins and structures this thesis through the geographical concepts of place and mobility as well as wider notions of the self and time. It provides a broad analysis of how the relationship between mobility and place has been theorised, as well as their relationship with the self and the dimension of time. The second section examines some of the main motivations and theorisations within international mobility. These motivations provide some central conceptual pathways for the study of mobility and young people's sense of self and 'home'. The third part examines how 'home' has been conceptualised within the literature, from located and static to mobile and fluid. The final section explores some of the ways in which geographers have engaged with the burgeoning fields of research on emotional geographies and international student mobility. Following a discussion on emotions within mobility studies, it reviews existing work on motivations of international student mobility and suggests ways forward.

Placing the self within mobility: conceptual underpinnings

Mobility and place form an intimate conceptual relationship at the heart of the discipline of Geography. Yet, these two concepts have converged only recently within geographical scholarship. Previously considered antithetical, place and mobility are now regarded as highly compatible and interrelated concepts as this section will show (Arp Fallov et al., 2013). The section first reviews the different conceptualisations of both mobility and place before turning the discussion to the conceptual merger of both concepts and its relationship with the self and time.

Mobility

'Mobility' has become a popular focus in the social and geographical sciences. Recognition of mobility as the core of everyday life has been generated only recently within geography. While work by Clifford (1997), Augé (1995) and other scholars paved the way for current movement-based work, mobility – as distinguishable from other movement-based notions such as migration, travel and transportation research – has

notably risen to prominence in the last decade with the proclaimed 'mobility turn' and 'new mobilities paradigm' (Adey, 2006; Cresswell, 2011; Hannam et al., 2006; Sheller, 2014; Sheller and Urry, 2006). The calls for a paradigm shift and a mobility turn produced the *Mobilities* journal (established in 2006) that straddles different fields and disciplinary approaches to mobility and movement. As the journal emerged and the calls for academic attention resonated across the social sciences so too did geographers turn their interest towards the 'new' mobility turn. A critique of previously bounded, fixed and static approaches to mobility has dominated the emerging paradigm and "challenges the ways in which much social science research has been 'a-mobile'" (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p. 208). Traditionally, movement and mobility *per se* were largely taken-for-granted, disregarded and overlooked as subjects of serious individual/focal inquiry.

Notwithstanding its apparent novelty, Cresswell (2011, 2012) points out that mobility – and ideas about mobility – are not 'new'. There is indeed extant research on mobility prior to its 'turn' or 'newness' (Cresswell, 2011). The pivotal difference is in the new way that geographers have begun to engage with the concept, shifting from a traditional focus based on stability and fixity to a more holistic approach centred on movement and flow (Cresswell, 2010; Hannam et al., 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). From this perspective, work on mobility has done much to stretch its theoretical container beyond fixity to encompass the interrelated movements of people, ideas, information, objects, communication and technologies, and break down distinct scales between the local and global.

The research agenda foregrounds mobile theoretical and methodological shifts as part of a "broader project of establishing a movement-driven social science" (Urry, 2007, p. 18). Mapping the conceptual, theoretical and political trajectories and underpinnings of mobility has driven much of the research agenda in the field. Mobility has been theorised as material, embodied and imaginative (Adey, 2010; Cresswell, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006). Hannam et al. (2006) recognise "the corporeal body as an affective vehicle through which we sense place and movement, and construct emotional geographies" (p. 14). Imbued with meaning and emotions, mobility is considered as the meaningful and affective equivalent of movement (Adey, 2010; Cresswell, 2006).

In response to the emerging mobility paradigm some scholars have countered with an attention to stillness (Bissell and Fuller, 2010). (Im)mobility is not absolute. People, objects and information are never fully grounded; rather, they move at different speeds and in relation to other mobilities. Instead of distinguishing dual modes – mobile versus immobile – immobility can be viewed and understood as relative and relational. More specifically,

what Adey (2006) terms a 'relative immobility'. Adey and other scholars point to the inherently political dimensions of (im)mobilities (Adey, 2006, 2010; Cresswell, 2010; Massey, 1991) and in doing so, press forth a politics of mobility that reveals and underscores the social inequalities and power relations that permeate different forms of physical, virtual and imaginary movements. The question of who moves and who stays put is largely determined by social distributions of power. Mobility is therefore relative, relational and differential. As 'mobility' has outgrown fixed and bounded theorisations so too has the concept of 'place'.

Place

Place has been argued as fundamental to how we experience and understand the world (Cresswell, 2004; Malpas, 1999). Place as the meaningful equivalent of location has moved away from more traditional notions of boundedness and fixity to more fluid and malleable conceptualisations (Cresswell, 2004). Indeed, places are in a constant state of motion and flux. People, objects and information continuously move between and through locations leaving indelible impressions that reverberate through the very fabric and essence of place. Urry (2007) likens places to 'ships' that "travel, slow or fast, greater or shorter distances, within networks of human and non-human agents" (p. 42). Alongside the emerging mobilities paradigm, scholars argue for a relationality to place (Hannam et al., 2006; Massey, 1991, 1994). Massey (1991, 1994) dismantles the theoretical and conceptual boundaries of place arguing instead for a 'progressive sense of place' that blurs the scalar boundaries between the local and the global. Such an approach recognises that places are shaped by both global and local processes and is described by Massey (1991) as a necessary "global sense of the local, a global sense of place" (p. 29). Activities and mobilities are not isolated within the physical or imaginary borders of a place; rather, they stretch and interconnect within constellations and networks of people, ideas, images and materialities (Sheller and Urry, 2006). Places are thus made and remade in relation to material, virtual and social mobilities. Social networks constitute place-making and because these networks vary, change and extend beyond that of the local, so too do places. As such, places are never a finished product or project "but are always in becoming – in process" (Cresswell, 2002, p. 20). While scholars assert that places are open and dynamic processes in a complex network of social relations and mobilities (Massey, 1991, 1994; Cresswell, 2002; Sheller and Urry, 2006), Massey (1994) observes that there is an assumption that this openness and relative boundlessness is a recent phenomenon when in fact places have always been this way. Much like the 'new'

mobility paradigm, the newness factor is in the way geographers are reconceptualising notions of place.

Similarly, just as there is a politics of mobilities there is also a politics of place (Cresswell, 2004). Places are both a site and source of contestation and identity construction (Massey and Jess, 1995). As people ascribe meanings and identities to places at varying scales – be it the neighbourhood, city, region or nation – social tensions tend to arise between different groups contesting and vying for specific spaces, qualities and boundaries of a place. Aggravating such tensions are the different power geometries that underlie mobility and place (Massey, 1991, 1994). Since place and mobility are loaded with emotions and feelings (Urry, 2007), how people feel about particular places is a central focus of geographical work. Scholars also argue that a sense of self is tied to a sense of place (Buttimer, 1980; Malpas, 1999; Tuan, 1974, 1977) and that identities are mobile and relational (Easthope, 2009). In examining the relationship between place and mobility in the identity construction of returned migrants to Tasmania, Easthope (2009) argues that mobility and place are not exclusive within identity construction; rather, "identities are incomplete, relational, and hybrid as well as constructed in relation to place and mobility" (p. 75). Thus, mobility and place are not only co-constituted but co-construct identities.

Time and self

The notions of self and identity intersect with mobility and place in complex but mutual ways. Much like place and mobility, identities are processual and fluid. Even within the specific context of travel Crang (2004) states that "both places and tourists are processual" (p. 82). Peoples' sense of self is no more rigid or bounded than conceptual notions of place and mobility; rather, the self is malleable and dynamic and always subject to change from social, political and environmental influences.

The terms 'identity' and 'self' are often used synonymously within the literature on mobility, travel and tourism (Desforges, 2000) as scholars vary in their use of terminology on 'identity' by interchanging between terms, such as identity and sense of self (White and White, 2004; Wilson and Harris, 2006), personal identity and sense of self (Cohen, 2010; Li, 2010) and self-identity and personhood (Desforges, 1998, 2000). Cohen (2010) points out that despite differences "the permeability of self and identity as concepts allows them to sometimes merge into each other" (p. 118). Indeed, notions of identity, self-identity and sense of self have become interlinked through conceptual commonalities of relationality, fluidity and process (Cohen, 2010). In examining the processes through which tourism and

mobility affect young people's self-identity, Desforges (2000) explains that the notion of self "points to a sense of personhood at a more individualistic scale than identity" (p. 930). Wearing and Wearing (2001) propose a processual self that "is reflexive and open to development through fresh experiences such as travel" (p. 144). As such, this thesis adopts a definition of self to include both manifest and latent attitudes, beliefs and ideas of oneself as a social individual (Desforges, 2000; Proshansky et al., 1983).

Along with archaic conceptualisations of identity as rigid and stable the notion of an essentialist 'true self' has been eroded (Cohen, 2010). Li (2010) observes that the "shift from a static, discoverable self to the one that is fluid and constructed, parallels developments in the conceptualisation of identity" (p. 195). Indeed, Erichsen (2011) notes that "a postmodern perspective on selves and identity offers us a conception of the self as in flux, continually changing, and always becoming" (p. 128). While Schlegel et al. (2011) consider that the metaphor of self-discovery provides a meaningful personal and inner search for individuals, Wearing and Wearing (2001) suggest that an emotional, malleable and non-essentialist self offers more meaning to people's lives. Although some participants in this study articulate and imply a search for a 'true self', this thesis challenges such a static perspective of self and supports a notion of self-discovery as processual and developmental. In addition to conceptual overlaps between terminologies of identity and self, this thesis considers notions of self-discovery, self-/personal growth, self-/personal development and self-/personal change to have similar yet different meanings. All three notions are processual and developmental but for the purpose of this study, I clarify their meanings as follows. First, self-discovery is defined as a self-reflexive search for understanding both latent and taken-for-granted traits and characteristics of the self. Second, self-/personal development or self-/personal growth is a process of developing and acquiring favourable attributes and qualities with the aim to 'improve' the self. Third, self-/personal change is defined as a process of modifying traits and characteristics of the self. Personal traits, qualities and characteristics in all three cases include values, behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and views.

This thesis therefore takes the concepts of mobility, place and self to be fluid, dynamic and processual. The term 'process' also implies a temporal dimension. Scholars assert that time is inseparable from mobility, space and place (Cresswell, 2006; Massey, 1994; Urry, 2007). As Tuan (1974) notes, "time is needed to create place" (p. 245). Indeed, time cannot easily be extracted from notions that fundamentally constitute and structure our experience of this world. The mobility turn is argued by Hannam et al. (2006) to have disrupted "existing linear assumptions about temporality and timing" (p. 13) with Sheller

(2014) highlighting the increasing interest in temporalities as part of the mobility paradigm. As Cresswell (2006) argues, "movement is made up of time and space. It is the spatialisation of time and temporalisation of space. Any consideration of movement (and mobility) that does not take time and space into account is missing an important facet" (p. 4). Travel is "an intense temporality which carries the self" and is as temporal as it is spatial (Fullagar, 2002, p. 67). Temporality is therefore integral to understanding the intersection of place, mobility and self. The notion of time in this thesis is understood and engaged with as a series of events and moments that constitute a process of change.

Mobility and place influence people's sense of self in complex spatial and temporal ways. The next section reviews the literature on theories and motivations of international mobility for capital, difference and distinction, challenge and finally, self-discovery, development and change.

Mobility and self-centred motivations

The terms of travel, tourism and mobility, despite varying disciplinary and conceptual definitions, share similar experiences of movement that are both physical and meaningful. Although this thesis will at times employ these terms to designate essentially the same meaning, this study has opted for 'mobility' as a more appropriate term within the context of mobile students across international borders. Despite similarities, international student mobility does not fit neatly into the context of travel or tourism. As this thesis will show, internationally mobile students do not view themselves, nor want others to view them as travellers, migrants or tourists. This is for a number of reasons. First, Findlay et al. (2006) comment that the term and notion of 'mobility' is best suited for research on "within-programme moves, typically for periods of 3–12 months, followed by a return to the 'home' institution" and in the case of students who view their sojourns abroad in terms of a temporary movement rather than a tourism or travel experience (p. 293). Second, universities also refer to exchange programmes as 'mobility' schemes. Third, as the empirical chapters will demonstrate, international students seek to distinguish themselves from tourists and travellers and therefore resist and eschew these labels. As such, this section discusses the different motivations within the mobility, travel and tourism literature centered on the self. These include capital accumulation, distinction, self-discovery and self-development and the notion of comfort zone.

Capitalising on mobility: capital accumulation

Bourdieu's (1997) notions of human capital – although originally not tied explicitly to mobility – are now well-incorporated within the literature on mobility and migration. Human capital is a highly sought out asset and a means of improving and enriching one's skill set and financial earning power. Studies linking mobility motivations to the acquisition of different forms of human capital are expanding within the literature, most notably on social capital (Findlay et al., 2006; King et al., 2011; Larsen et al., 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Ryan et al., 2008; Urry, 2002; Waters and Brooks, 2011) and cultural capital (Bótas and Huisman, 2013; Desforges, 1998, 2000; Erel, 2010; Fechter, 2007; Findlay et al., 2006; Holloway et al., 2012; King et al., 2011; Munt, 1994; Waters, 2012, 2006). Social capital refers to a collection of resources based on privileged relationships and networks of social connections and/or membership to a group (Bourdieu, 1979, 1997). Cultural capital – as embodied, objectified and institutionalised – is based on a set of qualities or attributes transmitted through family or acquired first-hand, which include knowledge, skills, qualifications, material goods and education (Bourdieu, 1997; Erel, 2010). Subsumed as part of cultural capital, the sub-forms of symbolic capital – that is, the recognition of distinctive qualities and competences endowed with a certain prestige (Bourdieu, 1979, 1997; Sin, 2013; Waters, 2007) – and linguistic capital – the acquisition and ability to master and use an international language (Baláz and Williams, 2004; Bótas and Huisman, 2013; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) – have also been discussed within the body of work on mobility. Studies have also discussed mobility capital defined by Murphy-Lejeune (2002) in the context of international study as the accumulation of mobility experiences gained through previous personal experiences, family history of mobility and/or contacts abroad (Findlay et al., 2006; King et al., 2011).

Much of the recent discussions in the tourism and mobility literatures acknowledge the reasons for, and value of, travel for facilitating and enhancing such forms of capital accumulation. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) describes that the primary difference between internationally mobile students and their non-mobile peers lies in the accumulation of mobility capital which enables "individuals to enhance their skills because of the richness of the international experience gained by living abroad" (p. 51). However, scholars argue that not only are most travellers *already* endowed with mobility capital but they are part of a 'migratory elite' (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) that often reproduce (dis)advantage and privilege through their travels (Waters, 2012; King et al., 2011). Clare et al. (2009) highlight how underlying postcolonial projects are implicated within the internationalisation of higher education and influence the experience of international students. The authors emphasise

"the discourses, power hierarchies, and social relations" that underpin international student mobility (p. 43). Simply being a traveller from the Western world can automatically infer gains of cultural capital (Fechter, 2007). Privileged individuals and groups are often pre-disposed with mobility capital and 'motility' capital – the capacity to be mobile in terms of access to, and competence and appropriation of, spatial and social forms of mobility (Kaufmann et al., 2004). Possession of such capitals prior to actual movement in space allows individuals to carry and enhance their capital gains through mobility. Urry (2002) points out that "for many social groups it is the lack of mobility that is the real problem and they will seek to enhance their social capital through access to greater mobility" (p. 264). An exception to this is the recent expansion of transnational education where international degrees are offered in students' home country allowing them to acquire institutionalised forms of social and cultural capital within their national borders. For example, in the case of Malaysian students enrolled in a UK degree in their home country, local cultural and social capital was valued above that of international education in the host country (Sin, 2013). In such exceptional cases, domestic education and hence, spatial immobility can be regarded as more profitable for capital acquisition than international educational mobility. Yet these cases are indeed exceptional. As Waters and Leung's (2012) study on transnational education in Hong Kong shows, local students enrolled in an off-shore British degree program can incur 'reduced privileges' in comparison to their peers studying abroad and at domestic universities (see also Leung and Waters, 2013). This could explain why transnational education – but also international studies – are sometimes viewed as 'second chance' opportunities to access higher education and cultural and social capital (Brooks and Waters, 2009a, 2009b; Waters and Leung, 2012). Travel to a different place allows individuals to meet and connect with new people and social groups, and through such encounters – whether with people of similar or diverse backgrounds – individuals can develop new acquaintances and friendships that extend their network ties and thus, an accumulation of social capital.

Among the reasons for seeking cultural and social capital acquisition through (international) mobility are the opportunities to improve career prospects (Findlay et al., 2006; Waters, 2012), elevate one's social class (Desforges, 2000; Fechter, 2007) and for self-improvement and distinction (Bótas and Huisman, 2013; Desforges, 1998; Findlay et al. 2012). An overseas education is considered to afford students with increased intercultural and interpersonal skills and second language acquisition as well as qualities of openness, confidence and independence that are highly sought out in the labour market. Young people, aware that prospective employers value and hold international

mobility in high regard, seek out such skills and qualities through international studies (Findlay et al., 2005). Stocking up on cultural and social capital provides students with assets that can be converted into economic capital through better employment opportunities and potentially a higher financial return. Social networks cultivated during the stay abroad can include contacts that may afford benefits in terms of job prospects. In other words, being connected to the right individuals and groups has advantages and privileges that can lead to future employment opportunities. It comes down to 'who' you know. For others, it is a matter of who you marry. In their study of Kazakhstani women studying in the UK, Holloway et al. (2012) demonstrate how geographies of cultural capital are gendered and differentiated. The women in their sample sought cultural capital abroad with the aim "to convert this into positional advantage after graduation" (p. 2281). While gender inequality and discrimination in some job markets can incite women to pursue an international education in order to improve their career prospects, the authors point out that cultural capital alone is not sufficient for attaining this positional advantage; they must also find a supportive and open-minded husband upon return who will allow them to use this capital. Different forms of capital are recognised and valorised differently based on gender, class and ethnicity, as well as over time and space (Erel, 2010). As my study will show, cultural capital is dependent on the recognition of friends, family members and peers in Canada.

Cultural and social capital acquired through international mobility is used upon return by mobile students as a way to distinguish themselves from non-mobile peers in the home (and international) labour market. The return to the home country and entry into the job market can involve a process of showcasing cultural capital through narratives of self-development and self-identity (Desforges, 1998). Bourdieu (1997) states that "the work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost" (p. 48). Bótas and Huisman (2013) echo these words as they suggest that international exchanges are a way to incite "self-improvement" (p. 748). Attending a 'world-class' university overseas, for example, is deemed to impart symbolic capital that can act "as a distinguishing identity marker" (Findlay et al., 2012, p. 128). In the case of young Australian travellers, tourism functioned as a way to both enhance and define their self-identity in relation to their peers (Lewis et al., 2010). However, some studies suggest that, rather than intentional, acquisition of cultural capital through international educational mobility can be accidental (Waters et al., 2011; Waters and Brooks, 2010). In other words, rather than set out abroad with the purpose and intention to accrue cultural and social

capital, some students – including those in my study – discover along the way (or following their sojourn) the benefits of mobility for various forms of capital acquisition and distinction.

Difference and distinction: distinguishing between different forms

Since Bourdieu's (1979) notion of distinction is entrenched in cultural capital acquisition, so too it is within mobility. A growing number of scholars have connected notions of human capital and distinction to studies of mobility, tourism and more recently, international student mobility (Desforges, 1998; Findlay et al., 2012; Heath, 2007; Holloway et al., 2012; King et al., 2011; Munt, 1994; Waters, 2007). Distinction arises when individuals struggle and compete to attain and obtain valuable symbolic and cultural signs. Such acquisition endows its owner with distinctive qualities that distinguishes them from less worthy or able competitors. Those that collect and acquire the most valuable and desirable signs or goods raise their social profile and status as well as their worth as an individual. The threat of being surpassed by opponents forces the current master possessor of distinctive qualities into a continuous symbolic competition to achieve greater quantities, and newer qualities, of distinction.

Studies demonstrate that the acquisition of cultural and social capital through international mobility enables individuals to achieve a mark of distinction (Waters, 2007). 'Collecting places' and differences through mobility allow travellers in Desforges' (1998) study to profess an authority over a particular part of the world (in this case, the Global South) that distinguishes them from other non-travellers back home. The term difference in this thesis is used in the sense of a different and changed self and to denote distinction, as in possessing an aspect or, in this case, an experience that others do not have. Indeed, Desforges (1998) explains that "by using travel as a form of cultural capital which serves as a sign of distinction, travellers gain access to a social class and its consequent privileges" (p. 185). Collecting experiences in the Global South acts as a marker of achievement and difference (Munt, 1994) and affords greater prospects of employability (Breen, 2012). Travel to parts of the world regarded as more 'authentic' and considered as less visited by other tourists differentiates travellers from the frowned upon masses and plays a "significant role in defining social distinction" (Munt, 1994, p. 102). The process of collecting social and cultural capital, resources and other markers of value, inscribes travellers and mobile individuals into a contest and pursuit of distinction with other travellers (Heath, 2007).

Gap years and overseas experiences are a popular rite of passage (King et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2010) and mode of travel for young people to differentiate themselves from their non-mobile peers at home. In the case of Heath's (2007) study, gap years give prospective students a distinctive edge over other applicants for admission to 'elite' institutions. This inevitably results in a small yet privileged group of young people – an "elite within an elite" – reproducing advantage and social differentiation (King et al., 2011, p. 165). Once accepted into a reputable and elite institution these students benefit from a 'world-class' education that differentiates and distinguishes them from less privileged peers (Findlay et al., 2012). As Findlay et al. (2012) observe, "simply by being 'different', they saw themselves as achieving 'distinction' through mobility" (p. 129). Indeed, one of the main motivations for international student mobility is to acquire institutional cultural capital through reputable educational qualifications in order to "stand out from the crowd in the competition for lucrative employment opportunities" (Holloway et al., 2012, p. 2279). In doing so, students perpetuate advantage and distinction, widening the inequality gap between themselves and their less fortunate peers.

However, not only do young people seek to distinguish themselves from non-mobile peers but also from other travellers and international students. In other words, once the well-travelled have established their difference from relatively immobile peers, they seek to measure their success against the experiences and capital of fellow travellers. As such, it is not simply a matter of – or, at least, does not stop at – who travels and who does not (nor mobile versus non-mobile) but of moving up the ranks in the competition for higher recognition. Distinction is always (re)negotiated in relation to other individuals, and in order to stay ahead of the competition for distinction, individuals "must endlessly redefine themselves in terms of distinction which always defines itself negatively in relation to [others]" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249). As is the case of Koreans on working holidays in Canada, their "effort to develop the self … is often accompanied by constant measurement based on certain standards and comparisons with others" (Yoon, 2014, p.1025). Travellers, as a result, continuously seek out newer and rarer experiences abroad in order to increase their social prestige and ultimately outshine and outclass others in the ongoing symbolic battle for greater distinction, and participants in this study are no exception.

In continuously redefining the stakes of the 'game', players must entice others – especially those less endowed with distinctive qualities – to 'play' in order to generate a pursuit of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 247). As individuals stack themselves against others of comparable calibre, different ranks and categories of distinction emerge within a hierarchy of differentiation. Distinction emanates from a competitive process of

differentiation but it is also itself differentiated. This thesis argues that there is a need to sharpen and deconstruct the notion of distinction into different sub-forms. It thus advances that individuals develop different forms or categories of distinction. The reasons for this are, on the one hand, to generate interest and value for the game and, on the other, to single out and reward players at different levels. In other words, newer travellers with little mileage and experience will seek to distinguish themselves from non-travellers but will happily join the ranks of average tourists or mass tourism. Meanwhile, well-travelled people will distinguish themselves from these emerging competitors in the lower ranks and, instead, strive to outdo more experienced or advanced travellers by visiting places seen as 'more exotic' and collecting greater experiences or distinctive qualities (whatever that may mean as the stakes evolve). Bourdieu (1984) explains that

> "the recognition of distinction that is affirmed in the effort to possess it, … helps to maintain constant tension in the symbolic goods market, forcing the possessors of distinctive properties threatened with popularization to engage in an endless pursuit of new properties through which to assert their rarity" (p. 249).

This thesis thus argues that there is a need to understand the underlining tension between different forms of distinction and highlight the iterative process. Studies on distinction within international student mobility are relatively recent in the literature and this thesis not only contributes to such work but advances and refines the notion of distinction into two categories (as discussed in Chapter 6).

Furthermore, capital acquisition and distinction within international mobility are tied to processes and discourses of personal reinvention (Conradson and Latham, 2007; Waters et al., 2011) and self-repacking (Yoon, 2014). The next section reviews notions of self-development and self-change linked to capital acquisition and distinction, as well as the notion of self-discovery popular within travel narratives and discourses.

Mobile and transformative notions of the self

As discussed in the previous section, part of the process of gaining distinction (and hence, cultural and social capital) is linked to processes of self-development and 'identity work' (Heath, 2007). In most cases, a mark of distinction attests to an individual's ability to acquire the 'right' kind of resources and capital to differentiate their personality from, and elevate themselves among, others vying for the same symbolic recognition. In other words,

"what is at stake is indeed 'personality', i.e., the quality of the person, which is affirmed in the capacity to appropriate an object of quality. The objects endowed with the greatest distinctive power are those which most clearly attest the quality of the appropriation, and therefore the quality of their owner, because their possession requires time and capacities … which therefore appear as the surest indications of the quality of the person" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 278).

Bourdieu (1984) – as cited previously – suggests that self-improvement is part and parcel of capital acquisition. Thus, mobility for capital accumulation (and hence distinction) is also, in part, mobility for personal development and self-identity. Travel is argued as a search for self-identity and a way to 'better' the self (Wilson and Harris, 2006, p. 165). Indeed, the main motivations for travel and international mobility are centred on the self and more specifically, on self-discovery and self-development (Anderson and Erskine, 2014; Bagnoli, 2009; Brown, 2009a; Cary, 2004; Cohen, 2010; Conradson and Latham, 2005; Desforges, 1998, 2000; Heath, 2007; Galani-Mouta, 2000; Lepp, 2008; MacCannell, 1999; Yoon, 2014). Christou (2011) notes that "experiences of mobile subjects become a process of self-searching, self-reflection, transition and transformation" (p. 253). In some cases, self-discovery and personal growth were not travel motivations from the outset but instead, were "discovered along the journey or reflected upon once at home" (Wilson and Harris, 2006, p. 165). Much of the literature on mobility, identity and self-discovery uses various terms to essentially describe the same motivations and/or outcomes of travel regarding the self[3]. As defined in the previous chapter, this thesis will use primarily the notions of self-discovery and self-/personal development in relation to students' sense of self, but will occasionally interchange with similar terms used by scholars within the literature and participants in this study.

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, the notion of an essentialist 'true self' – even if individuals (including participants in this study) still cling to the notion and draw meaning from the idea (Schlegel et al., 2011) – is now contested by scholars and is viewed as a 'myth' and "chasing a mirage" (Cohen, 2010, p. 129). Hence, this thesis

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[3] See, for example, personal reinvention (Waters et al., 2011; Conradson and Latham, 2007), self-repacking (Yoon, 2014), identity reconstruction (Bagnoli, 2009; Li, 2010), revising a self-understanding (Brown, 2009a), searching for self (Cohen, 2010), self-exploration (Conradson and Latham, 2005), reconsideration and reframing of identity (Conradson and Latham, 2007), re-narrating self-identity (Desforges, 2000), personal enrichment (Heath, 2007), self-reflection (Li, 2010), identity re-evaluation (Li, 2010), self-formation (Marginson, 2014), self-redefinition (White and White, 2004), and self-transformation (Bruner, 1991) among many others.

contributes to the notion of a self that is always in development and is constructed through "experiences and choices" (Schlegel et al., 2011, p. 986). It engages with the notion of self-discovery – as used by participants in this study – to contribute to a growing literature on mobility and self-discovery and, more specifically, mobility *for* self-discovery. Self-discovery as a motivation for travel has not yet received sufficient scrutiny. Thus, this thesis scrutinises self-discovery as an unproblematic motivation for international mobility by investigating beyond matter-of-fact motivational accounts and deepening descriptive accounts.

Some studies suggest that, rather than implying an innate discoverable self, the term 'self-discovery' is often used by individuals to denote a process of self-reflection. In fact, different groups can have varying meanings and definitions for 'self-discovery'. For young Koreans on working holidays abroad, the 'true self' meant being away from the parental and social environment of their home (Yoon, 2014). Indeed, a new environment can provide a context "in which aspects of oneself can be mirrored or reflected back in a new light" (White and White, 2004, p. 207). A Canadian tourist in Harrison's (2001) study expresses that travel provides "the opportunity, even accidentally, to bump into parts of yourself that you did not even know that you had" (p. 167) – an experience of self-discovery that Cary (2004) later refers to as a "tourist moment" (p 73). Self-discovery means "finding out about an inner strength, about hidden abilities, and about interests and previously unacknowledged passions" (Yair, 2008, p. 101). Li (2010) reveals that, through overseas travel, Chinese travellers gained "new resources to describe and understand their sense of self" (p. 210). More specifically, "living for a period of time in another culture allowed them to extend their sense of self by discovering attitudes and assumptions they carried, which would have remained unknown to them had they stayed in the familiar surroundings of their home country" (Li, 2010, p. 209). Self-discovery is thus about (re)discovering latent beliefs and attitudes that lay dormant or subsumed below our awareness. But it is, more importantly, a process of self-reflection and of evaluating one's beliefs and attitudes facilitated by a novel context or environment and subsequently making the desired self-changes (Li, 2010).

Self-change and self-development often go hand in hand with self-discovery. Searching for the self through mobility usually implies a process of personal growth. Conradson and Latham (2007) note how the overseas experience of New Zealanders is a way "to cultivate new forms of selfhood" (p. 237). Even more so, studies on self-discovery and personal development within the mobility and travel literature point to a pluralised definition of self (Anderson and Erskine, 2014; Marginson, 2014). In the case of

international students, mobility enabled the discovery and "heightened awareness of plural selves" (Marginson, 2014, p. 14). Marginson (2014) argues that international education should be understood as a complex process of self-formation wherein "students mix and match identities" selected from a socially and culturally structured repertoire of choices (p. 7). Investigating motivations and processes of self-discovery and self-transformation is important because "personal change is not only what we learn, but how we choose to incorporate it into our understandings of ourselves and our worlds" (Erichsen, 2011, p. 127). Indeed, the complexity and process of self-development and self-change is based on a multitude of social, familial, cultural, educational, linguistic and other factors.

Moreover, mobility not only offers a new perspective on our lives but also that of others. Li (2010) argues that self-discovery does not necessarily lead to permanent changes but instead "facilitated a learning process in which they obtained new resources to understand themselves as well as others" (p. 211). Likewise, social experiences during travel influence processes of self-discovery and personal growth (Montgomery, 2010; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). Tourists in Alexander et al.'s (2010) study of vacation travel claim that their journey of self-discovery was significantly attributed to encounters with other people – a view shared by participants in my own study. Alongside the social are a number of complex factors that are influential in shaping a sense of self. The next section will discuss how physical, social and cultural contexts – among others – are central to facilitating an inner journey of self-discovery and personal development. It will review the notions of challenge, comfort zone and boundaries within mobility motivations and illustrate how these three notions are interrelated as well as influence the sense of self.

Challenging the comfort zone

Travel abroad has been popularised as a form of challenge. From intrepid explorers to package tourists the journey into foreign and unfamiliar places is riddled with challenging contexts that are said to test the physical and mental abilities of the traveller. Studies within the travel literature note the dimension of 'challenge' as a motivating factor for international mobility (Anderson and Erskine, 2014; Galani-Mouta, 2000; Intolubbe-Chmil et al., 2012; White and White, 2004). More notably, challenge provides a context for self-discovery (Yair, 2008) and for self-growth by overcoming various struggles and obstacles. Those individuals seeking a challenge by going abroad are, by association, hoping to undergo a process of self-discovery and personal growth.

Mobility to a new and different place abroad can bring about a powerful journey of the self that is both reflexive and transformative. The extent of the self-discovery and personal development will vary according to the different types of travel people are engaged in (Li, 2010), with longer sojourns and permanent geographical moves affecting more durable changes to the self. Anderson and Erskine (2014) argue that the motivation for lifestyle travel is for an "identity challenge and transformation" (p. 2). The aim of this challenge is ultimately to achieve self-development through geographical place change. Lifestyle travellers are motivated by "a love for change and mobility" – what the authors have termed as 'tropophilia' (Anderson and Erskine, 2014, p. 6). The term "refers to an individual's need *to move* and *be moved* and to be stimulated and challenged in terms of their relations to place" (original emphasis, p. 6). Being in a different place through mobility is what constitutes the challenge. The environment of the Australian Outback provided long-term travellers with physical and cultural challenges that tested their sense of self (White and White, 2004). Self-discovery is arguably sought and achieved "under conditions of risk, of possible failure and frustration" (Yair, 2008, p. 101). Travel for this adventurous group offered "a way of challenging and extending themselves physically and intellectually" (White and White, 2004, p. 208). Similarly, Galani-Mouta (2000) suggests that physical and intellectual challenges sought through a different cultural and geographical environment can result in a process of self-discovery. Both these studies indicate that the challenges that come from travel relate to boundaries, both external and within the self (Galani-Mouta, 2000; Minh-ha, 1994; White and White, 2004). Novel experiences in a different physical location can result in "the over-stepping of normative boundaries" of backpackers' sense of self (Cohen, 2003, p. 104). Minh-ha (1994) comments that "travelling can thus turn out to be a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries" (p. 23). This temporary absence of familiar boundaries while new ones are formed is what White and White (2004) refer to as the 'transitional zone'. However, rather than the idea of a loss or over-stepping of boundaries, Galani-Mouta (2000) posits instead that travel can involve a "re-setting of boundaries" (p. 204) wherein self-discovery and personal change come from "learning to be more comfortable in uncomfortable situations" (Root and Ngampornchai, 2013, p. 523). In other words, the challenge is to step outside of the 'comfort zone'.

The notion of 'comfort zone' is best known within studies of pedagogy (Boler and Zembylas, 2003; Wiltse et al., 2014) and outdoor education (Brown, 2008b; Prouty et al., 2007), and while it is a well-documented motivation within international mobility (Chaban et al., 2011; Douglas and Jones-Rikkers, 2001; Doyle et al., 2010; Eden, 2014; Forsey et al.,

2012; Santoro and Major, 2012; Wilson and Harris, 2006), it lacks substance and analysis, often only mentioned briefly or metaphorically. Chaban et al. (2011) indicate that one of the main motivations for New Zealanders to sojourn abroad is for the "challenge of living outside one's comfort zone" (p. 787). Likewise, students from New Zealand in Doyle et al.'s (2010) study were primarily seeking a challenge and personal growth by being outside their comfort zone. Interviews with recently returned Australian students assert that getting out of the comfort zone was an important learning experience of the sojourn abroad (Forsey et al., 2012). Study abroad programs also want to ensure that their students meet this challenge. Outgoing students at an American university were required to participate prior to their study abroad in an intercultural pedagogy training designed to "facilitate [their] exploration out of their comfort zone and into the complexity of intercultural similarities and differences" (Pedersen, 2010, p. 73). Indeed, studies suggest that extending the boundaries of the comfort zone enables individuals to stretch their sense of self (Brown, 2009a; Hansel, 1988; Intolubbe-Chmil et al., 2012). As Brown (2009a) notes, "it is commonly claimed that sojourners undergo a journey of self-discovery as removal from the comfort of the familiar forces them to test and stretch their resourcefulness and to revise their self-understanding" (p. 505). Despite the widespread use of the term 'comfort zone' within travel and mobility studies a conceptual definition remains absent from the literature.

Brown (2008b) points out that there appears to be no extant documented theory for the comfort zone within educational and psychological literature but that within adventure education literature the comfort zone "is based on the belief that when placed in a stressful situation people will respond by overcoming their fear and therefore grow as individuals" (p. 3). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines the comfort zone as "a place, situation, or level where someone feels confident and comfortable." Whilst the term is inherently geographical, it continues to escape geographers' notice and remains marginalised – if not entirely neglected – within geographical scholarship. This thesis therefore contributes to the mobility literature on the 'comfort zone' by developing a conceptual understanding of the notion within international student mobility.

'Home' can also be part of the comfort zone, and while a sense of self is influenced by mobility and place, so too are people's sense of 'home'. Theorisations of 'home' have followed along the same conceptual path as those of mobility and place. Similarly, a sense of self is closely bounded up with notions and feelings of 'home'. The next section will discuss the different approaches used to conceptualise 'home' within the literature through a mobilities lens.

Mobile geographies of home

The term 'home' commonly conjures up images and ideas of a household or physical residence. Even within everyday language the notion of 'home' often connotes a material and physical space and is often conflated with similar terms such as 'housing' and 'dwelling' (Kellett and Moore, 2003). Much of the original literature on 'home' upheld and represented such material and simplistic assumptions and while 'home' can indeed signify physical and material features, it is now widely recognised that 'home' represents much more than a physical space where one resides. 'Home' is a concept that is multi-spatial, multi-faceted and hence, multi-definitional. It is a multi-layered and loaded notion (Mallett, 2004; Moore, 2000). In this perspective, the concept of 'home' remains ambiguous and multifarious and always susceptible to a myriad of interpretations from both subjects and researchers.

Much like mobility and place, scholars underscore how conceptualisations and meanings of 'home' have shifted from fixed and stable to mobile and fluid (Chambers, 1994; Nowicka, 2007; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). 'Home' has outgrown its conceptual physical container. Indeed, its definitional lexicon has expanded contextually, conceptually and in complexity. 'Home' is no longer seen as a rigid entity but rather as an "ongoing process" of home-making (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 10). Home-making is the perspective that 'home' is made and part of a process of creating and recreating homely practices, spaces, objects and relationships (Blunt and Dowling, 2006) and this thesis contributes to this fluid and multifaceted perspective. Geographers have been influential in developing and stretching a conceptual understanding of 'home' beyond stationary, located and material notions (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Blunt, 2005, Blunt and Varley, 2004; McDowell, 1999; Relph, 1976; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011; Tuan, 1975; Valentine, 2001). Although Tuan and Relph define 'home' as a place, they more importantly conceptualise the notion as a center of meaning from which subsequent works – including this thesis – continue to build on.

Scholars have engaged with 'home' through different contexts, such as 'home' and gender (Blunt, 2005; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Constable, 1999; McDowell, 1999; Webster, 1998), 'home' and migration (Case, 1996; Chambers, 1994; Fortier, 2003; Gustafson, 2001; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011), 'home' and homeland (Schama, 1991; Skey, 2011), 'home' and homelessness (Kellett and Moore, 2003; Somerville, 1992), 'home' and queerness (Fortier, 2001, 2003), 'home' and colonialism (Duncan and Lambert, 2004;

Webster, 1998), 'home' and materiality (Reimer and Leslie, 2004; Walsh, 2006). Geographers, more specifically, suggest ways forward for research on 'home' through critical geographies of home (Brickell, 2012; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; McDowell, 1999) and geographies of home and mobility (Ahmed et al., 2003; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Allen (2008) notes that researching the experiences and meanings of home within mobility offers a "rich opportunity to address gaps" within the literature on geographies of home (p. 86).

Just as the concepts mobility and place are meaningfully interrelated, Ahmed et al. (2003) argue that 'home' and mobility should not be treated separately; rather – as this thesis addresses – research should examine how the relationship between 'home' and mobility is constituted. As Germann Molz (2008) explains, "the question, then, is not whether home matters anymore amidst all this mobility, but rather how home matters" (p. 326). From this perspective, this study situates its inquiry and focus within mobile geographies of 'home'. The following sections examine the relationship between 'home' and the emotional self; the notion of 'home' as a space and feeling of comfort and familiarity; the temporality of 'home'; and finally, the traveller or migrant's return 'home'.

'Home' and the self: what a (mobile) feeling!

Blunt and Dowling (2006) describe 'home' as "both a place/physical location and a set of feelings" (p. 22). As Ahmed (1999) explains: "the question of home and being at home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect: being at home is here a matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel*" (original emphasis, p. 341). People *feel* 'at home' as much as they move *to/from*, *with* and *between* home(s). 'Home' is intensely emotional, affective and sensorial. Homely experiences are highly visceral and embodied (Ahmed, 1999; Johnston and Longhurst, 2012; Longhurst et al., 2009). Ahmed (1999) compares the sensorial experience of 'home' to that of embodying a "second skin" (p. 341). It is therefore unsurprising that as 'home' is wrapped up in the senses it is also wrapped in our sense of self.

Scholars assert that identity and self are embedded in feelings, meanings and ideas of 'home' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Buttimer, 1980; Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Easthope, 2004; Liu, 2014; Pocock and McIntosh, 2013; Porteous, 1975; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011; Rapport and Dawson, 1998; Reimer and Leslie, 2004; Sarup, 1994; Wise, 2000; Wiles, 2008; White, 2002). Identity is considered to be connected to specific home-places and indeed, place is a site that can articulate a sense of self (Cuba and Hummon, 1993). Cuba and Hummon (1993) suggest that 'home' is a place that stores symbols

associated with people's identities. They define "the existence of place identity … as expressions of at-homeness" (p. 553). In this same view, Rose (1995) indicates that identity can be attached to place if one feels a sense of belonging and homeliness. As she explains: "part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place" (p. 89) and this appears to also be the case for participants in my study (as discussed in Chapter 6). More so, Conradson and Latham (2007) posit that "because every place offers the self something, and thus every place could become home" (p. 248). Rapport and Dawson (1998) note that 'home' is where identity is best mediated and "where one best knows oneself," but the authors acknowledge that this does not necessarily mean one's happiest self (p. 9). Home-places can engender frustration and isolation. In her study of young adults staying at the parental household, White (2002) states that 'home' is part of the foundation of identity formation. (In)dependence and relationships (or lack thereof) at the parental home can affect the way we feel about ourselves. Indeed, Terkenli (1995) comments that "people construct their geographies of home at the interface between their self and their world" (p. 325) while Al-Ali and Koser (2002) assert that a sense of identity and of self is attached to different conceptualisations of 'home'. In her study of New Zealand migrants in London, Wiles' (2008) findings indicate that participants' sense of identity is constructed around a shared collective idea of 'home'. As migrants' identities can also be 'here' and 'there', King (1995) observes that "when they are abroad they tend to identify with home, when they are back home they identify with abroad" (p. 29). If 'home' and the self are intimately connected, then how does mobility influence our sense of self and of 'home'?

Scholars argue that the sense of self is influenced and changed by journeys and experiences abroad (Eakin, 1996; Sarup, 1994). Rapport and Dawson (1998) note that mobility is fundamental to the sense of self and that identity is inextricably connected to mobility across time and space. International mobility can bring national identities to the forefront and reinforce the idea of the nation as a homely place (Skey, 2011). 'Home' is often aligned along national borders and these borders can circumscribe people's ideas and feelings of 'home'. The notion of international borders/boundaries – as this thesis will show in Chapter 4 – is useful for understanding how and why individuals not only move 'away' from home but also move *towards* a new sense of self and 'home'. Yet 'home' can also be conceived at a larger and more abstract geographical scale than the nation. Ralph and Staeheli (2011) explain that migrants' identities "need not be enacted in the place of origin, but instead may be recreated in the places to which they have moved" (p. 522). Some travellers develop a sense of at-homeness in the world. Global nomads, in

particular, consider the globe as 'home' (Ahmed, 1999). Ahmed suggests that the ability to detach oneself from a particular place as 'home' and instead see the world as one's 'home' is what allows for the formation of a global identity. Yet, such a spatial imagination is often shaped by "colonial histories and postcolonial imaginaries" (Madge et al., 2009, p. 42). In viewing themselves as 'world citizens', long-term travellers in Germann Molz's (2008) study use this imagined global self as a way to distinguish themselves from tourists and, in the process, invariably end up reproducing "a privileged cosmopolitan appropriation of the world" (p. 338). Leaving 'home' and crossing international borders can thus reproduce privilege, as much as it can both reinforce and dissolve national identities.

In this case, mobility is motivated by a desire to escape a familiar place with the purpose to forge an identity of one's choice (Bagnoli, 2009). Manzo (2003) claims that journeying allows us to reflect on our relationships with places and their meaning for our sense of self. In discussing migrants' accounts of 'home' from the 1950s, Buttimer (1980) comments that the "loss of home or 'losing one's place' may often trigger an identity crisis" (p. 167). This is not to suggest that migration necessarily always results in the loss of one's identity; rather, migration can provoke migrants to reflect on their identity and feelings to places (Buttimer, 1980). Indeed, Ahmed (1999) explains that mobility does not transgress or destabilise identity; rather, migration challenges identity. In a similar position, Cuba and Hummon (1993) affirms that mobility does not undermine place identity. Instead, mobility away from home and between new and familiar places can spur self-growth (Gustafson, 2001). Mobility away from a home-place is thus a means to affect personal development and this reflects my participants' motivations to study or intern abroad. In a study of Chinese tourists, Su (2014) highlights how culturally a sense of 'home' is attached to a process of self-discovery. 'Home' can thus mediate our sense of self in ways that are productive for self-reflexivity and personal growth. The notion of 'home' is therefore constructive for working through the notions and processes of self-discovery, personal development and change as this thesis will show.

Mobility can also incite reflections on the meaning of 'home'. Scholars argue that mobility influences people's ideas and feelings of 'home' (Eakin, 1996; Lucas and Purkayastha, 2007; Nowicka, 2007; Terkenli, 1995; Wiles, 2008). Perceptions of 'home' are changed not only through physical mobility but also imaginative and virtual travel (Hui, 2008). In fact, as this thesis will show in Chapter 5, mobility challenges ideas of 'home' in a way that allows people to *reassess* the meaning of 'home' (Fortier, 2003; Nowicka, 2007). For example, young people who lived abroad have differing perceptions and ideas of 'home' in comparison to those who have not lived overseas (Eakin, 1996). 'Home' may be

missed while away, but mobility does not necessarily imply a longing to return to a place of origin; rather, mobility can incite a desire to feel 'at home' (Fortier, 2003) and both a physical and emotional search for 'home' (Su, 2014). In some cases, 'home' can be found while 'away' (Hui, 2008) whereas in other cases the search for 'home' was never completed but is continuously changing and on the move (Cohen, 2011).

Articulations of 'home' should also be considered within the different contexts of mobility. Ralph and Staeheli (2011) point out that migrants will share a common understanding of 'home', but different types of migrants (e.g. tourists, refugees, expatriates) will likely have differing experiences of home. Indeed, as Chapter 5 will show, international student mobility offers a novel context within the literature for exploring a different perspective and experience of 'home'. Mallett (2004) supports the argument that 'home' is changed through mobility, but like Wiles (2008), acknowledges that 'home' can also influence people's experience of mobility. Indeed, Wiles (2008) argues that "*home* and the *idea of home* (original emphasis) structure the experience of migration" (p. 117). 'Home' and mobility are thus considered to be mutually constitutive.

Home on the move, mobile comforts of 'home'

Since 'home' is "an idea and an imaginary that is imbued with feelings" (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, p. 2), Germann Molz (2008) suggests that "home does not leave the traveller" (p. 333); rather, such feelings are transported with the traveller. 'Home' not only *moves us* in the figurative and emotional sense of the word, but is also literally and physically *on the move*. Indeed, more than just being affected and changed by mobility, 'home' is argued to be mobile (Chambers, 1994; Nowicka, 2007; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011; Germann Molz, 2008). Germann Molz (2008) affirms that 'home' can be literally mobile, such as with trailers and camper vans, but even a train, plane or ship can be considered 'home' for travellers. Scholars agree that people feel 'at home' in mobility and that mobility can be 'home' (Germann Molz, 2008; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). With objects, social networks and family closely tied to ideas of 'home', their capacity to move with the migrant is what renders 'home' mobile. As Ralph and Staeheli (2011) explain, 'home' can be located, but need not be "limited to a particular locale" (p. 520); rather, because objects and people move with you, 'home' can be constructed through the people we share it with and the material objects in it (Nowicka, 2007). 'Home' is thus both mobile and grounded (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011).

Technology has also complicated understandings of 'home'. With the advent of the internet and recent technological advancements, technology has become accessible

nearly everywhere, allowing travellers to easily remain connected with family and to 'home'. While the internet allows travellers to maintain contact and communication with social networks, the reliability and fixity of websites in virtual space also creates a familiar and homely space. Germann Molz (2008) reveals that for tech-savvy travellers "home pages are figurative homes" (p. 332). Thus, virtual spaces and personal websites become mobile homes. In this sense, people not only travel *with* 'home', but can *log in* to 'home' from virtually any location. 'Home' is therefore 'online' and just a 'click away'. In addition to the familiarity of online spaces, feelings of homeliness are also re-enacted while 'away' through familiar embodied practices. In her study of mobile transnational professionals, Nowicka (2007) observes that during short stays away from home, people will reproduce routine practices and activities in their temporary locations in order to recreate a familiar and homely environment. 'Home' is often regarded as a secure, comforting and familiar space (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Case, 1996; Porteous, 1975). Indeed, conventional meanings of 'home' connote a safe, intimate and private domestic space offering a refuge from the uncertainties, stresses and risks perceived of the outside world (Porteous, 1975). Tuan (1975) describes 'home' as a haven providing a safe space of care and security. This view of 'home' as secure but also as a place of comfort was later asserted by Castles and Davidson (2000) in the context of migration. However, Mallett (2004) reminds us that ideas of domesticity and comfort are rooted in historical and cultural Western accounts of 'home' and remain prevalent in current times. Such affective, place-based constructions of 'home' may suggest conditions of fixity and immobility, yet ideas of 'home' as comforting and secure also emerge through mobility (Case, 1996).

As people move through space and time, feelings of comfort and familiarity can surface. It is thus unsurprising that the value of "familiar places is often brought home to us when we are removed from them" (Skey, 2011, p. 235). Allen (2008) indicates that ideas of 'home' for mobile families were linked primarily to feelings of familiarity, security and comfort. In examining young people's experience of leaving the parental home for higher education, Kenyon (1999) underscores the importance of comfort for creating a homely space during term time. Yet, far from being relinquished in the place of origin, these feelings are transported and recast *en route* or in a new place. Indeed, the affective underpinnings of 'home' are not abandoned with mobility; rather, as Germann Molz (2008) explains, travellers carry with them "the transportable sentiments of comfort, security, familiarity, and control" (p. 327). 'Home' is not only transportable and mobile, but is part of a continuous process of creating a space of comfort (Wise, 2000). Although Wiles (2008) notes that the idea of the nation as a homely space is tied to familiarity, comfort, and

security, there is nevertheless unfamiliarity in the nation and 'home'. Ahmed (1999) argues that there are encounters with otherness and strangeness in the nation. She contends that if the nation is not necessarily a 'familiar' place, then the conceptualisation of 'home' as familiar is problematic.

Although this thesis focuses on and elucidates the relationship between self/home and feelings of comfort and familiarity, it does not deny the presence of discomfort and estrangement (Ahmed, 1999) or even violence and oppression (McDowell, 1999). The view of 'home' as a place of refuge and security has been criticised most notably by feminist scholars. Blunt and Dowling (2006) assert that gender is central to understanding experiences of 'home' and that for many women, 'home' is a space of violence and oppression. In her study of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong, Constable (1999) reveals that some women leave 'home' to work overseas in order to escape domestic abuse from their husbands. This thesis acknowledges critical geographies of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Brickell, 2012; Constable, 1999; Fortier, 2003) but also recognises that 'home' need not be either comfortable or uncomfortable, nor familiar or unfamiliar. Indeed, such affective binaries can coexist (Mallett, 2004) and are often mediated through mobility. Feelings of (dis)comfort, as the literature and this thesis argue, can mediate where and when individuals feel 'at home'. Feeling comfortable and 'at home' in mobility is also a matter of time. Time is necessary to establish feelings of comfort in a new place but it is also important in how we conceive of notions of 'home'.

Temporality of 'home'

As an idea and a feeling, 'home' is fluid and susceptible to emotional tides and changing circumstances. How people feel and think about 'home' depends largely on the register or context they find themselves in (Ahmed, 1999). Meanings of 'home' not only change depending on locality but also fluctuate over time (Valentine, 2001; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002). Easthope (2004) points out that "different people are likely to understand 'home' to mean different things at different times and in different contexts" (p. 135). As Ralph (2009) explains, "it is an inevitably value-laden concept, whose normative connotations can change across geographical space and scale and throughout the life-course" (p. 184). Indeed, scholars indicate that people's meanings and ideas of 'home' are situated spatio-temporally (Allen, 2008; Easthope, 2004; Taylor, 2013; Marcu, 2014) and this thesis will demonstrate how participants' articulate 'home' using spatial, scalar and temporal markers (see Chapter 5).

As time and distance away from homely places increases, so too can it prompt and reinforce people's appreciation for, and attachment to, home (Case, 1996; Terkenli, 1995). For participants in my study, the temporality abroad not only provokes a reassessment of 'home' but incites a rediscovery of its meaning and a re-making of homely practices and spaces. Thus, as conditions and circumstances change, 'home' is 'made and remade' (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 9) in different spatial temporalities. In the case of geographically mobile families, Allen (2008) points out that "home is situated between temporal spaces" and that participants had multiple homes that "existed in the past, present, and future in both real and ideal forms" (p. 91). 'Home' is thus mediated by time and enacted in multiple physical and temporal spaces. Just as scholars note that home is 'now' and 'then' (Taylor, 2013), 'here' and 'there' (Al-Ali and Koser; 2002; Lucas and Purkayastha, 2007; Moskal, 2015; Sarup, 1994) and pluri-local (Allen, 2008; Marcu, 2014; Rapport and Dawson, 1998), this thesis argues that individuals have multiple homes and that 'home' has multiple meanings (Hui, 2008). 'Home' is thus a complex and multilayered notion that is concurrently emotional, physical and situated in multiple temporal spaces.

Despite geographies of home as inextricably embedded in time, Allen (2008) highlights that there is still a need to examine how conceptions of 'home' develop over time. This thesis therefore heeds such recommendations by using a longitudinal framework to explore mobile students' experience of 'home' over the course of their international experience, from pre-departure, to in situ at the mid-point to finally an ambivalent 'return home'.

Homecoming: the 'impossible return' home

The return 'home' or the 'homecoming' is often a long-awaited arrival fraught with excitement, ambivalence and disappointment (Constable, 1999; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). While return migrations are commonly referred to as 're-entry', both Wise (2000) and Eakin (1996) reveal that for third culture kids (TCK – children of mobile parents who are raised in a culture different than their parents) the re-entry 'home' is in fact an entry. Indeed, Eakin (1996) points out that the re-entry is a more difficult process of re-adaptation to the 'home' country than the initial entry and adaptation to the host culture. It is therefore unsurprising that upon arrival in the 'home' country, global nomads will tend to gravitate towards each other and seek out other international students (Eakin, 1996; Wise, 2000). Despite different passports and cultures of origin, the similarity in lifestyle and global experiences are shared commonalities that bring travelled youth together (Eakin, 1996; Wise, 2000). Indeed, participants in my own study seek out other young people with study

or travel experience abroad because of their common understanding of the international experience but also as a way to validate a sense of distinction (as discussed in Chapter 6).

Moreover, the anticipation of re-entry into a place of origin can quickly turn to disappointment as pre-mobility ideas and memories of 'home' fade upon return. Many return migrants are disappointed to not find the same home they remembered and idealised while away (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Instead, former homes can become strange and unfamiliar (Al-Ali and Koser, 2002). As Massey and Jess (1995) explain, "you may leave and dream of the places you once knew, but meanwhile they have themselves moved on. They no longer conform to the static picture that you retain of them" (p. 65). As a result, Marcu (2014) suggests that "returnees may re-evaluate 'where' home is located if the expectations of return do not meet the realities of homecoming" (p. 332). Feelings of 'home' sometimes became 'blurred' as "returned travellers often felt resistant, frustrated and unfulfilled by their concepts of 'home', which had arguably changed through exposure to new socio-cultural environments" (Pocock and McIntosh, 2013, p. 417). These common experiences of re-entry have led scholars to argue that you can never really return home because 'home' is no longer the same (Chambers, 1994; Eakin, 1996; Fortier, 2003; Porteous, 1975; Probyn, 1996; Wiles, 2008).

In his aptly titled essay *You Can't Go 'Home' Again*, Eakin (1996) discusses the impossibility of the return to a place called 'home'. Migrants are faced with the reality that the 'home' they encounter upon return no longer corresponds to the memory they romanticised during their time away. As Porteous (1975) explains, "in this sense we can never fully return home and thus our longing is tinged with unassuageable regret" (p. 388). Likewise, in his book *An Impossible Homecoming*, Chambers (1994) argues that travel suggests a return to an initial place of departure, but that our history and language is subject to change in a way that returning 'home' becomes impossible. Since the sense of self and meaning of 'home' changes while abroad, Wiles (2008) notes that migrant New Zealanders never really return 'home'; rather, as Fortier (2003) asserts, 'home' is different upon return and "is never fully achieved or arrived-at" (p. 131). In the case of refugees returning to Cyprus, 'home' is both figuratively and physically gone (Taylor, 2013). These experiences of loss and disappointment invariably affect our ideas of 'home'.

The return to a place of origin can reveal and exert changes to people's sense of 'home' (Eakin, 1996; Porteous, 1975; Wiles, 2008). In her study of Filipina domestic migrant workers in Hong Kong, Constable (1999) reveals that, much like other return migrants, her participants endured uneasiness in readapting to their former lives and relationships in the Philippines because both 'home' and themselves have changed during

their absence. Indeed, Marcu (2014) observes that migrants "painfully discover that in their absence the homeland communities and their own identities have undergone transformations, and these ruptures and changes have serious implications for their ability to reclaim a sense of home" (p. 336). This thesis suggests that it is not only the sojourn abroad but the *return* to a place of origin that can provoke a re-questioning and rediscovery of self and 'home'. However, the "homecoming rarely seems to fulfil that search for a singular home and stable identity" (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011, p. 522). Rather, as asserted earlier, 'home' or 'home-making' is argued to be an ongoing process (Ahmed et al., 2003; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Nowicka, 2007; Wiles, 2008). As this thesis will show, 'home' and self-discovery are both processual concepts that intersect and interact through mobility in mutually productive and formative ways.

Emotional geographies of international student mobility

Mobile emotions, emotional mobility

Emotions paint and pervade our everyday life (Bondi, 2005). They are part and parcel of human existence and influence how we perceive and relate to objects and subjects in our world. Once shunned and dismissed "as a source of subjectivity which clouds vision and impairs judgement" and relegated to the political, feminist and private spheres, emotions have now firmly established themselves as a serious and enduring field of inquiry (Anderson and Smith, 2001, p. 7). Emotional geographies are said to originate from Anderson and Smith's (2001) editorial piece within *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* on the relevance and value of emotions within the field of geography. From there flourished a number of special issues and articles with emotions at the centre of geographical focus (Bondi, 2005; Burkitt, 2012; Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Conradson and McKay, 2007; Pile. 2010; Thien, 2005). Like any nascent field of inquiry, emotional geographies have been debated and critiqued in its approach (see Thien, 2005 and Anderson and Harrison, 2006) and in relation to other related branches such as geographies of affect (Pile, 2010) as well as feminist geographies, non-representational theory and psychotherapy and psychoanalytic geography (Bondi, 2005, 2014; Pile, 2010). The call for attention to emotions within geographical and social scholarship has generated – among many – studies on emotions, students and education (Cairns, 2013; Holton, 2015; Kenway and Youdell, 2011), emotions and migration (Dunn, 2010; Cain et al., 2015; Tse and Waters, 2013; Walsh, 2012, 2009) and emotions and mobility (Conradson and McKay, 2007; Löfgren, 2008; Murray and Mand, 2013; Svašek, 2010).

Emotional geographies does not concern itself with just placing general importance on variegated emotions within academic scholarship but also on how we embody, represent and articulate emotions, and how these emotional articulations shape places, spaces and our sense of self (Davidson and Milligan, 2004). Conradson and Latham (2007) define emotions as "the self-conscious recognition, experience and interpretation of various bodily affects" (p. 236). Unlike affect, emotions are reflected upon, interpreted through a socio-cultural history and expressed by individuals using a cultural and linguistically-specific repertoire of affective and emotional terms (Conradson and McKay, 2007). Indeed, "emotions can be seen as socially constructed while also having sensate, corporeal components" (Burkitt, 1997, p. 43).

The consideration of emotions in this study's investigation of international students' sense of self emerged from the research analysis rather than a priori. It became not only a natural choice but a productive one. The self is innately emotional and emotions are *felt*. Hence, emotional narratives of mobility and place are not considered in a consolidated chapter, but rather emerge throughout the three empirical chapters where appropriate. Emotions allow us to understand how individuals relate to other people and places. As Davidson and Milligan (2004) argue, "emotions are understandable—'sensible'—only in the context of particular places. Likewise, place must be *felt* to make sense. This leads to our feeling that meaningful senses of space emerge only via movements *between* people and places" (original emphasis, p. 524). Places are meaningful but they are also imbued with emotions. As people move through space, mobility and places stir and affect emotions, and these emotions affect our relationship with, and feelings for, mobility and place. Emotions are mobile and mobility is an intensely emotional experience (Murray and Mand, 2013; Pile, 2010). Indeed, Marcu (2014) suggests that "travelling back and forth also may produce different feelings of motion and emotions" (p. 333). Mobility produces and allows for different emotional articulations to take place through and in places (Conradson and McKay, 2007). Emotions and affect, as Conradson and McKay (2007) assert, are integral in illustrating how feelings influence our sense of belonging to places and people. In their study of young people in Vancouver and Hong Kong, Tse and Waters (2013) demonstrate that geographical distance contributes to an emotional distancing from parental relations in their country of origin. As they observe, the detachment from familial relations in Hong Kong "seems to occur alongside a growing emotional attachment to Canada as a place" (Tse and Waters, 2013, p. 543). Young migrants illustrate how emotional geographies of transnational spaces can impinge on social and family relations as well as their relationship with places. The emotions felt through mobility also influence

our sense of self (Conradson and McKay, 2007). Marcu (2014) highlights that "in the process of mobility and search, emotions play an essential role in connecting individuals to changes in the environment in which they live" (p. 210). Exploring emotional narratives of British migrants in Dubai allowed Walsh (2012) to not only highlight the importance of temporality and spatiality for migrant identities but how living abroad altered migrants' emotions towards 'home'. 'Home', as we have seen, is a feeling that is inextricably tied to the self. Emotional geographies of mobility thus enable us to explore people's mutable feelings of 'home' and belonging whilst revealing potential ramifications to people's sense of self.

Davidson and Milligan (2004) point out that how others project emotions onto us can "challenge the very boundaries of the self" (p. 524) while Pile (2010) notes that emotions are not bounded; rather, they traverse boundaries, rattling their stability in their wake. Emotions test the permeability of the layers of the skin as well as the boundaries of the self. Comfort and discomfort, for instance, are both affective and emotional responses to physical and psychological stimuli that are accentuated through movement through space. Pile (2010) identifies comfort and discomfort as emotions described by geographers and indeed, Bissell (2008) is one such geographer who explores the corporeal and definitional ambiguity of comfort. Comfort is defined by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary as both a physical and emotional feeling in which a person feels relaxed, at ease and less worried, frightened or in pain. While a range of emotions are elicited through mobility and within participants' narratives (including fear, love, sadness and excitement), this thesis focuses on comfort as a predominant feeling expressed by participants within this study. More specifically, it is the prevalence of comfort within participant narratives that steered the research analysis towards a consideration of the emotional dimensions of international mobility. In other words, rather than frame the research agenda through an emotional geographies lens from the outset, the study considers the role of emotions through and specifically *because of* the emergence of the theme of comfort. Indeed, mobility influences how we perceive and *feel* (dis)comfort. If mobility generates and alters emotions and if emotions test the boundaries of the self, then how do emotions and mobility perturb the personal boundaries of the comfort zone? As such, this thesis will explore how (dis)comfort and the boundaries of the comfort zone are renegotiated and refigured through international mobility.

Conradson and McKay (2007) assert that affect and emotion are key facets of international mobility. And yet, research on the emotional geographies of international student mobility seems entirely neglected despite the obvious relevance of emotions within

young people's international educational travel and the ever growing body of work on emotions, education and mobility. Indeed, emotions also underpin youth transitions to higher education (Christie, 2009). This thesis seeks to rectify this neglect by engaging with an emotional geography of international student mobility.

Contextualising the study: international student mobility

Transitions to higher education within the UK (and arguably North America) are typically associated with expectations of leaving the parental home and 'going away' to university (Prazeres, 2013). With most university students aged between 18 to 25 years old, entry into higher education is an important part of the prime youth transition years – a developmental period between the ambiguous boundaries of childhood and adulthood (Valentine, 2003). Indeed, societal expectations of leaving the family home for educational attainment have historically defined such transitions. Yet, youth transitions are a complex and heterogeneous process marked by a number of educational, societal and familial factors (Schulenberg and Schoon, 2012; Valentine, 2003). In/dependence from parents, for example, is often seen as an influential factor that characterises young people's transition towards adulthood and participants in my study have identified this attribute as an outcome of their international sojourn. As young people typically move 'away' to university, Holdsworth (2009b) argues that "the meanings produced through student mobility are not just linked to being a student, but are intricately linked with projects of the self and transitions to adulthood" (p.1857). As such, if moving to university is a formative part of self-development and youth transitions, then international student mobility must also play an influential role in these processes. Indeed, Ansell (2008) reveals that although gap years in the Global South do not automatically result in independence, they are used by young middle-class volunteers as a way "to elect a particularly abrupt transition to adulthood" (p. 236). In this perspective, young people may capitalise on international sojourns in order to accelerate and legitimise a transition towards independent adulthood.

A growing number of students are choosing to move abroad for international education, whether for an entire degree or for a short-term study exchange or volunteer placement (UNESCO, 2014; European Commission, 2013). While international student mobility is an umbrella term that is differentiated into a number of different contexts, for the purpose of this thesis, I identify two predominant categories within the literature. Much of the literature has examined internationally mobile students in the context of degree or diploma mobility. This refers to students enrolled in an institution of higher education in another country for the entirety of a degree programme. The other main area of research

on international student mobility – and the focus of this thesis – is short-term, credit or temporary mobility (also known as study abroad, Erasmus or student exchange programmes). Most of the literature on short-term student mobility is further divided into two categories: study abroad exchanges where students are enrolled in an institution of secondary or higher education for an academic semester or year abroad; or, internship or volunteer placements (sometimes referred to as voluntourism) where students work or volunteer in a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in a different country for 2 to 12 months. While studies in the literature focus on either of these two sub-categories of short-term mobility, this thesis instead situates itself within the broader context of short-term student mobility by examining the experience of both students studying *and* volunteering/interning abroad as part of a university exchange programme. Deakin (2014) notes that student volunteer/internship placements have been under-researched in favour of study abroad. Instead of following the literature's tradition of separating both sub-groups, I have similar to Yang et al. (2011) incorporated both students studying abroad with those interning overseas for this study. Similarly, Haines (2013) includes different groups of migrants in his study of American returnees in order to "provide an integrated understanding of the return experience" (p. 26). In doing so, he argues that while these groups might disassociate themselves from one another, they nonetheless share similar experiences. While I acknowledge in this thesis the heterogeneity of experiences and motivations between these groups, I demonstrate that both share a common and predominant motivation for self-discovery and/or self-change and, in many cases, consider the different contexts of their mobility along similar grounds for distinction (see collective distinction in Chapter 6).

From a geographical and socio-economic perspective, the term 'vertical mobility' is used to describe students from countries in the Global South going to more "academically advanced" institutions of higher education in the Global North (Rivza and Teichler, 2007, p. 458). 'Horizontal mobility' is described as student mobility "between countries and institutions of higher education of more or less the same level of economic advancement academic quality" (Rivza and Teichler, 2007, p. 458); a context which is most commonly associated with short-term student mobility and specifically study abroad (and Erasmus) exchanges. General trends in international student mobility point to students from the Global South as degree-seeking students to a country in the Western world, such as the UK, US, Canada or Australia. In their studies on the determinants of international student mobility, Wei (2013) and Zheng (2013) indicate that in comparison with students from the Global North, students from countries in the Global South place a higher value on

economic factors as an important motivation behind international studies. These students are seeking to obtain higher quality education unavailable in their home country (Woodfield, 2010). Such perspectives of tertiary education in the Western world as 'better' than those of countries in the Global South and more economically valuable for future employment opportunities are historically "rooted in the structures of academic imperialism" and particularly in the hegemonic status of English as the dominant language (Madge et al., 2009, p. 39). As such, a degree from a reputable university in the Global North is seen to afford greater employment prospects and benefits than a short-term study exchange.

On the other hand, students from countries in the Western world tend to participate in short-term study abroad exchanges and remain within the Global North. Woodfield (2010) reveals that credit or short-term mobility often attracts students who are seeking competencies in a second language, personal development or whose programme at home requires a period of study abroad. Degree-seeking students from the Global North generally stick to major English-speaking countries and usually for the purpose of graduate studies rather than for an undergraduate degree. However, Breen (2012) suggests that students from the Global North are increasingly participating in short-term study and internship exchanges in the Global South. Indeed, Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) suggest that young people have "taken the lead in diffusing tourism outside Europe and in redirecting arrivals" to the Global South (p. 827). Yet, student mobility from the Global North to the Global South remains an overlooked area of research. Woodfield (2010) points out that there is "lack of consensus over whether an overseas study experience provides significant benefits to students from advanced economies compared with those from developing countries" (p. 118). This thesis therefore explores the motivations and experiences of students from Canada to the Global South.

Student motivations and ways forward

Although research on international student mobility is not new within the literature (e.g. Bailyn and Kelman, 1962; Coelho, 1962; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1958; Morgan Jr., 1975), academic interest on this topic has gained momentum in the last decade. International student mobility has been examined from a broad range of perspectives. There is particularly a plethora of studies on motivations for studying overseas (Allen, 2010; Brooks and Waters, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Chirkov et al., 2008; Doyle et al., 2010; Findlay et al., 2006; Gonzales et al., 2011; Hazen and Alberts, 2006; He and Chen, 2010; Lesjak et al., 2015; King et al., 2011; Madgett and Bélanger, 2008; Pineda et al., 2008),

including characteristics of students who study abroad (Frändberg, 2009; King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Morgan Jr., 1975; Salisbury et al., 2009; Stroud, 2010; Woodfield, 2010). Research has also focused on 'brain drain' (Findlay et al., 2006; Hazen and Alberts, 2006; Ziguras and Gribble, 2015), intercultural sensitivity and competences (Anderson et al., 2006; Pedersen, 2010; Salisbury et al., 2013), second language training (Wilkinson, 1998), the role of social and family networks (Beech, 2014; Brooks and Waters, 2010; Collins, 2008) and the influence on identity and the sense of self (Bagnoli, 2007, 2009; Dolby, 2004, 2005; Ellwood, 2011; Gargano, 2009; Holdsworth, 2009a; King, 2011; King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Van Mol, 2013) among others.

Student motivations to study or intern abroad are as diverse in scope as they are heterogeneous in experiences. Prevalent motivations in the literature include second language acquisition (Allen, 2010; Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014), personal development (Lesjak et al., 2015; Pope et al., 2013), career development and C.V. building (Findlay et al., 2005; Yang et al., 2011), intercultural experiences (Altbach et al., 1985; Chaban et al., 2011), adventure (King et al., 2011; Waters and Brooks, 2010) and social networks (Brooks and Waters, 2009a; Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014). Altbach et al. (1985) identified linguistic training, cultural enrichments and the experience of living in a different place as motivations for students from the Global North to study abroad. Matz (1997) listed five motives of students to participate in study abroad: heritage interest, adventure, second language acquisition, career goals and personal growth. Students from countries in the Global North with one parent born overseas or family ancestry to another country will sometimes seek to participate in a study exchange in the country linked to their family's heritage. As such, students of African American descent may go to Africa while students who are of Irish descent may decide to study on exchange in Ireland (Matz, 1997). For example, in Jewett's (2010) study of a short-term study tour with American students to Ireland, participants repeatedly cited their Irish ancestry as "evidence of their Irishness" (p. 642) and their reason for participating in the course. In Brux and Fry's (2010) work on the participation of multicultural students in study abroad, they reveal that there is a strong interest from Asian American and African American students to participate in a study abroad exchange in the regions that correspond to their heritage and this is the case for some of the participants in my study.

From a different perspective, Brooks and Waters' (2009a) findings on UK students' motivations to study abroad indicate that social networks and relationships are main motives that influence students' decision to study overseas. These include 'kinship networks', friendship networks, and partners and other romantic relationships. In their

earlier work on UK students' decision to study overseas for an entire degree, Brooks and Waters (2009b) point to overseas education as a 'second chance' opportunity. Their findings reveal that students' motivation to pursue a degree in higher education abroad is influenced by the outcome of their acceptance (or rejection) to high ranked universities in the UK. If students were unsuccessful at securing a spot in a reputable university in the UK, they would choose to attend one of the top universities in the US. A similar study by Findlay et al. (2012) on degree-mobility of UK students suggests a different perspective. Their findings indicate that students from independent schools in the UK chose to attend a 'world class' university abroad, such as in the US, to accrue cultural and symbolic capital as a way to distinguish themselves from home students in the labour market. Students chose to study overseas to go a 'step further' than their peers and thus viewed their degree abroad as a distinction above their stay-at-home peers – a view supported by this thesis.

Moreover, Findlay et al. (2012) indicate that there is a "social construction of 'internationality' within this educational milieu" (p. 124). This echoes views from other scholars that mobility among young people is increasingly becoming the norm based on societal expectation (Bagnoli, 2009). Woodfield (2010) suggests that "study abroad may be an integral dimension of youth mobility culture which values time spent abroad" (p. 120). In Frändberg's (2009) study on the transnational mobility of Swedish secondary school students, her findings reveal that students from privately run schools are being socialised into a lifestyle of international mobility as a result of their parents' or their own travel experiences. However, it should be noted that this increasing normality of youth mobility is more particular to the Global North, and that international student mobility, largely confined to a privileged elite, can thus contribute to reproducing privilege (Waters, 2012).

For students from the Western world, international mobility presents as an opportunity for self-discovery, personal development and/or self-change (Brown 2009a; Doyle et al. 2010; Forsey et al., 2012; Haines 2013; Hansel 1988; Gmelch 1997; Matz 1997; Morgan Jr. 1975; Waters et al., 2011; Wilson, 1988; Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014). Students' decisions to study abroad are commonly motivated by self-development goals (Chirkov et al. 2008). For example, in examining American students on a study abroad program in Switzerland, Morgan Jr. (1975) suggests that sojourns in a different culture have the potential to challenge students and incite self-development. Teichler's (2004) study on the motivations of students participating in the Erasmus program also reports that the vast majority of respondents indicated the opportunity for self-

development. In Bagnoli's (2009) study on the process of identity construction of young migrants in Europe, which included international students, she demonstrates how these migrants are "constructing a 'biography of choice'" (p. 340). She discusses how mobility can influence an individual's construction of self and identity noting that many of the young people in her study expressed how their experience abroad had "a major impact on their biographies and identities" (2009, p. 341). Findlay et al. (2006) support these findings and note that the quest for self-development corresponds with a "do-it-yourself biography" in which young people actively construct their individual biographies through their time spent abroad (p. 302). Indeed, the sojourn abroad is viewed in terms of an introspective journey culminating in self-growth and self-change and the findings of this study are no different.

As international student mobility increases in numbers and in academic interest, there is a need for student mobility scholars to explore and expand avenues of research that have been overlooked or underdeveloped within the literature interest (King and Raghuram, 2013). This includes the emotional geographies of international student mobility and geographies of 'home'. Experiences and meanings of 'home' have been discussed within intra-national student mobility (Hinton, 2011; Holdsworth, 2009b; Prazeres, 2013) but remains an emerging and underdeveloped area of study within international student mobility (for exceptions see Kenyon, 1999; Anderson, 2012; Collins, 2009; Skey, 2011). More significantly, while research on international mobility and students' sense of self is indeed visible and growing within the literature, there are lingering gaps that this thesis addresses. Despite self-growth as a well-documented motivation, van 't Klooster et al. (2008) point out that the personal development dimension in educational travel requires more in-depth analysis.

Concluding remarks

The mobility turn signalled a shift in paradigm but it equally set in motion a transition from conceptual understandings of place and 'home' as fixed to that of mobile. A review of the literature has shown how recent conceptualisations of place, self and 'home' have shifted from rigid, static and place-bound to fluid, mobile and emotional. Unhinged from their former state of fixity, reconceptualisations of self and 'home' as malleable have implications for how students feel and experience mobility. Interest in the dimension of temporality that has accompanied the mobility turn has seemingly not kept the momentum or extended entirely to studies on international student mobility. Very few studies have examined the process of the mobility experience for international students.

While scholars have explored identity in the experiences of international students, notions of self-discovery, development and change have only been touched upon. Despite the ubiquity of these motivations for mobility, they have received little scrutiny from geographers. Rather than advocate for a 'true innate self', this thesis contributes to notions of self as processual and developmental which align with recent conceptualisations of 'home' as a feeling and an ongoing process. This chapter has also discussed the acquisitions of social and cultural capital through mobility and, through such accumulations, the notions of difference and distinction developed more notably by Bourdieu. Self-discovery, personal development and change are also implicated and tied to human capital acquisitions as well as processes and practices of difference and distinction which Chapters 6 will illustrate empirically.

Among the motivations for mobility is the notion of comfort zone popularised by outdoor education programs and now widespread within travel and tourism studies but that has remained unexplored within the literature, and specifically within international student mobility despite its evident implications for notions of boundaries, 'home', identity and emotional geographies. While the relationship between the comfort zone – including more specifically the emotion of comfort – and the notions of self, distinction and 'home' has only been broached in this literature review, it will instead be engaged with in more depth in the following empirical chapters. 'Home', on the other hand, has been discussed here as a feeling that can be mobile and that can be affected by mobility. Yet work on international student mobility and geographies of home has been virtually absent from the literature. This thesis thus attends to this lacuna through emotional and mobile geographies of home. Finally, this chapter has revealed how emotional geographies of mobility and international student mobility have become important fields of inquiry but have yet to fully merge and engage with each other, a gap that this thesis also endeavours to address.

Chapter 3

Researching experiences of 'home' and self abroad

Research on the self and 'home' within international student mobility is still emerging and with it a number of methodological approaches and techniques remain underutilised. With the aims of this research to explore the role of mobility and place on international students' sense of self and 'home', this study has adopted a qualitative inductive methodological framework to most effectively address the research questions and objectives. This chapter discusses the methodological framework that was adopted for this research project and provides reviews of the methodologies used thus far in this field of work and in my fieldwork. It explains the choice of three sets of semi-structured interviews and participant-directed photography with photo-elicitation through a novel qualitative longitudinal design.

The first section reviews the different methodological approaches and methods (under)-used within research on mobility, 'home' and self, including adopting an emotional perspective on research in mobility and a qualitative longitudinal framework. It also describes semi-structured interviewing as a well-used technique within mobility studies and the use of photo-elicitation as an overlooked but insightful method within work on 'home' and the self. The role of positionality and power within qualitative research in general is also discussed as a reflexive exercise. The second section of this chapter discusses the methodological approach selected to address my research questions and describes the sample of participants and how the interviews and photo-elicitation were carried out with this group. It also presents the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative interview material. The third section considers the ethics of this study and presents the challenges and personal reflections of doing this research project.

Methodologies, methods and positionality

An emotional lens on mobility
Movement, in any physical or meaningful form, inevitably influences emotions and conversely, emotions are integral to experiences of mobility. While this may seem evident, it is only relatively recently that scholars have begun to turn their attention to the role of emotions within research on mobility. As Widdowfield (2000) notes, this is particularly

salient with the increase in qualitative research. With emotions as both a cause and consequence of mobility (Cain et al., 2015), a growing body of work in mobility is taking emotions seriously (Conradson and McKay, 2007; Marcu, 2014; Svašek, 2010). Svašek (2010) suggests that research must move beyond just documenting how people identify and name specific emotions to consider how emotions influence bodily experiences and habits. As Conradson and McKay (2007) assert, "research into mobile subjectivities has much to gain from a closer consideration of the dynamics of affect and emotional connection" (p. 172). Indeed, using an emotional lens in the research methodology can be insightful for elucidating the interrelationship between mobility and the self (Conradson and Latham, 2007). Svašek (2010) emphasizes that a focus on emotions is vital for understanding belonging within mobility and Christou (2011) followed suit by suggesting that "mobility and belonging is narrated in/through emotion in the way the research setting frames storytelling and the approach the researcher has adopted, that is, facilitating a context of emotional meaning-making through the researcher-researched relationship" (p. 254). Since meaning is created through people's feelings and emotions are "dynamic through time" (Saldana, 2003, p. 91), meaning-making is in fact an emotional process influenced by people's engagements with other people and objects (Dixon, 2010).

Yet, for some scholars, the emotionality of storytelling and the analytical value of emotions within the research process were recognised posteriorly (Cain et al., 2015). This led Cain et al. (2015) to later write about affect and emotions between researcher and participants retrospectively as "an important analytical tool" (p. 4). Similar to Cain et al. (2015), I only realised following the interviews that emotions were not only central to my study but also to a growing body of work within mobility and geography. Thus, while I implicitly used an emotional approach to the empirical research as a way to tease out the ways mobility and place influenced the notions of self and 'home' (both emotional concepts as discussed in Chapter 2) it is only later that I became acquainted with a body of work that takes emotions seriously and explicitly as a conceptual framework. Hence, I have incorporated this section to acknowledge the role of emotions in not only my conceptual framework but also partly in my methodology.

Qualitative approaches to researching the self and 'home' within mobility
Research exploring the self and 'home' within mobility have used a number of different methodological approaches to tease out the meanings and interpretations people assign to their sense of self and 'home'. Within identity and mobility, there seem to be disciplinary differences to researching this growing body of work with studies in psychology tending to

employ more quantitative approaches (Schlegel et al., 2011; Zimmerman and Neyer, 2013) while sociological and geographical studies favour primarily qualitative methodologies (Erichsen, 2011; Ganguly, 1992). Despite some studies using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Alexander et al., 2010; Hudson and Inkson, 2006; Simha et al., 2011), most favoured the use of entirely qualitative methodological approaches, such as focus groups (Lewis et al., 2010), ethnography (Brown, 2009a; White and White, 2004; Galani-Mouta, 2000), in-depth semi-structured interviews (Conradson and Latham, 2007; Desforges, 2000; Erichsen, 2011) as well as mixed-methods (Bagnoli, 2009; Diprose, 2012). In-depth interviews with British tourists allowed Desforges (2000) to identify a relationship between travel and identity. Semi-structured interviews in Li's (2010) study enabled various self-perceptions of travellers to emerge. Erichsen (2011) used multiple in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the ways that participants gave meaning to their experience abroad, with the latter set of interviews exploring how their sense of self may have changed. This longitudinal approach to research on the relationship between mobility and the self is also commonly used within the literature (Bagnoli, 2009; Brown, 2009a; Hudson and Inkson, 2006). Bagnoli (2004) explains that a longitudinal approach allows the researcher to examine changes to people's identities over time. Mcleod (2003) notes that within qualitative longitudinal interviews the "prospective/retrospective focus and the structuring of reflexive questions allows patterns, themes and orientations to emerge" (p. 205). Since recent conceptual shifts in the literature consider the self as developmental and processual it is unsurprising that many studies have privileged the use of qualitative longitudinal approaches.

Similarly, recent conceptualisations of 'home' as an ongoing process have also pointed studies towards qualitative methods as a means to shed light on people's mobile experiences and meanings of 'home', in particular through ethnographic research (Blunt and Bonnerjee, 2013; Brown, 2009c; Walsh, 2006) and in-depth semi-structured interviews (Allen, 2008; Anderson, 2012; Cain et al., 2015; Gustafson, 2001; Marcu, 2014; Nowicka, 2007; Wiles, 2008). Visual methodologies are also increasingly – even if not sufficiently – applied within research on experiences of 'home' (Datta, 2008, 2011; Johnsen et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2013), identity and sense of self (Chen et al., 2012; Croghan et al., 2008) and specifically the intersecting notions of 'home', self and mobility (Bagnoli, 2009; 2008) but to a much lesser extent than, and often secondary to, those of oral/verbal methods. Yet, visual methods offer a unique and dynamic insight into people's perspectives on place and ways of seeing (Pink, 2006; Rose, 2008). Visual methods are not 'new' within social research (Collier and Collier, 1967; Schwartz, 1989) or within geography for that matter

(Datta, 2008; Rose, 2001; Johnsen et al., 2008) but they remain nevertheless underused with the discipline and entirely neglected within research on international student mobility despite their ability to generate rich qualitative material and add depth to the data analysis (Leddy-Owen, 2014). Photographs, in particular, are recognised for their potential to elucidate people's feelings and emotional experiences with place and everyday life (Dodman, 2003; Myers, 2012; Spencer, 2011). Myers (2012) points out that they allow for a diversity of themes to emerge and elicit "more nuanced understandings" of place, people and events (p. 457). Datta (2011) describes that "through a relationship between pictorial and textual, visual narratives convey ways of inhabiting particular places by migrant bodies" as well as of moving between home and places abroad (p. 2). However, photographs rarely stand on their own; rather, they are often accompanied with captions and verbal descriptions and can evoke sensory interpretations (Pink, 2006). Instead of considering photographs as a single or final product, images should mediate the research by prompting verbal input (Pauwels, 2011). Moore et al. (2008) recommend that photographs be supported by interviews in order to "enrich the data collected and avoid any presumptions being made about the contexts and meanings of images" (p. 56). Such is the strength of photo-elicitation, a visual method that combines photographs with interviews and enabled Croghan et al. (2008) to understand the "spatial boundaries and arenas" in which young people construct their sense of self (p. 349).

My study has followed suit in adopting semi-structured interviews and participant photographs as methods for eliciting participants' feelings, meanings and ideas of self and 'home'. In his study of mobile journeys and 'home', Case (1996) affirms that a qualitative approach enabled an inductive analysis of the interview material. In other words, it allowed for the meanings to emerge from the data. A qualitative approach, as he notes, is used by the majority of empirical research on experiences and meanings of 'home'.

Qualitative longitudinal approach

Longitudinal case studies are useful for tracking changes to a particular event, group or subject over time (Baxter, 2010). Researchers use longitudinal designs as a way to examine the phenomenon in question at different intervals in time (Bryman et al., 2009). Qualitative longitudinal interviews are particularly appropriate for assessing the emotional dimensions of biographies and identities through "perspectives from different periods of time and vantage-points" (Mcleod, 2003, p. 202). While my study is not multi-year, Mcleod (2003) asserts that interviews carried out closer in time can still reveal change and afford a level of reflexivity, and may "also offer a more immediate and 'as-it-is happening' sense of

change and development" (p. 205). In fact, Saldana (2003) explains that as there is no prescribed length of time for longitudinal studies or "universal definition of change, there are no definitive opinions on change processes and products" (p. 11). Because "individuals' discourse about their experiences and thoughts may change over time, such that it becomes structured differently (at least partially) if they are contacted at another phase of their lives," then collecting data at different stages can be particularly insightful for researchers (Caetano, 2015, p. 230). While longitudinal designs can reveal contradictions which are "accumulated and amplified over time" (Plumridge and Thomson, 2003, p. 214) this should not necessarily present a problem to the research. Instead of attempting to 'reconcile' the contradictions we should "acknowledge them as inherent properties of change" (Saldana, 2003, p. 12). Indeed, these contradictions can constitute interesting findings in and of themselves. Although Saldana (2003) suggests that "if you want to know how, how much, in what ways, or why people have changed, why not ask them directly?" (p.36), I chose to refrain from asking questions about change until later in the interviews in order to give the opportunity for participants' to raise this topic on their own and at the appropriate moment. In some cases, participants may also be 'unaware' of any development or growth to their self (Saldana, 2003, p. 42).

While studies are beginning to use qualitative longitudinal designs within international student mobility (Rexeisen et al., 2008; Tucker and Weaver, 2013), it remains an underused methodological approach. Indeed, Chaban et al. (2011) highlight that there is still a need for longitudinal studies within research on international mobility and cultural adaptation. As part of a longitudinal design for examining international study tours, Tucker and Weaver (2013) used semi-structured interviews to collect data with the aim of conducting a thematic analysis of the experiences. This approach, they explain, was chosen due to a smaller sample size and the "need to recall student experiences over a period of time" (p. 3). Similarly, my own study sought quality and depth of data throughout different stages in time and thus, a qualitative longitudinal approach was effectively suitable for my relatively smaller number of participants.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviewing has become one of the most widely used techniques within human geography. The method is used to fill a gap in knowledge, to collect a diversity of opinions and experiences, and incite respondents to reflect on those experiences (Dunn, 2005). It is a flexible process with an emphasis on context and description, and how respondents interpret and make sense of their experiences (Bryman et al., 2009).

Valentine (2005) highlights that "the advantage of this approach is that it is sensitive and people-oriented, allowing interviewees to construct their own accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words" (p. 111). Indeed, Cloke et al. (2004) state that interviewing allows the researcher to gain access to the different meanings participants ascribe to their experiences. Semi-structured interviews are "conversational and informal in tone" (Longhurst, 2010, p. 105).

The choice of semi-structured interviews in this study was central for uncovering the meanings and feelings that participants generated and assigned to their international exchange experience. Interviews are practical and effective for story-telling and for multiple long-term conversations planned over time (Secor, 2010). Such a method is well-suited for an exploratory study of mobile students' experiences of 'home' and self abroad, a conceptual intersection and an empirical area of research that requires more depth. However, what interviews gain in depth they lack in representativeness. Yet, Valentine (2005) reminds us that this is "a common but mistaken criticism" as this method does not aim to be representative (p. 111). Notwithstanding the flexibility of semi-structured interviewing, an interview guide was created (both in French and in English) for each stage of the data collection with questions formulated around key themes and concepts (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3). Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face when possible, while (video) calls via internet using Skype were used as an alternate mode for interviewing participants while abroad. With the exception of one mid-point interview that was sent and received via email message due to the unavailability of internet access, all interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's permission to allow the researcher to be fully attentive to the respondent throughout the interviews. The location of the interviews was also considered for its potential to influence the interview process as well as the researcher-respondent dynamic.

Participant-directed photography and photo-elicitation
Photo-elicitation is a well-established technique within visual methodologies that uses photographs as part of the interview process to elicit different and in-depth interpretations of people's lives (Lapenta, 2011). The value of photo-elicitation resides not necessarily in the additional quantity of information generated as much as in the quality and type of information that is conveyed (Harper, 2002). Photographs are used during the interview process to prompt discussions and provide further details on the meanings participants assign to places, people and events (Hall, 2009). In their study of residents' feelings and perceptions of city life in the UK, Moore et al. (2008) observe that participants were more

open and confident in sharing their feelings and views on specific aspects of urban living through the use of photographs. Photographs can also 'enhance' participants' reflexivity and engagement in the interview (Lapenta, 2011, p. 206). Combining photos with interviews is a particularly insightful technique that allows the researcher to access aspects of participants' experience that may otherwise not have been revealed in semi-structured interviews alone (Pink, 2006; Moore et al., 2008; Croghan et al., 2008; Blinn and Harrist, 1991). Pauwels (2011) suggests that photographs offer a "unique (insider) perspective" into participants' lives (p. 8). Indeed, the opportunity to describe their photographs offers participants a chance to narrate the insiderness of their experience, putting them not only in charge of the content but in the position of insider via the researcher. Pink (2007) advises that when analysing images, it is particular useful to examine how people's descriptions of photographs are tied to specific worldviews and ideas of self. Since photographs are invariably inscribed within socio-historical registers and interpreted through a specific cultural lens (Spencer, 2011), Pink (2006) reminds researchers to question "how their own subjective feelings and assumptions influence the images they produce and their understandings of other people's images" (p. 322).

Using participant-directed photography – that is, photographs produced and guided by the participants – as part of photo-elicitation grants participants the freedom to capture and showcase the subjects most meaningful to them, as well as to take the lead in guiding the interpretations and the topic for discussion (Johnsen et al., 2008; Lapenta, 2011; Moore et al., 2008). This 'freedom', according to Moore et al. (2008, p. 56), can help to attenuate power relations between the researcher and participant. Such an approach can also allow participants to clarify possible misconceptions or assumptions made by the researcher from the interviews or images alone (Croghan et al., 2008; Dodman, 2003). The triangulation of semi-structured interviews with participant-directed photo-elicitation not only helps to minimise assumptions about the photographs and participants experience, but also to illuminate how place is made and intertwined with a sense of self. As such, photographs can serve as an effective source of data for the researcher to explore students' relationship with the different places they have encountered throughout their time abroad and reveal any themes that did not come up during the interviews. Photographs are compelling sources of information that can elicit emotional reactions and re-enliven experiences and memories of places and people (Harper, 2002; Myers, 2012). However, photographs are nevertheless a specific moment captured in time and therefore do not necessarily paint a complete picture or a fixed perspective of events or places (Dodman, 2003). Yet, an advantage of photo-elicitation is that it prompts participants to

explain the content of the images and in doing so can illuminate the *process* of their experiences (Croghan et al., 2008).

Since the practice of photography (and particularly the trend of documenting one's travels and everyday experiences with photos on Facebook and Instagram) has become ubiquitous among young people, the decision to use participant-directed photography with photo-elicitation as part of this study was both a relevant and productive choice. Photo-elicitation was combined with the final return interviews to prompt participants to reflect on their experiences of place and events while abroad. Prior to their departure, they were asked to take photos to document their sojourn with a particular emphasis on the places they usually frequented and that were most important to them. These instructions were reiterated during the mid-point interviews. Since recent advances in technology have made cameras more widely (and financially) accessible, each participant was already in possession of a photo-taking device (either with a digital camera or a phone with a photography function) and intending to use it during their sojourn abroad. As such, unlike all of the studies cited in this section, disposable cameras were not necessary for participants as their digital cameras allowed them to take ample photographs as desired. Indeed, the choice of digital photographs made sense in the context of this study and was also far more practical and fruitful than printed film. Upon return to Canada, they were asked about a week prior to the final return interview to select around 20 photos that they felt best represented their experience and the places that were most meaningful to them. These digital photographs were sent to the researcher via email and discussed during the final stage of the return interview; that is, following the first set of semi-structured questions.

Power and positionality

Social research is, to differing extents, entwined in power relations (Dowling, 2010). In spite of the advantages that qualitative research offers there are issues concerning reliability, validity and particularly the role of the researcher in (unwillingly) incurring and dominating power relations. As a response to such concerns, qualitative researchers and particularly feminist scholars critically engage with discussions on positionality and reflexivity (Rose, 1997). Reflexivity within qualitative research practice is integral to both the participant and the researcher and is well marked on the agenda (Hennick et al., 2011; Pickering, 2008). Reflexivity denotes not only awareness of, but a capacity to critically reflect on, how the position of the researcher influences the research process. I follow in McDowell's (1992) advice "that we must recognize and take account of our own position,

as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice" (p. 409). Rose (1997) also argues that reflexivity is a treacherous and potentially impossible path to achieve within research, but that such attempts are not futile, rather, researchers should recognise these concerns and 'work with them' (p. 318). This perspective ties in with the position of the researcher as an 'insider' or 'outsider' wherein the insider has commonalities with the research participants that should encourage a more free-flowing conversation and better understanding of what is being shared (Dowling, 2010, p. 36). Indeed, as a bilingual Canadian student in the UK with prior participation in an international exchange as well as an internship placement in the Global South, I shared not only a common language with participants but also similar experiences which may have facilitated the recruitment of participants as well as the depth and richness of the interview process. Yet, Dowling (2010) cautions that the differential perspective between insider and outsider is not so simplistic, rather, these positions can blur through our "overlapping racial, socio-economic, gender, ethnic, and other characteristics" (p. 36). My positionality, while potentially more on the insider spectrum than outsider, was still that of a researcher. Despite seemingly homogenous samples – in the case of my study, predominantly white, middle-class educated women – the research can never fully conform to the micro diversities of its group of participants. Instead, continuous reflexivity of positionality and power is judiciously exercised to reduce negative effects to both the research and participants.

Moreover, it is not just the position or place of the researcher within the research process that is recently gaining importance but also where the research takes place. The role of place in influencing the collection and production of qualitative data is growing within the literature (Anderson et al., 2010; Caetano, 2015; Elwood and Martin, 2000; Sin, 2003). These scholars concur that allowing participants to choose the location of the interviews or encouraging these to be held in the home-place was beneficial for the research process. Anderson et al. (2010) assert that decisions of where methods are carried out need to be as reflexive as the position of the researcher. While this may not eliminate power relations, interviews conducted in participants' homes can foster a sense of comfort, privacy, intimacy and openness (Elwood and Martin, 2000). The location of the interview interacts with participants' feelings in ways that can create a comfortable, open and productive environment for meaning-sharing or meaning-making. Much like in the empirical chapters, emotions and notions of comfort pervade even the research methods in ways that are productive for also the interview process. From a methodological perspective, spatial and contextual comfort during the interview is helpful for reducing

stress and eliciting opinions and story-telling (Caetano, 2015). Pickering (2008) highlights that how "some stories are told and retold, and often honed and polished" depends on the social relationship with, and location of, the interview(er) (p. 29). For this study, I therefore sought to conduct, when possible, interviews at participants' home environment, either in person or on a Skype (video) call. I also recognise that when interviews were occasionally held in locations outside the 'home' (both while in Canada and abroad) that this may have influenced the narratives and prevented participants from disclosing certain opinions. In one case, the interview held via Skype at the participants' parental home prevented certain significant issues from being brought up during the conversation (I return to this later). Thus, decision-making for the location of interviews was always given to participants and its potential influence kept in mind.

Relations of power and positionality were reflected upon throughout the research process. I was conscious of my position as a researcher and an 'insider' as an international student in inevitably influencing the dynamic and content of the conversations with participants. As such, I sought to reduce this dilemma by continuously exercising a level of critical reflexivity throughout the research process. Some of these challenges are discussed in more detail further below.

Research design

A methodological framework was developed to respond to the main research questions. These are centred on the interrelationship between mobility, place and the self, as well as mobility, place and 'home'.

> ➢ How do mobility and place influence students' sense of self and of home?
> ➢ How do different places (both 'at home' and abroad) mediate the sense of self and 'home'?
> ➢ How and why do students' sense of self and 'home' change over time as part of international mobility?

To respond to these questions, the study adopted a qualitative longitudinal approach to engage with the concepts and track the process of the experience and the potential changes over time. This methodological approach consisted of different stages of data collection and was carried out over almost a two-year period, from April 2012 to February 2014.

Recruitment and procedure

I returned to Canada in March 2012 in order to recruit participants for the first phase of the empirical research. Having participated in an international exchange during my undergraduate degree at the University of Ottawa and volunteered for their International Office as a mentor for exchange students from 2006 to 2011, I sought their help to attend pre-departure orientation sessions with outgoing students in order to recruit potential participants. I contacted a number of other universities in Ontario and Québec, and while many of my enquiries were met with reticence and rejection by several universities, four universities not only welcomed my project but more importantly, facilitated my access to students by allowing me to deliver a brief presentation on my project during pre-departure orientation sessions. My presentations introduced my research to students and solicited their participation in my study. Participation in the study was limited to sojourns in the Global South; in other words, countries in Latin America, Africa, Middle-East and South-East Asia.

I delivered a total of eleven presentations at different university sessions (there were often multiple sessions per university). Orientation sessions for internship placements were separate from more general sessions for university-wide study exchanges because they were usually part of a specific program of study (e.g. International Development Studies, and Journalism). Since I recruited participants in Anglophone, Francophone and bilingual universities, I delivered my presentations in the language of the session. A short paragraph describing my research and soliciting participants for my study was sent to students via email at other universities. This was due to either the distance of the cities from my base in Ottawa or conditions imposed by those universities. Although the emails sent to the outgoing cohorts generated some interest from students, attending the various pre-departure sessions to introduce myself to students yielded far greater numbers of participants. The summer months were dedicated to recruiting additional participants through word-of-mouth and snowball sampling. As a result, a handful of students from other universities were recruited through either informal channels or current participants.

However, because this first round of recruitment only garnered about 15 participants, an additional season of field work and recruitment was carried out the subsequent year which followed and repeated the same approach and procedure as the previous year. As such, participant recruitment was completed in two stages. The first set of recruitment and presentations was carried out from April to June 2012, and the second

round of participant recruitment and presentations was completed throughout the following spring/summer, from April 2013 to June 2013. There were 32 participants that signed up for this study, but only 28 returned my inquiries for interview date and location. Thus, a total number of 28 Canadian students from 7 universities within two provinces took part in the project.

Moreover, interviews with participants were also conducted in different stages. Three interviews were conducted with each participant: 1) a pre-departure interview a couple of weeks before departure; 2) during the mid-point of their sojourn abroad; and finally, 3) one month upon return to Canada. The reasons for conducting three sets of interviews from pre- to post-sojourn was not just to track the process and change but also to have a more representative picture of the experience. Due to the difference in duration of the exchanges (from 2 to 12 months), the timeline for the mid-point interviews varied according to the length of the sojourn. In other words, a mid-point interview for a 2-month sojourn would be after one month, while for year-long sojourns they would be at the 6-month mark. The interviews themselves lasted an average of 67 minutes for the pre-departure interviews, 54 minutes for the mid-point interviews, and 71 minutes for the return interviews which included the participant-directed photography. Interviews were conducted in participants' language preference, that is, either English or French (or, as we call it in my area, 'Franglais', a mix of French and English). I personally translated the French interviews into English when necessary for quoting within the thesis.

Since participation in this study was voluntary with no incentives given other than a desire to share the experience with a researcher that has similar experience, I remained flexible and adaptable to participants' availability and needs to retain and facilitate their continued interest and participation in the study. As indicated earlier, pre-departure interviews were audio-recorded and conducted in person with participants in Ottawa and via Skype with those residing outside of the city. The mid-point interviews were conducted via Skype or phone with participants during their sojourn abroad. Some participants in remote locations had limited access to internet and therefore, one participant was unable to participate in a mid-point interview via Skype or phone. As an alternative, the mid-point interview guide with questions was sent via email and the participant returned their written responses via email as well. For the final interview set, these were conducted upon return, either face-to-face in Ottawa or via Skype. In the majority of cases where location permitted for face-to-face interviews, participants chose their house. Generally they were alone but when someone was present in the home, interviews were always conducted in separate rooms of the house. Only a couple of interviews were conducted in person at a

coffee shop or in a private room at the university. Of the interviews that were carried out via Skype, most were also held in participants' homes, both while they were abroad and when in Canada. One was held via Skype at the participant's office while abroad because to a lack of privacy at home and the other at a friend's place abroad due to an unreliable internet connection at their residence.

There is one case that I briefly mentioned earlier in which the presence of family members in the house tampered the ability of the participants to freely divulge information. At the time of the interview I was unaware of this issue, but the participant emailed me following our conversation to explain that they felt unable to completely share all of the reasons for choosing to study abroad. This was because one of the reasons for going abroad was partly motivated by a desire to escape an abusive relationship with an ex-boyfriend, and while the parents were aware of this and supported the move, the participant felt that the sister (who was at the house at the time of the interview) was too young to be informed of the situation. As such, my participant chose to discuss this more freely and in detail during the mid-point interview. Therefore, location was indeed a factor that influenced both positively and negatively the interview process.

Fortunately, and surprisingly, all but two of the 28 participants completed the three interview stages of the research. One participant heard about my project after they had already begun their sojourn abroad and decided to contact me via email to express their interest in my study. As such, they joined the study at the mid-point interview. Conversely, the other participant did not return my messages for the final return interview. This was unfortunate as a fellow participant informed me that this person was experiencing a particularly difficult re-entry shock in Canada and seemed unwilling to reflect on the final months of their sojourn abroad, despite the fact that, as I was told, these were extremely positive months. Yet it seemed that they were too overcome by emotions to share the positive side of the experience as well as the downside of the return. As a result, a total of 81 verbal interviews were conducted, with one mid-point interview completed in written form via email.

Each of the interviews had questions that probed along general themes and concepts of mobility, 'home', self and places. Using an emotional lens, the questions were often phrased in terms of how participants were *feeling* about certain aspects of their experience. The first set of interviews (pre-departure) looked for motivations to study or intern abroad, feelings about leaving 'home' and expectations. The second set (mid-point) focused on the arrival week, what they missed from Canada, favourite activities and places, and how they felt in these places. The final set of interviews (upon return) asked

questions centered on the final months of the sojourn, how they felt upon return to Canada and what they miss from their place abroad, and were combined with photo-elicitation of participants' photographs.

A total of 552 photographs were selected by participants for the return interviews. On average, 20 photographs were selected for each return interview, with 13 photographs as the lowest number and 27 as the highest number of photographs shared by a participant. All photographs were digital and sent electronically; however, two participants did not submit their photographs. One of them did not respond to my messages for a return interview while the other did participate in the return interview but due to a brief 3-day stay in Canada before moving abroad again (to a different country for another exchange) they did not have the time to sort through their photographs. There was also one participant that did not have the time to send me their photographs for the return interview and because they were leaving again to a remote location with little or limited access to internet, they sent me their selection of photographs in a Microsoft Word document with descriptive captions for each photograph. During the photo-elicitation part of the return interview, I verbally stated the number of each photograph in order to identify and reference these to their corresponding descriptions in the audio-recordings.

Participants were asked to describe the content of the photographs, why they choose the photograph, what it represented or meant to them, where it was taken, who were the people in the photographs and how they felt in these places. However, in many cases, participants shared the necessary information without prompts and effectively led the conversation with enthusiasm and confidence.

Participant characteristics

Although this study did not seek to be representative, it did attempt (somewhat in vain) to recruit an equal mixed gender sample. In fact, the disproportional number of women (24) to men (4) in this study is representative of the unequal gender participation rates of women in international exchanges at Canadian universities but also more generally in the Global North. There were indeed very few men present at the orientation sessions, and within those going to the Global South, this was even less (see Table 1). More so, the over-representation of women is acknowledged in international study exchanges (King et al., 2010; Salisbury et al., 2010; Shirley, 2006), study abroad tours (Rourke and Kanuka, 2012), gap years (Heath, 2007), voluntourism (Bailey and Russell, 2010) and travel generally (Yoon, 2014; Elsrud, 2001).

Table 1. Gender representation of participants from two main universities

	2012-2013		2013-2014	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
University of Ottawa	142 (72%)	55 (28%)	203 (77%)	62 (23%)
University of Montréal	277 (70%)	119 (30%)	274 (72%)	109 (28%)

For linguistic representation, there were 12 Francophones and 16 Anglophones, with 18 participants from the province of Ontario and 10 from the province of Québec (see Table 2). Not all Francophones were necessarily from Québec, hence the difference in numbers. Concerning the context or type of exchange students took part in, there were 13 students participating in a study exchange at a university in the Global South and 15 students that took part in an internship placement with an non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the Global South (see Table 3). Participants on an internship placement were engaged in a range of volunteer work that usually pertained to their program of study. These placements included working at local media outlets, teaching English as a second language, working in agriculture with rural communities and assisting in a variety of positions (research, marketing, social work) at an NGO's office in urban centres. For participants studying abroad, most were enrolled in the same or a similar program of study as in Canada.

There were also varying lengths of sojourns ranging from 2 months to 12 months. The majority of participants were abroad for just 3 months and these were solely for internship placements, while longer sojourns were for study exchanges. The most popular region for exchanges among participants was Latin America/Caribbean (14) followed by Africa (7) and Asia (7) (see Map 1). In terms of linguistic context, while most participants went to countries where English was not the official or spoken language, the majority of participants worked and spoke in English with co-workers. As for those studying abroad, many studied within English-speaking programs or took courses taught in English. However, those studying in South America did complete courses in Spanish and/or Portuguese. Yet, regardless of the linguistic context of their sojourns, all participants expressed their efforts to learn the local language.

Moreover, for 13 participants, the international exchange was considered their first sojourn living abroad for an extended period of time (i.e. more than one month). In addition, only one participant was part of an organised volunteer group during the sojourn abroad. Instead, the majority embarked on an independent exchange experience, of which 17 participants were the only students from their home[4] (i.e. Canadian) university at their

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[4] 'Home' university is used in the literature and by international offices to refer to the university in the country of origin (in this case, Canada) while 'host' university refers to the university at the destination of the exchange.

destination, while another 10 students went abroad independently but were not the only ones from their home university at their destination. The majority of participants lived in private housing with locals (9) or other internationals (5) or a mix of both (3), while some lived in a host family (6) and a few lived in university halls on campus (3) or a private residence arranged by the NGO (2). Participants' average age was 22 years old, with the youngest participant being 19 years of age and the eldest at 28 years of age.

There were also three participants that could be considered as 'heritage-seekers' due to the fact that their exchanges were located in their parents' or grand-parents' country of birth (Peru, India and China). Most participants were Caucasian but two have Hispanic ancestry while one has Indian ancestry. Furthermore, a total of 9 participants were participating in another international exchange in a different country following the study. While there is much diversity in the characteristics of participants, a comparison of experiences between Francophones and Anglophones, as well as women and men, and between other participant characteristics, were beyond the scope and aims of this study.

Table 2. Participant characteristics

Gender	Number of participants
Women	24
Men	4
First language of participants	
English	16
French	12
Experience living abroad (more than 1 month)	
First-time living abroad	12
Prior experience living abroad generally	16
Prior experience living in the Global South	9
Program of study	
International Studies and Development	11
Social Sciences and Humanities	8
Journalism and Communications	4
Architecture	2
Law	2
Health Sciences	1
Cycle of study	
Undergraduate	25
Graduate	3
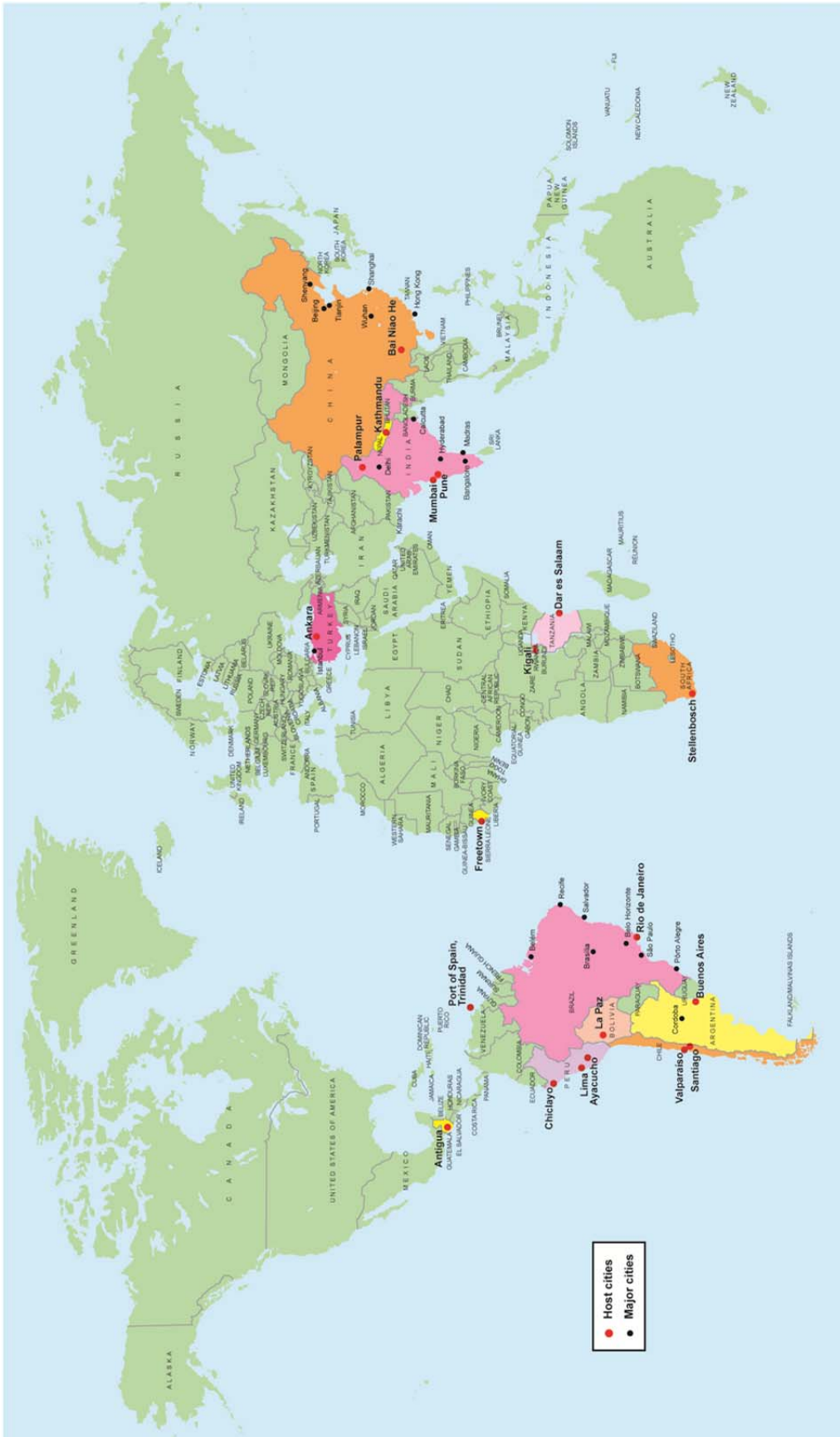
Plate 1. Participants' host destinations in the Global South

Table 3. Characteristics of sojourn

Type of mobility	Number of participants
Study exchange	13
Internship placement	15
Length of sojourn	
2 months	5
3 months	8
4 months	3
5 months	5
6 months	1
10 months	2
12 months	4
Destination of exchange	
Latin America and Caribbean	14
Africa	7
Asia	7
Social context of sojourn	
Independent (only one from home university)	17
Independent (but others from home university)	10
Part of an organised group	1
Accommodation abroad	
University halls on campus	3
Private arranged residence	2
Private housing with international students	9
Private housing with locals	5
Private housing with locals and internationals	3
Host family	6

Interpreting and analysing the qualitative material

Since the purpose of using participant photographs in this study was to prompt and elicit information as part of the final return interviews, I did not analyse the photographs independently from the verbal descriptions. Instead, the photographs were incorporated into the thesis to illustrate their accompanied interview quotes and the places that were meaningful to participants during their sojourn. The intention was to understand the content of the photographs from the participants' perspective and therefore interpret and analyse their descriptions rather than make assumptions of their photographs.

As soon as permitted, interviews were manually transcribed verbatim from the original audio-recordings. The decision to manually transcribe 81 interviews was not so much for lack of funding; rather, the process of transcription constituted a vital part of the analytical process. It enabled me to familiarise myself with the interview themes as well as discover emerging ones that escaped my notice during the interviews. As Secor (2010) explains, "analysis permeates both the design of the research and takes place throughout the encounter with research participants. … the researcher asks questions for further

clarification, reflecting back her own understandings to the participants" (p. 202). As a result, the researcher is continuously implicated in an ongoing interpretative analysis. The process of the interview encounters as well as transcription form part of the interpretation and analysis (Secor, 2010). I was aware that the analysis was always a double-layered interpretation of participants' interpretations. Caetano (2015) acknowledges that a 'double hermeneutic' is an inevitable part of social research (p. 230). Within this perspective, language is also an important factor and frame of interpretation. Language creates and shapes meaning (Miller and Glassner, 2011). My awareness thus also extended to my translation of French transcripts. I had to carefully choose the most appropriate corresponding term in English to represent the meaning-making of Francophone participants and while I relied on online translation websites to double-check my choice of translation, I retained in brackets and italic specific original expressions and use of words in French within the participant quotes in the empirical chapters. These were expressions or terms that were more difficult to translate as there was no apparent or precise English equivalent to convey the same connotation or meaning.

The transcript files, along with the photographs, were compartmentalised into individual folders for each participant and numbered according to the order of the first interview. Although there was the availability of the NVivo software, I opted to go 'old school' and manually code the transcripts instead of using computer software. Since I personally carried out and transcribed all of the interviews, it felt more comfortable and natural for me to manually navigate between the different sets of transcripts in order to compare and connect themes and check for overlaps and contradictions. Indeed, Blunt (2003) did a manual coding of her interviews for her study on identity and 'home' and explained that it allowed for "interpretating life stories and memories in a more nuanced and sensitive way than computer coding would allow" (p. 84). A thematic analysis of the transcripts was conducted by coding general recurring themes and constantly comparing new emerging and overlapping themes to (re)form categories.

Ethical considerations and personal reflections

Ethics

Prior to the field work, I filled out and submitted Royal Holloway's Ethical Approval Form to the College Ethics Committee and received formal approval in February 2012. Prior to the first interview, I provided a consent form (both a French and English version) which detailed the purpose of my study, what participation in the study entailed, confidentiality

and voluntary participation (see Appendix 4 and 5). Both participants and myself signed two copies of the consent form: one copy for them and the other for myself. The consent form stated and ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of participants (all names were changed into pseudonyms) as well as the strictly voluntary nature of their participation and the right to terminate participation at will. In cases where participants were unable to sign the consent form in person, these were provided via email and participants were required to reply to the email confirming that they had read and agreed to the terms.

Following the research analysis, I contacted those participants whose photographs I had chosen for the empirical chapters to ask for their permission to publish these in the thesis. Almost all of the participants agreed to have their photographs published in the thesis and were quite supportive of this. However, since one participant (out of 14) did not respond to my email inquiry about their photographs, these were not included in the thesis. Since I only have participants' old university email addresses and thus, could only contact them through these, I suspect that most have already moved on from that university and no longer check these accounts. Yet, it is also just as likely that they might not have wanted to respond to my request.

The use of participant photography raises questions concerning anonymity of both participants and other individuals present in the pictures as well as ownership of the photographs. Two participants had included some photographs taken by a friend or colleague. These were group photographs that included the participant but were not taken by them. In fact, it seemed that friends often took turns taking group photographs with the intention of sharing them among each other afterwards. As such, these were considered common property among friends and were shared during the interview as the content of the photograph itself was important for participants to illustrate aspects of their experience (notably the people they met abroad) but due to the ethical question of ownership, these are not part of the photographs showcased in this thesis. Yet anonymity remains a sensitive issue. Faces were blurred in the photographs in order to protect their identity from being revealed; however, it is possible that fellow participants may be able to identity each other despite these steps, either due to other aspects of their appearance (e.g. clothing) or simply because photographs were shared and published on social media sites such as Facebook and could be recognisable. As such, I chose to include in this thesis photographs from people that are less likely to be identified by other participants based on content and context of the photographs and participants (e.g. some participants went abroad independently).

Due to financial constraints, no monetary incentives were given to participants. Therefore, participation in the study relied on students' goodwill and their desire or willingness to share their experiences in confidential terms with an attentive and receptive researcher with international experience. My bilingual background was useful for enabling participants to express themselves in the language of their choice, including switching between languages when seeking the most appropriate word or expressions to describe an event or feeling. This was usually the case of bilingual students who had a proficiency in both languages and could select expressions and key words from a more extensive vocabulary. Notwithstanding the advantage of fluently communicating in both languages of participants, there were some challenges encountered during the research process that led to some personal reflections shared below.

Challenges and reflections on the research process

While my background facilitated a contact and rapport with participants, there were nonetheless some challenges, both practically with recruitment and critically with my position as a researcher. As mentioned earlier, initial contact with some universities was met with objections and rejections. There were administrative and ethical barriers raised by officials at some universities which refused my attendance at orientation sessions and my requests to simply forward a blurb on my research to prospective students. Fortunately, I received much cooperation from other universities and was able to recruit a few participants from the same universities that rejected my enquiries through word of mouth. Still, participation numbers in my study are lower than what was initially aimed for, which was between 30 and 40 participants.

Canadian participation in international exchanges is still low overall and particularly in comparison to European programs. Even more so, is that while study exchanges to the Global South are growing, there are still significantly fewer students choosing destinations in that part of the world compared to the Western world. This results in a very small pool of potential participants, of which many are not interested in sharing their personal experiences with a stranger or simply cannot be bothered in the midst of finishing exams and preparing for their departure. As such, participants were a self-selected group of students who were motivated to share their experiences – whether in the name of research or for more egocentric reasons. The fact that they allotted time in their busy schedules (finishing exams and working part-time jobs) to fit in a one to two hour conversation with no financial compensation is perhaps in itself very telling of the kind of sample this study (and likely others) yielded. I also sought to balance the number of study

exchanges with internship exchanges and therefore spent more time attempting to recruit lower numbers of students going to study in the South rather than potentially recruit easier and higher numbers of interns.

Although as a bilingual researcher the dual linguistic and cultural nature of the study (Anglophone Canada and French Canada) presented few problems, there were instances where I questioned whether certain terms translated into French retained the same connotations as its English equivalent. For example, 'home' is translated as 'chez soi' or 'chez moi', and the 'self' is 'soi' or 'moi' but these do not seem to translate in the same way or encompass the same generality or range of connotations as in English. While the term 'self-discovery' is widely used to denote introspection and reflection, Francophones used various other combinations of words to describe essentially what Anglophones have coined in one hyphenated expression. Despite my fluency in both languages I double-checked and supported my translations through online translation websites in order to consider a number of more adequate linguistic equivalences.

Yet, translation was not always the main challenge with language; rather, the ability or willingness to convey feelings and emotions proved particularly difficult for both participants and researcher. Guiding the interview narratives from descriptive accounts to more affective story-telling was no easy feat. Since open-ended questions were not always effective at teasing out how participant felt through the sojourn, I asked 'feely' probing questions that explicitly asked participants to recollect and reflect on their emotions at specific times and in particular places, and subsequently communicate these emotions verbatim. While this encouraged a reflexive exercise, some still struggled to find the right words or perhaps the desire to share such feelings. The fact that this led a couple of participants to joke that the research sounded more like a psychology study than a geography project indicated an awkwardness and discomfort in expressing feelings. Yet there were some participants – particularly those in journalism – that seemed to command a certain ease and facility with language and were thus more skilful in articulating and expressing their feelings and thoughts in a more detailed and illustrative way.

Since I conducted the mid-point interviews with the students via Skype rather than in person abroad, my perceptions and understanding of their experiences of place are framed and interpreted solely through their narratives and photographs. While in situ interviewing would have been ideal, it was simply not financially or logistically feasible. The implications of being at a distance are that I may not entirely grasp or access their experiences of the places which mediate their sense of self and 'home', and thus, may not accurately transmit the experience of my participants or, at least, not as faithfully as they

would see it. Participants' photographs offered a glimpse of the places that they frequented abroad and allowed me to peer into their everyday lives. While photography is a great tool to see through participants' eyes, my vision is nonetheless filtered through a different lived/personal lens than theirs. This is why I chose not to analyse the photographs independently from their verbal descriptions. Alternatively, being physically (and emotionally) absent from these places may have enabled me to discern a different perspective of these places and of their experience in a way that might be insightful to not only scholars but hopefully participants themselves.

Another factor to consider within the research is that differing lengths of sojourns abroad meant that the experiences were not easily or exactly comparable. While the culture shock phase of the sojourn might be around the 3-month mark for students on year-long exchanges, this would evidently differ for students on just 3-month sojourns. As such, mid-point interviews with students on 3-month exchanges would likely yield different perspectives than an interview at the 6-month mark for those away on 12-month exchanges. However, rather than pose a credible challenge to the study, this was taken into consideration as part of the empirical and methodological research process. Hence a longitudinal framework was designed to capture a fuller and more in-depth representation of the experience.

Technical issues were often a challenge and downside of using social media and technology for interviewing. However, the upside was that without Skype, interviews would not be feasible and they would have been ruled out, thus preventing mid-point interviews and reducing participation rates. Nonetheless, relying on technology and particularly the internet can be frustrating. Internet on either end sometimes disconnected and Skype calls often dropped or were simply incomprehensible due to a faint or unreliable internet connection. The quality of the calls recorded using an audio-recorder device next to the speakers of the computer meant that the recordings were often poor quality and occasionally certain words were inaudible and impossible to transcribe from fades or cut-offs in speech. As Hine (2005) notes, "the concern is to exploit the benefits of the medium while avoiding its possible pitfalls" (p. 4). I tried to remedy dropped calls by having participants repeat part of their conversation before the call dropped. In the odd case of inaudible words, these did not seem to alter the meaning or importance of the message conveyed.

Moreover, I want to return to the notion of positionality as a researcher and a bilingual Canadian international student. There were interviews in which I felt that participants were aware of my critical role as a researcher and seemed concerned with

defending their experiences and choice of studying or interning in the Global South. Some of these same participants seemed to want to show that they were critical, informed and educated. Indeed, as the empirical chapters will show, many of the participants were articulate, reflexive and aware of clichés, but through the use of a longitudinal framework, the multiple interviews through time revealed how some betrayed their previous image or contradicted themselves. This was of course part and parcel of the research process and the findings, but it points to how multiple interviews can be effective for revealing contradictions and latent underlying themes and perspectives, and how positionality does affect the interview content.

I was also admittedly unsure at first how to approach participants at the orientation sessions and then later at the start of the interview process. On the one hand I wanted to come across as professional and trustworthy but also relatable and accessible in order to recruit participants and then encourage open and free-flowing conversations. As both a researcher and an international student, I often pondered on the appropriate level of engagement in the interview process. In wanting to play my 'insider card' as an international student, I occasionally shared brief anecdotes of my own experiences abroad that coincided with what participants had said in an attempt to gain more trust and encourage more depth. In some cases, this worked, and I saw a quick change in the way participants engaged in the conversation and revealed more details and intimate information about themselves. Yet, in other cases, I felt that they may have perceived this as an intrusion and perhaps even as a transgression of my role as an interviewer. In the end, I had to feel my way through individual interviews to gauge what would be most effective and suitable for encouraging each participant to open up. Ultimately, I had to 'personalise' and 'adjust' to each interviewee (Caetano, 2015, p. 239). Furthermore, I also felt a tension between exercising critical analysis of the interview transcripts and illustrating what participants wanted to convey; in other words, a tension between a need to be critical for an academic audience and a desire to not misrepresent participants' intentions. This was the same for the photo-elicitation conversations.

Participant photographs were an aspect of the research that I found delicate to navigate. There were several photographs portraying participants and/or their friends that would complement some of the findings of this study but I was concerned that these might reveal participants identity to others and thus, I had to forsake them in the thesis. Another concern that nags me is whether participants will disapprove of how I interpreted their explanations and descriptions of their photographs. I sought to match these photographs and their accompanied quotes within associated themes in the empirical chapters, but my

fear is that participants may disagree with my subjective reasoning. They might regret entrusting their photographs and sharing their feelings, views and opinions with me if they feel that I have not done justice to their experience or worse, that I was unfairly critical in my analysis. In fact, they might have expected an entirely different study from the one I have presented in this thesis and yet, I hope that they can relate and appreciate at least some of the findings from my study, just as I appreciate their perspectives and the challenges and the journey they encountered, both internal and external, throughout the course of this study.

Finally, reflexivity was not only a necessary part of the research it was also an outcome of the interviews. My participants voluntarily raised the fact that they enjoyed the interview process and that it allowed them to reflect on their own motivations and experiences and clarify their feelings about it all. Their experience became meaningful when communicated (Pickering, 2008). As Caetano (2015) noted, "the interviews turned out to be moments of exchange, as the interviewees shared their experiences and perceptions for academic purposes and also found the research to be an opportunity to be heard and a safe space for self-analysis" (p. 237).

Concluding remarks

As research on the intersection of mobility, self and 'home' is growing in the literature, so too are qualitative methodologies. This chapter presented the methodological approach that underpins this research project. Qualitative approaches and particularly semi-structured interviews are well-relied on within mobility studies to elicit in-depth and meaningful data and this study is no different. Photo-elicitation through participant-directed photography is an insightful yet underused method that has served to enrich the qualitative data. Through a discussion of qualitative approaches, this chapter explained the choice of a qualitative longitudinal framework and the use of semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation as productive techniques for addressing the research questions and aims of this study. It argued that an emotional perspective and qualitative approach were integral to capture the meanings and feelings of students' mobility and the process of the experience over time.

Guided by the conceptual framework of place and 'home', the methodology was designed to interrogate participants at different places throughout the experience. This chapter therefore showed how interviews were carried out in three sets and conducted at strategic stages in the empirical research process: pre-departure, mid-point, and upon

return. This was to track effectively the process of the experience and capture a more holistic picture of potential changes. It also discussed how participant photographs were combined with the final return interview to elicit a richer data set and reveal different perspectives. I also discussed how a critical reflexivity was exercised throughout the process and how my position as a researcher and international student may have influenced the interview dynamic and content. Participants were Canadian students selected on the basis of their academic mobility to the Global South and were recruited through pre-departure orientation sessions at universities in Ontario and Québec and word-of-mouth through snowball sampling. The pre-dominantly female representation of the sample corroborated with trends and others studies within international student mobility.

This chapter has framed the empirical procedure for this study and has thus presented the *why*, *where*, *who* and *how* of this research. It discussed the ethics and sensitive use of participants' verbal and visual data, as well as my reflections and challenges on the research process. The next chapter places us at the start of participants experience by exploring through pre-departure interviews the motivations for participants to study or intern abroad generally and in the Global South specifically.

Chapter 4

Challenging the comfort zone:
Self-discovery through unfamiliar everyday life abroad

"Tourism is about desire--desire for change, but also a more sensuous desire to become intimate with the unfamiliar" (Lippard, 1999, p. 50)

Self-development, personal change, introspection, self-discovery, self-transformation and self-growth. These are but some of the motivations that saturate the literature on travel and international student mobility. As replete as the travel literature is with these 'self' centred motivations (pun intended), few studies have sought to unpack their conceptual and geographical underpinnings. While there are a number of complex reasons why students choose to study abroad (as discussed in Chapter 2), this thesis focuses on the dimensions of the self to further understand and explicate these popular motivations.

Based on pre-departure and return interviews with students, this chapter examines the ambiguous notion of 'comfort zone' and the ubiquitous theme of self-discovery frequently expressed within travel narratives. More specifically, it critically examines the tropes of 'leaving the comfort zone', self-discovery and self-change as reasons to study or intern abroad. These motivations are hardly new within the travel and mobility literature but following a thematic thread, this chapter picks at their underlying motives. I argue that students' motivations are based on the assumption from popular travel discourses and study abroad rhetoric that international educational sojourns result in personal development (Bishop, 2013). This thesis also argues that place matters, and this chapter will demonstrate this by conceptualising the notion of comfort zone. I argue that familiarity, (dis)comfort and everyday practices are used to navigate and renegotiate the borders of the comfort zone and to incite a reflexive and mutable self. Unlike the common view that people seek travel as a way to escape the mundane, my participants regard the mundane and everyday practices abroad as exotic and extraordinary because it represents a way to gain 'insider knowledge' and develop a sense of local belonging in their new place.

Ultimately, participants are aiming to adopt new habits and a sense of comfort to extend the boundaries of their comfort zone and their sense of 'home'.

This chapter will first examine the notion of comfort zone as expressed by participants. Second, it will take a closer look at the productive interrelationship between feelings of comfort and familiarity for enabling self-discovery and personal change and finally, it will discuss the appeal of everyday life and practices as a way to change personal habits and extend the comfort zone and the sense of 'home'.

Challenging the comfort zone

The predominant themes that emerged from the pre-departure interviews are those of seeking a 'challenge' and to leave the 'comfort zone'. Participants described their motivation to undertake an exchange abroad as a challenge to 'escape', 'leave' or be 'outside' of their comfort zone. Frequent mentions of the pursuit of a challenge were nearly always accompanied by references to the comfort zone. When probed further why they wanted to leave their comfort zone the reply was often 'because it's a challenge.' Conversely, when asked to define what is the challenge the response was to 'leave the comfort zone'. This popular statement and motivation is reflected in online articles and sources that promote study abroad, and particularly to countries in the Global South, as a way to 'challenge the comfort zone' (Sachdev, 2013; see also Figure 1).

Figure 1. Twitter post promoting exchanges abroad as a way to get 'outside' of the 'comfort zone'

I met with Pierre, a Francophone student, in his shared student apartment a couple of weeks prior to his internship in Nepal. He was in the midst of finishing exams and tying up loose ends. Originally from the Eastern coast of Canada, Pierre moved away from his family home four years ago to pursue university studies in Ottawa. Now finishing his final year of undergraduate studies in International Development his exchange will make up the final credits for this degree. Pierre has never visited a country outside of the Western world and has little travel experience abroad. His 3-month sojourn in Kathmandu will mark his first time away from Canada for such an extended period. His reason to participate in an exchange abroad neatly summarises what many other participants have foregrounded:

> "I see it as a challenge. That's the point. I'm going to Nepal; my point is to leave here and totally leave my comfort zone and to challenge myself. That's the whole point of my trip."

Leaving for Nepal seems to be synonymous with leaving the comfort zone and is seen as a form of personal challenge. The 'here' Pierre refers to is rather vague, but seems to imply both Ottawa and more generally Canada. Arianne is another Francophone student who studies in a similar program to Pierre and much like him has moved away from her parents' home – albeit from the West coast – to pursue studies in International Relations in Ottawa. Unlike Pierre she will be on a 6-month study exchange at a university in Valparaiso, Chile and has had previous experience living abroad in Europe with her family as a child and later as a tourist for one month in South-East Asia during first year of university. Probably aware of sounding hackneyed Arianne acknowledges that:

> "it's really stupid but I wanted a bit to set a challenge for myself (*me poser un défi*) now that I have become quite comfortable (*à l'aise*) with my life in Ottawa, and I wanted to leave my comfort zone and really start over (*recommencer*)."

Arianne might be enticed by the prospect of adventure and exciting new challenges through living in different place abroad. Notwithstanding the element of novelty, Arianne feels that leaving Ottawa – now a space of comfort and familiarity – for a different city and country not only presents a personal challenge, but her comment about wanting to 'start over' suggests a perceived opportunity for creating a new lifestyle and/or reinventing herself. A perspective promoted by expatriate sources online (see Figure 2). Indeed, White and White (2004) note that "journeys serve as a rite of passage between 'old' ways of life

and the possibilities of 'new' ways of living" (p. 216) while Murphy-Lejeune (2002) highlights how "new life conditions offer an opportunity to escape from your normal self" (p. 98).

Figure 2. Twitter post promoting living abroad as an opportunity to 'reinvent' oneself.

In wanting to understand how participants related the notion of challenge with that of leaving the comfort zone, I ask Judy (a Humanities student) before her departure for a 3-month internship to teach English to locals in Chiclayo, Peru, why the prospect of living in a different country was so appealing. Her reply is grounded in prior international experience (she lived in Eastern Europe for one year as part of a high school exchange program) and focuses on the notions of place and unfamiliarity that come along with moving to a new country:

> "It's more of a challenge when you're cut off from a lot of other things. Like, you don't know anyone, you have support but you're the only one there. You don't know what's going to happen this time, you don't know certain things, it's a different language, it's a different culture, there's different customs … things you can or can't do. You're getting the original challenge if you're teaching or working for [host organisation], but when you throw in a different country – even if it's a different city, whether it's in Canada or abroad – you add that level of challenge, making it more exciting or adventurous, and there's that aspect or variable that you can't account for; you don't know what's going to happen. So everything is a surprise."

For Judy, the international setting of the internship offers a new set of difficulties and therefore, a higher level of challenge than staying in her current city in Canada. Place, it would seem, gives value to particular (e.g. cultural and linguistic) forms of struggles.

Participants often emphasise that they have 'no expectations' prior to going abroad, yet it seems that the old saying of 'expect the unexpected' is part of the sought out challenge. The unpredictability of what awaits them in a new place is what creates the element of adventure and kindles their excitement. It also suggests that overcoming such difficulties necessarily implies some kind of reward.

Sitting opposite to Brianne in her living room in Ottawa, I notice her demeanour as I prepare my audio-recording device prior to our pre-departure interview. She seems either nervous or excited about the interview, or perhaps it is a combination of nerves and excitement leading up to her departure. Set for a 2-month internship in Kigali, Rwanda, Brianne is one of many participants who has never lived away from her parents' home. During the interview, she echoes the importance of place in her conception of the comfort zone and its potential reward in the form of introspection:

> "I think the best way to sort of learn about yourself is when you're not in your comfort zone. And I'm not someone who's going to go scaling mountains, that's not me, I'm not going to go bungee jumping but I think being in a different country, a different city, it's like, can I do this on my own? I can be independent in Ottawa no problem, it's easy. I can do it in any Canadian city. It's not going to be difficult; I mean, difficult yes, but it's not *not* doable, whereas living abroad, it doesn't work for everybody."

Brianne believes that geographical relocation and leaving the comfort zone can foster self-exploration and test personal attributes – such as independence. In pointing out that living abroad 'doesn't work for everybody', she is not only highlighting the challenge of her international endeavour, but also implying that emotional capacity is a key factor that determines whether individuals will – as goes the colloquial saying – 'make it or break it'. As Galani-Mouta (2000) explains, "the issue of people going places is important because it relates to notions of boundary, inside and outside, distance and difference, all of which enter into the construction and renegotiation of the self" (p. 205). Navigating the boundaries of the comfort zone through geographical travel is thought to have the potential to incite self-discovery and personal growth. While conventional notions of the comfort zone are primarily associated with outdoor physical challenges such as climbing mountainous terrain or engaging in thrill-seeking sports, Brianne defines the 'comfort zone' as a space delimited by Canadian national borders. Jenkins (2015) indicates that "a boundary is simultaneously *where* something stops and something else begins, and

something that *indicates* where something stops and something else begins" (p. 13-14). Here, the boundaries of the comfort zone parallel national and international borders and give access, or the potential, to tap into a reflexive mode of self-discovery. In other words, such physical and imaginative boundaries or borders indicate where the reflexive self begins and ends. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) comments that "for travellers, their own thinking-as-usual ceases to be operational outside their own borders" (p. 21). The physical (and possibly even virtual or imaginary) act of crossing over international boundaries is simultaneously a step outside physical and mental boundaries of comfort and familiarity; that is, the comfort zone. From this perspective, the notion of the comfort zone highlights two things: that space and place are important, and that the boundaries of a (un)reflexive self are drawn along, and aligned with, international and imaginative borders of (un)familiarity. Self, place and comfort interact and intersect within and between (un)familiar geographical borders. However, far from merely a geographical location, Steve (a student in International Development) explains to me during his pre-departure interview at his apartment in Ottawa how the comfort zone is necessarily about cultural distance. Originally from a different city in Canada, Steve has relatively extensive experience living abroad compared to most other participants in this study. He has visited and lived in multiple countries between 2 to 9 months at a time and hence, his 3-month internship in Kathmandu, Nepal, will add to his growing list of places visited around the globe:

> "I think it's more culturally than it is a physical thing. … The farther you move away from your culture – unless you've been somewhere in between – it's a lot harder for you to adapt and it's a lot further outside of your comfort zone. … Comfort zone doesn't necessarily mean putting your life in danger. It's like not being able to speak to the locals, not being able to read the local signs. There's always the possibility of getting lost (laughs)."

Leaving the comfort zone is not just a crossing over international borders, but of a stepping into a new cultural territory. As Steve points out, moving to another country usually implies different cultural customs, social norms and language barriers. The challenge of 'leaving' the comfort zone is understood in terms of a departure from cultural and physical familiarity. The degree of unfamiliarity and thus the level of difficulty of the challenge increases with both geographical and cultural distance. Indeed, when I ask Pierre at what level leaving the comfort zone was a challenge, he quickly responds:

"Everything. Physical, intellectual, moral, ethical, political; you wouldn't get that set of challenges here. … It's different. The whole lifestyle is different, everything needs to be relearned; how you speak to people, how you see life… everything. That's leaving your comfort zone."

Presumably 'here' once again refers to Canada as a country and hence, a national space of familiarity. Pierre's comment about how a different lifestyle needs to be 'relearned' alludes to what Arianne mentioned earlier about new beginnings in wanting to 'start over'. Through place, participants envision learning new everyday life practices such as local customs and foreign language communication skills that they regard as mental and emotional challenges outside of their comfort zone. Galani-Mouta (2000) explains that travellers are "enticed with evocations of a place that offers what is missing from one's ordinary/everyday existence (at 'home') -- the dream. Dreaming amounts to an imaginative journey which only the unfamiliar, the 'alien', can bring about" (p. 212). Pierre looks beyond his own comfort zone and hence, national and familiar borders for a wide spectrum of challenges that he feels are only attainable outside of his everyday life in Ottawa and even Canada. As such, the notion of comfort zone described by Pierre takes on a multitude of meanings through a complex amalgamation of external (physical) and internal (emotional) factors. Continuing my conversation with Steve in his now nearly empty apartment about his upcoming internship in Nepal, he explains how the conditions of the comfort zone vary among people:

"I'm assuming that everyone has a different experience. Like, where someone's comfort zone… the boundaries are a lot wider than me. Like, between me and my mom. My mom's comfort zone is, like, not climbing anything over 2 feet because she's terrified of heights. Where I'm like, 'oh mom, I'm going to go bungee jumping in Nepal' (imitates her terrified face and then laughs). That's why it's so difficult to explain [the notion of comfort zone] because everyone has a different concept of, like, a different idea of comfort and of what to expect."

By describing the difference between himself and his mother's comfort zone, Steve exemplifies how the concept differs and varies between individuals. As shown above, Steve and Pierre have similar yet different perspectives on the/their comfort zone. Both tend to place the emphasis primarily on cultural factors; however, considering their differing experiences of travel (Steve lived in multiple countries while Pierre has never

lived outside Canada) this could partly explain why Pierre paints a broader definition of the comfort zone in comparison to Steve. With little experience abroad, Pierre considers living beyond Canadian borders as a challenge on every level, while Steve's perspective of the comfort zone is more focused on cultural everyday factors. Participants' comfort zone will likely vary according to travel experience, ancestry, gender and other background characteristics that position them differently within a certain social milieu (be it within Canada or in certain places abroad). Although participants have different comfort zones, there seems to be common thread and consensus that the/their comfort zone is constituted by feelings of comfort based on a familiar space and cultural everyday practices.

Bissell (2008) calls for geographers to attend to the 'nuances' and complexities of comfort (p. 1697). The comfort zone is useful for understanding how young people attach internal (emotional) and external (geographical) boundaries to their sense of self. It suggests that a sense of self is embedded in familiar and comfortable (physical and emotional) spaces and places and, more specifically, how unfamiliarity of a place, as well as emotional and physical discomfort, are perceived as productive for self-discovery and destabilising a sense of self. Galani-Mouta (2000) suggests that

> "the journey has the potential to facilitate a re-setting of boundaries as the traveling self, besides moving from one place to another, may embark in an additional journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between the familiar and the unknown, between a here, a there, and an elsewhere" (p. 204).

The boundaries of the comfort zone are therefore uneven, diffuse, malleable, permutable and subject to change depending on (un)familiar and (un)comfortable physical, cultural and emotional contexts. Pierre's internship in Nepal offers an escape from the familiar, his comfort zone, and an opportunity to fulfill a challenge that he feels unable to achieve while in Canada.

However, if the nature of the challenge arises from the relocation to a different place and culture, why not choose to intern or study in a different province or region in Canada? Canada is a diverse and multicultural country with two official languages – English and French (not to mention the diversity of indigenous native languages) – and certain provinces and territories such as Québec and Nunavut are recognised as culturally and linguistically unique within the country. Many, if not most, of the native communities in Canada live in remote and isolated reserves with dilapidated infrastructure and poor social

and economic conditions akin to popularised images and perceptions of the Global South. Yet participants nevertheless choose countries in the Global South to study or volunteer in development. Christina, for example, has volunteered in countries in South America as part of a 2-week high school project and studied in an African country on a 1-month university course. These previous experiences overseas, as well as her upcoming 10-month study exchange in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, do complement her university studies in English and African Studies. I ask Christina as we conduct her pre-departure interview through a Skype video call, why not choose to study in Québec instead of Tanzania? She replies:

> "It's almost too close. It's like an easy get-away. Like, all of the cultural norms are pretty much the same. … I enjoy the difference. I'm just so used to being here that I enjoy being pushed… Like this sounds weird, but even if I went to France, it would be like, well, whatever; it's not enough of a challenge."

Christina highlights the importance of relative distance from everyday physical and cultural familiarity in her pursuit of a challenge. This reflects a comment made by a participant in Ryan and Mulholland's (2014) study of French expats living in London who express that the proximity of London to France felt like "living in the same country" (p. 594). Québec, in this perspective, is simply too close for discomfort. Indeed, many participants suggest that the boundaries of their comfort zone are delimited well beyond Canadian national borders; in fact, they stretch to the imaginative borders of the Western world and are drawn along the limits of an imagined Global South. It seems that the geographical vastness of the Western world is conceived as a homogenous space of comfort and familiarity where different cultural norms between nations are perceived as too similar. Such is the case with popular Western representations and geographical imaginations of the Global South which tend to erase international borders between countries within Latin America, Africa and Asia and instead lump these together into a uniform cultural and socio-economic plane. Imaginative geographies of the Global South as different and distinct from the Global North are thus seized upon to (re)produce particular ideas of specific regions of the world (Williams et al., 2014). These colonial spatial imaginaries and discourses within international student mobility underscore imperial legacies and end up reinforcing power relations between different places at an international scale (Madge et al., 2009).

The perceived 'exotic' context and features of the Global South appeal to the imagination of travellers, tourists and exchange students alike (Williams et al., 2014). The

Global South, considered and portrayed as culturally dissimilar from Canada and the Western world, is associated with greater risk and everyday challenges (i.e., culturally, socially and physically) and thus, is viewed as affording potentially more rewarding and transformative qualities, particularly in the context of development education and volunteering (Ansell, 2008; Diprose, 2012). Elsrud (2001) notes that "journeying to places described as 'Third World', 'primitive', 'poor', or 'underdeveloped' is seen as both risky and rewarding" (p. 598). The image of the Global South as a risky place is capitalised upon to differentiate from the comfort and safety of common tourism activities (Snee, 2013). Indeed, in the context of gap year travellers in the Global South, Ansell (2008) points out that: "to construct biographies that demonstrate achievement and strength of character, young people seek places that provide opportunities for risk-taking" (p. 222). Lack of comfort, difficulties in navigating public transportation, poverty, machismo, and perceived health and safety risks such as poor hygiene, illnesses, crime and violence are considered to endow extra symbolic capital and distinction. In this study, the Global South is sought out as a destination that extends beyond the comfort zone of the Western world, where young people can increase their cultural and geographical distance from familiar 'home' environments and thus stretch their self-growth and sense of self. Indeed, online student blogs advocate for travel to countries in the Global South in view of their potential for 'challenging the comfort zone' (Sachdev, 2013). The Global South is thus seen as a space where discomforts are productive for self-discovery. In the next section I tease out the relationship between the comfort zone and self-discovery.

'Leaving' the comfort zone for self-discovery and self-development

Bissell (2008) observes that "to remain within our 'comfort zone' is something that we are led to believe will at best impede our progress" (p. 1697). This popular belief is what underlies participants' motivations and comments about leaving the comfort zone. They believe that stepping outside the boundaries of their comfort zone (i.e. Canadian and Western borders and spaces of familiarity) is a path towards self-discovery, self-development and even self-change. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) notes that, while living abroad, students 'discover' new aspects of their self (p. 30). Geographical relocation to another city or country involves both physical and emotional discomfort, and the Global South in particular is viewed by many as a place of discomfort. This view is exemplified by Marilyn, a Communications student preparing for her 2-month internship in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Speaking to me on Skype from the comfort of her own room in Canada,

Marilyn (who has never lived away from her parents' home) describes her perspective of Ottawa and Freetown as geographically opposing spaces of comfort: "what I have is a very comfortable life in Ottawa, so I think that I'm going from one end to the extreme other". This element of discomfort is also expressed in her expectations of everyday life in Sierra Leone: "I know I'm going to see things that are going to make me uncomfortable and I don't know how that's going to change me or inspire me." Feeling uncomfortable, however, is regarded in this context as a desirable feeling that can inspire or incite self-change. Marilyn is not questioning *if* the discomforts of Sierra Leone will change her but *how* (in the definite sense of the word). This demonstrates that place – and specifically the Global South – matters (Keese, 2011). Participants imagine and project assumptions onto countries in the Global South based on representations and conditions that suit their needs (Korpela, 2010). By representing everyday conditions in the Global South as 'uncomfortable' and therefore different from her 'comfortable' life in Canada, Marilyn constructs and frames an image of Sierra Leone that corresponds to tropes of the Global South as a 'challenging' environment and to popular travel discourses of self-change.

The challenge and discomforts envisioned of everyday life in the Global South come from the anticipated struggles of trying to fit in a 'different' environment. Learning to 'fit in' a new spatial, social and/or cultural context with differing sets of normative dispositions "creates a sense of discomfort [that] can challenge or provoke reflection on our mode of relating to others, sometimes acting as a catalyst for change" (Valentine and Sadgrove, 2012, p. 2060) and this is what drives participants to study or intern abroad. As Lucy sits comfortably in her parents' home in Ottawa while we speak on Skype, there are moments when the presence of family members briefly disrupts the flow of her speech in a way that makes her sound *un*comfortable. Lucy later reassures me that she felt comfortable with her family but, as mentioned in Chapter 3, is weary of discussing certain topics in front of her sister as she was indeed looking forward to escaping Ottawa for additional reasons. Yet, while chatting about her reasons for studying abroad, Lucy talks about her escape from comfort:

> "It's kind of a like a little escape, and I find it makes you realise different things about you. When you go through the same routine every day at home, as comfortable and as happy as you are with it, you're not really challenged in different ways. … so I feel like it really helps you figure stuff out about you. And it gives you a chance to be away from everything and kind of discover yourself… as cheesy as that sounds."

Lucy seems to both be aware of and embrace discourses of travel and escaping the comfort zone as a path towards self-discovery. The idea of escape refers to the comfort of a familiar everyday life and seems to imply a personal state of ease and predictability that masks the 'true self' or hinders her ability to tap into its full potential. In realising that her motivation for interning abroad comes across as perhaps cliché and self-touting, she seems to want to downplay any impression of boastfulness by acknowledging the 'cheesiness' of her comment. Despite the 'cheese' factor, Lucy demonstrates how escaping the comfort zone – i.e. routine practices at 'home', a space of comfort and familiarity – is thought as an emotional challenge that can lead to self-discovery. As Murphy-Lejeune (2002) comments, "life abroad consolidates in a limited present the work of personal deliverance from the past during which individuals discover themselves" (p. 102). Indeed, Lucy's sojourn in Turkey offers an opportunity to remove herself (even if temporarily) from familiar places and people that frame her sense and image of self. The step away from familiarity and comfort is a step closer to self-discovery. Brown (2009a) observes that "it is commonly claimed that sojourners undergo a journey of self-discovery as removal from the comfort of the familiar forces them to test and stretch their resourcefulness and to revise their self-understanding" (p. 505). Familiarity of a place (i.e. a sense of place) can provide an important foundation for a sense of self (Hoey, 2009) in a way that can hinder self-growth. Instead, day-to-day interactions in an unfamiliar place can challenge the comfort zone in a way that is considered to stimulate personal growth. Dewsbury and Bissell (2015) suggest that

> "as we learn a new task, engage in new social settings or find a way of going on after the shock of an encounter, at the heart of each, we are synthesising the experience of our milieu. This implies both time and a radical questioning of the status, durability and plurality of the subject and sense of the self" (p. 26).

Leaving the comfort zone for a different social and cultural setting is thought to facilitate a discovery of self. Brianne echoes Lucy's comment:

> "This is going to sound a little cheesy, I think it's going to be a self-discovery. I really do. I think the best way to sort of learn about yourself is when you're not in your comfort zone. … So I think that's what I want to know, have I changed? Is it for the better? Is it not?"

There is an anticipated change about the outcome of the sojourn abroad. Brianne and other participants are eager and anxious to discover not only their self, but whether the self-discovery will yield the type of changes they hope for. Yet, despite their best intentions and efforts, participants may never succeed to fully escape their comfort zone. There is always an inherent comfort in knowing that their sojourn abroad is temporary (Brown and Aktas, 2011). Nevertheless, Brianne feels that the answers to her questions lie beyond the boundaries of her comfort zone and thus, beyond Canadian borders.

Removal from the comfort zone through geographical mobility is considered not only as a state of discomfort but also of physical and emotional/mental disorientation. Noble (2013) explains how "learning to live in a new place, means learning to grapple with the differences of a new setting. In making oneself at home, the migrant finds a way to live in a new place, but also becomes accustomed to a sense of disorientation" (p. 349). This is both a literal and figurative notion that has been expressed uniquely by Francophone participants. While speaking from her computer at her parents' home in Montréal, Marie-Josée (a Law student) explains to me that her 2-month internship in Senegal a couple of years ago has motivated her desire to participate in her upcoming 5-month study exchange in Stellenbosch, South Africa. She further expresses her motivation and excitement to once again 'leave' her comfort zone and 'feel disoriented' in South Africa:

> "Well to be challenged. To leave my comfort zone. I like to feel disoriented (*me sentir dépaysé*). It's to see how far I can unsettle myself (*me déstabiliser*)."

I ask her what is the desire to leave the comfort zone? She replies:

> "it's to challenge myself. It's really to re-question oneself and to have a more solid base, because … when you remove everything, what are you left with? Because the reality is that if you want to spend… let's say you want to work abroad, you will be out of your comfort zone for a long while, so you better know yourself damn well. It's knowing what you're made of."

The adverb 'dépayser' in French is defined by the online Larousse dictionary as breaking one's habits (*rompre ses habitudes*) by being in an unfamiliar milieu with different habits and/or a sense of unfamiliarity (*étrangeté*). Marie-Josée is confident that in losing her bearings geographically she will find her 'self' introspectively. In other words, she believes

that distance from familiarity will test one's mettle and rattle the foundation of the self to ultimately rouse and reveal fundamental character traits that will be up for personal re-evaluation. Indeed, Li (2010) notes that time spent in a different culture allowed travellers to revise and expand their sense of self and discover latent attitudes and beliefs that would have remained hidden in the familiarity of their home-place. Marie-Josée's comment of removing 'everything' echoes Pierre's earlier statement about how 'everything' of sojourning abroad is a challenge. However, here she is likely referring to the prospect of being stripped of the familiar environment and people; that is, the familiar resources and (institutional and emotional) support systems that are easily available to her in Montréal. Without recourse to these, Marie-Josée's rhetorical question is answered with: just herself. In other words, she needs to rely mainly on her competencies and capacities to create and find new resources, and this is part of the process of discovering what she is 'made of'.

Despite travel experiences in Europe, Amélie (a student in International Studies in Montréal) is another participant that has never lived abroad. During our Skype video interview from her parents' home in Montréal, she describes her anticipation of living for 3 months in a new place (in this case, Ayacucho, Peru) for the first time:

"I associate a different place with leaving my comfort zone and of disorienting myself (*dépayser*). Maybe of creating a distance with your own life to be able to have an outside perspective. Maybe I will make changes with my life upon return. Every time I return from travels, I come back with new convictions or new changes for life, each time. And in relation to what I've seen abroad, in relation to what I want for myself. Going to another place, it's a nice moment of reflection. Travel allows tremendously for reflection."

Laura: "What does this experience mean to you?"

"It represents for me a way of being better. Just a perspective in the way of improving oneself."

Amélie's previous travel experiences (in Canada and abroad) seem to correspond and attest to travel discourses of self-change. As a student in International Studies, the sojourn abroad has an evident academic appeal, yet the motivation behind her sojourn is focused entirely on personal discovery and change rather than on educational or career benefits. Amélie equates distance and removal from spaces of familiarity (i.e. the comfort zone) with

inevitable self-discovery and personal change (Curtis and Pajaczkowska, 1994). By interning in Peru for a few months, Amélie is hoping for "an embodied experience of disorientation and reorientation" (Noble, 2013, p. 344) that could lead to a personal re-evaluation. Thus, through geographical disorientation she is hoping for personal reorientation. Amélie's comment of disorientation also reflects female participants in Erichsen's (2011) study of international students: "as they moved from feeling lost toward redefining themselves … they took on newly discovered selves [and] discarded old selves" (p. 126). Indeed, Amélie believes that relocation to a different place will allow her to re-orient her sense of self. Much as Murphy-Lejeune (2002) notes of international students, Amélie believes that "migration and mobility create the necessary distance, a space from which it becomes possible to observe habitual assumptions from the outside" (p. 24) and, in doing so, would allow her to "absorb new habits when they seem better than her own" (p. 100). Just like Amélie, Amy is preparing for a 3-month internship in Peru. Although Amy has travelled twice to Central America for a high school field trip and later for a family vacation, her internship in Lima will mark the first time she lives outside of Canada. Having booked a private room at her university in Ottawa for our pre-departure interview, Amy describes largely the same expectations as other participants; that is, the idea of self-change through living in a new and unfamiliar place:

> "I think it puts everything in perspective to be removed from your usual setting and out somewhere else, to really understand how things are different and how things are the same. I think it shapes the way that people are. It can shape who you are, your actions, your opinions on certain things."

Amy perceives a change of place and cultural context as a way to undress the self and bring to the forefront latent values, beliefs and dispositions. Indeed, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) suggests that "leaving behind a certain social and family milieu, a period in one's life, personal habits, is the necessary condition to find oneself" (p. 98). Participants feel that leaving the comfort zone for an unfamiliar environment enables reflection and introspection that allows them to reshape, pick or keep the characteristics, views and values that they see fit or desirable for them. This reflects a "do-it-yourself biography" in which young people studying and working abroad use their sojourn to construct individual biographies (Findlay et al., 2006, p. 302).

Once again, the notion of distance – both physical and emotional – is regarded as conducive for, and productive of, self-reflexivity. Discomfort, distance, disorientation and

difference intersect in ways that create the necessary conditions to generate self-discovery, self-development and personal change. Distance, as I discussed earlier, is always relative and suggests proximity to something else. Indeed, participants use mobility with dual aims: to distance oneself away from comfort and familiarity; and, to move closer to difference.

Rebecca, an International Studies student in Ottawa, is speaking to me via Skype from her parents' home in Toronto about her motivation to move away from the comforts of Canada and into the bustling city life of Mumbai, India. Although she previously studied in France for a 3-month exchange in high school, her 5-month study exchange in India will be her longest sojourn abroad yet, and outside of the Western world. Much of what Rebecca shares in her interview revolve around notions of comfort and personal change but also difference. I ask her to explain how going abroad changes the self, she replies:

> "Well obviously it makes you a lot more independent. I mean I have lived by myself in Ottawa, but to push your boundaries, it's something that you're not really familiar with; it sort of brings out the true you when you're not in an atmosphere that you're comfortable. So I think putting myself in that situation will help me sort of see almost who I really am, which is weird because you think you know yourself so well, but when different situations come up you see how you react to different things. So you can see that and if you don't like that you can change or you can accept it and be aware of that. So the independence factor and obviously it opens your mind to different ways of living, different perspectives on many issues, whether it be politics and religion, or morals (laughs), so by seeing so many different perspectives on so many different things you can sort of open your mind to what's best for you or me."

This 'true self' that Rebecca refers to suggests an essential and authentic self that can be revealed through challenging and uncomfortable situations. She seems to ascribe to the ideas of personal and cultural authenticity embedded in popular narratives of self-searching and commonly expressed among tourists in India. Indeed, Korpela (2010) reveals that Western backpackers and lifestyle tourists adhere to discourses in which "surviving India is a challenge" and where "many backpackers claim to find themselves" (p. 1300-1301). Rebecca's comments reflect those of other participants who feel that the (emotional) discomfort of being in a different place can offer new insights on their sense of self and prompt a re-questioning of their beliefs and attitudes. She continues:

"I'm hoping that going on another exchange and going to meet different people and experiencing a different culture will aid me – not totally change me – but maybe help to improve the person that I … like, help me to become a person that I want to be, which is someone who is open-minded and well-traveled and educated. So, you know, you only really get that from your experience."

Perhaps wary of inflating her expectations (at least in front of the researcher) Rebecca hesitates to pin her hopes on self-change and instead, shifts and moderates her expectations to those of self-improvement. She also echoes the view expressed by Pierre and Christina that self-discovery and self-development can only be achieved through international mobility, but more specifically, distance and time away from Canada and the Western world. Yet, it is not only distance from their comfort zone that can facilitate an introspective and improved self, but also time away from the familiarity of their hometowns. Galani-Mouta (2000) ties in these different notions effectively by pointing out that

"the interlocking dimensions of time and space make the journey a potent metaphor that symbolizes the simultaneous discovery of self and the Other. It is precisely this capacity for mirroring the inner and the outer dimensions that makes possible the 'inward voyage', whereby a movement through geographical space is transformed into an analogue for the process of introspection" (p. 205).

The notions of space, place, mobility and time intersect in this thesis, and specifically in participants' perspectives, in such a way that is considered to facilitate self-reflection and self-discovery. Expectations and perceptions of self-change are also mediated by inner and outer positions, both metaphorically and emotionally in negotiating the inner and outer boundaries of the comfort zone, and physically and imaginatively in navigating (inter)national borders.

Having much experience navigating inside and outside of many international borders, Rachel is happy to converse through Skype about her upcoming year-long study exchange in Pune, India. She has lived and studied in three countries between two to eight months at a time and visited over a dozen countries in the Global South. Now undertaking a master's degree within the Humanities in Ottawa, Rachel describes what her upcoming exchange to India represents to her:

"It means that I will probably be a very different person at the end of the experience than I was before. Even at the half-way point I will probably be feeling very different and I will have already grown so much."

Informed by her previous experiences living and travelling abroad, Rachel expresses with some authority and confidence the self-change she anticipates through her one-year study sojourn in India. How or in what ways will she be different is less clear, but Noble (2013) remarks that living abroad "is not just learning the differences of a new place, it is learning that *you* are 'different'" (original emphasis, p. 349). While the repetitive use of the term 'different' in the interviews might be due to lack of a better word, it more importantly indicates what participants view as a consequence of proximity to difference; that is, participants believe that encounters with difference necessarily lead to a different self. Andersson et al. (2012) suggest that, "encounters and contact with difference during the university years have the potential to be transformative and re-shape attitudes and values" (p. 502). I suggest that participants seek out encounters with difference as a way to feel different, and later – as I will show in Chapter 6 – to perform difference. By engaging with different places, people and local practices, they seek to embody differences in order to *be* different. However, I also argue that participants "reproduce a potentially naïve assumption that contact with 'others' necessarily translates into respect for difference" and a changed self (Valentine, 2008, p. 325). But, as Brianne notes, not every participant expects to become a different person per se:

"I don't think I will be a different personality (sic) all of a sudden or be this different person, but I think I'll be better for it. Regardless, I'll be better for doing it."

While many like Brianne are not expecting a personality overhaul – or at least, hesitate to express it as such – they unanimously believe that this will have some form of positive influence on their sense of self. For better or for worse, participants like Brianne are expecting the best.

Indeed, as shown, even participants where this exchange will be their first time residing abroad carry an expectation that the experience will result in self-discovery and self-change. Élodie, a Francophone student in Sociology from Montréal, spoke to me about her expectations of her 10-month study exchange in Santiago, Chile. Speaking through Skype, she states that the experience "will bring me more wisdom on the world, on myself, because the one thing you learn the most about is about yourself, right?" While

Élodie espouses this view with certainty, it more importantly illustrates the popular assumption and expectation that studying abroad inevitably results in greater personal awareness. The commonly held belief that studying or working abroad leads to self-discovery originates from popular American travel discourses of self-exploration (Dolby, 2004; Feinberg, 2002). Forsey et al. (2012) point out that study abroad websites promote international exchanges as an opportunity for self-growth. On social media, such as Twitter, most of the news feeds from study abroad programs provide links that list how these sojourns lead to transformative self-changes. One organisation posted emphatically that "studying abroad will change your life – embrace it!" (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Twitter post promoting study abroad as a life changing experience.
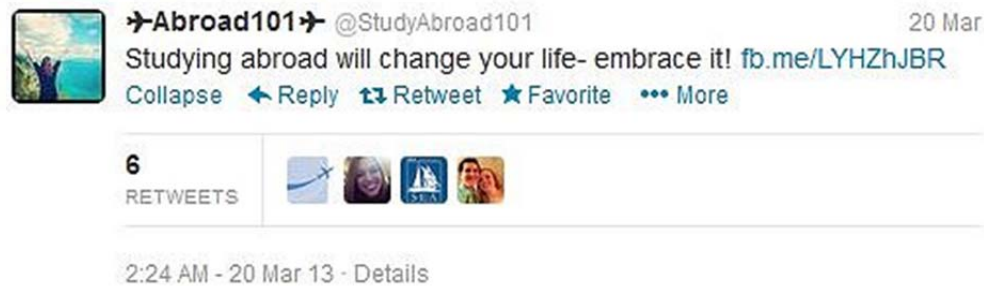
The statements usually proclaim that sought-after qualities such as independence, confidence, and intercultural skills are acquired through volunteering or studying abroad (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Twitter post from student indicating attributes gained abroad.

Online study abroad rhetoric can in fact frame students' expectations and experience of the international sojourn (Bishop, 2013). Participants' expectations and motivations are thus likely influenced and informed by popular rhetoric exhorted by travel narratives and

study abroad programs. So engrained are these discourses that participants such Pierre and Rebecca (as quoted earlier) believe self-discovery and personal growth can be achieved uniquely though an international exchange. These are, of course, dominant Western narratives. In examining Western tourism in the Global South, Bruner (1991) argues that "tourist discourse claims that the tourist self is transformed, while the native self is unchanged; but the argument here is that in the actual encounter, in the experience, the reverse occurs" (p. 242). Indeed, both the traveller and the locals are changed by the encounter (Salazar, 2011).

However, most of my participants are well-advised and informed that the experience can impact both students and locals as they are required to complete mandatory pre-departure orientation sessions organised by their home university. Simpson (2005) indicates that, unlike in the UK, Canadian and American volunteer abroad programmes are usually part of formal higher education courses which "include a more considered education dimension than gap years, often prioritising pedagogies that aim to critically examine the historical and socio-economic basis of uneven development" (p. 449). These programmes seem to want to impart an 'engaged pedagogy' of care and responsibility by informing outgoing students of the (post)colonial undertones and power relations that underpin student exchanges to the Global South (Madge et al., 2009). Since international students are "bearers of sensitive knowledge of places", the pedagogical ways that universities engage with incoming and outgoing students will influence not only the experience of these students, but also how particular "colonial spatial imaginaries" and geographical knowledge are constructed and circulated (Madge et al., 2009, p. 39).

I have attended a number of pre-departure orientation sessions at universities in Ottawa and Montréal. The sessions for students going to intern abroad discuss the sensitive socio-economic and cultural context of the communities they will work with and usually are several days in length. The instructors emphasise that the experience will impact both the students and the locals, and that students will not necessarily be 'helping' local people, but rather that the placement would be a mutual intercultural learning opportunity in which the student will likely benefit the most. Amélie reflects on this briefing prior to her internship in Peru:

> "I understand that no, [the locals] will bring me much more. They will bring me family values that I don't have here, maybe values that are more traditional. They will confront my feminist values. It will bring me a dialogue (*ça va amener un discours*)."

Amélie therefore reflects on the alternative perspective that her 3-month internship in Peru may be more self-serving than she initially thought and is keen to show that she is more 'forward-thinking' on this issue.

On the other hand, pre-departure orientation sessions for students going to study in a university abroad lasted half a day and did not explicitly or directly address these issues but did detail the signs and different stages of culture shock as well as techniques for adapting to their new environment. They also highlight the importance of keeping an open-mind and respecting local norms – although these cautionary briefings could also stem from the Canadian university's concern with maintaining a positive reputation overseas. The reason for these different approaches at pre-departure sessions between programs – that is, study abroad versus internship placement – is most likely due to the different educational contexts and the degree of interaction and engagement with local communities. In the case of internship placements with NGOs, students are usually working with groups considered to be from vulnerable and under-privileged communities, while participants studying in a university overseas usually remain within the confines of the campus and interact primarily with international student groups and more privileged locals. A number of participants, such as Amélie above, recognise this critical view of exchanges but some, like Véronique, also defend and fend off any potential judgement and criticism of their motivations for studying or interning abroad. Véronique is speaking with me via Skype from her parents' home in Montréal a week prior to leaving for her one-year study exchange in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A student from Montréal with no previous experience living abroad, Véronique raises and defends the perception of 'selfishness' without me even provoking the subject: "the reality is that we are selfish and we know that this will enrich us and it's not bad to be selfish. Because deep down you make the most of the experience and I think there is nothing wrong in that." Véronique seems to want to pre-empt any criticism I might make of her during our conversation and is therefore quick to point out and ensure that I, as a researcher, am aware that she understands and acknowledges critiques of international exchanges but that these should not prevent her from participating or feeling guilt from wanting to benefit from the experience. There is a fine line between feeling entitled to the experience and recognising their privilege and the power relations they uphold. Unlike those interning in local communities in the South, Véronique will be doing a study exchange in Brazil rather than working directly with sensitive communities. Yet there is a sense that she wants to absolve and deflect any potential judgement I may pass onto her as a scholar.

Moreover, in the next section I probe further into the notions of comfort, disorientation, difference and everyday practices and habits to unpack the underlying motivations and strategies of participants for leaving their comfort zone. By taking everyday life and practices as a starting point, I demonstrate how participants intend to employ and reconcile dichotomies/dualistic notions of (dis)comfort, (un)familiarity, the (extra)ordinary and difference/sameness to not only incite self-discovery and self-change, but to expand their comfort zone and sense of 'home' in order to attest to a narrative of self-change and cultural capital.

Trading places and mundane practices: comfort and home-making through everyday life abroad

This chapter has thus far shown that participants want to leave the comforts and familiarities of the Western world in search of a larger cultural gap in order to incite self-discovery and self-change. Although they desire to escape the comforts of their everyday life in Canada and encounter greater difference in the Global South, this section will demonstrate that they are just as eager to engage in mundane practices abroad as a way to, on the one hand, effect self-discovery and change and, on the other, re-create a sense of comfort and 'home'.

The tourism and travel literature has shifted from examining the reflexive potential of escaping the everyday through travel and tourism to arguing that the everyday is imbricated in travel/tourism practices and thus much of travel/tourism is largely unreflexive and habitual (Edensor, 2007; Larsen, 2008; McCabe, 2002). I take both these points to suggest that students see their mobility and relative immobility in a new place as a reflexive exercise (or, at least, having the potential for reflexivity) precisely because it is embedded in the everyday but in a different spatial and cultural context. My interviews suggest that students find the mundane, ordinary practices abroad as exotic because they exude a sense of authentic localness that they wish to tap into and possess. Not only are they searching to engage with the everyday abroad (i.e. discomfort of unfamiliar context outside the comfort zone) as a way to induce self-discovery and reflection, but to ultimately achieve a level of comfort and unreflexivity as a testament of their new cultural capital and sense of belonging as a 'local'.

Ferguson (2009) highlights that "everyday life seems so obvious and self-evident a term as hardly to require comment" (p.9). In fact, the 'everyday' is a broad term that can carry several connotations and within different contexts. Moran (2005) notes that different

academic disciplines within the literature on the everyday attempt to describe and define the term in a variety of ways and for their own purposes. The notion of the everyday is explored most notably by Michel De Certeau and Henri Lefebvre in the context of capitalism and commodification. However, the everyday is most commonly associated with routine, the mundane, the ordinary, the banal, the taken-for-granted and the habitual (Enloe, 2011; Pink, 2012). Enloe (2011) confesses to have initially overlooked the everyday because of its perceived routine and unexceptional nature but her article 'The Mundane Matters' is her shifting point, discussing and defending instead its value within the field of social research. In discussing the everyday in tourism, Pink (2012) argues that we need to resist conceptualising the everyday as static or mundane, rather, it is "a dynamic and changing site" (p. 28). Indeed, Edensor (2007) points out that despite its unreflexive tendencies, the everyday still entails some capacity for change:

> "The everyday is thus a realm of repetition, where cultural norms get habitually played out, where unreflexive forms of common sense provide protection against the questioning of mundane convention. Yet this only captures part of the everyday for if this static scenario was the totality of the quotidian, there would be no social and cultural change" (p. 211).

On the surface, the everyday may appear dull and unchanging, but it is not without transformative potential. The everyday may be commonly regarded as mundane and monotonous, but for my participants everyday activities in a foreign place abroad acquire an exotic flair and hold the potential of change. Unlike 'round-the-world travellers' (Germann Molz, 2010) and students on short-term study exchanges in Europe in which the challenge is to visit as many countries as possible during their time abroad (Gmelch, 1997), my participants are most interested in the local daily routines and activities in their host place; that is, they are most interested in the everyday *living* rather than *travelling* aspect of their exchange. Following her slightly defensive stance on her reasons for studying abroad, Véronique reflected on her expectations for her year-long sojourn in Rio de Janeiro:

> "My expectations are very mundane (*attentes très banales*). Expectations of everyday life. Just to have a nice everyday life (*un beau quotidien*), a nice routine, experience the atmosphere (*vivre l'ambiance*) of the neighbourhood, just to walk and that things happen as they may."

Rather than discuss the extraordinary sights and activities which most tourists generally privilege during their travels, most participants like Véronique draw excitement from the idea of ordinary and mundane activities abroad. This chimes with Week's (2012) observation that, "rather than participating in activities designed for tourists, travelers express an interest in experiencing the authentic, daily reality of the local people in the places they visit" (Week, 2012, p. 190). Indeed, my participants voice an eager intention and desire to engage in everyday life and practices in their new place.

Sitting in Sophie's kitchen in her student house in Ottawa, we chat about her upcoming 3-month internship in Antigua, Guatemala, over a cup of tea. Originally from a small town elsewhere in Canada, she explains how her International Development course and her previous volunteer experiences of 3 months – both in South America and Europe – continue to feed her fascination with life beyond Canadian borders. It is midday and outside her house, a cacophony of apparently inebriated students can be heard as they stumble by her front yard. This was, after all, a student neighbourhood in the heart of Ottawa and the drunken stupour and slumber of students in its streets is a normal part of the city's everyday life. This prompts Sophie to lament about the city and its people, expressing her impatience for leaving Ottawa and Canada in order to once again flee her comfort zone. Yet, Sophie describes to me how everyday life abroad is part of what attracted her to participate in her upcoming 3-month internship in Antigua, Guatemala:

> "It's so exciting! I find that when you live abroad, I mean, every situation is different and every country is a different experience, but even just going to buy bread is exciting. It's an adventure, whereas here, it's something you have to [do]."

For Sophie, mundane tasks or errands such as buying bread may be tiresome and banal in Ottawa, but transposing this routine to a different place abroad seems to spark excitement and a sense of adventure. It is not so much the everydayness per se that propels participants to escape Canada; rather, it is the unfamiliarity and novelty of everyday practices in a different social and cultural place that lures them abroad. Activities considered ordinary at home are regarded as extraordinary abroad. Binnie et al. (2007) suggest that unfamiliarity can be productive for change, inasmuch as "the perforation of the ordinary by the extraordinary can bring forth transformative or even enchanting moments or situations. A shaft of light, a shift in perception or change in perspective causes the familiar to become peculiar, uncanny" (p. 168). In other words, juxtaposing

familiar everyday practices with the unfamiliarity of a new place disrupts the mundane in a way that can provoke and enable us to re-apprehend the familiar through a different perspective. Habits and unreflexive modes of thinking and living can therefore be brought to our awareness and re-evaluated. And this is the challenge expressed by participants and hence, how they intend to incite self-discovery and self-change: through an engagement with everyday life and practices abroad. However, not just in any place abroad; rather, in the Global South specifically.

In the previous section Christina expressed how cultural norms in other countries of the Western world are still too similar to her life in Canada to be effectively challenging. Here she explains how life in Tanzania differs more from that of other countries in the Global North:

> "where I'm going I have to purify every single glass of water I drink, and like, I had to buy a special pen that I stick in the water and that's my water before I can even drink it. And it's just so far removed from my norm that it's awesome. It's a really big challenge in a good way, like, I'm proving myself that I can do it."

Christina views everyday basic practices and habits in the Global South as both challenging and exotic and extraordinary. In fact, the object of difference and unfamiliarity that participants seek outside of Canada and the Western world are everyday practices in a particular type of location in the Global South. Snee (2013) describes how a gap year traveller "realized he had left the 'western' world behind when he landed in Uganda, drawing a distinct line between his normal environment and this exotic place" (p. 149). The normality of everyday life back the Western world is contrasted with the exoticness of a new everyday life in the Global South. The boundaries of the comfort zone are thus aligned along the Western world and Global South, but are especially reinforced through everyday life and mundane practices. Similarly, Steve mentions the challenge in the everyday use of water:

> "Just everyday activities like washing the dishes is going to be completely different, because you're going to have to boil the water before you actually wash the dishes."

Christina and Steve use the example of a mundane habit – drinking potable water – to illustrate and, more importantly, *attest* how living in Tanzania and Nepal is not just different

from Canada linguistically or culturally, but differs at the very core of everyday life. Interning or studying in the Global South is considered to be more distant from the comfort zone and thus at a higher level of challenge precisely because everyday practices are seen as more different than within the Global North. And therein lies the foundation of the comfort zone and the underlining motive for going to the Global South. Habit instils us with familiarity and comfort, but it can also propel us to travel in order to escape the mundanity of our everyday life (Bissell, 2014). Habitual and mundane practices constitute the basis of our day-to-day life and are therefore a formative base of the comfort zone. Christina and Steve demonstrate how a basic everyday necessity such as potable tap water is largely taken-for-granted in much of the Western world but that in contrast, visiting other areas of the world requires them to reflect on this habitual practice. As such, living in an unfamiliar place with different everyday practices may spark a reflexive mode of evaluating one's habits. Since habits and everyday practices reside at deeper layers of the embodied self, any capacity to effect changes to these is regarded as favourable for, and even synonymous with, enacting changes to the self. Forcing changes to habits or embodying new practices is therefore part of the process of self-discovery and self-change. Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) suggest that,

> "as people move between physical spaces (migrate from one place to another), or when they move across social space … they can encounter different normativities (unspoken rules/codes of behaviour) and can 'become someone else' as their sense of self in terms of their own moral evaluation and social/ethical practices and dispositions change" (p. 2052).

The notion of dispositions, as Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) describe, "recognises that individuals can reflect on their own lives and chose to change or react to wider social relations/locations in new ways such that they produce and embody new dispositions" (p. 2052). Much of participants' narratives of anticipated self-discovery and self-change are centred on practices, habits and dispositions. Rebecca comments that if anything, she hopes that the sojourn will bring her 'new habits'. Even Sophie explains how her previous exchange abroad enabled her to reflect and examine her old ways and ultimately change her habits:

> "I think it's kind of like looking in at yourself and I'm trying to think how to word it… (pauses to think)… it's like you're looking at yourself from an objective perspective

and trying to see if what your doing is actually good for you or for others, or like, for example, good for the environment and then seeing, I guess, if the way you're doing it over there, if it's actually better or not… maybe? And then I guess I evaluated it and I was like, ok, maybe this is better, and that's what I do now."

Sophie believes that engaging in the mundane abroad can offer her an 'objective' viewpoint from which to assess and potentially modify aspects of her self. As participants are confronted with new everyday practices in an unfamiliar place, the contradistinction between everyday life at home and new practices abroad can provoke a re-evaluation of their habits and attitudes (Brown, 2009a). Kelly and Lusis (2006) explain that "the juxtaposition and changing of habiti creates a disjuncture that might be productive of new conceptions of the self and, at the same time, generate explicit reflection on an individual's habitus" (p. 846). In her study of gap year travellers, Snee (2013) compares a sense of (dis)comfort in a new place with Bourdieu's notions of habitus and field. She ponders that if "reflexivity may be a result of the disjunctures between habitus and field, we might speculate that 'not fitting in' may prompt the gappers to reflect on their place in the world" (Snee, 2013, p. 152). Yet, Snee (2013) concedes that proof of this reflexivity is not necessarily or easily perceptible in student narratives. Rather, this is difficult to assess and would require a different kind of study and methodology to evaluate such claims to reflection or change. What *is* evident is that participants attribute this sense of self-reflexivity to encounters with different everyday practices in the Global South. Participants seem to believe that self-growth develops through mastering the commonplace practices of local life while abroad. In a study of Australian student on an overseas academic exchange, students' relate their greater sense of independence to daily mundane tasks such as cooking and washing (Forsey et al., 2012). Personal change is therefore thought to develop as a result of engaging in everyday activities in a foreign culture and language (Gmelch, 1997).

Yet, if mundane practices and habits lay the foundation for the comfort zone in such a way that encountering unfamiliar spaces and practices can provoke a process of self-discovery, then what happens when the appeal of the extraordinary everyday abroad becomes, well, ordinary? What happens when the unfamiliar becomes familiar? While the likelihood of this fully happening is debatable, the answer to this is: a new sense of comfort. Participants want to become comfortable in the uncomfortable (Root and Ngampornchai, 2013). Despite the apparent contradiction, this seems to be part of a larger process of self-development and home-making; that is, a process whereby the initial

encounters with the unfamiliar and extraordinary spark a self-discovery and self-reflexivity that allow participants to make desirable changes to their self and ultimately extend the boundaries of the comfort zone and create a new sense of 'home'. Indeed, Pocock and McIntosh (2013) argue that,

> "changes to identities through encounters with otherness arguably beget changes to (internalised) meanings of home. The things, people and environments that were comfortable, familiar and gave a sense of belonging to the pre-sojourn traveller inevitably change as a result of these encounters" (p. 405).

It is not just the self that is transformed through mobility, but the very feelings of comfort, familiarity and 'home'. This is also a matter of time spent in the same place. Marilyn affirms that her 2-month sojourn is "a good length of time to feel like you have a new home somewhere else." Irrespective of the location, Marilyn believes that time – and specifically (or more conveniently) the length of her sojourn – is necessary for establishing a new sense of 'home'. However, in Christina's view, even four months is too little time. Instead, she explains why longer sojourns are more effective for creating a sense of 'home':

> "I didn't want to be there for four months. I thought that that would be too short, because that would give me barely enough time to get to know things, … So this way, I have a lot longer to make myself comfortable and to make friends and to get into it, and to transition out as well. I would have established friendships and a life and I'll know what I'm doing. I won't be a tourist. I feel like at four months you're still kind of an outsider."

Christina's describes how 4 months would be insufficient for developing a sense of familiarity and comfort abroad. She views her 10-month study exchange in Dar es Salaam as a way to establish 'a life' in her host city, one that distinguishes her from tourists (as well as other shorter-term exchange students) and situates her 'inside' everyday local life with all the knowledge, perks and comforts that it entails. Indeed, she states with certainty that she 'won't be a tourist', as though the length of her exchange ensures this 'insider' status. She explains further:

> "I feel there's a comfort level with being more than a tourist. … I want to look like I almost fit in, like, that it's not this outlandish thing that this white girl is wearing, like,

I want to fit it. I want to feel like I can give people directions … I want to know where the grocery store is and the best place to get this, and the place that I love to be on a Sunday morning or I just feel like you have to live there to see all these things and to know them. And the tourism thing, like, I understand that when I go to other places I will be this tourist, … but I want to feel like I know Dar, like it's my buddy, like we go way back and I know all this about it, you know, and I think that's why I want to be there for that length of time."

The mere mention of Dar es Salaam in its contracted form 'Dar' and its humanised reference as a 'buddy' suggests that Christina is already attempting to appropriate the city as her own before even having arrived. Knowledge of a place imparts a sense of comfort and confidence that might incite her to speak about the everydayness of place (i.e. the grocery store and the Sunday morning hang out spot rather than tourist attractions) with a certain sense of authority. Time allows Christina to accrue knowledge, familiarity, comfort and symbolic capital in a way that indicates a quality of 'insiderness' (Relph, 1976). Moreover, much of what Christina shares is about feelings and distinctions of being 'in/out of place'. Feeling comfortable in a place is contrasted with the uncomfortable and 'out of place' tourist or visitor. Similar to the gap year travellers in Snee's (2013) study, my participants negotiated feelings of being 'out of place' and discomfort by acquiring "insider knowledge" (p. 151). And just like the backpackers in Matthews' (2008) study of volunteer tourism, they might believe that more in depth engagements with locals "may give rise to the accumulation of authentic knowledge and ultimately a deeper or more finely honed sense of self" (p. 108). Christina and others see their relative immobility during the sojourn – that is, studying or working in the same location – as a means to embody new everyday practices and develop a sense of comfort with the aim to integrate into the local culture and feel a sense of local belonging.

This is the case for Lillian during her internship in China. Speaking with Lillian via Skype from her parents' home in Toronto prior to her one-year internship in a rural town in the province of Guizhou, she describes her previous five volunteer and study exchanges in countries around the world ranging from 3 weeks to 4 months in length. Her Chinese ancestry from both her parents' side has partly motivated her desire to teach English in China. Yet, like the majority of participants, her excitement of going abroad is to experience the everyday life of a small rural community in Guizhou. In fact, upon return to Canada, Lillian shares a photo (see Figure 5) of herself picking fruits from the local market and writes that:

Figure 5. Engaging in everyday local life – picking produce from the local market.

"Going to the market was something simple I did during my time there which I really enjoyed. Talking with the local farmers and sometimes bargaining made trips to the market something I always looked forward to. Going to the market also made me feel more a part of the local community."

Lillian demonstrates how everyday mundane activities and places were valued during her sojourn as a way to feel a sense of local belonging. The local market represented not only a quintessential site of everyday life and practices, but evoked a sense of *being with* the locals and *doing as* the locals. This reflects the "everyday practices and rhetoric" used by British migrants in France to impart their sense of belonging to the local community (Benson, 2010. p. 72). In fact, Benson (2010) states that British migrants' desire for local belonging was central to their motivations for migration and to distinguish themselves from others back in the UK. This is also seen by participants in my study as a way to dissociate oneself from tourists and travellers. Comfort here is used strategically to, on the one hand, become intimate with a place and develop a sense of belonging and, on the other, draw a distinction between what participants view as the tourist 'outsider' and themselves as local 'insiders'. Brianne describes in length the sense of anticipation and excitement she draws from the prospect of everyday practices in a different place:

"I think I'm most excited about daily life. To just, like, my boyfriend lives in Costa Rica [on exchange] and he was saying like, he gets excited to walk to the store because he's like: "I'm doing this in Costa Rica!" (laughs). It's sort of like you're doing such normal things but it's this whole new way of doing it. So it sounds weird, but I'm actually just excited to just like, go on the bus and go to work, come home, do my thing or go to the grocery store, like, because you're in a whole new environment, whereas if you're a tourist, you're there for a short amount of time, not two months. You have to do everything more fast-paced and you're on the go and you don't do normal things because what's the appeal of going to a Rwanda grocery store if you're a tourist? You go see the gorillas. You know what I mean? I don't know, but ya, the mundane things; that's what it is! I really don't know, I think it's just, again, you get comfortable. I can walk to the store and it's easy. I think the first week going to the grocery store is going to be an adventure, because I don't know how to get there, I don't know what I'm going to do and it's scary. It's also like, again, I think so many people go to different places and not by any fault of their own they don't necessarily get to feel what it's like to actually be in that country. You're more there to see things and then to leave. So I really don't know. I don't know what it is about doing normal things that I like. But it's just the idea or feeling that you belong to something that you normally don't belong to, I guess."

The excitement and sense of adventure evoked at the prospect of everyday life is about carrying out similar mundane practices with a different spatial and contextual backdrop. As Brianne's boyfriend expresses, it is the contrast of doing the same mundane in an unfamiliar domain; in this case, Costa Rica for him, and Rwanda for her. Thus, the exoticness of everyday practices is elicited through the unfamiliarity of place and, more precisely, of the Global South as a particular place imbided with specific imaginative geographies. Brianne also highlights the importance of comfort for integrating into the everyday and ultimately, cultivating a sense of belonging. Time spent abroad engaging with the everyday is how Brianne and others develop a sense of comfort and belonging, but also how they distinguish their experience from those of tourists. Brianne demonstrates how everyday practices and time (yet again, conveniently her length of sojourn) lend themselves to creating feelings of comfort and a sense of 'home', something that Amélie is eager to achieve:

"What I'm most looking forward to is to really try to feel 'at home' (*sentir chez moi*). … I'm excited to be in it, to have passed the discomfort (*d'avoir passé l'inconfort*). The moments in the beginning you're like, 'but why am I here? What was I thinking?' I'm like that for each of my travels, … but afterwards I make a routine there, but a different routine and one that changes habits (*qui changes les habitudes*). And then you feel good (*t'es bien*), you want to stay there, you don't want to come back to Québec. That's what I want, that moment of integration, to feel good. I'm looking forward to it (*j'ai hâte*). I'm hoping it will happen to me (laughs)."

Amélie views the transition of feeling uncomfortable to settling in comfortably in a new place as repositioning her from that of outsider to that of an insider 'at home'. Once she has surpassed the productive and reflexive stage of discomfort, Amélie believes that creating a different everyday routine can reshape and alter her habits. Everyday social and spatial interactions in a place are believed to lead to such transformations (Cook, 2011). Edensor (2007) explains that experiencing a disruption to the everyday "constantly threatens to undermine the structure laid down by habit" (p.212). Participants want to familiarise themselves with the unfamiliar to the point that they no longer flinch at the differences; where local everyday practices become unreflexive. In other words, they become habits. As Dewsbury and Bissell (2015) discuss,

"Habit is then a way of appreciating that a sense of place is emergent and developmental, rather than static or authentic. Through repeated inhabitation, our sense of place can change in profound ways. As our experience tells us, the strange can become familiar; the exciting can become dull; the unseen can become perceptible. Habit offers us an exciting way of understanding how a sense of place is precisely of these virtual dimensions of inhabitation" (p. 23).

The importance of habit as a central geographical concept is that habits are both a product of engagement with place and productive for place-making and home-making (Dewsbury and Bissell, 2015). Acquiring habits and a level of unreflexivity in the everyday abroad affords participants with a sense of local belonging and social and cultural capital. This is illustrated by Lillian who shares a photo (see Figure 6) and a description of how at some point in her sojourn in China she no longer noticed the unusualness of everyday practices. As she explains, the unfamiliar became familiar, and the unusual became 'normal':

Figure 6. The strange becomes normal - a local outdoor barbershop in China.

"Things that initially seemed really strange slowly stopped seeming so strange through my time in China…such as outdoor barbershops and children doing homework on a meat counter in the local market. I was reminded how 'normal' once strange sights became when my sister arrived in China at the end of my time there and was shocked to see things that I had become used to."

Lillian illustrates how local practices in China that were once unfamiliar to her eventually became familiar. Through what must have been her sister's similar reaction to the local practices, Lillian realises that she had become accustomed to these in a way that suggests a successful adaptation into local everyday life in China. Local practices and habits became less and less noticeable to the extent that Lillian is more surprised by how mundane these now appear to her, rather than how unusual they once were. Attaining this level of familiarity and apparent unreflexivity (however little it may be) is a marker of accomplishment and of cultural capital for participants, one that they hope and strive to achieve while abroad.

Although "habits are not hidden, mysterious and beyond agentic intervention, … neither are they easily accessible and readily mutable" (Lea et al., 2015, p. 61). Indeed,

"some habits might persist and endure through such events whilst others might not live on" (Bissell, 2014, p. 489). Habits and practices are continuously susceptible to changes and ramifications through both everyday experiences and extraordinary occurrences. The alteration or continuation of practices in the context of migrants and mobile individuals is well articulated by Maller and Strengers (2013):

> "through living in different countries and socio-cultural contexts, unlike other more sedentary populations, migrants are exposed to a vast suite of everyday practices. Moving between countries and being immersed in different cultures brings into stark focus how a practice performed in one place and time can dramatically differ from a similar practice performed in another. Exposure to new practices means that migrants can be recruited to a local variety; or they may continue to perform the practice as it was done in their country of origin" (p. 245).

Some individuals transport their home routines and transplant them in their new place, others appropriate those of the locals and discard (even if temporarily) their old habits, and many will interchange between practices or update them by adopting a mix of old and new practices. François is another participant who discusses the idea of habits, everyday life and belonging in our pre-departure interview. François will continue to pursue his university studies for one year while in Rio de Janeiro. His previous travel experiences in a handful of countries in the Global South and his 4 months of work in another Western country inform some of his expectations for Brazil. While chatting via Skype from his apartment in Montréal, François describes what he is most looking forward to during his year-long study exchange in Brazil:

> "Just being there and picking up little habits of everyday life (*prendre des petites habitudes*); that's really the stuff that I like. Like adapting myself to the Brazilian lifestyle; I'm really looking forward to that. That's really something that I know I will be able to integrate myself well (*bien m'intégrer*) in the … picking up little habits and living like a Brazilian. That's something I'm really looking forward to. I like to … not assimilate myself, but melt a bit in the crowd (*me fondre un peu dans la masse*), and I will get there and I will buy myself groceries and make Brazilian stuff, and dress a bit like everyone does; be more like them (laughs)."

François is hoping to acquire local everyday practices in order to 'fit in' and integrate into Brazilian life. As he explains his motivation to study in Rio de Janeiro, François seems to gradually admit or come to terms with the idea of become 'more like them', which is just a step removed from saying that he wants to *be* one of them. Judy echoes this motivation for her 3-month sojourn in Peru:

> "When I go abroad I want to try to be like the people. I don't know why I don't want to stick, but I want to try really to be like them and make me feel more comfortable and act like everyone else. … It's more fun to assimilate yourself and it's also a challenge as well to pretend you're someone else."

Laura: What's the desire to assimilate?

> "I just have this desire to just be like everyone else in a way. It's a challenge to myself to make it so that I'm still myself and I don't lose who I am, but at the same time take on this other role that makes me fit in with everyone and challenge myself that I can be a local. I can make people think that I'm supposed to be there, that I can know the city as though I've been there my entire life. I guess for me it's just one of those challenges that I set myself and when I achieve it, I'm like, yes, ok, I can level up to wizard now."

Judy's personal challenge is to emulate the locals through everyday practices in Chiclayo, Peru, without completing transforming her sense of self. She uses the analogy of a video game to explain the ever mounting level of challenges she sets for herself in the hopes of achieving 'wizard' level, which one can only assume means that of 'expert' in adapting and assimilating to other local ways. Yet, her comment of taking on a 'role' and 'make people think' she is 'supposed to be there' insinuates the deceptions of a con artist, of fooling people into the false pretension that she is a local. Perhaps Judy is aware that she cannot or will not *become* a local Peruvian during her internship and hence, wants to at least succeed in fabricating a convincing role and image. Appearance rather than substance seems to be Judy's play and motivation.

Nonetheless, participation in everyday life abroad is a way for participants to connect and 'fit in' with the local culture. There is an element of 'doing-as-the-locals'. Here, Marilyn illustrates through a photo (see Figure 7) how she did as the locals by helping them haul in a fishing net:

Figure 7. Local fishermen in Freetown haul in a fishing net.

"I think it captures sort of the raw strength and hard work and labour that people live through every day. You know, it's team work, it's accomplishment, it's a whole bunch of different things, and I went and helped them pull the net and I'm petrified of fish, and then one of them threw a barracuda at me because they thought it was funny. So you know, that was the first time I sort of threw myself in something super uncomfortable. They might never have seen a woman try to haul in a fishing net before, they found it quite amusing."

Marilyn suggests how partaking in this local everyday practice was a step outside her comfort zone, but that the 'team work' aspect of it brought on a sense of accomplishment and with that, a sense of belonging (even if temporarily) to the local community. Yet, as she acknowledges, fishing is typically a gender differentiated practice not associated with women. So while trying to 'fit in' and belong, Marilyn is in fact 'standing out' from the community. As Murphy-Lejeune (2002) highlights, "what is at stake in this social game is integration into the local society" (p. 196). The challenge is to become an insider elsewhere and arriving at this point is their marker of achievement and cultural capital and thus, distinction (as I will discuss more in depth in Chapter 6). Mundane local practices such as transportation and grocery shopping are embedded in, and constitutive of, everyday life. The ability to master these practices is regarded as a way to insert oneself

into local life and absorb new habits into a processual and developmental self. Differentiating themselves from tourists' superficial and ephemeral engagement with place flaunts an ability to engage differently with international or 'other/foreign' places. As Benson (2010) explains, "it is through everyday, mundane practices that local distinctiveness is enacted" (p. 72). Participants are essentially attempting to normalise unusual mundane practices to establish a sense of belonging and distinction as well as extend their comfort zone beyond western borders. It is a process of assimilating spaces of discomfort and unfamiliarity to be converted into an extended 'home'. Rather than remaining outside of the comfort zone for the entirety of their exchange, participants may be seeking to extend its spatial and practical boundaries into the Global South. Breen (2012) notes that as students move to the Global South, "the boundaries and definitions of migration change" (p. 99). I therefore argue that mobility can reconfigure the boundaries of the comfort zone and the sense of 'home'.

Concluding remarks

This chapter demonstrated how students view international exchanges as an opportunity to discover and transform their self. Yet, at the same time, popular travel discourses and study abroad rhetoric likely contribute to influencing students' motivations and expectations of self-discovery and self-change through international exchanges. The chapter showed that feelings of physical and emotional (dis)comfort and (un)familiarity are not only mediated by place and mobility, but are regarded by students as productive of self-discovery and self-change. As Murphy-Lejeune (2002) points out: "life abroad is a powerful experience of discovery of self and others because it shakes personal and social representations and introduces into identity processes perturbing elements, notably the notions of moving identities and flexible cognitive borders" (p. 30). Distance away from familiar and comfortable physical and cultural settings is perceived as effective for elucidating a reflexive self and thus, self-discovery. Moving away from comfort and familiarity is positively equated with moving closer to difference. Students want to encounter difference in order to *feel* and subsequently, *become* different. The chapter showed that the diversity of the Western world is considered as insufficiently discomforting and dissimilar to Canadian norms in order to adequately enable self-discovery. It revealed that students align the (imaginative) boundaries of their comfort zone along national and Western geographical borders. The Global South is perceived as a space of discomforts and unfamiliarities and this chapter demonstrates how space and place are important for

negotiating the emotional boundaries of a reflexive and mutable self. Participants' emotional geographies of an imagined Global South therefore reveal how both feelings and place and, more specifically, their interplay can underpin students' motivations for participating in international exchanges.

This chapter also suggested that the potential to challenge and discover the self is constituted in everyday life. Day-to-day activities and practices in local places are the building blocks for people's habits, dispositions, attitudes and commonly held beliefs and these are seen to constitute the foundation of the comfort zone. Local everyday life is a site of production for the comfort zone and thus, the sense of self. Students feel that participation in daily mundane activities and local practices has the potential to modify habits and thereby shake the foundation of their self. By purposefully engaging in the everyday life abroad, the sense of familiarity of students' everyday routines is juxtaposed with the unfamiliarity of a new place and practice. The contrast between the familiarity of everyday activities at home and the unfamiliarity of those enacted in their new place is considered to prompt students to re-evaluate their habits and attitudes. The continuous daily exposure to unfamiliar encounters and everyday life practices of a foreign place is thought to disrupt students' habitual and automated pattern of thinking from the familiar home environment and provides an opportunity to view and understand their inner self from an outside perspective and ultimately revise their sense of self. While such reflexivity and change in students is difficult to assess and is beyond the scope and aims of this research project, this study demonstrated that students believe or, at least, hope that self-discovery and change is possible through embodying everyday life practices abroad.

Although students seek discomfort and unfamiliarity in the everyday abroad as a means to incite self-discovery and change, the ultimate challenge and motivation is, in fact, to become comfortable and familiar with the unfamiliar abroad – notably, by mastering local mundane practices. The underlying but nonetheless evident motivation for engaging with mundane practices abroad is to integrate into the everyday landscape of their new place. Everyday practices are considered as a gateway to the local insider's life. As a result, the mundane abroad takes on an exotic flair and daily local practices are therefore viewed as extraordinary because they are both foreign (to students) and ordinary (to locals). In other words, students are fascinated by everyday practices abroad because they are foreign and exceptional *to them*, but because they are very much unexceptional, common and ordinary *to other people*. The fascination for participants is not just in the essential foreign nature of the activities, but in the commonality and banality of these practices to people in those places. Participants view their relative immobility abroad as a

way to gain comfort as well as local insider knowledge. This is in contrast to travellers and tourists who remain continuously mobile throughout their travels, moving from one place to the next without sufficient time to become acquainted and familiar with local everyday life. The notion of time is fruitful and seen as integral for acquiring comfort, familiarity and unreflexivity abroad. By embodying everyday local practices over time, students hope to acquire new local habits in order to not only incorporate these into a revised sense of self, but to instil a sense of comfort and familiarity as evidence of their insiderness. Comfort therefore not only mediates feelings of belonging and insiderness but also difference and distinction from overly-mobile travellers and tourists seen as 'outsiders'. Emotions are therefore important for understanding the motivations and expectations of international students travelling the Global South.

Importantly, the aim to develop a sense of comfort and familiarity through the everyday abroad is not only to gain a sense of belonging to a new place, but also to gain a new 'home'. Thus, it is not only or necessarily the self that is considered to be transformed through mobility, but rather, the feelings and ideas of comfort, familiarity and 'home'. Ultimately, their intention is to extend the boundaries of their comfort zone and their sense of 'home' to the Global South as the next chapter will discuss in more detail.

Chapter 5

(Re)discovery of 'home' and self: everyday life, comfort and social networks

"Home is where the heart is" (unknown)

In this chapter, I discuss the discovery of the meaning of 'home' and self through everyday life, comfort, familiarity and social networks. Since 'home' is imbued with feelings and meanings (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Easthope, 2004; Porteous, 1976), I examine the concept from the perspective of participants' feelings, senses and meanings of 'home'. Easthope (2004) notes the importance of understanding the concept of 'home' from the perspective of different individuals and within differing contexts and mobility provides a dynamic context in which to study experiences of 'home' and belonging. 'Home', as Blunt and Dowling (2006) assert, is central to mobility. The contrast between the different living conditions in the country of origin and a new country of residence can rouse feelings and ideas of 'home' to the forefront. This is the case for my Canadian participants for whom sojourning in a country in the Global South often involves travel – both physical and imaginary – between contrasting socio-economic realities. I address the absence of work on geographies of home within international student mobility by examining the experience of international exchange students in the Global South. Time spent away from home-places can spark a resurgence of emotions linked to those mundane objects, relations and spaces that pervade our everyday life, prompting us to re-enact home-making practices in new places. 'Home' is thus created and re-created through mobility (Ahmed et al., 2003) and in this chapter I explore how international students recreate homely feelings during educational sojourns abroad.

Based on mainly mid-point interviews and some return interviews with photographs from participants, this chapter examines experiences of home-making and meanings of 'home' within the context of international student mobility. As in Liu's (2014) study, many of my participants brought up the notion of 'home' before I could raise the topic. This chapter contributes to a multi-faceted perspective to geographical scholarship on mobility and 'home' and with recent work that spatially re-conceptualises 'home' with local urban spaces (Datta, 2011). Indeed, Blunt and Dowling (2006) highlight the paucity/dearth of research exploring the city as 'home' and Datta (2011) argues for more attention to the

mundane everyday spatial practices of mobile individuals within the city. This chapter thus takes on a critical geography of home not only in understanding 'home' from a multi-definitional and spatio-temporal perspective but equally by teasing out the contradictions as well as the positive and negative meanings of 'home' among internationally mobile students.

The previous chapter concluded with the role of comfort and everyday life practices in facilitating self-discovery and creating a sense of local belonging and 'home'. Following this thematic thread, this chapter discusses participants' (re)discovery of the meanings of 'home' through mobility and continues with the notion of the everyday as a locus for reflection on the self and on 'home'. As discussed in the previous chapter, engaging in daily mundane practices in a new place creates a juxtaposition with everyday life in the original place that can reveal latent attitudes, traits and values. The spatio-temporal juxtaposition of these everyday practices over time can reveal differences and similarities between both spatial contexts. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) points out that "the experience abroad juxtaposes several temporalities" (p. 102). She explains that the spatio-temporal context of international exchanges can create a "discrepancy between self and self in two different time-spaces, discrepancy in personal and social links which are momentarily suspended, discrepancy in social routines" (p. 18). It also picks up the notion and emotion of comfort discussed in Chapter 4 and demonstrates how comfort is central to home-making and for feeling 'at home'.

In terms of organisational structure, I examine first how mobility leads to a discovery of the meaning of 'home'. Second, I demonstrate how feelings and the re-creation of 'home' are constructed in everyday life and, more specifically, through geographical knowledge and familiarity of their new place. Third, I explore how familiar places and people lead to feelings of comfort that in turn, lead to ideas and feelings of 'home'. Fourth, I illustrate how students ultimately (re)discover the meanings of 'home' through the presence and absence of family and social relations. Finally, I discuss how family and social relations facilitate and influence self-discovery.

Discovering the meaning(s) of 'home'

'Home' is challenged by and discovered through mobility (Nowicka, 2007). Moving away from, and returning to, a place of origin allows for a re-evaluation of 'home'. Through mobile experiences across national borders, novel experiences, and environments, individuals can develop fresh perspectives that can enliven and transform understandings

of 'home'. Absence of, and distance from, familiar places and people can rouse homely feelings and trigger an awareness and reflection on 'home'. Mobility does not just cause perceptions of 'home' to change; it can also symbolise a "search for home" (Larsen et al., 2007, p. 249). This in turn can lead to a (re)discovery of the meaning(s) of 'home'. As Terkenli (1995) states: "home is best discovered from a distance, whether physical, social, cultural, or historical" (p. 331). Through time spent in a different place and context, feelings and ideas of 'home' begin to (re)surface, and as these homely feelings emerge, 'home' is reassessed and (re)discovered. Now returned to Ottawa following her year-long study exchange at a university in Pune, India, Rachel describes how time and mobility re-affirm her feelings for 'home'. When asked what is the most memorable aspect of her experience, Rachel replies:

> "I guess maybe the affirmation that 'home' can be anywhere. You know, the little corny thing of 'home is where the heart is'. Like, every time I travel that happens more. So being away for that long, it just really reaffirmed that belief and truth that 'home' can be anywhere in the world as long as you feel a connection with yourself and with people that are around you and you maintain certain relationships from where you come from, where you were brought up."

Rachel acknowledges the corniness of the adage 'home is where the heart is' but feels that it best represents the meaning of 'home' for her while abroad. Although she seems to initially discount the value of place midway in her comment, she then expresses the importance of maintaining a connection with 'where' she originates from. The importance of place, while perhaps secondary in Rachel's perspective, nevertheless emerges in her comment. Relationships are fluid and mobile yet they originate and are located in places. More notably, she underscores how studying abroad *reaffirmed* and strengthened her feelings of 'home'. She also highlights how time spent abroad and away from her original everyday context can bring the idea of 'home' to the forefront. Singular notions of 'home' are contested by participants and instead, 'home' is inferred as multi-temporal and multi-spatial. Having just returned to her Canadian hometown following her internship with a local organisation in Lima, Amy reflects on how her idea of 'home' has changed over the course of her sojourn abroad as well as upon return to her hometown in Canada:

> "I felt like you can have several homes. You don't necessarily need to have just one which I think is something I kind of had thought before, and even when I think about

before I left when I moved out from home and went to university, I kind of felt like I had two homes. So when I was away, I realised that it can really change when you're away. Whenever you're leaving, while you're away, you're like, 'oh, I'm going home now', referring to your house. So I felt like you can have different homes. It's not that you only ever have to have one, but they are different in the sense that now I wouldn't still consider Lima (Peru) my home. At the time it started to feel like 'home' where now it wouldn't. For example, if I think about my parents' home I haven't lived there in years but on some level I still think of that as 'home'. So I think I've come to start to think of 'home' as an ambiguous 'home' that can change and mean different things, and somewhere might feel like 'home' forever, and others places might feel like home for a while; it's not such a clear-cut thing."

Amy highlights the temporal condition of different spatial homes. Her description of 'home' as ambiguous, multifaceted, continuously changing and "relational across space and time" reflects the multiple spatio-temporal conceptualisations of 'home' within the literature (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, p. 198). Amy illustrates the complexity and the ambiguity in her understanding and reconceptualisation of 'home' but also its multi-dimensionality as 'home' is enacted and situated in multiple places and temporal spaces. Time is not just a location for 'home' but is the very mediator and medium through which we create and reflect on 'home'. For Amy, 'home' is a complex set of temporal and spatial nodes that evolve, fade and shift through mobility and time. Mobility is about movement between homes (Fortier, 2003) and Ahmed (1999) suggests that "migration involves not only a spatial dislocation, but also a temporal dislocation" (p. 343). The meanings of 'home' can therefore be reconfigured, blurred and complicated by the condition of time and mobility (Germann Molz, 2008). This notion of time and, in particular, the spatio-temporal context of the international exchange and the multi-spatial-temporality of 'home' is central and ubiquitous within this chapter (and this thesis as a whole).

Mobility can also expand notions of 'home'. Indeed, Ahmed (1999) indicates that while away, an "expansion of the meaning of home" takes place (p. 337). Joan is at the mid-point of her year-long internship in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Complementing her studies in International Development in Toronto with an international internship, she is working for a local development program to provide support for a rural community outside of Dar es Salaam. Since Joan has volunteered and worked in over 6 countries throughout the globe (ranging from a couple of weeks to one year) 'home' for her was already multi-located. As such, her internship in Dar es Salaam contributes to its physical and

conceptual expansion and the friendships she developed with both local people and international volunteers working at the same organisation also contribute to her sense of 'home' while abroad. Speaking via Skype, she says:

> "I think 'home' has expanded for me. I guess where I consider home is now more places than previously where I considered home. I mean, right now I have belongings in two different places in Canada, and also here in Tanzania I have stuff in Dar and I have personal stuff in the village, and I suppose I consider all those places 'home'. I guess since I travelled before this, I already kind of had an expanded notion of 'home'. That 'home' can sort of be like the host family I was staying with in Taiwan or my relatives I stay with in England. So 'home' was always a little bit fluid for me and not just my parents' home. It wasn't as restricted as what I defined as 'home' in the last few years. I suppose 'home' is where I feel comfortable and I feel myself. So that could be with stuff, the building house where I'm staying but could also be a friends place or the office. It goes beyond a structure of a house, which I think I kind of already knew but now I know even more so."

Joan's notion of 'home' has become clearer and more expansive, even if more complex, through her multiple travels overseas. 'Home' can expand spatially but also conceptually through mobility. She highlights the multifaceted dimensions of 'home' through material belongings in specific places, the relationships with relatives and friends, physical residences, as well as feelings of comfort. Joan's sojourn abroad not only expanded the places she considers 'home' but more significantly, her idea of 'home'. As 'home' expands in spatial and temporal locations it accumulates a diversity of meanings that can both elucidate and complicate the notion. Pocock and McIntosh (2013) observe in returnees from long-term travel that,

> "Although they had not reached a definitive concept of home by the end of our conversations (and indeed this was not the purpose of the research), their questioning and reflecting had led them towards a clearer understanding of what was important to them, what made them feel comfortable (or uncomfortable)" (p. 409).

With the idea of the self as feeling comfortable 'at home', Joan alludes to spatial, material and emotional dimensions of comfort as 'home'. Although 'home' is conceptualised as multi-scalar within the literature – from local houses to wider scales of region, nation and even world – participants such as Joan identify different cities as 'home'. References to specific rooms in a house were sometimes mentioned as homely, particularly in terms of comfort but to a lesser frequency than that of the city. I return to this geographical framing and conceptualisation of the city as 'home' in the following section.

Joan's reference to 'home' as 'fluid' is also well acknowledged by scholars (Anderson, 2012; Blunt, 2005; Germann Molz, 2008; Mallett, 2004; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). In fact, scholars have asserted that 'home' is a dynamic and ongoing process (Ahmed et al., 2003; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Case, 1996; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Similarly, Valérie expresses her changing ideas of 'home' over a Skype interview during her studies in Santiago, Chile. Having left her hometown of Montréal over 2 months ago, she was now half-way through her 5-month sojourn and lives in an apartment with four Chileans and a number of other international students in the capital of Chile. Although she thrice spent one to two months travelling in countries in the Global South before this exchange, this was the longest time she has lived in one place outside of Montréal and this has influenced her perception of 'home': "I think that it changed, but in the end, it showed me more that it was malleable, and I have the impression that it's less fixed and that I could live elsewhere again." By describing 'home' as malleable, Valérie highlights the fluid and changing condition of 'home' and therefore echoes conceptual shifts of 'home' from static and fixed to mobile and fluid (Chambers, 1994; Nowicka, 2007; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). In stating that she could live again in a different place, Valérie suggests that 'home' can be created and re-created anywhere (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Rachel shares this perspective: "I really do feel like wherever I travel I can create a sense of 'home' in each of these places." In this sense, participants discover the fluid and mutable conditions and meanings of 'home'. As such, 'home' is a feeling you can create and carry with you in different places. Notably, participants identify their reflections on the changing meanings of 'home' as an important marker of their sojourn abroad. This is particularly salient in Marilyn's description of 'home' half way through her internship in Freetown:

> "I wrote a whole post about how my concept of 'home' has changed. I've learned that strange places can feel like 'home' too, and 'home' isn't necessarily where you were brought up but it's where you feel at peace with yourself and other people, and I feel at peace with myself in Sierra Leone. And 'home', I don't know, I guess

it's the best way to describe it: home is where you're at peace with yourself. I mean, 'home' is where your family is and where your heart is, but 'home' doesn't necessarily mean a house, the furniture and the objects and the luxuries that you're used to. Those things don't make home and you can really feel 'at home' anywhere, like all you have to do is want it, you know what I mean? So that's how my concept of 'home' has changed."

Marilyn's comment parallels that of Rachel with the adage of 'home is where the heart is', and with the idea of creating 'home' in any place through transportable and transposable sentiments, she points to a discovery of the complexity and multiplicity of meanings of 'home'. More importantly, the sojourn abroad sparked a reflection on the idea of 'home' that prompted Marilyn to dedicate an entire blog post to the subject. Notably, she highlights how feelings of 'home' do not necessarily exclude strangeness (Ahmed, 1999; Mallett, 2004). Indeed, Ahmed (1999) asserts that there are always strangers and strangeness within the home. Marilyn dismisses common notions of 'home' as tied to material objects and physical structure and instead suggests that 'home' is associated to family as well as a feeling of 'peace' with oneself, a feeling also expressed earlier by both Rachel and Joan and similar to Rapport and Dawson's (1998) note that 'home' "is where you know yourself best" (p. 9). Since 'home' is a feeling, it can thus travel with you; it can be anywhere and everywhere.

Participants' narratives and descriptions of 'home' are indeed similar yet diverse. Their comments pack a variety of notions and themes within the same passage, attesting to its ambiguous and multi-faceted nature. As Marilyn and other participants discover, 'home' is not easily discernible or defined (Chapman, 2001). Rather, it is a complex and multi-layered notion (Allen, 2008; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Mallett, 2004; Wiles, 2008). As is the case in Ralph's (2009) research on Irish-born returned migrants from the United-States: "home was rarely given a discrete definition, but was full of shifting meanings for the majority of participants" (p. 195). Likewise, Ralph and Staeheli (2011) argue that "home must be conceptualised as both dynamic and as moored in order to reflect the complexity and ambivalence that makes it such a tricky and slippery concept" (p. 518). Mobility can blur and complicate notions of 'home' as much as it can help illuminate its multiple meanings.

Travel to a different place can provide more clarity and new insights and perspectives on 'home'. It can be both a reflective and reflexive process that can complicate, clarify, affirm, multiply, or expand the meanings of 'home'. It is a process of

discovering, rather than an ultimate 'true' discovery of the meanings of 'home'. Discovery in this context should always be understood in terms of the active form of the word, as discover*ing*, as a *process* of discovery, and in its plural form, as discover*ies*. The pluralised form of 'home' is part of the discovery; that is, 'home' is discovered as multi-faceted and multi-layered. 'Home' is discovered to have many meanings: place, person, object and/or activity; but more importantly, 'home' is discovered to be a *feeling*. People *feel at home* in a particular place and in the presence of specific people. Ultimately, what is discovered is that 'home' is *felt*, complex, meaningful, emotional, spatio-temporal, multi-faceted and always in flux.

The following section highlights and discusses the main themes that participants' associate with 'home'. These are organised and structured thematically along a main thread that illustrates not only participants' feelings associated with 'home' but also their *process* of creating and re-creating 'home' while abroad from everyday spatial knowledge to feelings of comfort and to their discovery of 'home' and, ultimately, of 'self'.

Home, everyday life and familiarity

As discussed in the previous chapter, engaging in everyday local practices is viewed by participants as a means to exert personal change and create a sense of 'home' while abroad. New and old everyday practices and routines are (re)created abroad in order for participants to become familiar and comfortable in their host place and ultimately recreate feelings of homeliness. Becoming familiar with the unfamiliar is part of their strategy for creating a sense of 'home' and ultimately effecting personal change. Kellett and Moore (2003) argue that the creation of 'home' is central to the inclusion and integration of individuals into the local society. Since the strategy devised by participants for enacting self-change and modifying their sense of self is by embodying everyday mundane local practices, then the creation of 'home' through everyday life is part of the process of mimicking the locals, developing a sense of belonging and gaining social inclusion in order to develop self-discovery and personal change.

Upon arrival in their host place, participants' set out to explore and discover their new environment by mentally mapping out their new place in order to become familiar with the geography of their new city (and in a few cases, villages). This is also a period of transition in establishing temporary roots and routes (Clifford, 1997; Gustafson, 2001) as well as routes to belonging (Kellett and Moore, 2003). Aside from the basic needs of where to buy food, a phone, an internet connection and where to attend classes or placement

work, participants want to become knowledgeable of the city in order to become a local insider in their host place and create a sense of 'home'. In their view, the first step to achieving an insider perspective is understood in terms of local spatial and geographical knowledge. In other words, knowing the city's geography and social landscape and generally being in-the-know is central to (re)creating feelings of homeliness. 'Home', as Ahmed (1999) notes, is a "knowable terrain" (p. 337) and participants are eager to know its streets, commercial places, transport routes and social hubs in order to feel 'at home' while abroad.

Despite the studying or interning purpose of their sojourn, university campuses and work locations are not necessarily the main places that participants favour or consider meaningful during (and after) their sojourn; rather, the most frequently selected photographs are of everyday public (urban) spaces. Since, as Dodman (2003) explains, "life in the city is an intensely visual process" (p. 293), photographs have been useful for illustrating the importance for participants of everyday life in the city. Indeed, the most visually and verbally cited and favoured places by participants are local public city parks. Amy illustrates one such place with a photograph of her popular rendezvous spot – a local park in a district of Lima (see Figure 8):

Figure 8. A neighbourhood park in Lima – the central meet-up place for Amy.

"I put that one in there because it's somewhere where I spent a lot of time or if I felt that I wanted to go out shopping or looking around. You know, there was little markets near there and stuff, that was sort of an area where I spent a lot of time. If I wanted to go somewhere that's was where I could go; that was like a very central part of where I lived. I guess the district even when you tell people that you live in Miraflores, it was like, 'are you near park Kennedy?' So it was just a central spot that I went to a lot."

Amy describes what many other participants have shared in terms of the main places they frequented while abroad. Local city parks offer a central and well-known place to meet with colleagues and friends to either linger and mingle there or move on to another spot in town. Public spaces are predominantly identified as meaningful places and favoured by participants for being central and in the heart of mundane local life. These allow for participants to both observe and participate with locals in an everyday environment away from the bustle of visitors at tourist attractions. Much as participants expressed in Chapter 4, mundane practices and everyday places are indeed an important part of their sojourn abroad. Public everyday spaces give participants a feel for the city and a feeling of belonging to the local community.

Among the narratives of 'home' expressed by participants a specific spatial scale of locality stands out. Contrary to theoretical and empirical work that conceptualises 'home' at the level of the nation (Schama, 1991; Skey, 2011), the majority of my participants frame the 'city' as a homely place (Blunt and Bonnerjee, 2013; Datta, 2011; Lahiri, 2010). In fact, both their hometown or university town in Canada *and* their host city abroad are frequently referred to as 'home'. For example, Sophie shows off the city of Antigua as her new 'home' in a photograph taken with her friend during her 3-month internship in Guatemala (see Figure 9):

Figure 9. Showing off the city of Antigua as their new 'home'

"The picture is myself and my friend [Mitsu] from Japan. So this is just us and you can see the volcano in the background and this is us just kind of standing on the edge of a concrete barrier, and we're like, 'that's our city!' you know! Like, 'that's our home!' and were just so happy and having a good day together. So ya, that's just a photo showing off our houses."

Sophie is effusively proud in 'showing off' the urban space of Antigua with her friend as their new 'home'. The photograph seems to act as a memory prompt that allows her to relive her excitement and her sense of 'home' in that city. Participants like Sophie also tend to point out the nationalities of the international students they befriend during their sojourn abroad, perhaps as a way to demonstrate their social and cultural capital acquired overseas. Yet this photograph is more illustrative of how exchange students, like Sophie and her friend, attach a sense of belonging to the space of the city. Similarly, in Lahiri's (2010) study on diasporas and belonging, importance was placed on the city of birth rather than on the nation. By delimitating urban spaces through imaginative and administrative boundaries, the 'city' is encompassed and projected as 'home'. Skey (2011) indicates that "it is primarily through boundary-making processes that particular places come to be (seen as) identifiable, familiar and secure" (p. 238). Unlike Skey's work that defines the nation as

a homely place, my study suggests a scaling down of 'home' to a more manageable, knowable and relatable space of urban locality (Datta, 2011; Su, 2014). My study chimes with Blunt and Bonnerjee's (2013) work on 'home' and diaspora in exploring the city as a home "through the observation of familiar everyday urban practices" (p, 226). Similar to their respondents, my participants attribute familiarity to their Canadian and host cities as a source of homely feelings. This is not to suggest that cities are exclusively seen as the only homely place (in fact, many participants refer to Canada or their host country as 'home'); rather, in comparison to other scales, urban centres are predominantly identified as 'home'. Although domestic spaces and physical residences – particularly specific rooms such as the bedroom – are present in the photographs and narratives and indeed, exhibited homely qualities, references to the domestic sphere are comparatively less frequent. Past and current cities of residency are predominantly and explicitly singled out as 'home' as participants express a stronger affinity and sense of belonging to urban centres rather than their host country. Judy demonstrates this urban sense of belonging through one of her photographs that depicts the graffiti of the name of her host city on a wall in the northern part of town (see Figure 10):

Figure 10. Graffiti of 'Chiclayo Norte' – where Judy attaches a sense of belonging.

"This picture represents, like, it's sort of in a bad area of town, so I'm like, this is my neighbourhood man, these are my people; this is my hood! I've always loved being in the North, which is funny because I live south of the actual city of Chiclayo. I don't live in the city really, but I like to consider myself Chiclayan and so I saw the picture and I'm like, ya, graffiti!"

This is an apt example of how participants attach a sense of belonging and 'home' to a more localised scale of the city instead of the nation. Judy's slang references of this graffiti scene in Chiclayo Norte as her 'hood' and her 'people' are partly said in jest, yet they do illustrate how she claims a sense of belonging to its local community and urban space despite the fact that she does not reside in that part of town. Describing this neighbourhood as a 'bad' part of town seems to appeal to, and coincide with, the popular perception of places in the Global South as risky and dangerous and may underscore an attempt by Judy to appear more edgy and street-wise. Rather than make a grand claim of being a Peruvian or Chilean (or any nationality for that matter) which would be quickly discredited by others, many participants seem to downscale their claims of belonging to that of the city level. Unlike the more contested issues of citizenship or ethnicity that are explicitly or implicitly tied to claims of nationality, a sense of belonging and claim to a municipality is not only less politically problematic, but the mere fact of residing in a city for an extended period of time is often a sufficiently acceptable requisite to refer to oneself as a local city-zen. I therefore suggest that the cityscape or city space affords a more practical and conceivable geographical area to develop a sense of familiarity and geographical knowledge in order to lay plausible, if not credible, authoritative claims of 'insider' and 'local' status. I propose the term 'cityzen' to refer to participants' feelings and claims of 'home', belonging and insiderness at the level of the city, rather than that of the nation. I therefore suggest that participants are not so much attempting to pass as national citizens in their host country (even if some try), but more to become local cityzens.

During her study exchange in Chile, Valérie explains how everyday geographical knowledge of her current city makes her feel 'at home'.

"What makes me feel like I'm 'at home' (*chez moi*) is just the geographical knowledge of the city. I have travelled it well, so I know the streets, I know the roads, I know where to buy specific things, I know how to go to the post office, I know how to take the metro. Those small details of how things work. I know where

to buy food, so I know the city; I'm no longer a foreigner/stranger (*étrangère*) in the city, I know it."

Knowing the geography and everyday spaces of the city not only endows Valérie with a sense of 'home' but enables her transition from stranger to insider. Living and studying with other Chileans has presumably contributed to this sense of belonging and knowledge, as well as to gains in cultural and social capital. She continues:

"Those small practices/routines (*ces gestes-là*) make me feel a bit like I too am part of that city and that life. Just to be able to know what are the small things that I need to say in Spanish, but in Chilean Spanish, at which moment and to whom, you know, I have the impression that I'm part of that world and to be able to show them that even if I look foreign (*étrangère*), I know the everyday life routines (*les quotidiens*), I know how it works … I feel settled (*je me sens posé*), I think that's a good word."

For Valérie, feeling 'settled' and engaging with mundane practices and everyday routines in her new city imparts a sense of belonging to the local urban life. Getting to know the everyday physical and social landscape of the city allows her to peer into the deeper layers of the mundane social fabric of the city and understand local customs and insider life. This, in turn, gives her a sense of 'home' and being a member of the local society. Yet, her comment of wanting to 'show them' – presumably, local Chileans – her knowledge of everyday life suggests that she seeks to both showcase to, and receive recognition from, the local community to which she aspires to belong. Acceptance from the local community is the ultimate indication and authentication of a successful immersion into local everyday life. In his study on the influence of journeys away on the meaning of 'home', Case (1996) reveals that participants discovered the conceptual boundaries of 'home' to be centred on time, routines and social relationship. Following her return to Montréal, I ask Valérie what makes Santiago feel like 'home'? She explains:

"Well the memories I think; the memories. The fact that I had been in those streets many times, I know where to go by bike because I've passed there many times. The fact of repeating certain everyday life practices (*styles quotidiens*), of going to that boutique to buy everything, I was no longer on my guards, ya, I knew the beat of the city."

Part of feeling 'at home' is about knowing the 'beat of the city' or, as Wiles (2008) notes, it is about knowing the 'rhythms' of a place (p. 123). Daily repetition of practices enabled participants to get in the rhythm and flow of local everyday life. What Valérie signifies by her memories of Santiago is her familiarity and local spatial knowledge of the city. Memories are constitutive of ideas of 'home' (Ahmed, 1999) and the act of remembering a place is thus a process of re-enacting homely memories; in other words, a homely spatio-temporality and sense of place. The ability to remember a place – to recall place-specific memories – suggests a cumulative knowledge of a place acquired through repetition of everyday local practices. She shares a photograph and description of her street in Santiago in order to represent to the importance of place (see Figure 11):

Figure 11. Valérie's street in Santiago, Chile.

> "This is my street. … This street was always calm because it's a residential
> neighbourhood but I live on the street where you see 'cueto' [street sign] in
> perpendicular. And I put this [photo] because that's where I passed on my bike or
> that's where I would go to take the bus, stuff like that, so it's really *my*
> neighbourhood (participant emphasis)"

Valérie emphasises in her tonality that this is *her* neighbourhood through living, biking and walking through its streets. These repetitive daily practices enabled the creation of place-specific memories situated in time. Indeed, feelings of homeliness can originate from daily patterns of activity (Case, 1996) and Terkenli (1995) states this point: "These patterns become part of home because they represent recurrent, familiar points of reference in time, space, and society. Repetition is an essential element in the transformation of place into home" (p. 326). Engaging in everyday routines and practices in their host city is crucial to developing familiarity, a sense of normalcy and of 'home', both while abroad and retrospectively upon return. Scholars indicate that meanings of 'home' are embedded and constructed in everyday life (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Blunt, 2005; Valentine, 2001) and this is illustrated empirically through participants' everyday practices in their host city. Homely feelings emanate from daily routines (Case, 1996; Tuan, 1975) and Véronique, half-way through her year-long study exchange in Rio de Janeiro, offers her perspective on this routine aspect of 'home':

> "I think what makes it feel like 'home' is the day by day life, you know, like waking up and knowing what you're going to expect from your day I think that makes it a little bit home, like, I know it's going to be hot, and I know my way around, I have a routine or my specific point in the city where I go to the university or my friends' houses. I know how to get around so I feel like it's home."

The element of predictability, of knowing what to expect from daily life that formed part of the reason for participants to leave their comfort zone in Canada is now partly what constitutes their feelings of 'home' while abroad. Having familiar spatial references and knowing what to expect from everyday life through routine practices contributes to Véronique's feelings of hominess in Rio de Janeiro. If 'home' implies repetition of daily practices, of a routine, then 'home' can be recreated across different spatial registers. Speaking with me at the 5-month mid-point of her studies in Dar es Salaam and in the middle of the Tanzanian summer, Christina is settled nicely in her new 'home' despite the different climate. Her studies on gender and Africa at the university are progressing well and she has acquired the knowledge of the city that she recalls pinning for during our pre-departure interview. In fact, she even discusses her new 'collection' of homes:

"So the way I think about it I have three homes. I have lived in Ottawa, I have Dar and I lived in my hometown. I'm collecting homes, kind of, you know? So it's pretty awesome, because I know I remember saying to you at the very beginning (pre-departure interview) is that the reason I'm going for a full year instead of half a year is because I wanted to know some place like the back of my hand, and I actually really distinctly remember that and the truth is that now I do."

Christina points to the many 'homes' she has collected between Tanzania and Canada through her specific spatial and everyday knowledge of these places. This reflects Desforges' (1998) study of travelers in which he proposes the notion of 'collecting places' as "a way of framing the 'Third World' as a place where individual knowledge and personal experience can be gained through travel" (p. 183). In the case of my study, participants like Christina are collecting 'homes' in the Global South through their everyday practices and knowledge of their cities. This collection of homes also signals an accumulation of cultural capital that can be narrated to friends and family both during their sojourn and upon return. Moreover, Christina acknowledges that 'home' is a feeling that is continuously shifting with space and time:

"I think 'home', it evolves. It's wherever, because I really do think that I have three homes. I think it's a feeling and they all give me different things and they are different experiences but it's just a sense of knowing a place and feeling like you're not just visiting, I think. Because I don't feel like I'm visiting. I feel like I'm living here and I'm experiencing here and the word that I really use is 'established', I'm established here."

The evolution of 'home' for Christina is based on a collection of feelings and places that create a sense of 'home', one that varies and changes through experiences. Knowledge of the place still underscores Christina's homely feelings but she also seems to justify her appropriation of her current place as 'home' by emphasising her 'living' rather than 'visiting' status. Through repeated use of the term 'established' during the interview, she does more than describe her condition as settled and knowledgeable of everyday life; she is suggestively referring to her new position as an insider. Indeed, Christina shares a photo

(see Figure 12) she took while riding a dala dala[5] in Dar es Salaam to explain how she acquired an insider's view of the city:

Figure 12. Christina's insider view of Dar es Salaam by riding a dala dala.

> "I took them all the time and I had such a love-hate relationship with them, because I love being on them, because you can see the city from really an insider's perspective and whenever I talk about knowing the city, knowing the city meant knowing the bus routes and I did get to know the bus routes really well, which was like riding these things which are both really dangerous but dirt cheap. So I just love sitting in them and having fun and just, because like, you're usually on it for like an hour and a half to go anywhere so, I just, I really love them."

Christina explains how taking popular modes of collective transportation to get around Dar es Salaam allows her to 'know' and become familiar with the spatiality of the city. Riding collective (public and informal) transportation offers a mundane way for participants to

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[5] Dala dala are a type of minibus that serve as a popular mode of collective transportation in Tanzania.

visually and actively map out the main nodes and locales of their new place. These forms of collective transportation inform and organise participants' knowledge of the city in a way that delimits the boundaries of their spatial urban imaginary. Yet, it also suggests that by sharing collective transportation Christina is emulating locals' everyday practices in order to feel more like a local insider in Dar es Salaam.

Aurélie, a Francophone student from Montréal, pursued her Law studies during her 5-month study exchange in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has previous experiences travelling abroad though not necessarily living in a country for more than a month at a time. Despite living in a shared house with Turkish students rather than local Argentinians, Aurélie recalls during our return interview the moment when she felt not only comfortable in the city, but considered herself Argentinian:

> "During a certain time I really considered myself an Argentinian citizen (*citoyenne Argentine*). I found it fun and I felt good. I was comfortable (*à l'aise*), I felt at home (*chez moi*) from the moment where I understood how it works, how you stop the bus. There was an awkward moment where you really look like you're not from the place, you don't know how it works, how to buy vegetables, you have to tell them the weight, it's the weight that counts and I didn't know how much 5 kilos was worth (laughs). But after that, you know, I felt 'at home' (*à la maison*)."

Aurélie recounts the process of transitioning from being 'awkward' and 'out of place' to knowing the everyday functions of the city and feeling 'Argentinian'. Much like how travellers' in Snee's (2013) study "negotiate potential embarrassments by gaining insider knowledge" (p. 151), Aurélie dealt with the 'awkward moments' by observing and adopting the everyday practices of locals in Buenos Aires. While she projects a bolder claim of belonging to that of the nation rather than the city, her comment also demonstrates how understanding the routine and mundane workings of her new environment can create a sense of familiarity and comfort, and thus, of 'home'. What is familiar is the mundane, the habitual (Berger, 1984). In discussing the role of daily routine patterns and places in the creation of 'home', Case (1996) explains that: "repeatedly encountered, these patterns and places become intimately familiar, so much so that they are unconscious to our daily routine, yet their very familiarity and routineness is what evokes the sense of 'being-at-home'" (p. 3). As participants become more familiar with the geography and everyday life of the city, feelings of uncertainty subside and concerns and worries brought on by the unknown gradually dissipate and give way to a sense of comfort. Having honed in on their

bearings and knowing what to expect from their surroundings allows participants to let their guard down and settle into local life.

This sense of knowing the spatial and social everyday landscape of a new place affords participants with a newly acquired sense of 'home' and of local insiderness. In Benson's (2010) study, a sense of local belonging is emphasised through expatriates' relationships with local people and their local inside knowledge of their new place. As new insiders, they feel entitled to the status of 'local'. Marilyn illustrates this perspective having since returned from her internship in Sierra Leone:

> "I was initiated as an African, I speak the language there, I ate their food, I skinned my own fish. I think it's a different experience when you go there and you don't live as a tourist and you don't live in nice accommodations and you don't have money and you live there as an African, as a local. I think it's a very different experience. I'm very attached to Sierra Leone, it's where I learned to survive and where I learned things about myself and it's where I made my new home."

Marilyn's comment addresses several of the themes discussed in this thesis, notably how time spent in Sierra Leone has led to self-discovery. However, more interestingly, by presenting herself as a 'local' and an 'African', she engages in processes of home-making and homogenisation. Marilyn reveals how she projects herself as 'African' by referencing and generalising certain practices and conditions such as 'skinning fish' and lack of money as not only typically and authentically Sierra Leonean but, more broadly, as African. She is not only suggesting that her new language skills, food consumption practices and her lack of money and 'nice' accommodations are evidence of her 'African' status, but that these are the de facto characteristics that represent Sierra Leone and the African continent as a whole. In doing so, she neglects or rejects – even if unintentionally – the existence of other cultures and languages within the African continent while simultaneously transforming Sierra Leone and Africa into exotic places and perpetuating generalisations of poverty in the Global South. While later in the interview she acknowledges the diversity of cultures and countries within Africa as well as the common stereotypes, Marilyn nonetheless illustrates such homogenous stereotyping in her narratives and through a photograph of her neighbourhood (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Locals doing laundry near where Marilyn lives.

> "Those women are there all day doing laundry, you know, living in pin shacks essentially, and you know, that's just people going about their everyday lives, that's just a typical Sierra Leonean routine."

Instead of localising these practices and conditions within the specific neighbourhood she lives in, she projects them not only onto Freetown but Sierra Leone as a country. Moreover, returning to her previous comment, Marilyn is projecting her sense of 'home' to the national and even larger regional scale rather than the local urban space. She seems to be attempting to claim a greater sense of belonging and 'home' as well as of cultural capital and distinction by appropriating her 'African' status rather than just a Sierra Leonean one (or even that of a local town insider). Marilyn worked as the only Canadian on a full-time basis for a local non-governmental organisation as part of her internship in Sierra Leone and considers this context – that is, working as a full-time employee rather than a tourist – as an indication of her 'local' status and ability to cope with everyday challenges that tourists would normally not encounter while engaging in brief sightseeing tours.

Participants are adamant in underlining and asserting their *living* rather than *visiting* purpose abroad and their *local* as opposed to *tourist* status. There seems to be an

assumption or perception among participants that the studying and/or working purpose of their sojourn allows for and legitimatises claims of 'nativeness' or at least of 'insiderness' as well as feelings of 'home'. Once they have become familiar with the unfamiliar through active participation and repetition of everyday life practices and routines, participants feel they have achieved and, as Marilyn continues to explains, earned their sense of 'home' in that place:

> "I also feel I earned my home in Sierra Leone. It took two months of struggle and challenge, of embarrassment, of awkward moments, it took tears. I really had to fight to feel at home there and for that reason I feel like I've earned my right to feel at home in Sierra Leone. Like, I learned my title as a Sierra Leonean. I went from the difference between just living in Sierra Leone to like thriving in Sierra Leone. So I started out as just surviving and getting by each day and then the more I let go and relaxed and started to look into myself for ways to enjoy this new country that's when I started to feel at home."

The struggles, challenges, embarrassments and awkwardness Marilyn is referring to relates to feeling 'out of place' in Sierra Leone, of not knowing the everyday local life, of not yet being an insider. Yet, as Snee (2013) suggests, travellers view their ability of overcoming feelings of discomfort and 'not fitting in' as "becoming an experienced traveller" (p. 151). Having overcome the challenges of the unfamiliar and conquering the unknown through repeated and continued proactive participation in everyday day life, Marilyn and other participants feel that they have earned their title as a member of the local community and thus, lay claim to the feeling of 'home' and to the title of 'local' insider. This is similar to international students in Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) study in which she suggests that "through the experience, strangers gradually modify their status. They find ways to break through existing social boundaries" (p. 124). Furthermore, Marilyn stresses the transition of condition from 'surviving' to 'thriving'. It does not suffice to merely be living or struggling to live in their host place; they need to feel that they are *thriving* and *living comfortably* in order to achieve and earn their new 'home' and status as a local insider. This hard fought accomplishment and status as a 'local', as well as all of the challenges and work that their status implies, grants participants a membership to the local society and with that a sense of distinction (discussed in entirety in the next chapter).

Moreover, active participation in local everyday life makes it so that participants become familiar with particular places and recognise specific people and, conversely, the

peoples in these places recognise them through their frequent or repetitive visits. Amélie illustrates this sense of friendly familiarity with an elderly woman who lives and works next to her place in Peru (see Figure 14):

Figure 14. Amélie's Peruvian 'grand-mother'.

"That was my Peruvian grand-mother (laughs). She lives in the back of the small corner shop that you see in there. I lived behind that corner shop. … And so she loved me and I loved her *(elle m'adorait et moi je l'adorais).* I had such difficulty to understand her because she spoke Spanish but interspersed with the native Quechuan tongue, so it was incomprehensible, but she would always say to me 'my pretty, my pretty, good day, good day' and it would end there, but we saw each other all the time during the day so ya, it was a lovely encounter *(une belle rencontre).* … She was very wise, she was very relaxed, and she was a bit of a cornerstone (*un monument*) for the community, always there, she knew everyone."

Amélie's reference to her Peruvian neighbour as her 'grand-mother' is both an endearing term as well as an indication of her familiarity to local people who seem to not just acknowledge but welcome her presence in the community. The very affirmation and recognition of Amélie by a woman who is a cornerstone in the community therefore increases her respectability and status as at least a temporary 'local' in her

neighbourhood. Participants want to become familiar *with* local places and people but they also want to become familiar *to* local people. Case (1996) has pointed out that the combination of being in a familiar place and engaging in familiar activities with familiar people evokes a sense of 'home'. Marie-Josée, who lives in a shared house with a mix of locals and international students, illustrates her sense of localness while studying Law in Stellenbosch, South Africa:

> "I felt like I was integrated because these are small hidden places that only the locals know, and they are really good, so I have the impression that I am from the place. I sit down and people talk to me in Afrikaan directly. Generally people speak to me in English because I don't look like I'm from here, but I arrive in these places and the people speak to me in Afrikaan, and then I'm like, 'oh, I'm sorry', so I really have the impression that I am a South African citizen in a tranquil café (*à un café tranquille*). I like that because I don't have the impression that I am with a gang of internationals that speak tons of languages and just look like tourists."

Marie-Josée explains how she seeks out ordinary, everyday local places that are not in the tourist itinerary; places that are frequented predominantly, and ideally uniquely, by local citizens in order to feel like she not only fits *in* the place but is *from* the place. In this case, Marie-Josée excludes not only tourists from her imaginary of the 'local' landscape but also other international students such as herself. In wanting to avoid being exposed as someone 'not from the place' – and potentially 'out of place' – she visits the café independently from international students (those most likely to be in her group of friends) in order to uphold her image as a local 'citizen', as both perceived by the locals in the café and imagined by herself. For Marie-Josée and other participants, having local people address her in the local language is an affirmation that she *could* be or, at least, *appears* to be from the place. Indeed, as a tall and fair skinned girl with light hair, Marie-Josée has similar features to those of local Afrikaners. Being mistaken or able to pass as a local is the ultimate marker of achievement for participants and the utmost indication of integration and cultural capital accumulation, even if bodily features rather than any particular skill or acquired cultural competency is at play. The impression of feeling integrated within local familiar places and into the local society by locals is what contributes to a sense of 'home'. In Valérie's case, a local bar in her neighbourhood creates that sense of 'home' for her while studying in Santiago (see Figure 15):

Figure 15. Bar Raices, a local bar and Valérie's haunt in Santiago.

"That was one of my favourite bars, and what was really fun (*ce que j'ai vraiment trippé*) was that it was really close to my home, you know. It was at a point where I knew my neighbourhood well, the neighbourhood was really my home (*c'était vraiment chez moi*), you know. I didn't really leave much my neighbourhood, I did everything by foot or on bike, you know. Most of the exchange students weren't there but my close friends often lived in that neighbourhood."

Valérie suggests that by limiting her mobility to walking and biking in her neighbourhood, she intentionally concentrated her activities and practices within the centre or surroundings of her neighbourhood in a way which endowed her with a personal sense of insiderness – if not for Santiago at an urban scale, at least for a specific neighbourhood within the city. As such, for some participants, a sense of 'home' and a claim to local belonging may very well be focused within a smaller scale than that of the city. With the apparent absence of international students in her neighbourhood but the presence of close friends (perhaps local Chileans), Valérie may imply that the bar retains a sort of local cachet. Having become a regular patron of Bar Raices and by spending a great deal of time in the neighbourhood where she lived, Valérie gradually cultivated a sense of familiarity and

'home' that she – like many other participants – sought to achieve during their sojourn abroad.

Scholars both acknowledge and critique conceptualisations of 'home' as familiar (Ahmed, 1999; Fortier, 2003; Mallett, 2004). Ahmed (1999) underscores the ubiquity of strangeness in the 'home' and argues that migration is movement between estrangements. In her comprehensive review of the literature on 'home', Mallett (2004) notes that 'home' can be both familiar and strange. This apparent contradiction is pertinent to my study. Participants are considered to be strangers in an unfamiliar place, yet they create a sense of familiarity that feels homely among greater conditions and instances of unfamiliarity and strangeness.

Living with locals in a shared house in Santiago, Élodie chatted with me at her 5-month mid-point about feeling 'at home' in the streets of her city:

> "I feel a little like 'at home' *(comme chez nous)*. These are places that integrated me to the city and it's like there is a little bit of me in these streets. I feel good *(je me sense bien)* and I pass in front of certain corner stores and there are people that recognise me, you know, and then they smile, and I feel… not at home – I know I'm a foreigner and I always will be – but a little bit, it's like home (laughs)."

While acknowledging her position as a 'foreigner' in Santiago (both self-defined and through the eyes of the locals), Élodie demonstrates how becoming familiar with everyday places and a simple and small gesture of recognition from locals (such as a smile) can impart feelings of homeliness. Habitual visits to everyday places foster a sense of familiarity and inclusion between participants and locals. Lucy, who lives in a university residence with other international students in Ankara, illustrates this through her study exchange in Turkey:

> "There's one coffee shop that I go to a lot and the waiters know us there, even though they know we don't speak Turkish, you just feel really relax. It's the place we know we can go and can get our favourite drink and there's this cheese cake we always get, and ya, again, it just makes me feel like I'm welcomed because they know what you're going to get and so you just feel really included in society."

Although participants seek out and patronise more local shops and places in order to distance themselves from tourists and be recognised as locals, they often do so in the

company of other international students. Even though locals are likely aware of the brevity of students' sojourn and still view international students as foreigners, participants feel as though they are acknowledged as locals because of their frequent visits to the same places and their familiarity to the locals that work there. Participants seek out cues from locals – a nod, a smile, a greeting from the waiter or owner that remembers the student's name – that could affirm or, at least, that participants could interpret as an affirmation of their integration into the local society. Nevertheless, by establishing routine jaunts and haunts in the city, participants develop informal relations with locals and intimate relations with places that can provide a sense of familiarity. A sense of belonging to a place develops not only through familiarity, but also depends on "the extent to which others recognise us as legitimate participants in that setting" (Anderson, 2012, p. 332). Through repeated contact, encounters and daily interactions with local places and faces, participants establish a connection, even if limited, with local people that provides them with a sense of 'home' and belonging as well as social and cultural capital. Lucy adds to this:

> "You definitely feel like you're part of it. You become more of an insider as opposed to a tourist. Actually a lot of people think I'm Turkish here, even though I have light skin but I have dark eyes and hair, so people come up to me and think I'm the Turkish one of the group. And now that I'm able to get on the bus and know where I'm going it makes me feel like people don't look at me differently. Before I felt like people were looking at me like, 'oh, she's foreign' and that makes me a little bit uneasy but now that I'm more comfortable and assertive in where I'm going, I just feel a lot more part of the – not necessarily the Turkish society – but at least the area."

Despite having fair skin, Lucy's darker facial features allow her to blend in the social landscape and pass as a local from the place. Indeed, Marie-Josée and Lucy's appearances within the ethnic contexts of their places facilitate their integration into the local society and in doing so, situate and construct their experience differently than those of other fair-skinned participants in countries where the ethnic majority's has characteristically darker skin – such as is the case of Marilyn who 'struggled' in Sierra Leone.

Moreover, Lucy demonstrates how comfort in navigating local transportation and being mistaken for a Turk generates feelings of belonging and of 'insiderness'. Yet, while

describing these feelings, she catches herself mid-sentence and seems to veer her claim of belonging from the nation of Turkey to that of the local area. Lucy may have hesitated to express a national sense of belonging in realising that an overstatement may undermine her credibility and claims of being an 'insider'. What does sound credible is that through repetition of mundane daily practices (e.g. walking the same daily route to university and eating at the same places) participants develop a sense of familiarity and comfort in their host place. Chaban et al. (2011) indicate that familiarity contributes to recreating feelings of comfort while abroad. Feeling comfortable in everyday life can give the impression of being 'local' but also 'at home'. As Blunt and Bonnerjee (2013) note, feeling 'at home' is centred on creating a sense of comfort within the city. The next section expands on notions of 'home' as a comfortable space and comforting feelings.

Comforts of 'home'

Comfort is a ubiquitous theme across the interview stages. Participants express a sense of homely comfort from familiar places and people as well as from a sense of integration into the local society. From their perspective, being perceived by others as a 'local' attests to their successful transition from visitor, traveller, stranger and/or foreigner to that of knowledgeable, integrated, local insider. However, for participants studying or interning in societies where they are visible minorities[6] – that is, where their skin colour visibly stands out in the social landscape – there is a more challenging process of developing comfort and thus, a sense of 'home' in their new place. The process of developing familiarity and comfort in a new environment include moments of emotional and physical discomfort (Ahmed, 1999; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002).

Jane is a master's student from Ottawa with previous experiences studying and volunteering for several months at a time in countries in Europe and Africa. Currently living on her own in Kigali, Rwanda, Jane is very open and reflexive about her nearly 2-month internship. Speaking over Skype, she recalls moments of discomfort during her first weeks in Rwanda:

> "I guess that was my big source of, if not fear, at least awkwardness or discomfort when I first started was kind of acknowledging the fact that you're almost like, I don't know, a degree of notoriety just by walking in the room."

[6] The term 'visible minority' is used by the Government of Canada to refer to "persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour and who do not report being Aboriginal" (see Statistics Canada)

For Jane, her entrance and presence at times and in particular places of the city generates attention from local people that incurs discomfort. As a Caucasian woman in Rwanda, Jane illustrates how her comfort zone potentially differs from those of other tourists, travellers or international students with more similar bodied features to that of the local population. In engaging with a critical geography of home my study demonstrates how 'home' can engender both feelings of belonging and alienation (Blunt and Varley, 2004).

Feeling (un)comfortable connotes both emotional and corporeal sensations. Skey (2011) describes how 'home' is based on an everyday sensory experience and that "the place of the embodied individual within it, is therefore crucial in understanding how and why people come to be/feel 'at home'" (p. 238). If 'home' is a feeling and particularly a feeling of comfort, then 'home' is also embodied. Indeed, Ahmed (1999) compares 'home' to that of an outer layer of skin. 'Home' is experienced through mobility and bodily sensations and as the embodied self moves through space, it perceives new visual sights and novel sounds, it captures new smells in the environment and feels the change in climate. Mobility thus involves a "spatial reconfiguration" of the bodily self (Ahmed, 1999, p. 342). Véronique describes how the streets of Rio have changed the way she walks and feels while walking:

> "It's really weird, even the way you walk here is different because of the pavement. There's little stones; it's really weird and I think I'm the only one to notice but in Montréal the pavement is all concrete so it's really smooth, so here (laughs) all the time you trip over yourself because of the stones and you have to be careful."

The physical features of Rio de Janeiro influence Véronique's embodied discomfort while walking in the streets of the city. Transposing her embodied habit of walking from Montréal to Rio de Janeiro incurs discomfort and clumsiness that not only incites her reflexive awareness of these habits but prompts her to adjust her walking in order to feel comfortable and 'fit in' her new place.

Other participants discussed the impact of local cuisine on their body as particular foods contribute to physical and emotional (dis)comfort. Familiar 'comfort foods' increase their sense of 'home' while local exotic dishes occasionally inflict physical discomfort. In addition, the effect of constant heat and humidity on the body affects their level of discomfort. Even for participants in predominantly Muslim societies trying to adhere to strict cultural dress codes and norms of appearance, the soaring temperatures influence

their choice of dress, which, in turn, generates uncomfortable glares from locals. This is the case for Christina while studying in Tanzania:

> "A lot of the time I'm super aware of the way that I'm dressing. Sometimes there are days where I just don't care and I really want to wear shorts because, you know, when it's over 40°C with humidity, you're just, I don't care, it's just too hot."

While Christina normally tries to abide by the dress code and 'fit in' to the social landscape there seem to be threshold-moments when participants succumb to everyday 'challenges' and temporarily (or selectively) suspend their attempts to integrate and conform to local standards and ways of life. It is as though they break character in instances that no longer suit their needs or in which they judge will not affect their insider status. In addition, Christina's impulse to even comment on this transgression – not only of local norms but also her own expectations – suggests a need to legitimise (whether to herself or myself as a researcher) her reasoning behind her decision to disregard customs in this context. Later she explains how her body has adapted to the temperatures and odours that permeate her surroundings and thus, how her body has come to feel 'at home' in her new place:

> "That's one thing my mother said, it's completely changed. She noticed in me that my level, you know, at home I would want to shower at least every day and here that's just not possible, so I have a different standard for what smells. Even if, like we'd be driving somewhere and there would be this large garbage dump and I wouldn't even smell it at all, and she would be like, 'that's disgusting' and I was like 'I actually don't even smell it, not even a little'. But I was afraid when I came if I would smell BO, like body odour, because there is a very strong smell of that and when I first arrived I smelled it, but now my nose is completely desensitised to stuff like that. And being comfortable just sweating all the time is also a new thing."

The sensory changes emitted by the new environment amounts to different feelings of (dis)comfort. Comfort is embodied; it is physical as much as it is emotional. Yet, Christina also seems to suggest that in accustoming herself to local odours she is now integrated into local life and can thus feel 'at home'. Her comfort zone has expanded in adapting to her new milieu and is now bodily and sensorially different to that of her mother's and her previous standards. The comfort zone can therefore change along with new conditions. Moreover, for women in male-dominated societies, feelings of discomfort originated mainly

from the masculine gaze. Such was the case of Rebecca, a student in International Studies and Modern Languages from Ottawa now studying on exchange in Mumbai, India. Although less travelled than her counterparts from Ottawa, Rebecca did participate during her high school years in a 3-month study exchange in Europe and during childhood she visited her extended family in India with her parents. While Rebecca's Indian ancestry is visible in her appearance and must facilitate her integration into society much more than Caucasian participants, this does not dissuade or prevent local men from staring at Rebecca. Indeed, she describes her (gendered) experience in India:

> "It was an uncomfortable experience for me being considered high class, and being a woman here is really hard and that's one thing that I can't get used to at all. Because you know, this sounds crude, but every time I step out of my apartment I'm getting eye-cocked (laughs). People are like (imitates expression of men ogling or leering at her). You're like eww, you know, you're like so uncomfortable. … you really don't see that many woman on the streets or alone especially, so when I'm a young girl walking around alone like I'm used to at home, I should be able to feel totally comfortable but I'm not. You know, people stare, they make comments, I've been groped here which is not cool and like I look Indian so you can imagine what it's like for the other girls, like the white girls and stuff which is really bad, so ya, you try to dress conservatively, but what can you do? … You know everyone says women should be careful in India, which is fine, you can be careful but at the same time I wasn't expecting to feel so uncomfortable walking around all the time."

Unwanted male attention was the main source of bodily and emotional discomfort for Rebecca. Gender can therefore mediate the comfort zone of participants depending on the social and cultural milieu in which they are situated. For Rebecca, being a woman in India incurs feelings of discomfort that may not occur in a different place or country. Hence, male participants in this study may have very different comfort zones and emotional experiences than those of female participants. However, this is more pronounced for those women who visibly stand out from the crowd due to skin colour, whereas the visibility of Rebecca's Indian ancestry in her appearance is still likely to stir less undesired male attention compared to a Caucasian female participant such as Rachel (also in India). Indeed, "physical differences between the gappers and the local people they encounter engender feelings of 'standing out'. At times, the gappers are uncomfortable and feel they do not 'fit in' or are 'on display'" (Snee, 2013, p. 151). Being stared and whistled at sufficed

in itself to amount to everyday discomfort, but groping and cases of sexual harassment challenge their ability to feel comfortable in local everyday life. The contrast between their embodied comforts back in Canada with their bodily discomfort abroad contributes to eliciting the association between 'home' and comfort.

In all cases, participants are able to develop and find comfort in other aspects of their new place and eventually accept and overcome, even if not necessarily eliminate their source and feelings of discomfort. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) explains that "the feeling of 'uncomfortableness', of 'not fitting in' is then replaced by a feeling of being 'comfortable' or 'at ease', two words which students use constantly to identify the process of integration" (p. 137). Christina points to this transition during her studies in Tanzania:

> "As a white person living here, particularly at the university, it's really a complicated situation. It's just not easy. I'm constantly being watched and laughed at for just being, which is really, really hard, but I've built up a layer. But that was definitely one of the biggest transitional things for me was getting past being stared at, but now, I really do feel 'at home' walking down the street because I just don't even notice it anymore."

Christina's fair skin in Tanzania hampers her attempts to fit in and feel comfortable in Dar es Salaam. Rather than succeed in fooling locals that she is from the place, Christina reaps a sense of achievement by conquering the uncomfortable. Her process of developing comfort and extending her comfort zone was thus fraught with more obstacles than other participants in different countries. Once the unfamiliar and the uncomfortable became familiar, participants like Christina were able to feel 'at home' in their host place. Joan, another Caucasian student, explains this experience in Dar es Salaam:

> "It's just having to redefine what 'normal' is and what your routine is. And then it becomes a new comfort zone. I was definitely in one in Tanzania. After about three months I just felt like, ya, this is home for me."

Joan's sense of comfort is reconfigured in order to establish a new comfort zone. Over time and by living with a local host family when she works in a village outside of Dar es Salaam, the unfamiliar became familiar and 'normal', allowing her to feel 'at home' abroad. Since, as Wise (2000) suggests, 'home' is an ongoing process of "creation of a space of comfort" (p. 300), it is unsurprising that people transpose and enact feelings of comfort and

familiarity "through various embodied practices" (Germann Molz, 2008, p. 329). Mobility therefore elicits the importance of comfort within people's ideas and meanings of 'home'. In other words, the relationship between 'home' and comfort becomes explicit during the sojourn abroad.

Catching up with Lillian at the mid-point of her internship in rural China (where she is teaching English to local students), she refers to her room in a house as her 'temporary home'. At this point, Lillian's boyfriend, another international teacher she met during the first weeks of her teaching, has unofficially moved in with her. She shares a photograph (see Figure 16) of her room with her boyfriend and captions that:

Figure 16. Lillian's boyfriend in her 'temporary home' while in China.

"This room felt like a physical temporary 'home' and even more so with [her boyfriend] there. I spent a lot (perhaps too much) of my 'down time' relaxing in this room, and the familiarity of it to home in Canada was sincerely appreciated."

Earlier in the interview, Lillian describes her idea of 'home': "I guess for me 'home' would be a mix of a physical space where I feel very comfortable with people; where I feel comfortable." Lillian illustrates how comfort is associated with 'home' both through the physical space and the presence of loved ones. Also, the comparable familiarity of her room in China to her home in Canada is what contributes to feeling 'at home' abroad.

Participants always mention feeling comfortable at 'home' or feeling 'at home' through comfort. During her 3-month internship in Lima, Peru, Amanda is living in a house with a landlady and other locals. Although Amanda spent one month in Peru visiting family with her parents when she was a child, this was her first experience living abroad or travelling outside of the Western world. Speaking to her on Skype following her return to Ottawa, she reflects on the dis/comfort of 'home':

> "I feel there are aspects of home wherever you go. I got comfortable, like, I got a lot of comfortable feelings when I was in Lima, and I get comfortable feelings here, but I also get uncomfortable feelings in both places as well."

Amanda illustrates how 'home' is tied to feelings of comfort, but how there can also be discomfort in 'home'. I argue that feelings of discomfort can make feeling 'at home' a difficult but not an impossible venture. Discomfort can hinder but not entirely prevent people from developing a sense of 'home' in a new place. More importantly, comfort and discomfort shape and mediate feelings of homeliness.

For others, such as Steve in Nepal, an increased sense of comfort in their new place can result in feeling more 'at home' abroad than 'at home' in Canada. Steve, who lives with a host family and works in a rural community just outside Kathmandu, Nepal, explains this feeling: "I actually in some aspects I feel more at home here than in Ottawa." I ask Steve to elaborate on this and he says:

> "Well, where my parents live, we grew up on a dairy farm on the countryside drinking raw milk and here I live in next to a buffalo farm and a chicken farm in the middle of nowhere and we go to the neighbours to get milk every day. So in some respects, I'm more comfortable here than I am in Ottawa."

In Steve's case, the familiarity of the countryside and farm life at his placement just outside Kathmandu, Nepal, reminds him of his childhood home and as such, despite living in Ottawa for many years, feels more 'at home' in a place that exudes a stronger sense of familiarity and comfort. However, Jane points out that this sense of comfort is predicated on potentially a superficial level of comfort and understanding of their new place:

> "I think it changes all the time. There's kind of a real ebb and flow to it. I mean, it's almost arrogant but when you first arrive in a place you have this set of first

impression and you almost fool yourself into believing that it's in any way accurate. As if you could be at all an authority on a place after two weeks or even a couple of months, and so you know, you start to question that and then you arrive at a new conclusion and you're like I'm getting it and then something happens and you're like, oh no, I didn't get it all. So there's kind of a real ebb and flow about it and I feel like you could be here for years and that would probably continue to happen. It's weird, every once in a while I lull myself into a false sense of security that I know something or start to feel comfortable but then something will happen or a weird interaction or a miscommunication that confirms again that, no, I don't actually know what I'm doing and I'm a stranger here and what I'm seeing is half a percent of what really goes on here. But then you think, well you know to what extent can anyone know 100% anywhere and so, you know, who's to say that my quarter of a percent is any less real or any less authentic than anyone else's quarter percent of the universe. So it's hard to say… that was all very vague (laughs)."

Jane's comment explains how it is impossible to ever attain complete knowledge and understanding of a place and with that, an absolute fixed sense of comfort. However, in the latter part of her comment she may be trying to justify the legitimacy or the 'authenticity' of her insiderness in the face of her wavering sense of comfort. Yet the instability of her sense of comfort points instead to comfort as a relative emotion and condition, one that changes and adapts as circumstances arise and destabilise comfort. This is particularly salient in Marilyn's case:

"Definitely something happened last week that changed my impressions. I thought I knew Sierra Leone. I was comfortable in Freetown, you stop and say 'hi' to the same people on my work every day and I was starting to feel like this is my home for now and then four people got shot by a police officer outside of my office and I was the person who saw it and I've never seen people get shot nor have I ever heard gun fire."

Marilyn's comments demonstrate how one event can undo weeks or even months of built up sense of familiarity and comfort. This also highlights the perception of safety and security in people's sense of comfort. Sudden and unexpected moments of unfamiliarity and discomfort can quickly strip away months of carefully accumulated comfort. However,

there is always a sense of comfort in knowing that the sojourn abroad is temporary and often brief in the grand scheme of their lives. As Sophie points out:

> "I didn't really miss my family. Like, I love them very much, but because I know I'm going to see them again, I didn't feel homesick, if you know what I mean?"

The expected return seems to provide an ontological security and comfort (Easthope, 2004; Manzo, 2003; Ralph, 2009; Skey, 2011; Somerville, 1992). Skey (2011) emphasises that

> "a willingness to visit such potentially challenging places may also be underpinned by the knowledge that one can return to a place of safety, once the novelty of being somewhere different wears off or if those challenges become realised. In these cases, one's status as a Western citizen, able to wield a privileged passport and to expect the support of powerful institutional authorities, may be particularly relevant" (p. 248).

While in Rwanda, Brianne echoes this view:

> "I do sometimes just miss being 100% comfortable but I also get over that pretty fast because I'm like I'm here for two months. I've got to take advantage of it. I'm not supposed to be comfortable here."

Brianne's comment raises two points. On the one hand, she reasserts her main motivation for participating in the exchange as an opportunity to 'get out' of her comfort zone in order to ultimately gain personal growth and change. On the other hand, her comment, like many others, is indicative of a position of privilege (Ahmed et al., 2003; Germann Molz, 2008; Skey, 2011). The freedom and ability to travel abroad – to obtain passport(s) and visa(s), to leave and to return – raises questions on the power geometries of voluntary mobility (Massey, 1991; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). As international exchange and fee-paying university students from a country in the Western world, their socio-economic condition – even within the general population of Canada – places them in a position of privilege and power. As privileged mobile individuals, theirs is a mobility of choice, with the power to return at will. There is thus always an inherent ontological comfort in knowing that they can and will return 'home' in Canada.

From this perspective, it is important to underline the various and complex power relations that relate to ideas of 'home' (Brickell, 2012; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Notably, the view of 'home' as a space of comfort has been justifiably criticised by feminist and queer scholars (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Brickell, 2012; Constable, 1999; Fortier, 2003; McDowell, 1999). I thus want to acknowledge valuable critiques and critical geographies of home but suggest that for middle-class students who voluntarily travel abroad, comfort and familiarity are still central features of 'home'. This association also suggests an upbringing characterised by comfort, security and safety in the familial home. Indeed, for the majority of my participants, friends and family are the most important source of comfort and thus of feelings of 'home'. Catching up with Rachel at the 6-month mark of her sojourn in Pune, India, she is enjoying the courses at the university and had even started studying yoga on the side. She lives in a modest house with a local (but not host) family and is relishing her opportunities to travel around the country on weekends as well as the connections she is forging with new friends. Speaking via Skype, Rachel describes feeling comfortable and homely through her social connections:

> "I've been here for a number of weeks now. I was doing a yoga teacher training and I made some very good friends and it's a very comfortable environment, so even this town is starting to feel like 'home'. So for me, I think I've been able to travel independently comfortably because of the connections that I make with people and with my environment. And for the most part, maybe its luck or maybe I've chosen good places to go study and to go travel, but I definitely felt like I have made a string of connections in all the places I've been and because of those connections it gives me a sense of 'home' and comfort."

The friendships that emerged from Rachel's academic studies and yoga training in Pune have transmitted a sense of comfort and 'home', but also a sense of support that allows her to 'travel independently comfortably' throughout India. Yet, it is also the combination of friends from her previous exchanges that contribute to feeling comfortable and 'at home' in different places abroad. As the familiarity of places and people grows while abroad, so too does their sense of 'home'. Meanings of 'home' are thus embedded in a complex register of multiple and contradictory notions. 'Home' can represent and evoke familiarity and unfamiliarity, comfort and discomfort, as well as positive and negative feelings of integration and exclusion, and vice versa. Feelings of 'home' and belonging are therefore mediated by (dis)comfort and (un)familiarity. I concur with Moore (2000) that research on

the meanings of home "need to focus on the ways in which home disappoints, aggravates, neglects, confines and contradicts as much as it inspires and comforts us. The challenge for future research is to empirically engage with this multifaceted complex concept without losing sight of the many layers of home" (p. 213). Therefore, this study responds to a critical geography of home by illustrating both the positive and negative experiences of 'home' (Brickell, 2012).

In the next section, I demonstrate how ideas, feelings and meanings of 'home' are explicitly and intimately tied up with family and social relations. I also show how the meaning of 'home' is discovered through the presence and absence of family and social relations, both during their sojourn abroad and upon return to Canada.

Discovering the meaning of 'home' through social relationships

In the previous sections I discussed how feelings of 'home' arise alongside everyday knowledge of place and feelings of familiarity and comfort. In this section I demonstrate how feelings of familiarity and comfort are also bound up with family and friends, and thus 'home'. Although 'home' can be re-created through familiarity of place and a sense of comfort, it is mainly through the social connections and friendships – local, national and international – that participants forge during their stay abroad that creates these comforting and familiar feelings of 'home'. In their study of migration and home across the life cycle, Cuba and Hummon's (1993) findings reveal that the sense of 'home' for young people was primarily attached to social relations. The idea that individuals create 'home' through social relationships is well-acknowledged in the literature (Allen, 2008; Blunt, 2005; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Case, 1996; Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Moskal, 2015; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Valentine, 2001; Wiles, 2008).

Nearly 6-months into her year-long study exchange in Rio de Janeiro, Véronique has already established friendships with locals and internationals, both from her university classes but also her living arrangement with housemates. She thus aptly discusses the relationship between 'home' and friends during her mid-point in Rio de Janeiro:

"I think what makes home 'home' is the people that you know. I think it's getting around and the people you know. I think it's the two main factors for me, because I've grown to love and really know and appreciate a lot of people here and it's not about them being Brazilian or not. I think it's just because this point in time they were in Rio de Janeiro. Since you create so many strong bonds with people here

and that the background and the 'home' for these relationships was Rio de Janeiro, it kind of becomes a home because there are so many feelings and love. Ya, I think that's the main thing, the people you know and how to get around. I think that's what makes it 'home' for me."

Véronique's spatial knowledge of Rio de Janeiro combined with the friendships developed in that city stir up feelings and emotions of 'love' as well as a sense of 'home'. Love is an emotion that fits in with the adage of 'home is where the heart is' and thus can contribute to feelings of comfort and feeling 'at home'. Friends are therefore vital to instilling a sense of love and homeliness while abroad. Indeed, personal networks are important to articulations of 'home' (Ralph, 2009) and the creation of a community while abroad constitutes part of the process of home-making (Castle and Davidson, 2000). Place, as Véronique points out, can become 'home' through the social relationships and activities enacted in that locale. These social relationships are often a mix of primarily international students and fellow nationals from Canada as well as locals. Van Mol and Michielsen (2014) note that international exchange students "search for a home in both physical and emotional sense" by engaging in local and/or university social life (p. 3). Rachel illustrates this meaning of 'home' through a photo with her Canadian friend in India (see Figure 17):

Figure 17. Rachel's visiting friend in India evokes a sense of 'home'.

"That picture is a perfect blend of what I mean by 'home', you know, like, I'm in India. I'm so far away from home, and here is one of my closest friends from home. Although, not really from home – I met her in Australia – but it all kind of feels like 'home'. Like, 'home' is where the people you love are and the people you're closest with."

For Rachel, the visit from her Canadian friend she met in Australia signifies and represents a mobile feeling of 'home'. Close friends and loved ones evoke a sense of 'home' despite being geographical distant from the place she refers to as home – in this case, Canada. Indeed, many of the photographs taken by participants depict friends and family they met while abroad. The photographs attest to the importance of friendship and family for participants, both as a source of 'home' and comfort but perhaps also as an indication of their successful integration into local social networks and an accumulation of social capital. Since friends and family can travel to or with you, 'home' is thus mobile and hence, individuals can feel 'at home' in mobility (Allen, 2008; Germann Molz, 2008; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Since returning to Canada following her study exchange in Chile, Élodie reflects on the relationships that created a sense of 'home-away-from-home' while abroad:

"I felt very at ease (*à l'aise*) and very 'at home' (*chez nous*) when I'm with certain people over there, you know? Even during the second semester I lived with eight other people and that was really fun. It was more like residence life and that made me really feel 'at home' (*chez nous*). We did parties, like a home-away-from-home."

Élodie considers that the residence lifestyle; that is, the social aspect of living in residence contributed largely to feeling 'at home' during her sojourn in Santiago. Her 'home-away-from-home' comment suggests a multi-spatial and social 'home' as well as a temporary second 'home' in comparison to her social relationships – and hence, 'home' – in Québec. As Case (1996) points out, "this reinforces the notion that the meaning of 'home' is inextricably associated with the beings who live in it" (p. 10). 'Home' is the creation of a community that shifts between 'here' and 'there' (Al-Ali and Koser, 2002). Francophone students, such as Élodie, mention the influence of language in contributing to familiarity and homely feelings. Language is an essential part of our self-identity and is particularly salient in the case of international students (Montgomery, 2010). Indeed, one can feel 'at home' through languages (Brown, 2009c; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). This aspect was unique and particular to Francophone students. Participants from Québec note how being able to

speak French again with parents and friends invoke homely feelings. Since English is primarily the main language and mode of communication among locals and international students while abroad as well as with co-workers, Anglophone Canadians are able to speak their mother tongue daily while French-Canadians have little, if any, opportunities to speak in their native language.

The creation of romantic relationships during the sojourn also contributes to temporary feelings and mobile ideas of 'home'. Having returned to Canada, I ask Lillian what 'home' means to her. She explains:

> "Wherever I feel wanted and appreciated I guess; that I can just be most myself I guess is where I feel most 'at home'. You know, in China, even though I wasn't with my family per se, I made really good friends and my boyfriend who I met there. And in the physically I had my own room, my own space, so whenever I would go to class and come back to my room that felt like home. I pretty much lived with my boyfriend when I lived in China. So I guess my home is portable and that felt temporary but still felt like 'home' for me there."

Once again, Lillian relates her room in residence in China as a temporary – and thus temporal – 'home'. The romantic relationship developed in that place created a temporary homely space through emotions of comfort and love. This elucidates Wise's (2000) comment that people can feel 'at home' "simply in the presence of a significant other" (p. 299). Having both returned to their respective countries, the home-space Lillian is referring to is situated in time. Now back in Canada and still maintaining a long-distance relationship with her boyfriend, 'home' has now become mobile (Nowicka, 2007). With plans to reconnect through his upcoming visit in Canada, 'home' will soon come to her; moving towards and merging with her 'home' in Canada.

The presence, absence and creation of social relationships and family while abroad and upon return to Canada, as I will now demonstrate, provoke an evaluation and a (re)discovery of the meaning of 'home'. The relationship between family and 'home' is evident within the literature (Allen, 2008; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Case, 1996; Kenyon, 1999; Mallett, 2004; McLeod and Burrows, 2014; Nowicka, 2007; Rykwert, 1991; Wiles, 2008). In Wiles' (2008) study of a sense of 'home' among New Zealanders in London, feelings of 'home' are continuously associated with familial relations. Tse and Waters (2013) also call for attention to geographical research on the influence of family in young

people's transnational lives. Upon returning to her family's house in Ottawa, Brianne describes how family makes 'home':

"I came back to my house and felt at home instantly and it's because of the family. I think that's what it is. I like my house, but it's not really anything without the people in it."

The physical abode is incorporated into the idea of 'home' but only through the physical presence of family members. As the feeling of being 'at home' is evoked upon reuniting with family, the absence of family members is also felt as a missing piece of 'home'. This was particularly poignant during periods of sickness. As Brianne exemplifies,

"Being that sick made me really miss my family and want to be at home. … So ya, I definitely miss just being around people that I'm comfortable with."

Health issues abroad tend to exacerbate feelings homesickness and discomfort. Without the presence of family, homesickness is particularly acute during bouts of ill-health. Jane recalls how the relationship between 'home' and family became clearer while dealing with personal health issues:

"I'm looking forward to going home anyway but this kind of exacerbated what I was already feeling in the sense that Rwandan culture, I loved it, I had great friends, but at the same time, it's not the same as being home; and all those sorts of things are amplified, you know, when you're injured and maybe need of a bit more of a support network as you would otherwise. … I guess it just highlighted the sense that, even though I had lots of friends visiting, I was removed from my network that I would have had had this happened in Canada. I don't know, it made me realise how important that social network is … I don't know, that sense of 'home' became much clearer for me."

The association between family and 'home' is highlighted by the absence of family during difficult periods. Whether emotionally or physically unwell, and particularly stricken with a serious illness, participants lament the absence of family and thus of 'home'. When I ask Jane after her return to Canada what is generally the most important thing she learned from her experience in Kigali, she addresses the issue once again:

> "Um, I don't know, it sounds stupid but you do learn, I don't know, I sound so glib, but the importance of family. I don't know, that was really driven 'home' in the sense that you can have the best friend in the world and have the best intentions but there is no substitute of having people around that are close and very much willing to help. So it made me realise the attraction of family more."

The importance of family relations in the meaning of 'home' becomes more pronounced through time and distance away (Case, 1996; Nowicka, 2007). In her autobiographical study of Chinese migrants in New Zealand, Liu (2014) describes how after several years in a western country she eventually rediscovered the importance of her Chinese identity. This "rediscovery of myself" as she puts it, allows her to work through her participants' – as well as her own personal – understandings of the concepts of 'home' and identity (p. 21). For some of my participants, the (re)discovery of the meaning of 'home' arises from the visit of family members. Rachel describes this:

> "My sense of 'home', like Canada does still feel like 'home', but I've had a number of close friends come to visit me in India and my dad is currently visiting me right now. So my dad is in the same town I'm in right now and my mother is joining us in one week so I have some of my very close family here (and) close friends that I visited. … So even though Canada still feels like 'home' geographically, I have a lot of people that make home 'home' and they are a lot closer to me in India than they would be if I were in Canada, so because of that, that's also changed how I view 'home'."

While Rachel's idea of 'home' may still hold a geographical – and national – component, the presence of her parents in India illuminates the role of family in her sense of 'home' and has shifted not only its locality from Canada to India but also the very meaning of 'home'. Indeed, visits from family seem to change, clarify or confirm participants' idea of 'home'. Canada may still represent 'home' since the national space is associated with the presence and residence of family, but when these family members travel beyond national borders this can highlight and shift the essence of 'home' from a geographical place to a familial space. In these cases, 'home' travels to and with participants. As Christina succinctly and explicitly explains:

"I was really lucky, because I was not having a good time at one point and so my mother booked a flight and came over, so 'home' came to me in that way."

Instead of arriving *at* home, participants receive the arrival *of* 'home'. Family then *is* 'home' (Rykwert, 1991). Lucy explains how meeting with family during her time abroad is an event that evinces her meaning of 'home':

"I think 'home' is more where the people you care about are. Because my family went to Jordan with the purpose of me meeting them, so when I saw them in Jordan I realised that if I never went back to Ottawa given that I had my family, I'd be fine. … and I kind of knew that before going on exchange but the exchange made it more obvious."

Being in the presence of family again made participants realise the importance of familial relationships for their feelings of 'home'. The return to Canada was also a process of (re)discovering the meaning of 'home' as participants are re-immersed into their social and familial networks. Since returning to live with her family in Canada, Katie explains how her concept of 'home' has become more important through her internship in Kigali, Rwanda:

"Just having that sense that my family is around me is actually nice, even though I thought it might be really stressful, I think my experience abroad it made me realise that it's important to appreciate what I have. So in that sense, I think the concept of home became a little more important."

The meaning of 'home' becomes more apparent through time away from family and social networks (Case, 1996). Homely feelings intensify in the presence of family; even if, as Mallett (2004) points out, the relationship between 'home' and family remains contested. In the case of this study, interviews with participants demonstrate how the meaning of 'home' is (re)discovered through the absence and presence of family and social relations whether while abroad or upon return to Canada. In the next section, I discuss how family and social relations contribute to participants' self-discovery.

Discovering new friends, discovering 'home' and self

Family and friends are discovered as central to the meaning of 'home' but they are also influential in the process of self-discovery. Studies within international student mobility argue that personal change develops through social interaction with contacts and networks abroad (Alexander et al., 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). Mallett (2004) has noticed that sojourning away from 'home' can incite changes to both 'home' and the self. International exchanges are more than an academic learning experience; they are an opportunity for students to meet new people from different and/or similar cultural and national backgrounds (Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). Montgomery (2010) points out that international students gain self-discovery through interactions with social networks abroad. Indeed, international students are immersed in a new cultural and social environment where they can test out different attitudes and can develop new relationships and friendships. Placed in an unfamiliar physical and social environment with generally no familiar faces, participants need to quickly exercise their social skills in order to establish connections and build their social network for the entirety of their sojourn abroad as a source of support and comfort (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Ryan et al., 2008). In his study of South Korean international students in New Zealand, Collins (2008) reveals that the relationships that emerged between co-national students during the academic sojourn abroad were crucial in facilitating and easing the transition into everyday life in an unfamiliar place: "they make the otherwise unfamiliar and challenging negotiation of everyday life in Auckland more familiar and, as a result, more manageable" (p. 411). Scholars point out that a mix of locals, national and internationals constitute international students' social networks while abroad (Bilecen, 2014; Bochner et al., 1977; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Much like these studies, my participants developed bonds with a diversity of individuals and social groups during their sojourns. During the return interview stage, participants recalled these social networks as the most memorable aspect of their international sojourn, as Katie demonstrates:

> "I would definitely say the people, the relationships that I built; we got really close with the guy I was working with in my newsroom and my editor there. We made really good connections and I think those are the memories that I will carry with me; is my bond with those people and the way that I got to know their culture through them and their country through them. And when people ask me about my trip I often just start talking about my co-workers that I was with, so ya, I think that was

the most memorable. It had really striking experiences that I had by myself but I think the thing that I look back on the most are the people and the friends that I made there."

Katie points out that she discovered the local culture through the relationships and 'bonds' she developed with her co-workers in Kigali. Her readiness to bring up these relationships at the start of conversations with friends and peers in Canada demonstrates the importance of these 'connections' in her sojourn, but also serves to evince her newly gained cultural and social capital through the insider perspective of her local co-workers. Participants have many memorable moments and aspects of their experience but those that stand out the most are the people they met and the friends they made while abroad. Larsen et al., (2006b) state that "travel is really as much about sociability as a search for exotic places" (p. 29). The relationships developed during the sojourn abroad have a notable impact on participants' sense of self. Having returned from her internship, Sophie discusses her local friends and the people she met in Guatemala:

> "I would say the people that I met there definitely had an impact on me, and I made quite a few Guatemalan friends as well as foreign friends that lived there. And definitely the people and the experiences that we shared together; those were definitely the best parts of the trip. And I learned a lot at my work placement as well with my Guatemalan co-workers, so ya, definitely the people. That's what really made the trip."

Sophie highlights how the diverse mix of friends and people from different cultural backgrounds encountered in Antigua had a positive influence on her sojourn and arguably her sense of self. For participants on an internship placement in an NGO, it is their co-workers – mainly locals and some internationals – that had the most profound impact on their self. In the case of participants on a study exchange at a university abroad, other international and national students and some locals made the most lasting impression. At times, the new friendships and social groups developed while on exchange invoke a sense of family. Lucy explains to me upon return to Ottawa how friends abroad represented family:

"Definitely the people; I mean, one thing I found is over there the people you meet become your family, because you don't have your family and friends, because here [in Ottawa], even with my best friend, we'll make plans, but it's more like, 'let's meet after class or work' and you'll plan to meet next Tuesday, whereas over there, you did everything together. The people became your family. Like, if I had to go to the doctor, my friends and my roommates would come with me or between classes my friends would be like: 'Hey! Do you need anything from the grocery store?' And that's not something you do with people here. So I miss that super closeness all the time."

Lucy highlights the contrast in the dynamic between her friendships in Ottawa and those with international students in Ankara, Turkey. Unlike in Ottawa, the absence of family and social networks upon arrival in Ankara propel Lucy and fellow exchange students to seek out each other's company and maintain a 'closeness' – both literal and figurative – as a way to provide mutual emotional and physical support throughout the sojourn. It is the constant physical presence and emotional support of friends in situ that create a sense of community and of family while abroad. Friendships with international students while abroad form a support group that instill a sense of family and 'home' (Bilecen, 2014). Indeed, Kenyon (1999) notes that new friends and social groups at university create a sense of 'family' for students living away from the parental home. The need to create new connections in the absence of 'home' while abroad can result in "the discovery of a new community" and thus of a new sense of 'home' (Ahmed, 1999, p. 336). This perspective is well articulated at length by Murphy-Lejeune (2002):

"The enrichment which students derive from the experience comes from a deeper sense of who they are and what resources they can avail of in unusual social circumstances. This double edge may be summed up as twin gains: discovering otherness and discovering oneself. The creation of a social fabric is similar to a conquest, a triumph over distance between self and others…. The undertaking is far from easy. It implies in the first place the identification and search for those contacts one wishes to create, sometimes having recourse to specific and reasoned strategies, and then the transformation of those distant external relations into close ones within the time constraints imposed by the stay. ... The necessarily limited duration of their stay gives prominence to the challenge represented by the venture. Some students try to overcome this particular constraint differently, by

playing the international game, by announcing continuity of friendships in the
future, by creating a family type of exchange with a few chosen individuals, all
strategies aimed at penetrating an existing social milieu frequently closed to
passing visitors. After a while, the ambiguity of being in between leads to the
question of who you are, a stranger at home and abroad or at home in both places"
(p. 202).

From this passage, Murphy-Lejeune sums up many of the central themes discussed within
this chapter and thesis; that is, the discovery of self and others, the immediate
coalescence of social relationships, the sojourn as a 'challenge' within a predefined
temporality, and the reflection on the self as well as on the meaning and locality of 'home'.
As this chapter suggests, social relationships, family, self and 'home' intersect in ways that
facilitates their mutual discoveries. Since leaving home involves the creation of a new
social group and community of like-minded individuals that share a similar bond (Ahmed,
1999), participants discover how they can make new friendships with people from different
international backgrounds but that share similar points of view (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002).
Valérie illustrates this point:

"I learned a lot of things seeing as I was removed *(extrait)* from my social group of
friends and my everyday relations, like to have to create another. I was with people
that don't necessarily do the same things as me but we could really meet
(*rejoindre*) on other points of view. And I have the impression that I have
become…I have like less prejudices, but not so much cultural, but I'm more open or
I have less resentfulness (*rancoeur*), so I'm more likely to take people as they are,
and well, if we don't agree on something, it's not a big deal, we're able to connect
on other things. And I think I have changed a bit my priorities too with who are the
people that I want to build relations with in the long-term. I think I've now arrived at
a more mature point in my social relations thanks to the people I met in Chile."

The social networks Valérie developed in Chile provoke a re-prioritisation of the
meaningful relationships she feels worth investing in and because these new friends
abroad understand each other better, they are prioritised over older friendships (Kenyon,
1999). Indeed, Brown (2009a) suggests that the international sojourn can provoke a
reordering of priorities. Valérie demonstrates how the social relationships and friendships
she cultivated in Santiago influence her perceptions and opinions of others and enable

self-changes and self-discoveries related to qualities of openness. In another study on the experience of international students, Montgomery (2010) indicates that students attributed gaining a more 'open' and 'sociable' attitude to their new friendships and social networks (p. 102) while backpackers in Bagnoli's (2009) study mention "both the dimension of discovering oneself … as well as the dimension of discovering others, and the relationship one has to them" (p. 332). Likewise, Li (2010) acknowledges that "travel did involve a type of self-reflection that was achieved through the exposure to the destination as well as through the contact with home. The travellers reworked their identities in relation to dual places and gained a renewed understanding of others as well as of themselves" (p. 213). Indeed, by being removed from their social networks and family in Canada, participants discover not only new friendships but also new perspectives on relationships and themselves. Case (1996) explains this experience:

> "Seeing new places and different people and experiencing new situations all provide a new perspective on life. It is as if travel allows a transcendence of present place and present self. By being pulled from daily routines and rituals, one gains an awareness of otherness: other people living other lives in other places" (p. 7)

Participants were able to re-evaluate the self; that is, likes and dislikes, emerging traits and shifting values, and thus develop personal growth or change through their new social relationships. Émilie, a Francophone student in International Studies in Montréal, developed friendships and romantic relationships with locals during her 4-month study exchange in Trinidad. Living in a university residence with other international students, Émilie describes during her mid-point interview how local friends in Trinidad force her to reflect on her general attitude to circumstances and put events into perspective:

> "I have a tendency to complain when I'm at home [in Québec], but here no one complains, so you don't complain either. … there's no time to waste with that, so it really changed my way of seeing things too. Ah, and also, I was complaining because I couldn't find my camera and I couldn't buy a new one and we were at the waterfalls, so I really wanted a camera and I was complaining; I was really frustrated, and I said, 'if I don't have my camera for Sunday…' and then my friend cut me off and he told me, 'if you don't have your camera for Sunday you will still have both your arms and both your legs, you will be happy anyways.' That put

things back in perspective for me, and I was like, 'you're right'. So I think I'm less of a complainer. I hope it will stay that way because it's really better for everyone."

In immersing herself within a new social network made up of locals and internationals in Trinidad, Émilie is confronted with different social and cultural norms that impinge on her perception of self. Acknowledging and embracing her newly acquired positive attitude, she hopes this personal change will perdure upon return to Québec. Regardless of whether these apparent local normative attitudes and behaviours stem from the larger cultural fabric or are limited to the relationships with particular individuals abroad, participants learn from, and are influenced by, the social group they now inhabit (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). However, in a few cases, participants discover that they have no interest or intention in changing certain values and beliefs. Katie illustrates one such case. She reflects on an event during her internship placement in Rwanda when a co-worker expressed his beliefs that gays and lesbians should be executed. The discussion roused her beliefs and values and a heated debated ensued. Here she shares what came from that experience:

> "I learned a lot about myself. So one thing that I learned…, because it tested me every single day, that I have very strong values and principles, and I think I'm just very rigid in them. And I think I tried, because everyone told me, like everyone back home told me to really try to let things roll off and not get upset at things that maybe in our culture we would consider rude, but I realised that I'm not really capable of that (laughs)."

Despite the insistence of friends and family back in Canada, Katie stuck to her morals and beliefs, resisting any change on the issue in question. In other aspects, Katie describes a change in attitudes but remains firm on her values. Although self-discovery is usually associated with the discovery of latent beliefs and values which can then lead to personal change, it can also be achieved by choosing to maintain previously known values. In other words, what is discovered is that one has no desire to change their values.

Everyday encounters and interactions with locals and international students sometimes raise issues and discussions on the topic of citizenship, identity and national values (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). As a place, 'home' is often expressed at the space of the city, but as personal and cultural values meet and contest, these are assigned to a larger community and space and as such, the idea of the nation emerges at the forefront. Katie and other participants discover not only different cultural and international values through

interactions with local citizens, but are also confronted with their own national Canadian values by locals. Élodie describes how international exchanges offer different perspectives through social encounters that can disrupt the original value system:

> "It's an opportunity to change your frame of vision (*cadre de vision*), to unsettle (*déstabiliser*) oneself, especially for people who study in social sciences it's important to be confronted (*de se faire confronter*). I was confronted a lot by Chileans by the fact that I'm Canadian. Also just for the language, I find it exceptional to be able to understand someone in another language because you understand their character. A Chilean friend here [in Canada], once I had returned and could speak in Spanish, I discovered another person completely."

Élodie points to the influence of social relations in confronting her values as a Canadian citizen and engendering a form of self-discovery of her own cultural background (at least in relation to the Chilean culture). She also highlights the role of language in discovering a different person in a Chilean friend upon return to Canada. It seems the linguistic capital gained abroad has enriched her pre-departure social capital. Language is fundamental to how others understand and perceive us (Montgomery, 2010), as well as to how we understand and perceive other people.

In particular, the relative inaccessibility and unavailability of internet allows for participants to disconnect from their home networks in Canada and encourages them towards potential new relationships. Connecting to the internet can invoke a sense of familiarity where particular social network sites such as Facebook and Skype can mediate 'home' virtually for travellers (Collins, 2009; Fechter, 2007; Germann Molz, 2012). The inability to connect online with friends and family in Canada encourages participants to make new social connections in their host place. When asked what is the most memorable aspect of her experience in Peru, Amanda does not hesitate:

> "The people; they kind of brought a new amount of life in me I find, because over there I didn't have much internet access except at work and I wasn't using my phone. I had a different phone that didn't work well. I feel like I was able to focus more on other things. The internet didn't work at my house, so Facebook wasn't working, like ok, I had to close it and do something else; so I could focus on other things."

Being involuntarily disconnected from social networks in Canada affords the opportunity for participants to connect with new people and friends. These new relationships enacted during their exchange seem to have (re)invigorated their sense of self and provoked personal change. While reflecting on her year of study in Tanzania, Christina says:

"It really was mostly people I would think about. That would be my most favourite or memorable thing, and I'm still in contact with those people. It's different but it's good. It's the people that I met that really changed my life…. I just met people that changed my life and changed me. And I went through meeting so many people from so many different backgrounds."

In Christina's case (as with Lillian, Lucy, Émilie and Rachel) these relationships are more than friendly connections:

"In terms of things that are most memorable its these very specific moments that I've experienced and relationships that I've built with people, like ya, I met what is now one of my best friends, like we talk every day, and I don't know how odd it is supposed to be, but I fell in love twice there; it was a really weird year. I think on exchange you're more open with your emotions."

Christina highlights how social (romantic) relationships and the emotions they evoke are influential for bringing about self-change. Love is a powerful emotion that seems to influence participants' self-perceptions, provoking them to reflect on the relationships and feelings that constitute their sense of 'home' and self. Participants describe gaining a more open attitude towards people during their sojourn that seems to inevitably lead to opening up more emotionally in their relationships. As Véronique explains:

"All the emotions and the relationships that I have built here are heightened and they are accelerated. And I have really close bonds with people from across the world and it was really a nice experience to meet all these people and them appreciating me as well as I appreciate them. And just living really beautiful friendships in such a short time, I think it was one of the best experiences here, to have those friendships that were so quick and so fast and I believe will last for a long time."

Véronique demonstrates how emotions are accentuated through mobility and sojourns abroad. The friendships that stir these emotions are defining moments and aspects of participants' experience. It seems that the brief duration of the exchanges contributes to intensifying participants' emotional relationships. Having also formed a romantic relationship during her exchange in Turkey, Lucy echoes this view:

> "because relationships here are so fast tracked, I feel like I'm really close to these people here, like closer than some people that I've known for years at home, just because the way you interact. … Definitely here I find relationships, any form – romantic, friendship or whatever – they go through these stages of relationships so much quicker because they are all you have."

Some of these relationships resulted in long-term friendships and coupledom, such as in Rachel's case: "I've made lifelong friends and ended up falling in love with somebody during my last week in India." Having returned to Canada and quickly departed again for a job opportunity elsewhere in the Global South, Rachel has now moved in with "this amazing man that I had fallen in love with" and who followed her across the world to her new place. However, not every relationship resulted in a happy ending. During her return interview, Christina refers to the dissolution of her relationship as an 'inter-continental breakup'. Regardless of the highs and lows of these relationships, participants' social networks and emotional relationships facilitate their self-discovery and personal change.

Although I heed Skey's (2011) note that we should question the assumption that encounters with other people through mobility inevitably challenge perspectives, in the case of my participants, interactions with locals and internationals is perceived by participants to contribute to some level of self-discovery. However, I will demonstrate that it is not necessarily new or 'other' people that can incite self-discovery, but instead, familiar social relationships.

Self-discovery through family

Earlier in this chapter, I demonstrated how visits from friends and family provoked discovery for the meaning of 'home'. Here, I suggest that visits from friends can also incite a discovery of self. Reconnecting with friends from one's original environment can provoke and reveal a contrast in attitudes and values. Amélie exemplifies this through her best friend's visit in Ayacucho, Peru:

"First of all, when Sophie came to meet me in Peru, I immediately felt that there was a bit of distancing (*éloignement*). She's my best friend, we do tons of things together, but she doesn't have the same values as me. She doesn't have the same goals in life and there I felt that there was an emptiness (*un creux*). One of the first times that I had the impression that she didn't really understand me, that she was not open necessarily to a more responsible mode of consumption whatsoever, and I had the impression that she was judging Peru a lot which shocked/offended me a bit (*choquer*). I thought she lacked openness (*elle manquait d'ouverture*)."

Amélie's comment suggests that the distance or separation felt between herself and her friend is a result of her time spent abroad, yet this distancing could be more a deliberate statement to substantiate her self-discovery. Friendships are generally based and embedded within specific social and cultural registers and since childhood or school friends grow up alongside each other and tend to influence one another, physical and emotional proximity over time in a familiar locale means that the friendship continues to evolve without any obvious dissimilitude or disparateness. However, removing friends from their formative social and cultural setting and placing them within a different cultural context can reveal differing and contrasting points of view. It seems that reconnecting with a friend in a new cultural setting does not necessarily imply the continuation of the same friendship in that new place. Instead, this dissonance can offer insights into long-held friendships and a discovery of self-change. This discovery of self and of another is echoed by Rebecca:

"I think coming back you really see how much you've changed and how things changed. I met people that I had a certain view of them before I left and a totally different view of them after I came back. For people and perspectives that I had, and I'm rethinking my education plan right now, what I want do later after my undergraduate degree. It really did help me figure out a bunch of things and change my views."

Rebecca illustrates how meeting people from her hometown has revealed her changed perceptions of both others and herself. Indeed, friends, family and peers are perceived differently following the international sojourn. In reference to tourists, White and White (2007) note that "they reflected on and (re)-assessed the meaning of their various

friendships and relationships" (p. 99) through their travels. Rebecca and other participants may feel as though friends have changed during their time away, yet this change in perception is more an indication of their own personal change. Friends do not necessarily change during participants' exchange abroad; rather, participants themselves are altered by the experience and thus perceive old relations with different eyes. Case (1996) explains that:

> "many travellers report engaging in extended, soul-searching conversations with companions. Whether it is to resolve longstanding interpersonal concerns or to obtain a new view of oneself or of one's relationship to another person, a renewed sense of self emerges" (p. 7).

Re-immersion into their previous and original setting allows for a reflection on their experience and sense of self. Wilson and Harris (2006) highlight that for women travellers in their study, "the meaning gained from travel did not become clear until they had returned home, or were living their 'normal' lives again" (p. 169). The return to social networks and family in Canada is fraught with the same ambivalence and self-discovery. Katie, now returned to her parents' house in Ottawa, describes this different perspective:

> "I had a few interesting conversations with my mom and my stepdad over dinner and it made me noticed that I have a very different perspective on that area of the world now and that culture that other people don't have."

Katie highlights not only how discussions with family upon return reveal a change in her perceptions of the world, but also how she now possesses a particular type of cultural capital that 'other people don't have'. Indeed, the act and process of narrating the experience to family and friends can reveal differences in one's perspective and understanding of cultural issues within a specific part of the world whilst allowing participants to showcase their new cultural capital. If participants are disconnected from internet and social media for the majority of their time abroad then the infrequent connection – and lack thereof – with social networks in Canada can result in friends and family 'back home' having less understanding of their experience abroad. This means that participants are unable to relate their everyday experiences and the encounters and observations they make while abroad to family and friends. Since friends and family are not able to follow and accumulate a continued second-hand experience throughout their

sojourn, this often leads to a gap in understanding that is most noticeable upon return when participants can finally sit and properly discuss their experience in person. The result of this is that participants are confronted with a contrast in perspective and thus, a discovery of their new or revised views. Since returning to her student apartment in Ottawa, Vanessa explains how conversations with family, friends and colleagues have enabled her to make sense of her experience and self:

> "It's funny because the more I talk to people about my experience, the more I learn about myself. Because as much as I reflect on what I did, I don't ask myself the questions that somebody else asks me, you know, and it's not until they ask me these questions that I'm like, wow! This is a conversation I was having with somebody here in Ottawa after returning and he's an immigrant from Benin and he says that many times when we come to these countries we try to integrate ourselves with the culture and the society, and we almost become somebody else. And to have been able to be in Bolivia all by myself and to not have the people that I always look up to which is my mom or my cousin, I didn't have them there to imitate their ways, it was me, it was me completely 100%. I just felt so happy to be my true self."

Vanessa's statement that being away from her family allowed her to discover her 'true self' implies that she was previously living an inauthentic version of her self and by referring to this essential self in the past – 'it was me' and 'I felt so happy' – she is also suggesting that she has reverted to this previous state of inauthenticity since reuniting with family in Canada. Her comment that she can 'become somebody else' by living abroad suggests that a different place and culture can either bring out an (in)authentic self or different versions of one's. Yet these are seemingly conflicting comments and perspectives. Amy is perhaps not necessarily asserting the view of an essential 'true self' as much as she may be trying to express that the absence of familiar people allows her to discover new traits about herself that she feels more comfortable with. The absence of family members removes the potential influence of prior social networks that, as a result, allows Amy to explore different personal traits through exposure to a different socio-cultural environment. Her comment illustrates that distance away from family followed by once again a proximity to those members incites self-discovery. Most notably, it is not necessarily the difference between 'us' and 'them' – that is, the traveller confronted with the exotic host and stranger – that provokes a contrast; rather, it can be the encounters with like-minded people abroad

and the return to the original place and old previous familiarity – friends and family – that facilitate self-discovery. Thus, I argue along with Hansel (1988) that the process of self-discovery and the "experience does not end when the student comes home, for readjustment to the home culture is part of the learning experience" (p.191).

Concluding remarks

This chapter explored the process of (re)discovery of the meanings of 'home' and of self within international exchanges. In particular, it demonstrated the myriad of meanings international students' ascribe to the notion of 'home'. Their diverse perspectives reflect the multi-conceptual geographies of 'home' within the literature. Since ideas and meanings of 'home' can vary over time and across space, mobility can provoke a reflection on, and reassessment of, 'home'. In this perspective, movement and time away from a place of origin towards and into a novel environment can spark a process of (re)discovery of the meanings of home. Through mobility and time, the idea of 'home' is thus reassessed, re-affirmed, reconfigured, rediscovered and expanded. Participants discover that 'home' is multi-spatio-temporal; that is, it is situated simultaneously in multiple spaces and in times. Their new place "becomes home even though it is not forever but for the time being" (Marcu, 2014, p. 342). The notion of 'home' takes on a plural connotation and a malleable, fluid and dynamic quality through its emotional, temporal and spatial conditions. 'Home' is an idea that is imbued with meanings and emotions. Indeed, most importantly, 'home' is discovered to be a *feeling*. People *think* about 'home' and *feel* 'at home' within differing contexts. As an idea and a feeling, 'home' is internalised and mobile; it is inhabited but it is also embodied. 'Home' is thus inscribed in the body.

    This chapter also demonstrated how students engage with everyday practices as a way of becoming familiar with their new city and to feel 'at home'. Everyday routines, through the repetition of daily mundane practices, allows for the accumulation of geographical knowledge. Routines and geographical knowledge are viewed as fundamental to building familiarity and comfort – both feelings that induce a sense of homeliness. Students favour coffee shops and other everyday places that are frequented mainly by locals as a way to integrate into the culture and gain insider knowledge. In particular, participants identify their new city – or at least parts of their new city – rather than the country, as a knowable and familiar homely space. Students develop and then attach a sense of belonging to the urban locality of their new place. This fits in with recent studies that downscale and reconceptualise 'home' to the space of the city (Blunt and

Bonnerjee, 2013; Datta, 2011; Lahiri, 2010). This seems to be both a practical and strategic undertaking. Practically, an urban space is a more feasible space to explore and familiarise oneself with than the nation. Strategically, laying claims of belonging and insiderness to a city is more realistic and believable than to a country. I thus suggest that despite claims of belonging to the nation (and even a continent), many students pin-point their belonging to the city – a notion that I have termed as 'cityzens'. This also allows students to appropriate a more unique space rather than compete for distinction with higher numbers of visitors who have travelled within the same nation. More people may travel to a particular nation but less are likely to visit a particular city and as such, fewer visitors to the same place allows the new 'insider' to maintain exclusive claims of belonging over their new 'home-place'. These claims of insiderness are reinforced through emphasising their 'living' rather than 'visiting' status. Participants use the context of studying and working abroad to situate themselves within local everyday life. In other words, they are following the everyday rhythms, routines and lifestyles of locals rather than travellers and tourists. Studying and/or working and engaging in local everyday public spaces occupy their time to a greater extent than sightseeing and this is how they distinguish themselves from tourists and travellers. Even though participants do travel and sightsee within and outside their host country, it is their relative immobility and the duration of their sojourn that is used to signal such a distinction (see following chapter). Reciprocal greeting gestures in the street as well as being mistaken for a local native speaker is what endows students with a sense of belonging and legitimises their claims to being an insider as well as their achievement in succeeding in this ultimate challenge of assimilation (as discussed in the previous chapter).

However, feeling 'out of place' incurs emotional and bodily discomforts that challenge students' personal and outward claims of belonging and integration. 'Home' is frequently and explicitly expressed with the emotion of comfort. Feeling comfortable is directly associated with feeling 'at home'. The emotions of comfort and discomfort thus mediate feelings of belonging and 'home'. In addition, gaining insider knowledge is used to reduce and replace feelings of 'out of place' with feelings of belonging and 'home'. Time is central to transforming the uncomfortable into the comfortable. Through everyday practices and insider knowledge accumulated over time the sense of comfort is reconfigured into a new 'comfort zone'. However, power relations and a mobility of choice signal that there is always an ontological comfort in knowing that the sojourn is a choice and a temporary one at that in which a voluntary return is immanent.

Moreover, emotions of comfort and love and thus 'home', are strongly felt in the presence (both virtual and physical) of friends, romantic partners and family members. 'Home' is explicitly linked to friends and family. The social networks and friendships forged while abroad also endowed participants with social and cultural capital. More importantly, the presence and absence of social relationships while abroad and upon return to Canada is considered to not only elicit a (re)discovery of the meaning of 'home' but also a discovery of the sense of self. In particular, family members are key to facilitating self-discovery through their visits abroad and/or upon reuniting in Canada. Homely comforts and self-discovery from the presence of social relationships are evoked in a number of ways: through the creation and presence of *new* social networks and friends abroad, through visits from family members and friends abroad, and finally, upon return in reuniting with social and familial networks in Canada. This chapter thus revealed that family members, friends and romantic partners (both abroad and in Canada) play an instrumental role in revealing participants' latent values, beliefs and attitudes. As such, mobility abroad is considered to facilitate self-discovery and (re)discovery of the feelings and meanings of 'home'.

Chapter 6

Self-discoveries and performances of difference and distinction

"Where you are is who you are. The further inside you the place moves, the more your identity is intertwined with it. Never casual, the choice of place is the choice of something you crave." (Mayes, 1998, p. 96)

Both of the previous empirical chapters argued that the pursuit of self-discovery and of 'home' through comfort, familiarity and everyday practices abroad are the pivots of participants' international exchange experience. While the first empirical chapter explored the pre-departure motivations to study or intern abroad for self-discovery and personal development as well as the role of everyday practices for facilitating these personal changes, the second empirical chapter examined participants' sense of 'home' and the role of social networks for facilitating self-discovery during the sojourn abroad. This final empirical chapter further explores the process of self-discovery and self-change within the context of the return to the place of origin. It picks up on the themes of the previous two empirical chapters by discussing the specific attributes discovered or gained while abroad as well as the notion of distinction. Although participants narrate aspirations and assertions of distinction even prior to leaving Canada, these narratives are most salient not only during the sojourn but particularly upon return. Therefore, drawing mainly on the return interviews and some mid-point interviews along with participant photographs, the chapter focuses on the ways that participants use popular expectations of international exchanges as a process of self-discovery to attest to self-change and to narrate and perform difference and distinction.

During the sojourn abroad, participants expressed having undergone varying degrees of personal reflection and development that resulted in self-discovery and/or self-change. As a result, re-entry in the social network and place of origin is fraught with feelings of ambivalence, excitement and anxiety. Participants tend to have expectations of how family and friends will react to their experience and personal changes. Increased confidence, openness and patience are some of the attributes and benefits derived from the experience that participants are eager to promote among their original social networks in Canada. The experience of self-discovery and self-change is both internalised within a

private narrative and externalised through a public narrative. Narration is a necessary part of the ongoing process of self-discovery and transformation. In most cases, recognition is sought from friends and family in order to validate the experience and its associated changes.

However, many participants end up disappointed and frustrated with the reactions from friends and family who are often disinterested in, or dismissive of, these personal changes. In this chapter, I suggest that narrating the experience to friends and family helps participants to make sense of the sojourn and weave the experience into their life biography as well as ensure the recognition and vitality of their 'new' sense of self. Moreover, the findings in this chapter suggest that participants engage in public narratives of self-change and performances of difference to showcase a sense of distinction among friends and peers. However, when faced with disinterest and scepticism from family and friends, participants will mutually share narratives of self-discovery and personal development to co-validate self-change and gain credibility through a collective narrative of distinction. Co-narratives help participants make sense of, and generate a distinctive value for, their sojourn. Yet, participants also desire to distinguish themselves from other travellers and international students and claim a unique, individual sense of distinction. While previous work has argued that international exchanges are a marker of distinction, the notion has not been engaged with in sufficient depth to adequately illustrate and highlight the iterative process and complex dimensions and tensions of 'distinction'. I suggest that upon return to Canada participants negotiate a tension between narrating a collective distinction and an individual distinction.

Participants seek to elevate and promote their individual distinction by disparaging and devaluing the experience of fellow travellers and international students. They compare the experience of other travellers in contrast to their own achievement and acquisition of cultural and social capital. Such gains in cultural capital are showcased among family and peers through narratives of authoritative knowledge. However, some participants express a critical disapproval of ostentatious narratives of self-change, which they view as potentially damaging to collective and individual forms of distinction. Instead, they opt for a more understated approach to displaying difference. I suggest that participants demonstrate and affirm their embodied cultural capital through performances of difference – performed through visual, musical, linguistic and consumptive practices acquired abroad. Such practices are distinctive markers of cultural, social, and linguistic capital that attest to participants' achievement as well as distinguish them from their peers. Thus, performative and narrational strategies are employed for conveying difference and distinction. I

conclude in this chapter that the international exchange is not a definite attainment of self-discovery and self-change; rather, the sojourn is part of an ongoing process of self-transformation.

The return 'home': self-discoveries and changes

Self-discovery and personal change are common themes that runs through the different interview stages of participants' international exchange. From pre-departure to post-sojourn, participants narrate their expectations for, and outcome of, personal development and self-change. As discussed in the first empirical chapter, participants want to study or intern abroad to leave their comfort zone and ultimately, achieve self-discovery and self-change. Although this study does not confirm or argue for the veracity of these changes (it would require a subsequent study to evaluate the durability of these changes in the long-term), many studies in the literature on international exchanges acknowledge or argue for the transformative impact of international exchanges on young people's sense of self. Much of the literature that examines the benefits and impacts of international travel on young people discusses some of the personal changes and qualities described by students upon return to their country of origin (Brown, 2009a; Gmelch, 1997; Marginson, 2014; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). Studies note that students expressed a greater sense of openness, tolerance and patience (Brown, 2009a; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). The ability to be more adaptable in varying cultural contexts and unfamiliar situations is also a commonly reported quality (Gmelch, 1997). Forsey et al. (2012) observe that the study abroad experience boosted students' sense of confidence and independence. An increased sense of confidence, particularly in approaching and conversing with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is a prominent example of personal change described by my participants. The return or re-entry into a place of origin and an original everyday life is not only part of the self-discovery process but can be the catalyst for provoking such a discovery of self. As Wilson and Harris (2006) point out, the women in their study "discussed the benefits of realising their strengths, weaknesses and limits once they had *returned home* and were involved again in 'everyday life'" (my emphasis, p. 166). This indicates that everyday life is not only instrumental for a process of self-discovery while in a *new* place abroad but also in an *old or original* place.

Many of my participants have indicated that their mobility to a new place has yielded or revealed seemingly new attributes and qualities that they intend to maintain in Canada. Indeed, Pocock and McIntosh (2011) suggest that upon return travellers "may

discover an unanticipated personal growth" (p. 645). Just like the motivations they expressed prior to their departure abroad, participants do feel upon return that leaving their comfort zone led to positive experiences and self-growth. The photo and accompanying caption that Lillian shares following our return interview points to this (see Figure 18):

Figure 18. The road that led Lillian outside of her comfort zone in China.

> "This was the road leading into the school (the other way goes into a nearby town). I hitch-hiked up and down this road many times during my year. It was probably not very safe of me, but it was testament to how stepping out of my comfort zone often led to adventures."

Lillian brings the notion of comfort zone and the experience full circle. Her photograph serves to attest to the adventures that emerged from leaving her comfort zone through (not-so) everyday activities like hitch hiking. She thus affirms that her motivation and goal of leaving her comfort zone has indeed yielded the positive outcome she anticipated prior to her departure abroad.

I caught Rebecca in the midst of her brief return to Canada. She just arrived in her Canadian hometown after a semester of study in India and is preparing to leave abroad again for a second semester of study, this time in South America. Rebecca wanted to study for a full year abroad but decided not to limit her experience to a single country. Instead, she applied for two separate international exchanges in different countries. She wanted to benefit from not one but two culturally and linguistically divergent experiences, what Desforges (1998) would consider as 'collecting places' (Desforges, 1998). Following some travels in Europe post-India, she is now back with her parents in her hometown of Ottawa and trying to make sense of her physical and personal journey to India. Despite mentioning some negative experiences with the university education system, and particularly gender harassment in daily life, Rebecca considers the sojourn a positive experience that afforded her a different perspective on her life and the world:

> "I think I'm a lot more confident and I analyse social situations less, and I'm more independent of things like media influences. And what you think is cool when you're younger, you're more influenced by that, but I've gotten to the point that I'm very comfortable with who I am and not worrying too much. I know it's really cliché and cheesy that you grow up and don't care what people think (laughs) but I do feel that way."

Rebecca feels that the experience in India has afforded her with more confidence and critical awareness of media communications and sources. By stating that she was 'more influenced' by the media when she was 'younger', Rebecca signals a successful transition from youth to adulthood. Comfort is also framed as a positive feeling that has been gained from her time abroad. In fact, feeling more comfortable, confident and secure in one's skin are common attributes and emotions that denote personal change. Rachel illustrates this through one of her photos of herself practising yoga while in India (see Figure 19):

Figure 19. Rachel practises her yoga 'tree pose' while in India.

"The picture just really kind of represents how free and independent and confident I was feeling on my own at this point in India. … It kind of represents the calm and security I did feel in India, you know, like as long as you take the precautions that you should take just about anywhere in the world when you're travelling on your own as a single woman, as long as you take those precautions and you know, you're pretty careful, then I felt very, very comfortable and happy just travelling on my own and this picture just speaks that for me."

Confidence, freedom and independence are qualities that Rachel acquired or honed while in India but her sense of calm and security is in contrast to popular perceptions of the Global South as risky and dangerous. Her ability to convert the discomforts of life in India into a sense of comfort may attest to her ability to successfully transition from outsider to insider. Now back in Montréal at her parents' home, Émilie echoes the sentiments of many participants by noting her increased or newly gained sense of confidence:

"I learned not to worry about more insignificant things …. I really gained even more confidence here; really, really, I'm less shy in general and if someone that gives me attitude I don't care (*je m'en fou*). I learned that the real people that are important to me are worth it and with the others, I've learned to make a separation on that level."

Émilie voices her gains of openness, confidence and sociability but also highlights her personal change in her ability to judge situations and people and compartmentalise these into distinct 'insignificant' and 'important' emotional registers. Fretting over people's opinions can be an everyday encumbrance, but with time spent overseas that burden gradually lifts, self-assurance increases and participants become less concerned with what other people think of them. The gains in self-confidence are projected as a feat in overcoming personal insecurities and developing personal growth. Personal insecurities fade and are replaced with a growth in confidence and the ability to tackle and overcome mundane daily social challenges in a different cultural and linguistic setting. While these self-changes are part of wider narratives of youth transitions it may be that the sojourn abroad accentuates or accelerates (or at least the appearance of) this transitional process. In addition, personal and professional competencies acquired through their studies and/or work placements abroad such as communication skills, second language skills and intercultural skills also endow individuals with a sense of confidence, openness and sociability, yet these are skills that can also be acquired through studying and working in Canada. However, they are potentially less evident or remarkable in a familiar environment, whereas the contrast of a new place can evince these qualities more noticeably from participants' perspective (and perhaps also those of family and friends after time away). Yet, it could also be that participants view the sojourn abroad as a limited time slot dedicated specifically for those purposes and are thus more actively focused on acquiring those skills overseas than while they are in Canada. In any case, participants reap a sense of achievement and pride from their personal changes. Amélie expresses this:

> "What I learned the most was about myself; on life with a group, my capacities, my maturity, my confidence in myself, my sense of listening (*sens de l'écoute*), and having learned also to take criticism, to be able to [say], 'ok, I need to work on this'. I think being in another context, I learned to be an open and willing person (*partante*). Ya, I'm really proud of myself, of what I've accomplished."

Amélie lists the capacities and interpersonal qualities she gained from her internship in Peru, but she also affirms her new ability to be self-reflexive and evaluate what she needs to personally 'work on'. The personal changes presented by participants are predominantly voiced in positive terms (Noy, 2004). Additional qualities expressed by participants

included a more relaxed, outgoing and friendly attitude. Having returned from a year-long study exchange in Tanzania to her parents' house, Christina discusses the contrast in her attitude pre- and post-sojourn and confesses that: "before leaving I didn't love who I was becoming." Now she reflects on how the experience endowed her with favourable self-growth:

> "I think that's a really important part of my growth, of becoming this new person while I was there, which was a transition and then coming here, like, the essence of who I am is still the same but I'm much more critical and much more patient and just much more reflective. I guess my friends have kind of noticed the difference that I used to be really quick to have an opinion about things and just a really black and white opinion whereas now there's just so many shades of grey in a way that I've never saw before."

Christina frames her more critical and reflexive perspective as evidence of a transitional transformation into a 'new' (and improved) critical and moderate self. She also evidences her personal growth through her friends' observation of her more nuanced attitude and view. Her friends' assessment of her altered attitude is both an inward confirmation and outward attestation of personal development. Participants' narratives suggest that international mobility engenders personal changes invariably regarded as positive and beneficial qualities. Since mobility to a new place offers the possibility, at least socially, to begin anew, international exchanges thus present participants with a clean slate. A place where nobody knows you or has any social ties to your 'home' network provides a fresh start for building a new social network and image. Being in a different place, away from the influence of the 'home' social networks allows participants to sample different personality traits without the scrutiny from familiar relationships. Christina further illustrates this:

> "We were being who we really wanted to be, everybody was. Like, you got to be yourself because there were no external forces pressuring you to do other things, like if you didn't want to do something you didn't do it, because there wasn't the same pressure and you wouldn't necessarily be seeing all of these people again; like, you could live life the way you really want to."

Christina echoes earlier comments expressed by Amy in the previous chapter about the influence (or lack thereof) of familiar places and faces on a potential 'true self'. This

suggests that for some, the idea of a 'true self' is tied to a sense of independence and freedom from familiar social and spatial influences. The sojourn abroad is not only a temporary freedom from social and societal pressures in the place of origin but also a freedom from a permanent stay in the social environment abroad. In other words, participants can discover and adopt new personal traits while abroad without the judgement of family and friends in Canada and at the same time, the temporary status of their sojourn means that these new traits or 'self' bear no long-term consequences upon return to Canada. Christina, like many others, therefore notes how the absence of 'forces' and 'pressure' exerted by her original place enable her to exhibit the personality traits she favours without the inadvertent long-term consequences. The short-term duration of the international exchange offers the possibility to construct a new personal and public image, minus the judgement of family and friends and/or a sense of commitment to these changes.

Much as discussed in the previous chapter, participants attribute their positive changes to social networks. During her semester of study in Valparaiso, Chile, Arianne forged some close friendships with locals and other international students that she intends to keep in touch with. Having now returned to her parents' home in Western Canada, she is happy to see old friends again but finds the return to her Canadian hometown more daunting than her departure for Chile. Arianne explains how her friends in Chile have influenced her attitude, a positive change that she hopes to keep in Canada:

> "I think that me and North American society is always go-go-go, what's the next thing, and over there it's just go with the flow, things fall into place eventually and my friends over there were like: 'why are you always running?' So I'm trying to apply this here, although it's hard because I have more responsibilities, but it's true that it's useless to always lose sleep because you have to do something. So I don't know, I think for me it's the thing that struck me the most, that I really try to bring back to my life here, to just chill more and be relaxed in general."

Arianne pins her new critical perspective of the fast-paced working culture of North American society on comments raised by friends in Valparaiso who questioned her attitude and lifestyle. Those remarks by friends clearly impress on her a need to reflect and alter her habits in a way that she feels has elicited a positive change to her self. However, she feels that a greater sense of responsibilities in Canada might hinder her ability to maintain those changes. Yet, the idea that she has 'more responsibilities' in Canada indicates that

she already felt less pressure and had less commitments in Chile. Arianne explained to me that unlike in Valparaiso, she has a part-time job in Ottawa and a heavier academic coursework load than in Chile. The absence of part-time work on the side and a lighter course load would thus have facilitated a more relaxed approach and attitude to studying and everyday life from the start of her exchange.

Although the predominant narratives of self-discovery during the mid-point and upon return are framed within a positive light, there are also tales of self-discovery that suggest a less favourable perspective. Instead, some discovered that they are more rigid in their values and beliefs. Aurélie was describing an instance with local Chileans when she was confronted with her cultural values from Québec. As a result of that exchange, she explains how she discovered herself to be more firm in her beliefs than previously anticipated:

"Let's say it's some of those things that are part of me and that I like. It's not that I could not live elsewhere, but it's like I'm attached to [her values] and I wouldn't want that to change. So I wouldn't be able to totally integrate myself in another culture and adopt absolutely all the ways of seeing (*façons de voir*), thinking and behaving (*comporter*), you know?"

Aurélie's example demonstrates that not all experiences lived up to the expectations and assumptions of propitious personal change. While this self-discovery of rigidity and stasis may be depreciative within an over-arching project of self-change, Aurélie asserts her favour for retaining what she regards as befitting values. As discussed in the previous chapter, self-discovery does not necessarily equate in personal change. Rather, awareness of favourable pre-existing traits can connote a positive self-discovery.

What is most notable from these narratives is that participants do indicate having undergone some form of self-discovery and/or self-change. Among such narratives are those of corporeal changes. Personality traits are often singled out as the main source of self-discovery and personal change, but dietary habits and consumption views are also modified as a result of local influences. Amy, for example, has adhered to a meat-free diet for almost a decade. However, a lack of healthy vegetarian options combined with local influence from cultural conventions in Peru swayed her eating habits. Whether she held strict vegetarian views beforehand is hard to say, but the point is that her Peruvian internship experience did disrupt her dietary practice:

> "Before Peru I was a vegetarian for 7 years and now I'm not (laughs). I mean, I don't eat a lot of meat because I've gone so long in my life not eating meat, but I do still now sometimes eat meat and its weird because I didn't for years before I went (laughs)."

I asked her whether she thinks she'll continue along this dietary path:

> "I don't know, I think I will probably continue but not a lot, maybe once a week or twice or week. I don't think I would be the type go to the grocery store to buy a bunch of meat. So I guess that was a big change."

Although Amy is unsure how often she will continue to consume meat, she seems fine or at least resigned at the idea of continuing this dietary practice. Granted, once or twice a week seems substantial for a once-upon-a-time vegetarian. This suggests that she either consumed meat on a daily basis in Peru or was not entirely opposed to eating meat from the beginning. Nevertheless, long-standing consumption values tested against very different cultural consumption practices can inflect changes that may be maintained, even if moderately or temporarily, upon return. Scholars point out that many of the changes professed by travellers are subtle and temporary (Li, 2010; White and White, 2004), but Maller and Strengers (2013) suggest that migrants carry, integrate and discard new and old practices between places. Students can adopt new practices while abroad, revert to their older sense of self upon return or combine practices from home with those from abroad to update and craft a new sense of self. Although it would require an extended longitudinal study to determine whether the changes professed by participants will stand the test of time, what is evident by their statements is that participants expect and *intend* to maintain these perceived personal changes upon return to Canada. While in Rio de Janeiro, Véronique explains why she expects to maintain 'new' personal traits when she returns to Montréal:

> "I think I have become more patient with stuff here because even if you get angry or mad it's not going to change anything. I think I'm more patient and more tolerant for different stuff. I don't know, I believe that when I go back to Montréal I will be more tolerant and patient with everything because I've learned to appreciate what I have in Montréal now more than I did before. Maybe I did appreciate it but I didn't know how valuable it is."

Véronique believes that being immersed in a different cultural context has developed her capacity for tolerance and patience; qualities that are indispensable and necessary for adapting to, and enjoying life in a new cultural place. The cultural norms of another country have instilled a newfound sense of appreciation for everyday life in her Canadian hometown. Having succeeded in developing these attributes in a challenging environment, Véronique is confident that her improved personal traits will be maintained upon return to Montréal. She feels that if she was able to acquire these attributes in a place that continuously challenged and tested her patience, then these should be relatively easily maintained within the familiar environment of her hometown. While studying in Santiago, Valérie echoes this view:

> "I think I'm looking forward to returning to Montréal and apply what I learned here and so to be more at ease (*tranquille*) with the city."

The intent to apply and maintain the favourable personality traits and attributes acquired abroad is a dominant current that runs through both the mid-point and return interviews.

Claims to personal growth and change are commonplace among travellers. Indeed, travel discourses and study abroad rhetoric suggest that the challenges encountered and surmounted during the sojourn abroad inevitably lead to self-discovery and self-change. Participation in an international exchange is commonly and tacitly assumed to involve some form of self-growth and personal transformation. International mobility places students in a specific category or 'class bracket' that signals personal growth and an acquisition of attributes and symbolic capital directly resulting from the international exchange experience (Desforges, 1998; Findlay et al., 2012). Heath (2007) has pointed out that the "gap year is shored up by commonsense assumptions that taking time out must self-evidently be 'a good thing'. Many students place huge store on the idea of the year out as a life-changing experience" (p. 100). Participants, well aware of travel discourses and rhetoric around work and study abroad as 'life-changing' experiences, utilise these popular assumptions to attest to a new and improved self among peers, friends and family (Desforges, 2000; Heath, 2007). The experience and its associated benefits are articulated as part of a personal *and* public narrative of self-development. They have achieved a personal goal and a sense of fulfillment that is gratifying on a personal level but is also strategically used as part of a wider construct and presentation of self-change. As Noy (2004) observes, "remarkable personal changes are constructed and

communicated as a natural consequence of a remarkable experience" (p. 91). Indeed, international mobility is used as "a record of achievement and experience" (Munt, 1994, p. 112). Much like in Desforges' (2000) study in which a participant was able to "use travel to emerge from some of the restrictions placed on her by her previous identity" (p. 935), my participants use the exchange abroad as a means to influence the perceptions of friends and family to fit the expected and standardised image of self-growth and personal change associated with international student mobility. In order words, the commonly-held expectations that going to work or study abroad results in personal development is used by participants to justify their personal changes to friends and family, as well as "culturally transmit 'the right signal'" to people beyond their social and familial network (Holloway et al., 2012, p. 2285). As Elsrud (2001) points out, travellers "creatively manifest a narrative, which is culturally legitimated in their home environments" (Elsrud, p. 613). Personal change is thus justified as a natural outcome of an overseas experience. Whether or not such changes took place is of less importance here, what matters is that participation in the international sojourn automatically speaks to the intended and anticipated personal changes. As Noy (2004) suggests,

> Although the stories indeed describe adventurous undertakings, they reflect upon the "internal", rather than (and by way of) the "external", and thus present a witnessing narrative, testifying to *inner* changes. In other words, experiencing adventures and encounters with authenticity are *means*, rather than ends, in the narratives, substantiating a claim made on a different level—not on that of undertakings but of identity—that the individuals underwent a change" (original emphasis, p. 91)

Thus, from this perspective, the mere condition of mobility and, more specifically, of participating and completing an international sojourn suffices in itself to attest to a successful process and outcome of personal change. I argue that through popular assumptions and travel rhetoric the sojourn abroad enables participants to lay claims to self-growth and justify any – real or imagined – alterations to their attitude, views and values. Whether deliberate or unintentional, they strategically use the international experience to break away from previous ideas and expectations placed on them by family, friends and others within their local society in order to narrate and reconstruct a new sense of self (Desforges, 2000). Thus, the sojourn abroad is an opportunity to revamp one's image of self at 'home'.

While Véronique and Valérie expressed that they expect to maintain their new attributes in Canada, returning to the social network in the place of origin can pose several dilemmas for returnees' sense of self. It is well-known that international students encounter difficulties and challenges upon return to the home society, a symptom commonly referred to as reverse or re-entry culture shock. In addition to the struggle of re-adjusting to the home society, some participants are faced with the difficulty in attempting to transgress and disencumber themselves from societal norms and expectations, particularly those of friends and family that may doubt the legitimacy of their self-change. Despite participants' best efforts and intentions to uphold the traits and values developed while abroad, many upon return express the challenge in maintaining these changes. Amélie explains this difficulty when returning to Montréal and re-entering her culture of origin:

> "After my internship placement, even though I was excited to return to Québec, I was returning with the idea that I would no longer be the same consumer as before. That changed a lot my values it seems. I like to believe that I will reflect more when buying now. I came back a bit disgusted by that pressure, the feeling of buying and buying. [The sojourn] enriched me, yes, on an individual point of view I know who I am, but now I need to uphold those values (*s'assumer dans no valeurs*) and I find it's difficult to be consistent (*d'être conséquente*) with oneself in a society that, like it or not, is a bit controlling in a certain way."

By pointing out how she became 'disgusted' by the consumerist society in Canada generally, Amélie demonstrates her changed perceptions (as well as her re-entry culture shock) of cultural and personal values, thereby distinguishing herself from the mass of consumerists in her home country. She also highlights that the sojourn not only afforded personal growth ('enriched me') but also self-discovery ('I know who I am') that she seemingly frames as a 'true self'. Yet, Amélie feels that returning to her home society might efface the changes constructed over time in Peru. In Canada, participants feel that their attempts to make self-changes are regulated and restricted by societal expectations and local normative attitudes exerted by their 'home' social network. In other words, it can be difficult to transgress people's perceptions in one's place of origin if they did not bear witness to the behavioural or attitudinal changes abroad. Friends and family retain a specific idea and perception of who we are, how we think and behave, and this fixed image may no longer correspond or be compatible with participants' new sense of (true) self. While for family and friends the 'new' or 'improved' self may not be that far-removed

from the 'old' self, participants' at least *feel* that their personal changes are considerable and meaningful. Regardless of how minute these changes may appear to friends and family, any nuances or tweaks from the previous original self requires recognition from the original social networks in order to reassure participants of their self-growth as well as justify the worth and value of the sojourn. For participants, there is a need for others to recognise that the sojourn was more than a simple leisure trip overseas; that there was some genuine, deeper interaction and engagement with locals from a different cultural context that could thus infer an inevitable impact on the self.

Although I assert – as I argued in the previous chapter – that the challenge of re-entry upon return is part of the self-discovery and learning process (Hansel, 1988), I also suggest that if family and friends neglect to attentively engage with the tales of returnees' experience, whether they are narratives of personal development or anecdotal stories, participants may feel as though the sojourn and their life in Canada are spatially and temporally fractured into two distinct realities or lives. The unwillingness of peers, family, and friends to recognise and attend to the self-developmental aspect of the experience may trigger a sense of regression to the previous pre-sojourn self rather than a progression. In the next section I consider the role of social networks and the different spatio-temporalities in affecting participants' sense of self.

Different spatio-temporalities, differing senses of self

> "Although a journey is as much, and as little, a part of the traveler's life as all other activities he or she engages in, it usually stands out as a demarcated time and space, qualitatively different from the rest of the life course. It is claimed by many of the interviewees that this timespace, away from home, offers certain new qualities, or perhaps loses some old, in that it relieves them from a pressure (on identity)" (Elsrud, 2001, p. 604).

Elsrud goes on to mention one traveler who "having spent several years traveling, describes physical and temporal demarcation as a possible means of escaping external expectations upon identity and achieving 'freedom' to give effect to his own changing" (p. 605). Indeed, a different socio-temporal space can allow (and even empower) participants to shed undesirable traits and gain new qualities in order to transgress social expectations and the previous image of self from the original spatio-temporality. Hence, familiar places retain and reflect a sense of self; one that is tied to a particular time and place. During their

exchange abroad, participants cultivate new social networks that become intimately tied to that place and time. Different social spaces – i.e. the social networks in a particular place (e.g., friends, family, etc.) – reflect a specific sense of self. In other words, a specific sense of self is embedded in a particular socio-spatial temporality. Having developed some strong (romantic) relationships in Dar es Salaam, Christina describes herself as 'heartbroken' to be back in Canada. Leaving Tanzania meant that she was going through an 'inter-continental break-up' with a local Tanzanian student, which made the reverse or re-entry shock all the more acute. She reflects on the relationship between her social networks and sense of self among different time-spaces:

> "There were certain people that I talked to and saw every single day for, like, February onwards and to not be seeing them right now, it's hard. I feel really far away from the things that they are doing and the lifestyle and even the person that I was there. I feel different being back. I feel like a different person than the person who I was when I left, while still being different from the person I was in Dar as well. So there's been I think a lot of growth."

Christina reflects on the 'person' she was in Dar es Salaam from both the different 'persons' she *now is* and *used to be* in Ottawa. While these references evoke different personal roles or personalities based on place and temporalities, these are positioned and mediated vis-à-vis the presence or absence of friends from Dar es Salaam. According to Christina and other participants, different places and social networks can elicit varying facets of one's personality. The discovery is therefore not of an essential 'true self' (even if for some it appears to be or is at least worded that way) but rather, of personal nuances and divergent trajectories and possibilities. The juxtaposition and combination of two places – the host and 'home' cities – is what can reveal personal traits through an ongoing process of self-discovery. Over time, two different socio-spatial temporalities – i.e. the sojourn abroad and the place of origin (even if rarely entirely independent from one another due to access to technology and social media connecting both social spaces in real time) – begin to drift apart and evoke differing senses of self. In referring to international students, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) comments that: "In between two biographical moments, time-lags and discrepancies accumulate: discrepancy between self and self in two different time-spaces, discrepancy in personal and social links which are momentarily suspended, discrepancy in social routines" (p. 18). Thus, as participants develop new social relationships during their international sojourn, different versions of

their self can emerge over time. In some cases, they can become aware of this separation in the midst of their sojourn abroad. For example, I spoke with Jane during her mid-point in Rwanda. Her work with the local organisation 'dominated' her life and she mainly socialised with colleagues both at and outside the office. She immersed herself in the local work culture and while she frequently connected with family and friends via internet her current life began to disconnect from her home-place. Jane was almost two months into her internship placement in Kigali when she noticed a juxtaposition with both her life in Canada and her new reality in Rwanda, explaining how her current life in Rwanda "just seems a step removed from life back in Canada". Mobility and place seem to have distorted both her spatio-temporal realities:

> "I don't know, after a while it's just so different, the way you think is different, the people you see every day are different that, I don't know, it's almost like living in a parallel universe compared to life back home and they almost begin to detach in your head. My life here and my life back at home, while very, very interconnected just seem like they've become detached."

Although Jane is aware that Kigali and Ottawa are imbricated with each other, she nonetheless feels and perceives them as distinct due to the different spatial, cultural and social contexts. Over time, being in a different place and socio-cultural context gradually creates a rupture between two spatio-temporal realities, creating an impression of separate lives. As participants immerse themselves in local everyday life abroad a sense of fragmentation unfolds alongside their re-entry shock and process of re-adaptation, and while Murphy-Lejeune (2008) points out that international students' "attachment to or detachment from the home culture is merely loosened rather than seriously tested" (p. 25), the narratives suggest that participants' sense of self is tied to, and yet divided between, different socio-spatial temporal dimensions. Speaking with Véronique via Skype at the half-way point of her sojourn as she basked in the carioca[7] lifestyle, she reflected on the distinction between her habits in Rio de Janeiro and those in Canada. Véronique believes that the self-growth and personal changes developed in her host city would be incompatible with her life in Montréal. She explains this contrast and conflict:

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[7] Carioca is a Brazilian term used to describe a person or various other aspects from the city of Rio de Janeiro.

"Everything I do [in Rio de Janeiro] is different. Like I know I haven't changed but the circumstances have, so I need to adapt to it. So therefore I am different in everything I do. … So I think everything has changed even though I think I haven't, but everything is so different that I couldn't be the same person that I am in Montréal or have the same habits; it would be incoherent to have them here."

Since Véronique believes that her habits from Montréal would be 'incoherent' in Rio de Janeiro, she explains that the different spatial and social context of her host place encouraged the changes to her practices and habits, even if she feels her sense of self (i.e. values, opinions, beliefs) has not changed. Dispositions and habits developed throughout the sojourn in a different cultural context can construct a distinct sense of self that is embedded in, or corresponds uniquely to, that specific place through new practices and habits. Because the sense of self is tied to particular social spaces and places (and habits), returning to a place of origin can seem like a clash between a sense of self and a sense of place. The return can hinder the durability of these new habits and practices as well as threaten the developmental process and progress of personal change, where some participants revert to their 'old' practices and sense of self. This resonates with Brown's (2009a) comments on international students:

"The journey was not over until they had negotiated the return to their old home world. Evolution in attitudes and behaviour may not necessarily be accommodated at home; reluctance to return to the old self may not be the prelude to life-enhancing change. The anxiety among returning students over the accommodation of their new values and behaviours points to conflict between the new and the home cultures. Unless sojourners become successful in moving fluidly between different life worlds, they might be compelled to undergo the painful and conflicting process of unlearning the new norms and values absorbed during their journey through a new culture. Sojourners are in the unique position that the outcome of the sojourn is only life-enhancing if positive change can be maintained at home. … they may be unable or unwilling to assume their old role, to forget the journey of self-discovery they have travelled" (p. 516).

Despite a willingness to maintain habits and uphold values acquired abroad, the return is fraught with social and spatial barriers. Although normative societal expectations can inhibit the sustainability of personal changes, I further develop my argument from the last

chapter and suggest that it is primarily the expectations and attitudes of parents, friends and peers that can both enable and disable the perception of self-growth. Social networks in the place of origin play a vital role in enabling or encumbering personal development and a newly constructed sense of self. Many participants have expressed how the return from their sojourn abroad resulted in a disjuncture that created a feeling of having two lives. Pocock and McIntosh (2011) highlight that "exacerbating this dilemma was the perceived disinterest by those at home in the returnees' experiences overseas" (p. 639). Indeed, Élodie discusses how her return to Montréal following a 10-month study exchange in Chile elicited scant attention from family and friends. Although she quickly re-connected with her old social network, her friends in Montréal showed little interest in her experience. Élodie suggests that they asked questions pertaining to her life in Chile more out of politeness than from any genuine interest. As such, she lamented how her friends' apparent indifference to her experience created two diverging lives:

> "It's like two lives. It's like two life chapters (*deux chapitres de vies*) that are completely different. People in Chile know practically nothing about my life in Montréal; what my life plans are. People in Montréal know nothing; they've just seen photos really."

The departure from one social network and the return to the other skewed and confused Élodie's personal sense of self, with both places and social networks creating the impression of two separate lives. Place not only fosters the separation of social networks but the interruption or suppression of self-growth as Élodie explains: "It's like I'm back to square one. Really, I'm exactly where I was before I left." Participants feel they have reverted to their older self upon return. Disinterest from friends abruptly severed the possibility of integrating or connecting Élodie's experience abroad with her life in Montréal. Her friends and family view her sojourn abroad as a pause/break in her life at home, while for Élodie, the experience expanded her social network and mind-set. Yet, having two sets of social networks which, in most cases, do not overlap, gives the impression of being between two realities. The sense of self can seem divided and torn between two social groups and spaces, with neither one understanding the other. Valérie's return to Montréal was marked with feelings of ambivalence as she was seeing her boyfriend again after 5 months apart. She wandered the familiar streets of her hometown in an attempt to reconnect with the place, but had an uneasy transition where she felt 'disoriented' and 'mourned' her experience in Chile. I ask Valérie what is the most memorable aspect of her

experience. Her response, much like Élodie's experience, highlights a socio-spatial division of the self:

> "It's not a moment per se (*un moment en soi*), but it's really the friends that I made over there. The everyday relationships (*relations quotidiennes*) with the people I met. When I was looking at the photos to select which ones, I was like, obviously I did some trips, obviously I've done things that were extraordinary, but really what was most difficult to leave behind and what is really most important to me when I think about it are the friends I made. I didn't want to come back because I had the impression that I was going to lose new friends that I could have really become closer with, and that's when I had the impression of having two lives."

Valérie expresses her fear that her new friendships created abroad will erode with distance and time. The potential and probable disintegration of at least part of these friendships seems to signal a fear of a larger, more intimate loss. Along with the concern of an eventual dissipation of these social networks, participants fear losing their memories of the sojourn and with it, any real personal growth and changes. Élodie describes this fear when talking with peers and friends in Montréal about her study exchange in Santiago, Chile:

> "Maybe I have a fear of forgetting if I don't talk about it. I won't necessarily have time, like, I don't really have time to write in my journal and write down all my memories. I don't necessarily write now and if you don't talk about it, if people don't ask you questions that will make you think back and dig up all these memories, maybe I'll just forget, but it's not like it never happened. People talk like: 'How was Peru?' [She replies]: 'It's Chile' (she laughs). It's like it never happened between, they will never be able to talk about my experience there because they don't know what I lived over there, people here don't know. The relationships I have with people here are strictly here that it takes place and it's always been here. They would say 'Élodie always leaves to travel; Élodie is gone; Élodie is there', but that's all they know, my parents too."

While Élodie finds humour in people confusing the country she studied in for another nation in South America, what she finds less amusing and indeed frustrating is their apparent disinterest and inability to ask the 'right' questions. For Élodie, her social relationships are specific to, and contained within, distinct places and therefore complicate

her memories and feelings of continuation and thus, her sense of self. Although a self-developmental process may have unfolded during the exchange it can swiftly be succeeded by a regression to an old sense of self if the social conditions upon return do not facilitate and allow the returnee to make sense of their experience and personal changes. François expresses this disappointment with his friends:

> "My friends reintegrated me into the group of friends as if I was gone for like two days, as if nothing happened (*comme si de rien n'était*)."

Returnee travellers in Pocock and McIntosh's (2011) study describe how over time the experience abroad felt "like a dream" and from which they question "did I really do it?" (p. 643). Back at her parents' place in Montréal, Marie-Josée echoes this view:

> "When I saw my friends again for the first time, I was like, 'ah really?' It was as if nothing changed."

Marie-Josée was surprised and disappointed that her return to her friends' circle in Montréal was received with little fuss and attention to her sojourn abroad. In fact, reunions with friends and family in Canada, while initially met with jubilant excitement, are often swiftly accompanied by disappointment. I thus suggest that in order to counter such feelings and prevent a fragmentation of the sense of self, the international experience must be narrated to, and shared with, friends and family in the place of origin. Family and friends must reciprocate an interest and actively engage in the narration and story-telling to allow participants to make sense of the experience. Indeed, narration upon return is an essential part of the self-discovery process. Given the opportunity to communicate and narrate the experience and personal changes, participants are able to continue the process of self-reflection and self-adjustment (Noy, 2004). As mentioned earlier, Arianne felt the pangs of re-entry culture shock, and here she vents her frustration at the lack of interest from friends and peers:

> "The thing that I find most difficult is trying to explain what I've lived (*ce que j'ai vécu*). The first two weeks I was so frustrated because literally everyone that saw me was like: 'oh my god! How was your trip?' I was like, as soon as you say 'good', they move on to something else. They ask by politeness (*par politesse*) but in

reality they don't want to listen, and even if you try to explain they don't understand, they don't want to understand."

Although Arianne's friends reacted with alacrity and an inquisitive liveliness upon seeing her again, their excitement quickly wanes with Arianne's response, prompting her annoyance at their courteous inquiry for the sake of politeness rather than sincere interest. Hence, participants voice their disappointment and discontentment at discovering upon return that their enthusiasm for the sojourn is not necessarily shared by their friends and family at home. Élodie continues to share these sentiments:

> "I haven't talked about it that much really, because people aren't that interested. Now anyways I've seen people again and everyone many times and they no longer ask me questions. I'm back and that's all that counts. They talk to me a lot more about their lives as well, but anyways, it's no big deal, I don't expect them to give a fuck anyways, you know? They don't understand, basically they know that I left and now I'm back again. They are all concerned… there's a lot of people that say, 'so, the return?' (laughs). Everyone knows apparently that it's hard to return, and I'm like, 'it's okay, I'm just looking for a job'. I don't talk about it that much because it seems that people show interest just because they are supposed to show interest, but then the moment you start explaining something… I always ask them to ask me a specific question because they always ask: 'so how was it?' Like, (laughs) like how can you answer that question? It's too general (laughs). You start talking to someone and their eyes just, don't roll, but they look away, you know? They're not really interested. They are interested but not really, so I stop talking there. So I'm like, 'oh ya, it was really cool' and usually they just change subjects like they don't really want to listen (laughs), so it's like, great (laughs)!"

Once again, despite people's questions about her study exchange, Élodie vents her vexation and resentment at the unwillingness of friends to inquire about the particulars of her sojourn. Although Élodie and other participants are perhaps too demanding and selfish in their expectations of friends and family, I nonetheless suggest that participants must narrate their sojourn to friends and family in order to patch and weave the sojourn into their biography. As Elsrud (2001) explains, "this narrative is not only a courtesy to the listener but perhaps more a means for the narrator to order experiences and to reach a 'sense of continuity' in his or her identity" (p. 600). Family and friends should thus acknowledge and

accept (and ideally, embrace) returnees' narratives in order to validate their experience as well as their personal changes. As Kauffmann et al. (1992) observe,

> "Acceptance of the changed self by others as well as by the sojourner seemed to be the key to a healthy re-entry adjustment. Students who felt pressure to revert back to what they were before the experience had more difficulty adjusting upon return than those who were allowed to incorporate their changes into their daily living" (p. 115-16)

While international travel can be used as a way to narrate and construct a new sense of self, it needs to be viewed "as not just beginning and ending with the trip but also extending into the whole lifecourse" (Crang, 2004 p. 81). Many of the narratives of self-development and the frustration expressed from family and friends' reluctance to recognise personal changes fit in with ideas of youth transitions. Despite the fact that participants see themselves as having gained self-growth and independence, Valentine (2003) points out that "they may still be treated as, or at least retain, the identity of 'children' in their own parents' eyes" (p. 38). Yet, family members play an important role in facilitating youth transitions even if they are often regarded as the source of young people's desire to move away (Valentine, 2003). Thus, narrating the experience to friends and family during the sojourn abroad through social media can facilitate the process of self-discovery as much as it can hinder personal growth.

Although during the sojourn there should be a separation between socio-spatial temporalities – i.e., reducing contact with family and friends in the place of origin in favour of increased participation in social relations abroad – in order to enable removal from the comfort zone and ultimately personal development, both realities need to be connected upon return. Both socio-spatial temporalities need to be connected and reconciled – even if not necessarily seamlessly – for participants to integrate personal growth and the new sense of self into their life trajectory. Such reconciliation can only happen through the social. This is evident by, a) the relative omnipresence of social networks across both spatial-temporalities, and b) the role of social relations in facilitating self-discovery (as discussed in Chapter 5). A successful outcome depends on returnees' ability to re-engage in social activities in their place of origin whilst maintaining contact with social networks abroad (Chaban et al., 2011). However, I suggest that recognition of the value of the sojourn is not only (or at least, not necessarily) sought to validate and maintain a new sense of self, but also (or instead) to confer a sense of distinction.

Distinctions

International student exchanges are popularly framed in terms of a life-changing and transformative experience that inevitably results in self-discovery and personal change. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ability to voluntarily travel abroad also signals a form of privilege. Since it is *assumed* that international travel enables self-growth, thus, it is *expected* that others will recognise its prestige and worth. Desforges (2000) points out that if the motivation to travel abroad is personal development then the return 'home' should be a means of extracting the benefits from the experience. I suggest that participants expect and seek out recognition and validation of their international exchange from friends and peers as a form of distinction. International student mobility as a form of difference and distinction is already posited by geographers (Desforges, 1998, 2000; Findlay et al., 2012; King et al., 2011; Raghuram, 2013; Waters, 2012; Waters and Brooks, 2011; and see Tindal et al., 2015 for intra-state mobility) as well as promoted online through study abroad organisations (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Twitter post promoting study abroad as a form of distinction.

I follow in this perspective by suggesting that upon return participants – whether premeditated or accidental (Waters and Brooks, 2010) – narrate and perform difference and distinction. In the previous section, Arianne and Élodie (among others) voiced their

frustration at people's disinterest in the sojourn as well as their inability to grasp the magnitude and transformative potential of the experience on their sense of self. This is particularly salient in another comment by Arianne concerning how she reacted and now copes with her friends' inattentiveness to her experience:

> "Now it's better because I understood a bit that it's not that important that they understand. But in the beginning, I was like 'no, please listen! I've lived the best thing of my life and it's not equal to the work you did in Ottawa this summer!' It's really bad/rude (*c'est vraiment chien*), but it really annoyed me."

While Arianne is now less demanding of her friends' attentiveness towards her sojourn and acknowledges the rudeness of her behaviour, she reveals her perception of distinction by contrasting the importance of her exchange to the less significant experiences of her friends in Ottawa during her absence. In fact, the lack of interest and attention from friends and peers is of concern to returnees as it can lessen the anticipated sense of achievement and distinction. This is comparable to the university's academic curricular requirements concerning international exchanges: if the courses participants are enrolled in at the host country are not recognised by the home institution, then the necessary credit equivalences cannot be transferred, and thus, their academic exchange will not be officially recognised by the university, nor conferred in their diploma. Both academic and personal prestige is predicated on other people's recognition and validation of these. Bourdieu (1984) has explained that distinction "only exists through the struggles for the exclusive appropriation of the distinctive signs which make 'natural distinction'" (p. 247). Without general appeal and interest by others for the object in question there is no distinction. The value for the object or status of distinction lies in the interest generated "by the mere fact of entering the game, joining in the collective belief in the value of the game which makes the game and endlessly remakes the competition for the stakes" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 247). International exchanges need to be recognised and valued by both outgoing students and stay-at-home peers in order to confer distinction.

Distinction, the recognition of differential worth, is riddled with nuances and interlaced with contestations within young people's varying experiences and forms of mobility. The next section considers how students complicate the notion of distinction. I argue that international student mobility offers an apt context to illuminate the complex and iterative process of distinction. I demonstrate how participants compete with other travellers as well as among international students for varying forms of distinction. In

seeking to validate the value of their international experience, I suggest that participants narrate and navigate contesting forms of distinction. More specifically, I suggest that participants negotiate a tension between maintaining *collective* and *individual* forms of distinction; that is, they negotiate a personal desire for individual distinction with a need to generate popular appeal to validate international exchanges through collective distinction.

Collective distinction

Since family and friends may not always engage with returnees' narratives or recognise personal changes, participants turn to each other to validate their experience. They engage and collaborate with other international students in shared narratives of personal change and self-discovery to co-promote recognition and collective distinction. In the case of Israeli backpackers, "self-change is an inherent feature of the collective voice" (Noy, 2004, p. 89). Collective appreciation for international student mobility can be fostered by connecting with fellow returned Canadian exchange students, such as Élodie who mentions another Quebecer she met while studying in Chile:

> "There aren't many people who would find that interesting except for others who travel. The only person with whom I talk about my trips, except for the other Quebecer that I met there… the first semester with her, after I saw her again, we talked about it because we knew the same people. We lived in the same country, you know? So it's just with these people that you can really let loose about your experience and how you feel, because usually they have been through the same."

Élodie explains how it is only fellow travellers that can understand and recognise the value of travel and relate to a common experience of mobility abroad – irrespective of a travelling or living context – and can therefore position non-travellers as out-of-the-loop (so to speak). International students intuitively understand the challenges and rewards of the sojourn as well as the struggles upon return to the place of origin. They can relate to the experience and co-validate their narratives of personal development among each other. Narration is not only part of the ongoing process of self-reflection but also of constructing a collective distinction. Sharing tales and narratives of the sojourn abroad attributes meaning and value to their international experience. Indeed, "in order to cash in on the social value of their experience, travelers must share it with their peers" (Week, 2012, p. 199). Desforges (1998) explains that "their trips form a mutual social bond in that both value and respect the knowledge and experiences gained through travel which serves to distinguish

them from others" (p. 185). Travel, Desforges (1998) claims, can "create a sense of social solidarity through distinction" (p. 185). Other exchange students, irrespective of the host destination, can relate to stories of personal change. As Arianne points out, the destination does not matter so much as the journey:

> "At least I have a few friends that went on exchange too. We share stories and even if they were in a completely different country, it works because lived a bit the same changes or the same experience a bit. For that it works really well (*ça se passe vraiment bien*)."

Place still matters for Arianne; as long as it is not Canada. Instead, it is the place-based experience *outside* of Canada that creates a shared story. Arianne expresses how mobility in the context of international exchanges is the common marker of distinction among students but she also underscores a specific condition:

> "I think just the idea of comfort zone; even if we were in completely different things, we all took a step outside of our comfort zone. Like, everyone left for at least six months or sometimes even a year. They had the same emotions; it's a bit the same thing upon return. There are some things that seem to be really stupid, it's just small things but we miss them. I guess we are all interested in hearing what the other has to say. Because one of my really good friends is in Switzerland, so it's not at all the same experience, but the fact that he tells me, 'oh ya, I did a trip here, I learned this,' I can always relate that to something I have done, because, ultimately, no matter where you are, it's really the idea of change or the idea of comfort zone which comes back all the time. So he would tell me… or when we compare people, he will talk to me about Swiss people and I talk about Chileans, and I talk about this and this that is different. So it's like small things that have similarities or it's just really general themes (*des grandes vagues*) of how we feel or how we felt."

Arianne acknowledges that her friend's experience in Switzerland differs from hers, but that the emotions – particularly those of (dis)comfort – experienced while abroad are a common point of reference and marker of distinction. Her comment also draws the experience into a full circle by linking the notion of comfort zone from a pre-departure motivation to a shared narrative of return. Participants' pre-departure motivation to leave

the 'comfort zone' is what binds their experience and common membership to a group. Exchanging tales from their experience can convert the international sojourn into a marker of recognition and distinction (Bourdieu, 1997). Yoon (2014) has observed how Korean youth travellers continuously compared and measured their tales of personal development among each other. Mutual recognition of this common motivator establishes membership criteria to a particular group and collective participation among international students generates interest among other people. There is appeal and value in numbers, in being an 'exclusive club' that others may envy or strive to join (Waters, 2007). Arianne has demonstrated how membership is inclusive of those who were able to leave their comfort zone in the context of international exchanges. Escaping the comfort zone becomes a common condition linking other exchange students. Self-change and qualities of openness and patience accumulated during the sojourn also figure prominently in the collective discourse (Noy, 2004). Similar motivations, expectations, goals and interests regarding the international exchange constitute the building blocks used to create an exclusive and illustrious group. Yet, place also matters in both endowing and demarcating distinction.

Although the combination of shared narratives and membership to an exclusive group grants participants with cultural and social capital, Fechter (2007) notes that being a traveller from the Western world tends to inevitably lead to an accumulation of cultural capital. Accumulation of different forms of capital – i.e. cultural, social and mobility capitals – is well-documented in the literature on international student mobility (Baláz and Williams, 2004; Desforges, 1998; Findlay et al., 2012; King et al., 2011; Waters, 2006; Waters and Brooks, 2010). The international experience is as much about public narratives of cultural and social capital as it is a private pursuit for achievement and personal change (Desforges, 1998).

Although any international exchange is considered beneficial, some are considered to be relatively more valuable and worthwhile than others (Heath, 2007). Waters (2012) notes the emerging differentiation within different types of international education and Heath (2007) and Simpson (2005) indicate that a hierarchy has begun to manifest itself in which certain types of international sojourns are positioned as more valuable than others. The choice of host country or destination of the international sojourn can lend an additional value and distinction to the experience. Scholars highlight the distinctive value, prestige and privilege of travel to the Global South (Ansell, 2008; Breen, 2012; Desforges, 1998; Elsrud, 2001; Noy, 2004; Munt, 1994). The geographical location of study is strategically selected by students as a way to heighten their distinction in relation to others outside of these 'unique' places (Raghuram, 2013; Tindal et al., 2015, p. 97). In comparison to

destinations in Europe, countries in the Global South are imagined as less travelled and more 'authentic' (Elsrud, 2001; Korpela, 2010; Munt, 1994). As such, the Global South is framed as a destination offering higher stakes and claims to distinction. European countries on the other hand have become over-popularised and have lost their distinctive appeal. Raghuram (2013) points out in the context of student migration that places are "marked by individuality and distinction" (p. 143). In his study of young travellers, Desforges (1998) argues that participants differentiate themselves from peers by placing a distinctive value on countries in the Global South and dismissing travel within the Global North as commonplace, insignificant and decidedly pointless. The attitude is: Global South or bust. Participants 'imagine' countries in the Global South "according their own needs" (Korpela, 2010, p. 1299). I argue that the Global South is viewed as the next level of challenge and as a step ahead of others in the quest for difference and distinction. As the Global South grows in popularity as a volunteer and study destination, a hierarchy may emerge between countries in the Global South with some perceived as less travelled and more risky than others. This demonstrates how geographical location and place are not only productive for (dis)comfort and, hence, self-reflexivity and self-discovery, but also for the production of difference and distinction.

Although current members establish the criteria for admission to the group and hold tightly to its boundaries (Waters, 2007), new conditions and conquests continuously contest and re-define its limits. Members engage in an iterative back-and-forth process of positioning and re-ordering themselves within the international traveller hierarchy. If no one wanted to do an exchange, then it wouldn't be valuable, but if too many do it, then it no longer is distinctive. There is a process of relative differentiation and hierarchising between groups of travellers and non-travellers as well as between different types of travellers. International students, and particularly interns, are similar to expatriates in that they are abroad for work, but they distinguish themselves from expats through a reluctance to remain within the expat 'bubble' – although some interns did remain mostly with expats and other interns (for examples in the literature on expatriates resisting the 'bubble' see Benson, 2010). Since their sojourns are generally short-lived, participants want to be an active member and part of the local community in order to be considered a local insider. Whether they achieve this is another point of discussion, but they use this criterion for membership to distinguish themselves from other travellers, expatriates and especially tourists – even if participants studying (rather than interning) remained in circles of other international students.

In addition to competing with other travellers, students also need to contend among themselves for distinction, both in spatial (i.e. place-based) and qualitative (e.g. time-based) terms (Munt, 1994). In other words, they use their choice of destination and length of stay as markers distinguishing them from other Canadian exchange students. As Munt (1994) points out, they adopt "a number of practices in seeking to establish social differentiation and to disassociate themselves from the tourism practices of class fractions below" (p. 119). Members of the group can differentiate on a more generalised scale between exchange students and non-exchange students (e.g. stay-at-home students) or can refine the criteria and exclusivity of the group through a smaller-scale differentiation among exchange students based on specific qualitative – and at times quantitative – criteria. There is a hierarchal differentiation of distinction and value between groups as well as within the groups. Within the context of tourism, Crang (2004) suggests that,

> "the cachet offered by different activities or their 'cultural capital' will vary, and may well change over the life course of an individual. These changes may be due to changes in the 'value' of a destination, as somewhere becomes more well-known it may lose the distinctiveness it held when visited; or it may be that social groups change, so what was admired by one's 18-year-old friends as mature and sophisticated appears less so when one is 30; or it may be that through our lives we move through different social circles which value things differently" (p. 81).

The stakes are continuously raised for maintaining, elevating, re-establishing and re-articulating distinction. Participants find ways to outdo other travellers and exchange students through spatial, cultural and temporal dimensions which can be strategically and advantageously reconfigured. For example, the duration or length of sojourn, the cultural and socio-economic context of the destination, the purpose of the sojourn and even the number of previous international experiences are used to re-establish and re-appropriate exclusivity and distinction. Thus, different forms of mobility can complicate the quality of distinction. Through shared and co-produced narratives with other international (Canadian) students, participants are able to co-validate their experience and create a collective distinction that grants membership to a socially exclusive and prestigious group. However, once they have found legitimation and validation in a collective distinction they each seek a more unique, individualised form of distinction.

Individual distinction

Once value for the international exchange is generated through mutual recognition and collective distinction, participants re-negotiate their form of distinction. More specifically, they differentiate themselves from other exchange students in order to claim a unique and *individual* distinction. Participants thus compete among fellow Canadian exchange students. Erel (2010) posits that migrants "actively co-construct institutions for validating their cultural capital within the society of residence" whilst simultaneously creating new parameters to validate and elevate their cultural and social capital over fellow migrants thereby creating "new forms of intra-migrant distinction" (p. 656). A process of re-ordering takes place among exchange students. Elsrud (2001) also suggests that travellers convey specific types of narratives and practices with the purpose of ordering oneself within a hierarchal structure and gaining a positional advantage. Individuals therefore highlight unique distinctive qualities over others. Based on a re-evaluation of standards and criteria, some qualities and people make the cut while others are excluded. During her placement in Rwanda, Katie illustrates how being (more) adaptable distinguishes her from other interns:

> "I'm kind of surprising myself with how well I'm adapting. Like, even though the [work] life and culture is pretty hard for me to adapt to and I'm still really struggling with that, the sort of day to day life as a culture and the miscommunications that you have, all of that stuff actually really hasn't phased me in a way that I've seen some of my other friends who are here."

Through this comparison, Katie positions herself above other interns who are relatively unsuccessful in overcoming the difficulties of adapting to the local culture. Despite the struggles, her ability to fare better in terms of adaptability infers a higher level of cultural capital and distinction. She is thus able to distinguish herself from other interns and claim an individual distinction. Since arriving in Rwanda for her internship placement, Brianne has been living in a shared accommodation with other Canadian interns. For her first time living outside the parental home, her experience and living arrangements with fellow Canadians have been, at times, tenuous and irksome. Yet, Brianne manages to transform an unfortunate situation into a positive affirmation of her superior capacity to adapt to a new cultural environment. She discusses her journey of self-discovery and difference in relation to other Canadian interns:

"I also learned a lot about how other people deal with it too; deal with being in another country. I guess before we left, there were two other interns and I thought, 'Ok, we're all in the same page and then when we get there, it's completely different, right? (laughs). One wouldn't leave her room, the other guy was not interested in me as much and the other guy came a week later which was a nice change and we became closer that way. So meeting other interns I learned how other people, I guess, it sounds obvious now, but everybody is different and they are not like they are at home either, especially this one girl who got really depressed. She didn't want to do anything and was afraid all the time. She was not like that in Ottawa at all, so I learned a lot about how some people they can do this and other people just can't, and I'm just happy that I was the one that could. I survived. … So I learned how some people thrive and some people don't; how some people come off as so confident and cool and then, you know, people are really tested."

Brianne underscores her personal achievement and success by measuring her experience against the shortcomings of fellow interns, distinguishing her ability to survive and thrive in contrast to those less able. Participants elevate their distinction and badge of achievement in relation to less successful cases of adaptation. Bourdieu (1984) states that agents "must endlessly redefine themselves in terms of distinction which always defines itself negatively in relation to them" (p. 249). In Tindal et al.'s (2015) study of intra-state students seeking distinction, participants point out the challenges of living and studying in London as a means to distinguish themselves from those "outsiders" studying elsewhere in the country (p. 97).

Notably, Brianne later draws a distinction between 'surviving' and 'thriving' abroad. The ability to thrive abroad – a qualitative condition and outcome – is a measure of success in comparison to those that struggle to merely 'survive'. Her experience is thus qualitatively different and distinguishable from friends and peers. What stands out from this narrative is the qualitative manner in which participants describe, frame and assess the valour of the experience as if the sojourn was some epic, challenging conquest. Brianne continues:

"I think it does feel kind of cool to say that I went to Rwanda and worked there and lived there and it feels like an accomplishment to come out of it alive. I feel really proud that I can say that I went to this poor country and was able to survive and

even thrive sometimes, so I think it put a little bit more confidence in me that I can be resourceful."

Brianne boasts of the 'coolness' factor ascribed to such a destination and experience. By describing their destination as a 'poor' area of the world, she frames her sojourn in the Global South as both a risky and rewarding endeavour that valorises the exchange (Elsurd, 2001). Participants also distinguish themselves from fellow international students by highlighting their participation in more authentic and unique experiences while abroad. Marie-Anne implies this perspective through her photo of an elderly woman she assisted as part of the volunteer work she undertook on the side of her studies in Lima, Peru (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Marie-Anne assists an elderly woman in Lima.

"It was a really lovely experience because I had some contact with another reality *(contact avec une autre réalité)*. Because the entire time I lived in… I lived with foreigners in a well-off neighbourhood *(un quartier aisé)*. I went to a well-off university *(une université aisé)* and I arrived there with people who didn't have it

easy in life, and you know, I'm happy because with that I saw another soul of Peru *(un autre âme du Pérou)* that other people on exchange didn't necessarily see. All they saw… they went to Yara, they went in the jungle, they went to Ayahuasca, but they didn't see Peruvian life. So you know, I feel lucky that, not privileged but you know, I think it was still a fortunate opportunity *(une chance)* that I was able to do that, to have a contact with those people."

Marie-Anne expresses her luck in having been fortunate enough to volunteer with local Peruvians during her studies in Lima in a way that other international students were uninterested or unable. She alludes to her distinction in experiencing everyday 'Peruvian life' in contrast to the popular tourist sites that other exchange students seemingly prioritise over her choice of volunteer work. Her interactions with local elderly people afford her with a different perspective – a different soul – of Peruvian life that her fellow internationals missed out on or overlooked. In fact, participants seem to want to outdo the value and worth of their experience in relation to others. Arianne illustrates this contention:

"I think I get more frustrated by the fact that there are people that understand absolutely nothing of what I'm saying and the worse is that if they think they understand, and like, I have a friend that spent 9 days in Venezuela and we were talking about our experiences like [they said], 'ya! I love South America!' and I was like, 'Can you really say that?' (laughs) I don't know, it's only 9 days in one country. So things like that, that I think before going it wouldn't have bugged me at all but now it's weird."

Arianne affirms the value and distinction of her sojourn by devaluing that of her friend's. A tourism trip is judged as inferior, less worthy and having less credibility than an educational sojourn but this is also in relation to time spent in the same place abroad. Arianne mocks and downplays the length of her friend's sojourn as too brief to appreciate and lay claims to the entire continent or region of South America, implicitly contrasting it to her own more lengthy sojourn of 6 months in Chile. Length and context of the sojourn carry more worth and value than short-term leisure travels, which explains why participants express their frustration when social relations in Canada refer and view their sojourn as a leisure 'trip', rather than a *living*, *working* and/or *studying* part of the local everyday life. Benson (2010) describes how "migrants strived towards a sense of authentic living to qualify their social standing" and distinguish themselves from the "less authentic lives" of their British

counterparts (p. 69). In her study of backpackers, Falconer (2013) underscores the length of the sojourn as an important marker of distinction vis-à-vis tourist and short-term travellers (see also Waters and Leung, 2013). Claims to acquisition of cultural capital are contested among different travellers and according to the length and purpose of the international sojourn. Longer-term sojourners are deemed to possess more legitimate claims to cultural and social capital. Time is the highest indication of distinctive value (Bourdieu, 1979). As Bourdieu (1997) notes, "the work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost (on paie de sa personne, as we say in French), an investment, above all of time" (p. 48). Depending on context and necessity, participants will alternate between being a member of a collective distinction (inclusive of all travellers) to that of an individual distinction, based on refined and personalised criteria.

However, for some participants, visits from family members pose a problem to their claim of distinction. The physical presence of family during the sojourn abroad can lessen the badge of achievement and distinction in the eyes of others. Such is Amy's case when her parents announce they are coming to visit her in Peru. Amy voices her concerns over how a parental visit may adversely affect her image and sense of independence:

"When I found out that my parents are coming I was like, 'oh ya, that's good', and then I was kind of like, does this make me seem, like, I don't know, I was wondering if I almost felt less independent. Like, I can't even go away for three months without having my parents coming to see me (laughs). So wondering if it was like my own trip to go away by myself for three months but I kind of I thought of about it, and like, nah, I know my parents and they aren't coming because they feel they need to be here because I can't be away for three months alone, it's like they like to travel and they wanted to go on a trip and I'm in Peru so let's go there."

Amy's concern over her parents' visit likely stems more from a fear of appearing 'less independent' in the eyes of her peers, rather than a personal questioning of her independence. This could explain her need to justify their presence in Peru at the end of her comment. Visits from parents can devalue the self-change narrative and distinction, yet they offer participants an opportunity to demonstrate their local knowledge and validate their local insider status. Participants also narrate their sojourn in terms of difference. Amélie expresses this upon return:

"I question things a lot, to put things in perspective (*de relativiser*), that we buy things without awareness (*de façon inconsciente*). But unfortunately I cannot change people, the people that surround me, and that is frustrating. I would like to educate them. I don't know, (laughs) it's maybe a pretentious thing, but I have like a conscious that is a bit different and I have the impression that I'm marginal in relation to my society and I have the impression that I feel a bit different and that there aren't many people that can understand me."

Amélie, like many other participants, acknowledges the pretention of their comments, yet demonstrates how she uses her sojourn as a way to convey and affirm difference. This feeling of difference can thus be narrated publicly or internally as part of an individualised distinction. In their study of international students, Findlay et al. (2012) reveal that "simply by being 'different', they saw themselves as achieving 'distinction' through mobility" (p. 129). While I concur with this perspective, I suggest that many of my participants accidently stumble upon an opportunity for distinction (Waters and Brooks, 2010), rather than have purposely anticipated such an opportunity from the outset. Much of the process of hierarchal differentiation is internalized and not necessarily premeditated prior to the exchange. Difference is a qualitative condition that participants (un)intentionally showcase upon return to Canada. Nonetheless, while self-change was a personal motivation for embarking on an exchange, it can be subsequently used as part of private and public narratives that showcase authoritative knowledge and cultural capital.

Showcasing authoritative knowledge and cultural capital

International mobility provides an opportunity for accumulating different forms of capital. In particular, cultural capital is narrated upon return through claims of authoritative knowledge (Simpson, 2005). Desforges (1998) explains that young people can convert their experiences into cultural capital "through a narrative of personal development and authoritative knowledge about the world" (p. 189) while Simpson (2005) argues that gap years enable individuals to claim authoritative knowledge over others. Participants are eager to showcase among peers and family the cultural capital they have cultivated or inevitably acquired through their sojourn abroad. Back at her parents' home and at her university classes in Ottawa, Katie recounts a conversation with family and a discussion in the classroom:

"I had a few interesting conversations with my mom and my step dad over dinner and it made me notice that I have a very different perspective on that area of the world now and that culture that other people don't have. So I find myself wanting to explain that a lot to people and throwing it in class discussions as an example, like, 'well I've seen this other way of life and it makes me think this,' which I don't do consciously or something but I think it's kind of a part of me now. But I can see how that experience has put a stamp on my way of conversing."

Family and friends and even peers at the university not only reveal to participants their newfound perspectives, but act as an audience to communicate and showcase their knowledge of a particular place. Katie explains how the experience affords her with a different perspective on the world; a perspective she can now use to showcase her cultural capital and distinction. Cultural capital is showcased and transmitted in the academic classroom in the form of authoritative knowledge:

"So I feel like I'm a bit more articulate on those issues now and that's definitely a change and that was something that I was looking forward from this experience; to speak about the developing world with a certain authority because those issues that I really care about but never had experience to speak to …. So I feel wiser in that sense and more articulate and able to question a lot more what I thought about African development and certain projects that are going on in east Africa."

Katie shows how a particular type of knowledge of the world or of a specific region is highly valued in the academic context. Knowledge, particularly that gained first-hand over a period of time, imparts a marker of difference and distinction. This type of knowledge trumps that acquired in the classroom and positions Katie as an authority among her peers. Distinction is displayed through her insider knowledge and new-found "personal authority" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 279).

Moreover, some of the narratives reveal a sense of frustration but also a haughty tone towards others. Marilyn spent 2 months working as an intern in Sierra Leone where she witnessed some horrific violence and abuse of power that affected not only her view the world but also of her family and friends back in Canada:

"I know they say that when you go to Africa it's going to change you and you come back a different person and all of those things. I still feel the same but I feel more

mature. I feel more enlightened, and perhaps that's gone to my ego a bit. I know in some ways that I'm different. I have a lot less tolerance for people complaining about their problems because nobody here knows what it's like to have real problems. Like, when my brother complains about something or someone that he says: 'oh this is so stupid', I'm like, 'shut up! You don't know anything about problems! (laughs)."

Marilyn once again mythicises the continent of Africa into a homogenous space and place with transformative qualities that are seen as easily (and even automatically) transferable to its visitors, or at least – as most participants like to imply – to those that seek out its perceived 'authentic' practices and everyday life. Indeed, by expressing that she feels 'different' and 'enlightened', Marilyn is affirming that her sojourn lives up to the popular romanticised assumptions of Africa as a place that can 'change you'. Difference here is conveyed in the sense of personal improvement as well as distinction from others. Marilyn seems to acknowledge her egotism in order to subsequently justify deriding her brother for the apparent triviality of his comments. Despite acknowledging her pretention, she exhibits an attitude of (moral) superiority over her brother. Sibling rivalry could be at the root of Marilyn's criticism or it may be that family relatives are easy targets for participants to showcase their difference and cultural capital. MacCannell (1999) notes that non-travellers are viewed as "morally inferior to that of a person who 'gets out' often" (p. 159) while Heath (2007) suggests that young travellers' consider themselves more mature than stay-at-home peers. Many participants seem to adopt a moralistic tone in their narratives of personal growth and acquired knowledge. Cultural capital and first-hand gained knowledge permits participants to pass judgement on those less able or willing to participate in an international exchange. Christina shares her experience upon return:

"I'm shocked at people's ignorance or lack of awareness about certain things which some of my friends are like, 'well that's kind of your culture shock in that way too'. Like, in some of my classes some people say things that I'm like, 'your scope is like this big, you don't see the bigger perspectives'. To complain about certain things I'm like, you've got to be kidding me. Like, you're complaining that this doctor prescribed you this medicine and it's like, 'dude, he was trying to help you! And it's a good thing, you didn't have to walk for forever, it was readily available, it was subsidised. There is no way they will run out of it.' Just those kinds of things… so I guess now I'm not ungrateful which is a positive."

Christina's critical perspective of others is likely to be in part, as her friends suggest, a symptom of re-entry culture shock, yet it is conveyed as a verbal reminder to others that they lack her cultural capital and authoritative knowledge and are thus (morally) poorer for it. In the case of volunteer abroad programs for Canadian students in international development studies, Tiessen and Kumar (2013) note the "tendency of students to start feeling they are the 'experts' on everything related to development" based on their short-time abroad (p. 426). While it may be that my participants have become more informed about issues in the Global South in comparison to their stay-at-home peers, the narratives suggest a mixture of both re-entry frustration and condescending difference. Participants often showcase their distinction and difference by framing their experience in contrast to those who did not travel. As Arianne demonstrates:

> "I learned so much about myself, about what is important for me, but also what is important in life. I regret that my friends didn't have the opportunity to do something similar because in the beginning everyone wanted to go on exchange and finally, out of two of my close friends, I'm the only one that left and I find that sad because it was just an incredible experience."

Although Arianne expresses her disappointment that her friends did not follow suit, she explains how she benefited from their immobility and, as a result, gained an individual distinction. The personal changes benefitted from the exchange puts participants at a positional advantage (Noy, 2004). The immobility of friends automatically allows her to gain and carry back cultural capital that she can promote to others. In addition to her family relatives, Marilyn expresses a similar condescendence towards immobile peers:

> "I feel like I know, and I know this is almost naïve, and I know that because I spent two months in one country doesn't mean I know the whole world, but I feel that I have a better appreciation of the circumstance that other people live in and I better understand the conditions of the world around me. And part of me, and again this must be the enlightenment ego thing, I don't know, but I guess I feel sorry for other people who haven't experienced that. They just have no idea what it's like, what life is like somewhere as far away as Africa. All they know is Third World happiness in [small Canadian suburb]."

Once again, she seems to justify her derisive comments as a reaction and outcome of her 'enlightenment ego thing'. Marilyn, like many other participants, criticise others for their ignorance and privilege, yet their own narratives of personal change, difference, and authoritative knowledge are emblematic and indicative of a more problematic condition: that of reinforcing privilege and reproducing advantage (Findlay et al., 2012; Waters, 2012). Despite assumptions that international students are part of a privileged elite, informal conversations with my participants suggest that many are not particularly wealthy nor necessarily privileged (Waters and Brooks, 2010). Most participants, particularly those from Québec, receive funding that covers partially, if not most of the costs incurred from international exchanges. Nevertheless, international students are predominantly part of a middle-class that seeks to distinguish themselves within a growing culture of mobility and internationality (Findlay et al., 2012; Frändberg, 2009; Woodfield, 2010).

However, it seems that participants do not view immobility as a result of a lack of financial resources, but rather more in terms of a lack of emotional resources. Students from Ontario seem to focus the competition within their own socio-economic bracket/class, whereas students from Québec do not consider finances applicable because the province grants them generous scholarships to cover the costs of the exchange. In both cases, their first-hand knowledge distinguishes them from those emotionally not up to, or unfit for, the challenge. Marie-Josée reflects on the personal qualities she discovered in herself through reconnecting with her friends in Montréal:

> "From a personal point of view, I've learned that I'm maybe more daring/risk-taking (*téméraire*) than I thought. Like, I never thought that it took guts to go to South Africa. Especially when I arrived there, there were lots of foreigners, even if I was the only one from Québec, everyone was like its normal for us to do studies abroad. Yes my friends here [in Montréal] find it intense but over there it was normal. So I never realised how adventurous I was deep down."

Marie-Josée is not only suggesting how the reaction of friends in Montréal led her to discover her brave and adventurous side – qualities that require a mental and emotional capacity – but is also contrasting how these friends apparently lack such qualities. By expressing that studying abroad (and specifically in South Africa) was 'normal' for her, she is (not so) subtly underlining how innate these qualities are for her.

I suggest that, even though access to international academic mobility comes down mainly to economic means as well as academic results (e.g. lower grades) and linguistic

barriers (Findlay et al., 2005), participants view immobility predominantly in terms of social insecurity and emotional incapacity. The pity expressed for non-travellers – as Arianne and Marilyn commented above – is perhaps a pretentious reference to friends and peers that they consider as financially able but emotionally *un*able; that is, those who chose not to participate because of the very fact that the sojourn involves an *emotional* challenge (as indicated in Chapter 4). Non-mobile students are perhaps perceived and depreciated by their internationally mobile peers as being emotionally unwilling and incapable of sojourning abroad. Amélie explains how she feels talking about her sojourn to her friends in Canada as well as their lack of interest in her experience:

> "I lived something very 'human' (*j'ai vécu quelque chose de vraiment humain*). I have the impression that people aren't ready to hear that. … It's a little bit moralistic (*c'est un peu moralisateur*), so I don't talk to them about it much (laughs). We're not all at the same level, we're not all on the same progression/journey (*cheminement*), we don't all have the same values."

In referencing her 'very human' experience, Amélie suggests that her non-mobile friends are neither prepared nor willing to listen to – let alone live for themselves – an emotional experience abroad. She admits that her conversations may sound moralising, but proceeds nonetheless to imply that she is on a morally higher ground as a result. For mobile students, what may undermine their play for distinction is non-travellers' disinterest and indifference in "the game" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 247). As such, in order to up the stakes and prestige of the competition, international students may set a criterion for eligibility that rules out financial constraints as an excuse for not playing and is instead based on intrinsic emotional innateness, thereby ensuring that others are automatically entered as players into the 'game' and eventually outplayed. Distinction is premised on possessing the 'right' kind of cultural capital and knowledge but perhaps also on embodying and utilising the 'right' kind of emotional resources. On the other hand, distinction may not necessarily depend on a lack of specific emotions but rather, by being incapacitated and consumed by the presence of undesirable emotions. However, as Chapter 4 argues, distinction and a sense of achievement are acquired through overcoming and recalibrating particular emotions, such as discomfort. When I ask Christina if she would recommend the experience to others she responds affirmatively:

"I would completely recommend it … you need to be pushed, everybody needs to be pushed."

Laura: "Pushed in what way?"

"I guess the discomfort. Like, sometimes things are going to be hard, everybody needs to experience hard things because your mind gets pushed. … I would recommend anybody goes spends time abroad, but I also know that it's really hard. If you're the kind of person who can't be away from certain luxuries then in my case you couldn't really do it. That was definitely some of the hardest stuff was not having running water for two weeks or whatever, you know, not having a flush toilet and being sick a lot, stuff like that was really hard."

Christina would recommend an international exchange to friends and peers but cautions that the material and emotional discomforts of everyday life may prove too challenging and difficult for some. Thus, the will and ability to cope with discomfort is what distinguishes international students from their stay-at-home peers. Participants unanimously recommend the experience to friends; however, they caution that an international exchange is not for everyone. Rachel admits that she would not recommend the experience to everyone due to the everyday challenges:

"It comes with some really difficult challenges. You know, from the very simple day to day things like using the toilet and not being able to have hot water and showering with a bucket, and not having AC and being very humid. You know, all of those day-to-day things that you might not think about initially can really end up having a strong impact on how you feel each day."

The experience is promoted to friends in part as a need to validate and justify the exchange, yet by warning that the various physical and emotional challenges of the exchange are not for everyone, participants are acknowledging their own unique success and strength in conquering these challenges. This two-sided response highlights a two-fold necessity: to attest to the distinctive value of the sojourn, and to maintain exclusive 'rights' to difference and distinction. As a result, the international exchange is promoted and framed as an enviable experience to strive for and be admired by those less emotionally able and mentally willing. As such, participants seem to have few qualms about

showcasing and – as I show in the next section – performing difference. Thus, emotions are not only productive for recreating feelings of 'home' while abroad but also for demarcating and showcasing difference and distinction.

However, among the exuberant narratives of self-change and difference are those who are aware and wary of 'overdoing it'. Instead of flaunting their cultural capital some participants are critical of fellow travellers for being shamefully boastful about their experience. Not everyone can afford to participate in an international exchange and Élodie acknowledges that international mobility often stems from a privileged background:

> "It is true that it is a bit mundane, it's not everyone; that is, it is bourgeois, middle-class, privileged, not too privileged but let's say, it's not given to everyone to travel (*c'est pas donné à tout le monde*), so it can appear a bit pompous."

What Élodie intends to express by 'mundane' is that bragging can be banal in the way that 'place-dropping' is a common means of showing off. Bragging and showing off are perceived to be in poor taste and by this admonishment, Élodie is cautious not to overstate her experience:

> "And it can sound pompous, you know, like those people who are like: 'this one time in China…' you know those people that just talk about their trips and it's like, 'come on man, a lot of people haven't travelled here and it sounds snobbish'. Like, 'one time I went to Singapore and it was so…' You know what I mean? And I don't want to be like that. I know a girl that I'm like, 'dude, watch what you say'. She travelled a lot, you know. Be careful, at worst don't say it was in Singapore that it happened (laughs). Just to not make other people envious of you or just think that you're, I don't know. I just don't want to sound like that, so when I do, I just try to make it funny or short."

Élodie adopts a shortened and toned-down version of her experiences abroad to avoid putting off friends and brewing envy. By this testimony she highlights how place-dropping can engender envy and rub people up the wrong way. She is cautious not to convey her experience in a way that would be misinterpreted as pretentious. Desforges (2000) explains that travellers

"are intensely aware of the problem of being a 'travel bore' who goes too far in impressing their experiences onto other people. They have to select certain parts of their experiences, cutting them up, exaggerating for effect, making connections among different places: in short, using a whole host of narrative devices to communicate some kind of story to others" (p. 938).

Some participants choose to curb their travel narratives in order not to alienate friends or hinder the re-integration process into their original social networks. For her part, Élodie says:

"even if I'm not envious at all because I have travelled and I don't really want to go to Australia, but sometimes it's the way they talk, you really have the impression that they are bragging (*qu'ils se vantent*) and I really don't want to look like that."

Listening to other travellers unabashedly flaunt about the places they have visited can come across as uncouth and tasteless. Flashy statements can negate the intended effect of the narratives because a showy narrative "devalues itself by the very intention of distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 246). In this way, the narratives lose their appeal and value among the audience that is sought to validate and garner distinction. Katie is another participant who is irked by other travellers' grand narratives and inflated claims of self-change:

"I think it's really disingenuous when people come back all pious and pretend that they, like, are somehow different now. I actually have a few friends like that who they just really feel like they are different than everyone now because they had this experience and I'm like, 'no, I'm still an entitled white kid living in relative comfort.' Just because I went to Rwanda and experienced and saw and met people it doesn't really change that, so anyways."

While this critical regard would seem to suggest that some participants entirely reject collective distinction and forgo public narratives of difference, this is not necessarily the case. As discussed earlier, Katie does participate, even if unintentionally, in collective and public narratives of distinction. However, overstated claims of self-transformation are considered for some participants to be tacky, distasteful and damaging to the image of distinction that is delicately constructed and tacitly at play. The difference is in the strategic

way that some participants communicate and demonstrate difference. Distinction is efficaciously carved out of modest yet compelling narratives of difference. A tactful approach is used to convey difference and perhaps envy without being perceived and labelled as pretentious. Élodie and Katie are among a select few that seek to differentiate themselves from other exchange students whom they view as tarnishing the experience and distinction through overt arrogance and extravagant narratives of self-change. As such, they search for more indirect and understated approaches to exude difference. The next section discusses how participants demonstrate difference in a more tacit but evocative way through embodied performance.

Performing difference

While narratives are an explicit way of conveying one's identity and difference, a tacit method of expressing and affirming difference is through embodied performances. Noy (2004) mentions the 'performative dimensions' of travel narratives about self-change (p. 95) while Sin (2009) reveals that volunteer tourists "performed a 'self' that is sensitive to the locals, different from 'other' mass tourists who are often deemed to be insensitive" (p. 493) and that has developed "a deeper understanding of local conditions" (p. 491). The body is the utmost representation of taste and class and an expressive means of transmitting the signs of difference (Bourdieu, 1979). I suggest that participants perform difference through newly acquired habits, practices and linguistic skills. Transporting and enacting new practices in Canada is a performance of difference that attests to personal change. Judy describes how local habits from Peru pervade her everyday life in Canada:

> "I miss Spanish a lot. I find that if I'm not paying attention or if I'm passing someone, things that I would use very, very often in Peru, I'm using here. So if someone does something for me, I say 'gracias, de nada' and I don't even think about it until after, like, wait a minute (laughs). Like, if a small child is about to run into to me, which had happened to me in the airport, instead of being like, 'Oh be careful!' I'll say it in Spanish because I'm so used to do that with my children in the class. Oh! Crossing the street; I don't cross at the light. I j-walk 10 metres down because in Peru you just j-walk everywhere, there aren't street lights half of the time. I was like, this is so illegal, I'm going to get in so much trouble."

While language and practices acquired abroad do become habits, their reproduction in the place of origin can become an intentional performance of symbolic difference. Linguistic capital is presented through oral performances while embodied cultural capital is displayed through corporeal performances. Waters (2012) argues that "embodied cultural capital is acquired by international students who intentionally immerse themselves within a foreign culture and language-environment, thereby acquiring various cosmopolitan 'cultural traits' (language ability, accent, style of dress, sense of humour, and so on) deemed desirable" (p. 127). Judy showcases her newly acquired linguistic and cultural capital through everyday practices and her ease with the Spanish language. Participants play up differences through practices that stand out beyond the normative standards of Canadian society. Such practices and habits are performed for public consumption and differentiation. Marilyn, for example, did in fact participate in everyday life as discussed in Chapter 4 by emulating local mundane practices such as carrying baskets on her head (see Figure 22):

Figure 22. Marilyn engages in local everyday practices in Sierra Leone.

"That picture it represents I guess running to overcome obstacles. There was another picture I was going to send of me sort of struggling to even pick up a bucket and you know, by the end of my trip I was carrying buckets on my head full of water, you know, up and down stairs, and down to the market, those sorts of things, so it was learning to do everything the African way. … Like, I carried, just for fun I carried my bag on my head to the bus stop the other day, and it was just so strange and people were looking at me, but that's the best way to carry things."

While Marilyn generalises a local practice of carrying objects on her head as 'African', she also frames this practice as part of her successful transition from struggling in Sierra Leone to thriving and becoming a local insider. Yet her comment of re-creating this local practice in Canada could be an (unintentional) performance of difference that invites an unassuming audience to affirm Marilyn's difference through their stares, glares and bewilderment. Valérie is another example of a participant who, by maintaining (and imposing) local customs from Chile upon return to Montréal, signals to her friends her acquisition of cultural capital:

"For example, I invited some people at my place and they arrived at 8h30pm and I was like, 'what are you guys doing here?' (laughs). They're like, 'well, you want us to come in?' And then I was like, 'no, I'm not ready but okay, come in' (laughs). For me, it's unthinkable because when we invited people at our place in Chile the first people arrived at 10h30pm and until midnight, but here at midnight it's finished. So I think I'm surprised when people here go to bed at midnight, it makes no sense, but I was finishing small parties at 4am and the big parties at 7am."

While Valérie appears surprised by her friends' early arrival to her place, her story attests to narratives of bodily difference: people here still do this, but now I do this. The performances are a provocation to their audience, provoking a reaction from both friends and members of the public and thus generating interest in her experience. Although François denies exaggerating his new Brazilian practices, these nonetheless draw the attention and bemusement of his friends:

"My friends laugh a bit sometimes, like, 'ya, you're really acting Brazilian (*tu fais ton brésilien*) because you do this like this' and 'ya, it's funny you wear your shirt from Rio and your Havaianas and you do your Brazilian thing'. No, I'm not able to dress

differently. You know, people laugh because I wear flip-flops but I wear flip-flops because there's nothing more comfortable, and that's it. Also food that I eat because I brought back *farofa[8]*; I listen to Brazilian music. They find it really bizarre when I put on *forró[9]* and sing the lyrics of the songs and they are like, 'ha! It's funny'. They think I'm exaggerating but I'm not."

Despite scepticism from friends of the inherent nature of his new habits, François demonstrates difference – whether unintentionally or deliberately – by embodying local Brazilian ways and appearances, but also by expressing and performing bodily comfort. Here, comfort is used to indicate and convey a natural effortlessness and innateness of Brazilian habits to showcase his belonging, cultural capital and transformation into a Brazilian local. International students use specific foods and eating habits to distance themselves from their culture of origin and convey difference and distinction (Brown, 2009b) and their acquisition of a new 'home'. Bringing and eating Brazilian food in Canada is part of an embodied performance of "consuming difference" (Germann Molz, 2007, p. 85) and showcasing cultural capital (May, 1996). Difference is performed through material, linguistic, musical and consumptive practices. The body on display is an expression of difference that showcases difference and cultural capital. For example, Johnson (2007) suggests that there is a "reinscription of the self, often marked by the acquiring of a tattoo, jewellery, or even a tribal-language name" (p. 162). Indeed, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) notes how some participants mention that "you can change your own skin" (p. 98) and François, having experienced 40°C in Rio de Janeiro, illustrates this point:

"I miss the heat too. Everyone is saying, 'ya, it's really hot here [in Montréal] this week', and I'm like, 'no, it's 27°C, it's not hot. There's nothing to flip out about (*rien à capoter*)' (laughs)."

François reminds his friends of his difference through bodily narrations as his body is read by, and narrated to, friends and family. Indeed, Elsrud (2001) suggests that "the traveling body … is a powerful instrument in narrative practices" (p. 611). It can be used to assert difference and cultural capital through both performative and narrational means (Noy, 2004). As such, difference is showcased as part of a show-and-tell performance, where social differentiation is asserted and performed through habits, practices, language and appearance. In this sense, the body tells a story in a way that can be more effective and

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[8] Manioc (cassava) flour, which is used in many Brazilian food dishes.
[9] A genre of Brazilian music.

compelling than verbal narratives. Actions speak louder than words and participants have demonstrated the powerful use of performance in conveying social difference.

An ongoing transformative process

While many participants claim the international sojourn resulted in self-discovery and self-change, some feel that the experience is part of an ongoing process of individual transformation. In the case of Li's (2010) study, her "findings indicated that travel clearly entailed an internal voyage in which the travellers were in the process of discovery of who they and who the others are" (p. 210-11). Self-identity is processual and developmental (Cohen, 2010; Crang, 2004) and so too are youth transitions (Valentine, 2003) and self-discovery (Li, 2010). The sense of self is continuously susceptible to ramifications and change. Rather than an end result, the international exchange is part of a larger and longer journey of self-discovery, self-development and transition to adulthood. Aurélie reflects on this aspect of her experience:

> "I don't think things have changed radically that people would say that I've completely changed directions (*virer de bords*), but it's maybe more that things have evolved. Like I said, I've already been to South America, I already travelled a bit so it's maybe more a gradual process that I will always discover a bit different ways of living (*façons de vivre*) or different personal ways (*façons personnelles*) and always put that into question (*remettre ça en question*). Sometimes I even question myself that, 'ah ok, that upset me, but why? And is it justified?', but I don't think there is anything that drastically changed"

Previous experiences in South America may have triggered a process of self-discovery that set Aurélie on a course for seeking out future experiences abroad – such as her exchange in Chile – and thus accruing additional mobility capital. The experience did not amount to dramatic changes but paved the way for additional opportunities for personal discoveries and development and thus, further mobility. The possibility to impress changes to one's way of life, even if transient, can excite a desire to pursue further experiences of transformation abroad (Crouch, 2004). Crouch offers this perspective: "In changing destinations the individual may seek to continue the possibility of change, however frustrated their desire may be" (p. 91). Findlay et al. (2006) point out that students are part of a mobility culture that reproduces subsequent mobility. Indeed, prior to their departure at

least nine participants had confirmed they had already been accepted to another study exchange or internship placement following this exchange – either in the Global South or in the Global North. When asked if she would recommend the experience to friends, Amanda says:

> "Yes, I would, because you learn a lot about yourself. You learn about different worlds and you learn how to use yourself in different ways and think in different ways. It makes you more creative in life and stuff, and it makes you more tolerant. It makes you more driven to be that person you want to be even if you can't be that person yet, it can really open your eyes to those aspects of the person that you like. I feel like there's lots of changes that I can do myself and I can't do them all yet but I feel an experience like that can make you more aware of them and then you're one step closer to actually becoming that person you want to be."

Amanda feels that her experience afforded personal clarity and new attributes, but that the self she strives for is a work in progress. Personal change may not be entirely or permanently achieved, but the exchange nevertheless imparted personal attributes that have equipped Amanda with the tools to (re)construct the kind of individual she wishes to be. Her image or idea of that kind of individual may also evolve with time. Subsequent experiences could prompt her to revise her aspirations of self and thus, provoke additional international pursuits for self-change. International sojourns may not produce the adult-like or ideal self that participants seek out; rather, it is part of the transition to adulthood and a stepping stone which offers a window into the self and a path towards further personal development.

Concluding remarks

This chapter suggested that students view their international exchange as having enabled the development of personal attributes which they intended to maintain upon return to their Canadian hometowns. An increase in self-confidence including a more relaxed, outgoing and friendly attitude were reported as the most notable newly acquired qualities. Participants expressed that the sojourn allowed for self-discovery and self-change. The benefits of the experience are articulated as part of a personal, but also a public narrative of self-growth and change. Successful completion of the international exchange not only represented a personal sense of achievement but signalled to others that personal change

was a natural and expected outcome of the experience. Through popular travel rhetoric and assumptions, the sojourn abroad was used by participants to break away from the previous image attached to them by family and friends and ultimately justify and legitimatise their 'new' self. Thus, I argue that the sojourn abroad is an opportunity for participants' to refashion their image in their place of origin.

The findings demonstrated that space and time can create contrasting senses of self. As participants forge new social networks and friendships abroad, a 'new' sense of self emerges and becomes intimately tied up with that socio-spatial temporality. Returning to a place of origin can complicate participants' sense of self and hinder the development process. Re-entry into the home social network can threaten to undo the perceived gains in personal transformation and incur a regression to previous practices and hence, an older sense of self. I argue that place and social networks therefore play a critical role that can either disable or enable personal development and change. Depending on family and friends the return can provoke a disjuncture between both socio-spatial temporalities that can feel like two separate lives. I argue that family and friends are vital to participants' ongoing process of self-discovery and development. Social relations must engage in participants' exceptional and mundane experiences abroad in order to weave the sojourn into their personal biography. As Sin (2009) notes, "the 'self' is continually performed both externally to one's audiences (friends, relatives, and other people one comes across) and internally to strengthen one's self-identity" (p. 491). Narration to social networks is necessary to reconcile both spatio-temporalities and maintain a new sense of self.

Social networks are also essential to conferring a sense of distinction. This chapter has offered a finer grained perspective of the process of distinction by refining the notion in two categories: collective and individual. Participants expect and seek out validation from social relationships in order to gain a sense of distinction among friends and peers. Value and distinction can only be achieved through other people's regard and interest for international exchanges as a commendable and enviable experience. As such, participants engage with other international students in shared narratives of personal change and self-discovery to promote a collective distinction. In this way, participants can co-validate their personal and public narratives of self-development and change. Qualities of openness and 'getting out of the comfort zone' are the common denominators linking international students to an exclusive group. The act of co-narrating the experience and the associated benefits derived from the sojourn forms the basis for a collective distinction and membership to a distinctive and prestigious group. Narration is also part of the ongoing process of self-reflection and accumulation of social and cultural capital.

However, this chapter shows that travelling at its simplest form can transfer cultural, social, linguistic and mobility capital. In particular, mobility to the Global South holds more value than travel within the Western world and infers a more distinctive position to the traveller within the international mobility hierarchy. The socio-economic status of the Global South seems to offer greater challenges and thus more potential for transformation and distinction. Through their choice of country, participants differentiate themselves not only from other travellers but also from fellow international students. As international student mobility increases so too do the stakes for distinction. To prevent membership from reaching a critical number that threatens to debase the distinctive value of the collective, members must continuously re-assess and re-establish membership criteria to the group to maintain distinction. A process of differentiating and hierarchising between different categories and contexts of mobility serves to re-order travellers' distinction on the travel hierarchy. International students contend among themselves using qualitative, temporal and spatial markers of difference. I suggest that participants negotiate a tension between a need to co-validate the experience through a *collective* distinction with a desire to gain an *individual* distinction. Participants vacillate between both forms of distinction based on necessity and context. Once collective distinction is achieved participants seek to differentiate themselves in negation to other international (Canadian) students through qualitative measures. As Bourdieu (1984) explains, performances of difference and distinction help

> "to maintain constant tension in the symbolic goods market, forcing the possessors of distinctive properties threatened with popularisation to engage in an endless pursuit of new properties through which to assert their rarity. The demand which is generated by this dialectic is by definition inexhaustible since the dominated needs which constitute it must endlessly redefine themselves in terms of distinction which always defines itself negatively in relation to them" (p. 249).

Time is of essence and value (Bourdieu, 1997). Longer sojourns are considered to offer greater accumulations of cultural and social capital. The educational context and purpose of the sojourn is deemed more worthy than a leisure trip and participants tend to devalue other peoples' travel experiences in order to elevate their own individual distinction. A successful sojourn is judged in terms of an ability to not only survive abroad but, more pre-eminently, *thrive*. I suggest that sharpening the notion of distinction into two categories allows us to better understand its complex, contested and iterative process, and reveals

the underlying contradictions, motivations and aspirations of international exchange students.

As this chapter demonstrated, the international exchange allows participants to accrue a wealth of cultural and social capital that can be showcased upon return in the form of authoritative knowledge. First-hand knowledge exceeds that learnt in the classroom context and enables participants to supersede peers as an authority on development issues and a specific part of the world. The attainment of cultural capital seems to warrant participants' criticism of others' ignorance and privilege. Yet, cultural capital acquired through travel inevitably reproduces advantage and privilege. However, immobility is viewed not in terms of financial constraints but as an emotional shortcoming. Participants admonish those in the same economic category with the financial means to travel but that are instead emotionally unwilling to take on the challenge. Yet I suggest that distinction is not necessarily a planned motivation from the outset of the sojourn; rather, their awareness of the potential for distinction likely manifests itself through interactions with other people abroad and upon return, and may reflect more a reactive response to re-entry shock as well as a need to validate and justify their experience abroad and their absence from 'home' than to actively outdo and diminish others.

Although many participants boast of their self-growth in public narratives of difference, some disparage fellow international students for bragging about the experience and their supposed changes. Showing off and 'place-dropping' is not only considered distasteful but potentially harmful to the collective distinction. Such extravagant narratives and claims are recognised by other participants as detrimental to their distinction. As such, some adopt a more understated yet compelling approach of conveying difference through embodied performances. I suggest that newly appropriated habits and practices are performed as a tacit way of expressing difference. Cultural capital is attested through performances of difference that include material, musical, linguistic, bodily and consumptive practices. The body is a powerful and dynamic form of expression that can narrate and perform markers of difference and this chapter also showed how emotions, and specifically feelings of comfort, are used in narratives and performances of difference and distinction.

I concluded in arguing that the international exchange experience is part of an ongoing process of transformation. The sense of self is processual and developmental, always subject to modifications and reassessments. International travel is a stepping stone along the journey of self-discovery and personal change. Previous experiences abroad lead way to subsequent mobility that continues to build on students' project of self-

(re)construction or reinvention. The habits and practices transported to Canada – whether temporary or durable – are part of the young people's ever changing sense of self. This chapter thus demonstrated that international exchange experiences are part of a continuous process of transformation and self-discovery.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Laura: "If you had to write a letter to your future self to be read upon your return to Canada, what would you say?"

> "I think it would be, well I think it would be a lot of questions, in the sense that, in that way, it would allow the future me to reflect more, if that makes sense? … But what I meant, I think, is that I want to learn about myself, so I think this is the opportunity for me to learn, and so by writing this letter, again, with questions like, 'Where do you see yourself going from here? Was this a good experience? Would you do this again? Do you think this made you a better person or are you the same?' I think that is also a question I would have, I mean, it's going to be enriching regardless … you'll learn a lot more, but even if you learn one thing, I think it's going to be enriching."

I chose this letter, narrated by Brianne prior to her two-month internship in Rwanda, to conclude my study as it fittingly and effectively links participants' pre-departure motivations with their expectations of the return and illustrates one of the main themes evoked throughout this thesis. Brianne, like other participants, was motivated to study abroad for self-discovery and self-change and the questions she poses in her letter address and reflect on the potential, if not probable, changes and discoveries to her future sense of self. Her letter is in fact a provocation and reflexive note to her future (but also current) self. Indeed, the very act of posing these questions prompts her to reflect and come to her own conclusion that the outcome of her exchange will invariably be an enriching experience. Yet, her letter also supports one of the central arguments of this thesis – that self-discovery is developmental and part of an ongoing transformative process which extends from pre-departure preparations to well-beyond the return.

In this thesis I argue that international mobility exchanges to the Global South are used by Canadian students for self-discovery, discovery of 'home' and distinction. Despite these findings, the notion of 'home' has been largely neglected within studies on international student mobility while studies on self-discovery have not engaged with the notion in sufficient depth. I suggest that feelings of comfort and the notions of the comfort zone and everyday life are useful for understanding how students use and engage with mobility and place in order to discover, change and distinguish themselves throughout

their experience. The notion of 'home' reveals how it is complex, emotional and intertwined with the sense of self. Students' sense of self is embedded and wrapped in feelings of 'home' as comfortable, familiar and social. This thesis responds to calls from scholars for research on mobility to consider the notions of 'home' and the role of particular emotions in influencing experiences of mobility, and more specifically, for studies on international student mobility to engage more in-depth with notions of self-discovery and self-development. It also addresses a need for a processual understanding of students' experiences of mobility by examining the process of these emotional and mobile experiences of the self and 'home'. In this final chapter, I gather the main themes and arguments of my research in relation to my original research questions and outline the conceptual and empirical findings of the study. Finally, I suggest some ways forward for future research.

Conceptual contributions

International student mobility is rapidly establishing itself as a dynamic and fruitful field of inquiry within geographical scholarship (King and Raghuram, 2013) and with the recent surge of studies in this area, scholars have begun to consider the importance of 'home' within student experiences (Anderson, 2012; Collins, 2009; Kenyon, 1999; Skey, 2011). Yet, there is still a need for research to explore the influence of mobility on young people's conceptions of 'home'. And while studies on students' sense of self are making headway within the literature scholars have noted lingering gaps regarding self-discovery and self-development. By considering the importance of particular emotions in the experience of mobile international students, my study reveals the significance and interplay of feelings of comfort within young people's experiences of mobility, place, 'home' and self-discovery. This thesis therefore makes important empirical and conceptual contributions to research on international student mobility through its focus on 'home' and the self.

More specifically, my study has explored the motivations of students for participating in international student exchanges and the process of their experience throughout their journey to and from the Global South. It reveals that students view and use international exchanges as an opportunity to discover, develop and change their sense of self, and suggests that their expectations for self-discovery and change originate from popular travel discourses and study abroad rhetoric. A desire to leave the comfort zone was given as a predominant motivation for participating in an exchange in the Global South and as a means to incite self-discovery, self-development and self-change. From

this viewpoint, Chapter 4 engaged with the notion of 'comfort zone' to unpack the underlying reasons for choosing mobility abroad, and particularly to the Global South. It revealed that distance from familiar and comfortable physical, emotional and cultural contexts and thus, familiar places, is perceived as productive for enabling a reflexive and introspective self. The pervasive references to stepping away from emotional and physical settings of comfort and familiarity demonstrated how the boundaries of the comfort zone are aligned along international and imaginative borders of the Western world, effectively blurring or erasing cultural diversity and homogenising the Global North as a space of comfort and familiarity in contrast to the Global South as a homogenous space of discomfort and unfamiliarity. The Global South is seen as a challenging place with bountiful risks and discomforts and thus, generous opportunities for self-discovery. While this thesis acknowledges heterogeneity, it reveals how students draw dualistic borders between the socio-economic contexts of the Global North and the Global South in order to demarcate spatial contexts that are un/productive for self-discovery. In turn, my study shows that place and mobility mediate feelings of physical and emotional (un)familiarity and (dis)comfort. In other words, this thesis shows that space and place are important for navigating and negotiating the emotional boundaries of a (un)reflexive 'self' drawn along international and imaginative borders of the Global North/South. More importantly, it asserts that place matters. It also illustrates not only how emotions are inflected through mobility and affected by space/place but how particular emotions are regarded as conducive for self-discovery and change. In doing so, I attend to the calls by Bissell (2008) for geographers to turn their "sustained attention to the nuances" and complexities of comfort (p. 1697) and what it "can potentially do" (p. 1709). Indeed, discomfort has the potential to provoke self-discovery in the expectations of mobile students.

Although spaces and contexts of discomfort are sought out for self-discovery and change, this study reveals how students' motivations are laced with contradictory intentions. Indeed, my study shows that students want to develop comfort abroad as part of a larger motive and strategy of belonging. The ultimate 'challenge' expressed by participants is therefore to assimilate into the local society by making the unfamiliar become familiar, and the uncomfortable become comfortable. From this perspective, I have demonstrated that students regard mundane practices abroad as exotic and extraordinary precisely because they are unexceptional in the local context and offer a possible access into local 'insiderness'. In other words, students are enticed by everyday practices abroad because these are viewed as a way of embodying a native localness and thus, a means of becoming familiar with, and integrating into, the local milieu. Students

negotiate and attenuate feelings of discomfort from feeling of 'in/out of place' by acquiring insider knowledge through participation in everyday life (Snee, 2013). I argue that students regard not so much their *mobility abroad* as a reflexive exercise but instead their *relative immobility while abroad* precisely because greater time spent in an unfamiliar everyday context can change habits and gradually instil a sense of familiarity, comfort and belonging. This reveals the pivotal role of time for acquiring comfort and familiarity while abroad and thus, self-discovery, change and belonging. Drawing on Bissell's (2014) concept of habit as productive for comfort and familiarity, I suggest that habits, dispositions and everyday practices constitute the base of the comfort zone. From this perspective and that of participants, I suggest that everyday practices are used by students to not only effect self-discovery and personal changes but to extend the boundaries of their comfort zone to the Global South. I therefore argue that mobility can reconfigure a sense of comfort as well as the boundaries of the comfort zone and hence, the sense of 'home'. Thus, this thesis contributes insights into an overlooked area of work on everyday life within international student mobility.

Another key conceptual contribution of my study emerges from students' (re)discovery of 'home'. This study engages with geographies of home to address a lacuna within studies of international student mobility. In doing so, this thesis contributes to notions of 'home' as felt, complex, mobile, malleable, multi-temporal and multi-local. Indeed, travel and mobility between places "reveal the significance of temporal, social and emotional boundaries in defining home" (Case, 1996, p. 10). My findings concur with studies that discuss how mobility can complicate and blur feelings and meanings of 'home' but also allow for 'home' to be re-affirmed, reassessed, refigured and expanded (Germann Molz, 2008; Ahmed, 1999). Much like for self-discovery, the notions of everyday life, comfort and familiarity are shown to also play a constructive role within the process of home-making. Comfort is explicitly tied to 'home' and this study has shown that comfort mediates and re-creates feelings of homeliness while abroad. That being said, this thesis acknowledges and recognises the power geometries and inherent ontological comfort of voluntary mobility as well as critical geographies of 'home' that make space for instances and presences of unfamiliarity, discomforts, and strangeness. The study further reveals that students develop a sense of belonging and 'home' through gaining familiarity of, and comfort in, everyday life and places in their new city. In fact, this thesis challenges scalar and conceptual notions of 'home' at the scale of the nation. The findings of my project support and correspond with studies that have linked notions and feelings of 'home' and belonging to the space and scale of the city (Blunt and Bonnerjee, 2013; Datta, 2011;

Lahiri, 2010). This appears to be a practical and strategic undertaking whereby an urban space presents a more feasible place to familiarise oneself with and a more credible area to lay claims of belonging. I thus propose the term 'cityzen' to refer to participants' claims of belonging, 'home' and insiderness within the city and its community rather than at the national space.

More significantly, this thesis suggests that mobility enables a *re*discovery of 'home', in which students are implicated in an ongoing process of (re)creating and *re*discover*ing* meanings of 'home'. I suggest that the notion of 'discovery' should be apprehended through a process and active form of the verb (re)discover*ing*. I therefore contribute to work that conceptualises self-discovery as an ongoing process of reflection (Li, 2010). I argue that one of the important discoveries of 'home' through mobility is that it is in fact a *feeling*, and hence one that is mobile and can be transported to, and re-created in, different places. In particular, the study has demonstrated that feelings of love, comfort and 'home' were explicitly evoked through the physical and virtual presence of friends, significant others and family members, both abroad and in Canada. Notably, it revealed that self-discovery and homely feelings were enacted abroad through the visits of friends and family and the presence of new *in situ* and online social networks as well as upon returning to the 'home' social networks in Canada. More importantly, I put forth the argument that mobility and social networks allow for both a (re)discovery of 'home' and a discovery of self. These findings illustrate that self-discovery and a discovery of 'home' are both processes that span from the arrival abroad to the return 'at home' and ostensibly well beyond.

While discovery is an ongoing process, this thesis reveals that students view their international sojourn in terms of a successful journey of self-discovery, self-development and change. Yet, I argue that travel and study abroad discourses automatically speak to a process of self-discovery and self-growth and that these popular assumptions are used by students to support their claims to any real or imagined changes. However, this thesis did not examine or argue for the veracity or durability of these personal changes; rather, much as Tiessen and Heron (2012) highlight in their own study, "the findings are the perspectives of the youth participants and serve as a reflection of their imagined selves" (Tiessen and Heron, 2012, p. 50). What it did indicate is that the return to Canada juxtaposed contrasting socio-spatial temporalities which yielded a self-discovery of positive and, at times, less positive latent and taken-for-granted habits, beliefs, values and attitudes. Independence and confidence are the primary personal attributes that participants identified as self-discoveries, echoing broader narratives of youth transitions.

The thesis suggests that international exchanges are used by students to accelerate and accentuate youth transitions to adulthood or, at least, to legitimise and attest to this transition. Although some participants expressed self-discovery in terms of a 'true self', this seemed more as a metaphorical expression to refer to the absence of parental influence or the social network from the place of origin rather than an actual essential self. Indeed, the thesis concurs with scholars that the self (Cohen, 2010), self-discovery (Li, 2010) and youth transitions (Valentine, 2003) are an ongoing developmental process.

My findings suggest that students' mobility through time and place(s) has generated two spatially and relatively distinct social networks in which students' sense of self became muddled and entangled. This in turn, I suggest, can hinder the self-development process and cause students to feel that their sense of self is dislocated between two socio-spatial temporalities, between two separate lives or imagined realities. I thus sustain my argument that family and friends play a key role in the ongoing process of students' sense of self by either disabling or enabling personal development and self-change. Here, I reassert the importance of place as a locus for social networks and a sense of self. This is not to argue that students' sense of self is bounded to place; rather, that place and the self are fluid entities and that instead, different places abroad and 'at home' mediate and negotiate students' sense of self.

Social networks, as this thesis has shown, are also integral to a process of distinction. Indeed, this thesis contributes conceptually to distinction by sharpening the notion into two categories: collective and individual. I argue that students must narrate their experience to friends, family and peers in order to showcase authoritative insider knowledge and their accumulation of social, cultural and linguistic capital as well as to validate the perks and benefits of their exchange and confer a sense of distinction. Distinction requires a receptive audience to accrue and legitimise valuable and distinctive social and cultural capital. My study reveals how students share and exchange tales of self-discovery, self-change and 'leaving the comfort zone' among each other to promote and generate interest and distinctive value for international exchanges, thereby creating an exclusive and prestigious group. Yet, it also reveals that when opportune moments arise and popularity threatens to strip the distinctive lustre of the group, students compete amongst each other for higher ranks and stakes of distinction. As a result, a continuous process of differentiation and re-hierarchising between various types and contexts of mobility re-order and re-position individuals within the distinction echelon. My findings illustrate how qualitative, temporal and spatial markers of difference are used to compete for higher and/or different forms distinction. I suggest that participants negotiate a tension

between a need to co-validate the experience through a *collective* distinction with a desire to gain an *individual* distinction. I thus put forward a finer grained representation of the notion of distinction and suggest that sharpening the notion into two categories allows us to better understand the complex, iterative and contradictory process of distinction as well as the underlying motivations of international exchange students. Yet, these are not mutually exclusive; rather, they overlap as students waver between both categories. Therefore, by drawing on and sharpening Bourdieu's notion of distinction in a way that illustrates the iterative process of hierarchisation between competing yet overlapping categories of distinction, I assert that voluntary and hence, privileged mobility reproduces social (dis)advantage. More specifically, using Bourdieu's theories of capital and distinction to analyse international student mobility demonstrates how students alternate between distinctive categories and thus, different exclusive groups that inevitably and (un)intentionally reinforce class structures and social inequalities not only among students and young people, but within and between the larger societies they navigate and inhabit through their different (im)mobilities.

This thesis also makes a contribution to emotional geographies and notions of distinction by demonstrating how feelings of comfort are productive for a process of differentiation and distinction. Indeed, my study suggests that students compare themselves to non-mobile peers they consider as financially capable but emotionally unable. I propose that, in their quest for distinction and performances of difference, students conveniently and strategically position other people not on the basis of economic constraints but rather, on emotional capacity and resources. I further suggest that distinction may depend on embodying the 'right' kind of emotions wherein comfort in unfamiliar practices and places demonstrates an ability to not only successfully adapt but integrate to different cultural contexts. This study hence argues, alongside other studies (Findlay et al., 2012; Noy, 2004; Waters, 2012) that international mobility reinforces privilege and reproduces advantage. It further reveals how some students opt for more sophisticated and understated approaches to conveying difference through embodied performances. I suggest that students use their body to perform difference through new habits, modes of dressing, edible and musical consumptive practices and language skills. Yet, I suggest that distinction is not necessarily intentionally sought out prior to the sojourn, but rather, that narratives of distinction emerge through, and are spurred by, interactions and discussions with people – both abroad and in Canada – and from a response to re-entry culture shock. Finally, as this study is about process of the experience, it argues that

students seek to encounter difference in order to *feel* different and ultimately to perform difference.

Empirical and methodological contributions

From a study abroad and short-term exchange perspective, international student mobility within and to the Western world (i.e. the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand) has been well documented. There is also a growing literature on mobility from the Global North to the Global South in the context of voluntourism and volunteer placements from university development studies. Yet there is an absence of work exploring short-term study exchanges from the Global North to the Global South and significantly less research on the experiences of outgoing Canadian students. While scholars continue to ponder and debate the benefits of international exchanges for students from the Global North in comparison to those from the Global South (Woodfield, 2010), this study shows how students' from the Global North view sojourns in the Global South as valuable for self-discovery, self-development and distinction. Likewise, exploring the experience of international students in the Global South reveals how place matters and differs for self-discovery and distinction. Since Canadian universities offer a wide selection of destinations in the Global South for students to choose from, the Canadian context provides a novel and diverse perspective on the experience and mobility flows of international students. There are also virtually no studies to date that include volunteer and study abroad contexts together despite commonalities between both groups. Rather than separate both groups or compare them as is the case in the literature, and without dismissing the heterogeneity between these groups and indeed, within each one, this study has contributed a novel geographical and empirical perspective to extend the international student mobility literature by including the experiences of Canadian students both studying and interning in the Global South.

Methodologically, most studies on international student mobility have tended to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative findings to examine motivations either before the sojourn, during the sojourn abroad or post-sojourn. Yet very few have sought to explore the process of the experience over time. While some studies have collected two temporal sets of data, many have tended to be quantitative survey questionnaires and thus, have offered inadequate insight into the possible contradictions and underlying motivations and lived experiences of students. This thesis thus addresses the dearth of studies on the processual parts of the international student sojourn by collecting interview

material at different stages during the experience. It contributes a novel approach to international student mobility research by using a qualitative longitudinal design with semi-structured interviews conducted pre-departure, in situ, and upon return to Canada. The use of visual material in this thesis also addresses a methodological gap within the literature on international student mobility. In order to illustrate and elucidate the importance of place and the experience abroad, this study contributes an important visual methodological approach to the literature on internationally mobile students by employing participant-directed photography through photo-elicitation.

Pathways for future research

While my research project illustrates a specific case study of the role of mobility and place within the experiences of mobile students from Canada to the Global South, it offers some important insights and implications for the study of international student mobility generally, both within a program policy and an academic research context. This thesis flags new and dynamic conceptual pathways to further develop within geographical thought. While the following is by no means an exhaustive list, I put forward a number of recommendations and areas for potential future research.

  Canada has one of the lowest rates of participation in international student exchanges of the Western world, a figure which has roused university leaders and even politicians to call for better strategies to increase participation of outgoing Canadian students (Bradshaw, 2012; Chiose, 2014). Whilst this thesis has briefly raised the role of study abroad rhetoric in student mobility, future research should further explore the influence of social media and online resources on students' motivations for participation abroad – both in the Canadian context but also other nationalities. Prospective students considering an international exchange and those already accepted to an exchange program have access to, and are bombarded by, a vast range of information from educators, international offices and online websites that can both guide and lead students astray. What future research could examine is the sources of information students consult prior to departure and how these can influence the experience abroad in ways that may potentially encourage and disappoint students throughout their sojourn abroad. This would provide the international offices of universities with insights on the appropriate content and sources of information to target for outgoing students. Furthermore, I echo Tiessen and Kumar (2013) that "pre-departure orientation should also have discussions on the use of

images, the representation of people from the Global South in (Northern) mass media and how these images influence our thinking about the people we encounter and consequently shape our relationship with them" (p. 425). Since colonial histories continue to frame and underpin international students' spatial imaginaries and the ways in which they construct knowledge between places, I extend Madge et al.'s (2009) postcolonial analysis of international students to suggest that orientation and de-briefing sessions should equally incorporate an 'engaged pedagogy' of care and responsibility that highlights to outgoing students how they are implicated in, and the implications of international student mobility for "wider international power relations and inequalities" (p. 40).

From another program policy perspective, universities should take into account the influence of social networks for students' adaptation process not only abroad, but also upon return. The role of social networks in the decision to travel abroad is well-known, but lesser known are how different social networks can hinder and impede self-development and home-making. Since my findings suggest that social networks can both enable and disable students' developmental process, a more engaged examination at the role of social networks in influencing self-growth while abroad and in the return adaptation process could be useful for university program policies, particularly for the content and consideration of mandatory de-briefing sessions. Similarly, future research should also further investigate the influence of social media on students' self-development process while abroad. In particular, such research could thus consider the ways in which staying connected online to social networks 'at home' can both support and facilitate as much as hinder self-discovery and self-growth during the sojourn.

A significant avenue for future research on international student mobility would be to consider and explore the role of emotions in negotiating the adaptation of students both in situ and upon return. Despite recent studies, emotions have been widely ignored within the body of work on international student mobility. Yet this study has shown how particular feelings and emotions mediate self-discovery and ideas of 'home' throughout the sojourn in such a way that could be insightful and have implications for research on young people's adaptation while abroad. For example, future research could explore the emotion of love for facilitating a sense of 'home' and belonging. Comfort, in particular, has revealed itself to be productive for self-discovery, home-making and distinction, and while this thesis has explored the geographical and conceptual boundaries of the comfort zone the notion requires further and more detailed examination. I echo Bissell's (2008) call for geographers to engage with emotional and spatial conceptions and theorisations of (dis)comfort around this untapped notion. If, as this study suggest, the comfort zone is

expanded to the Global South, then what is the next form of challenge for students? What are the potentially new dimensions, feelings and emotions that can reconfigure the boundaries of the comfort zone?

Drawing on these emotional insights, I recommend that future studies explore the connections and intersections of languages, emotions, self and 'home'. Although the parameters of this study did not allow for comparisons between Francophone and Anglophone participants, this would be an important avenue for future research and one that has been widely neglected within international student mobility. While this study did not allow for a comparison of perspectives between participant characteristics, for example, women vs. men, study vs. internship, first-time vs. previous experience and Francophones vs. Anglophones, the profile presented in this chapter helps to contextualise the findings and may be of use in the scope of future research. Similarly, whilst this thesis has touched upon the notion of belonging, it has given a glimpse into its potential for distinction and home-making within international student mobility.

In extending scholarship on geographies of 'home' within mobility, future research should take a closer look at how students not only 'collect places' through their mobility abroad (Desforges, 1998) but collect homes and how these multiple homely places are incorporated and integrated into longer-term meanings and feelings of 'home'. This includes how such a collection of homes may be used as resources within discourses of distinction later in the life course. Indeed, I call for more research to consider the longer-term impacts of international student mobility on young people's careers trajectories, their sense of self and their newly acquired habits and practices through extended retrospective interviews 4 or 5 years down the road. Mcleod (2003) indicates that tracking "versions of the self" over time can provide insights into ramifications within the habitus (p. 206). In particular, I encourage future research to consider the everyday life of students abroad and how habits and specifically the habitus are challenged and potentially changed through mundane practices and daily encounters with new people. I also recommend using visual methodologies, such as visual ethnography with participant-directed photography as an effective tool to illustrate and elicit both the extraordinary and mundane places, events and people that punctuate, fracture and pervade participants' everyday lives. International student mobility, along with notions of 'home', self-discovery, emotions, social networks and everyday life are ripe for geographical enquiry and future studies should endeavour to explore their potential for new conceptualisations and theorisations.

International student mobility is on the research agenda, but much work remains to be done to address gaps within the literature and pave the way for new theoretical and conceptual pathways. This thesis reveals how international student mobility is not necessarily about or for academic learning. Rather, student exchanges abroad are sought for, and embedded in, ongoing processes of self-discovery, (re)discovery of 'home' and distinction. Through mobility abroad, the self and 'home' are reassessed, rediscovered and revised. Researching internationally mobile students can therefore be productive and insightful for thinking about, and rethinking, notions of self-discovery, comfort, distinction and of 'home'.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide – pre-departure interviews

Background questions

- What is your age?
- What city/town are you from?
- What university do you attend?
- What is your program/major?
- What stage/year are you in your studies?
- Where are you going?
- What are the dates of your sojourn abroad?
- Will you be returning to Canada immediately following your study/internship?
- Is this a compulsory component of your academic program?
- What organization is your internship part of?
- What is your position?
- Are you self-funded?
- Have you lived abroad before?
    - If so, where and when?
    - For how long?
    - For what purpose?
- Have you been to a country in the Global South before?
    - If so, which one(s)?
    - For how long?
    - For what purpose?
    - If so, how do you feel like this experience might be different?

Pre-departure questions

Before we start, do you have any questions?

- What are your motivations to participate in this study abroad/internship program?
    - Why do you want to go study/work abroad?
- What is the desire to go live in a foreign place?

- How do you think that will be different?
- Tell me about your choice of destination…
    - Why did you pick this destination?
- How do you feel:
    - About leaving home?
    - Where is home?
    - About living in a different country?
    - About going to (destination)?
    - About the duration/length of your exchange?
    - What do you think it is about going to a different place? What do you think it does?
- What are your expectations?
- What do you imagine or envision when you think of this new place you're going to?
- What impression or image do you have in your mind?
    - What is the mood, feeling, or atmosphere?
- What about the host culture? How do you think it will be different?
- What does this opportunity mean to you?
- What do you think this experience will bring you?
- What are you most looking forward to?
- What are your career, life, general plans for the future or when you come back?
- Do you have any concerns?
    - What are your greatest fears?
- What are you bringing with you for this sojourn?
    - Are you bringing any mementos, important belongings or symbolic items with you? Photographs, notes, books, gifts, etc?
- Do you think you'll miss where you are now? If so, what do you think you'll miss the most?
- What do your friends, boyfriend, and family think of this?
- If you had to write a letter to your future self (when you'll return to Canada), what would you say?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 2: interview guide – mid-point

Mid-point questions

- How did you feel while on the way to your destination (plane, train, bus, etc)? What were you thinking about?
- How did you feel upon arrival? What were your first thoughts?
- Has that initial impression changed? What's your impression of your host place now?
- Are you with other North Americans or Westerners?
- Have you or will you receive a visit from family or friends?
- Tell me about the lifestyle…
- Which places do you frequent regularly?
- What are your favourite places? How do you feel in those places?
- What has been most striking or surprising for you so far?
- What are the differences and similarities between your life in Canada and there?
- What have you done or do differently than back in Canada?
- Have you overcome any fears? If not, why not?
- Have you accomplished…
- What do you like and dislike so far?
- Have you experienced any culture shock?
- Do you miss anything from Canada? If so, what?
- What do you look forward to or excited for the most when you return to Canada? Food, places, people?

Appendix 3: interview guide – return

Return questions

- Tell me about your return…How did you feel upon return?
- Tell me how you feel since you've returned…
- Tell me about home…
  - When do you feel most at home?
  - When did you first feel like you had arrived home?
- What souvenirs or mementos have you brought back?
- What is the most memorable aspect of your experience?
- Reflect back on your experience and (the place), how do you feel? What is your sense of that place?
- What did you learn? What was the most important thing you learned?
- Is there anything you would have done differently?
- Has something changed for you? Is there anything different?
- What do you miss from your experience?
- How does it feel talking to your friends and family about your experience?
- Have your plans (career, academic) changed since you left and returned to Canada?
- What was the good and difficult part of coming back?
- How did you feel about 'home' when you came back?
- Do you see your place differently now? City, home, etc?
- Would you recommend the experience to your friends and why?
- Have you influenced them to go?
- Do you intend to return one day?
- Any final comments or thoughts?

Move to participants' photographs for the photo-elicitation portion of the interview.

Appendix 4: consent form (English)

Consent Form

International student mobility between Canada and the Global South

Laura Prazeres
PhD candidate
Department of Geography
Royal Holloway, University of London
Laura.Prazeres.2011@live.rhul.ac.uk

I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Laura Prazeres.

The purpose of the study is to understand the experience of Canadian students on a study exchange or internship in the Global South. The aims are to understand the process of the experience over time.

My participation will consist of open-ended conversations, audio-recorded, about my experience in the Global South. The audio-recordings are strictly for logistical purposes to allow the researcher to remain attentive to the participant during the conversations. For the final 'return' conversation, the researcher may invite me to share select photographs of my sojourn to illustrate the experience.

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential and that I will remain anonymous. The audio-recordings of the conversations will be safely stored on the researcher's computer, secured with a password. The recordings will be kept for four years.

It is hoped that my participation in this study will benefit international student mobility programs, and that I will personally benefit from the opportunity to share my experiences with a fellow student who has undertaken similar experiences.

My participation is voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal can be used by the researcher, unless I specify otherwise at the time of the withdrawal.

I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Laura Prazeres of the Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher at any time. There are two copies of the consent form: one for myself and one for the researcher.

Participant's signature: _____Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____Date:_____

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

Appendix 5: Consent form (French)

Formulaire de consentement

L'expérience d'échange international : mobilités entre Canada et le Sud

Laura Prazeres
Candidate au doctorat
Département de géographie
Royal Holloway, University of London
Laura.Prazeres.2011@live.rhul.ac.uk

Je suis invité(e) à participer au projet de recherche nommée ci-dessus menée par Laura Prazeres.

Le but de l'étude est de comprendre l'expérience des étudiants canadiens en échange ou stage académique dans le Sud. Les objectifs sont de comprendre le processus de leur expérience au cours du temps.

Ma participation consistera à répondre à des questions ouvertes, par voie d'entrevues enregistrées, au sujet de mon expérience dans le Sud. Les enregistrements ont strictement pour but de permettre la chercheuse de rester attentive lors de la conversation. Pour la conversation finale lors du retour, il y a possibilité que la chercheuse m'invite à partager quelques photos de mon séjour pour illustrer mon expérience.

J'ai l'assurance de la chercheuse que l'information que je partagerai avec elle restera strictement confidentielle et que je resterai anonyme. Les données recueillies par entrevues enregistrées seront conservées de façon sécuritaire dans l'ordinateur de la chercheuse. Les enregistrements seront conservés pendant quatre ans.

Il est espéré que ma participation à cette recherche aura pour bénéfice de contribuer au développement des programmes de mobilité étudiantes et que je bénéficierai personnellement de l'opportunité de partager mon expérience avec une autre étudiante qui a entrepris une expérience semblable.

Ma participation est volontaire et je suis libre de me retirer en tout temps, et/ou refuser de répondre à certaines questions, sans subir de conséquences négatives. Si je choisi de me retirer de l'étude, les données recueillies jusqu'à ce moment pourront être utilisées par la chercheuse, à moins que je précise autrement.

Je,_____, accepte de participer à cette recherche menée par Laura Prazeres du département de géographie, Royal Holloway, University of London.

Il y a deux copies du formulaire de consentement: une pour moi-même et l'autre pour la chercheuse. Je peux contacter la chercheuse n'important quand pour des questions.

Signature du participant:_____ Date: _____

Signature du chercheur:_____ Date:_____

Merci de votre participation dans cette étude.

Appendix 6 - List of participants

Name of participants	City, country and length of sojourn	Experience living abroad
Jean-Marc	Palampur, India, 2 months	First-time
Vanessa	La Paz, Bolivia, 3 months	Lived in South America (until 17 years old)
Amanda	Lima, Peru, 3 months	First-time
Sophie	Antigua, Guatemala, 3 months	Volunteered in South America and Europe (3 months)
Steve	Kathmandu, Nepal, 3 months	Work and study exchanges in countries in Europe (2 to 9 months)
Pierre	Kathmandu, Nepal, 3 months	First-time
Amy	Lima, Peru, 3 months	First-time
Judy	Chiclayo, Peru, 3 months	Lived and studied on exchange in Europe and Asia (12 months)
Jane	Kigali, Rwanda, 2 months	Work and study exchanges in Europe and Africa (6 to 12 months)
Amélie	Ayacucho, Peru, 3 months	First-time
Rebecca	Mumbai, India, 5 months	Study exchange in Europe (3 months)
Élodie	Santiago, Chile, 10 months	Volunteered in Africa and lived in Europe (3 to 8 months)
Katie	Kigali, Rwanda, 2 months	First-time
Brianne	Kigali, Rwanda, 2 months	First-time
Marilyn	Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2 months	First-time
Rachel	Pune, India, 12 months	Study exchanges in Europe and South America (2 to 8 months)
François	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 12 months	Worked in Asia (4 months)
Marie-Josée	Stellenbosch, South Africa, 5 months	Internship in Africa (2 months)
Véronique	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 12 months	First-time
Aurélie	Buenos Aires, Argentine, 5 months	First-time
Joan	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 12 months	Work and study exchanges in Europe, Africa & Asia (2 to 12 months)
Émilie	Port of Spain, Trinidad, 4 months	Study exchange in Europe (4 months)
Lillian	Bai Niao He, China, 12 months	Study exchanges in Asia and Middle-East (1 to 4 months)
Christina	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 10 months	Study exchange in Africa (1 month)
Lucy	Ankara, Turkey, 4 months	First-time
Arianne	Valparaíso, Chile, 6 months	Lived and studied in Europe (4 years)
Valérie	Santiago, Chile, 5 months	Lived in Asia, Europe and South America (1 to 2 months)
Marie-Anne	Lima, Peru, 5 months	Volunteered in Africa (3 months)