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Belonging and becoming in academia: a conceptual framework

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What does it mean to become a scholar? And at what point in the doctoral journey can we say that we have become one? Is it when someone hands us a degree and tells us that we can now call ourselves a doctor? Or is the process more internal – a gradual understanding of what it means to conduct research and belong to a scholarly community, culminating in a feeling that we are, indeed, scholars? While doctoral programmes might very well measure progress in terms of clear milestones such as being admitted to a programme, completing coursework and defending the thesis, the internal process of *feeling* like a scholar might take place along a very different path.

This is especially true for those who begin their journey at the periphery of higher education and in some very profound ways struggle to feel like they belong. In a university setting where most students are full-time undergraduates, part-time doctoral students stand apart. Likewise, mature students with a strong professional identity might feel particularly like outsiders in an institution dedicated to disciplinary knowledge and the creation of an academic identity. And while international students are not uncommon (especially at the doctoral level), most are able to take up residence in the country of their studies, whereas international distance students are at a distinct disadvantage as they struggle to integrate.

'I don't really think of myself as an academic, but more of a teacher', is a feeling many Doctor in Education (EdD) students have, not only when they start the programme, but sometimes also when they finish it. For many, the academic research (and publishing) aspect of a doctorate may feel like an ill-fitting costume they are forced to wear for a short period

before they can return to their more familiar practitioner environment. For others, the realisation that they have something to contribute to an academic discourse is transformative, and 'academic' becomes part of their identity, part of who they are, regardless of where they are situated and how they earn their living. In this book, we use the terms 'scholar', 'academic' and 'researcher' interchangeably. We are aware that they have different connotations – with 'scholar' perhaps more comfortable for those in the humanities, 'academic' for those in university settings and 'researcher' for some in the social sciences and those outside university settings. But for us, the important distinction lies not in the differences between these terms, but in the difference between someone who feels like a genuine participant in an academic discourse and someone who feels more comfortable identifying as a practitioner or professional.

Throughout this book, we look at the process of developing an academic identity through the lenses of *becoming* and *belonging* (Mantai, 2019; Archer, 2008). We see academic identity as developing over time, where there is a significant period of in-betweenness, of being no longer just a student, but not yet a scholar. This liminality – or 'status of being betwixt and between' (Deegan and Hill, 1991: 327) – is characterised by periods of confusion or ambiguity that often manifest in writing practices associated with the milestones of course completion and thesis writing. Techniques and study habits that worked well for the student in an undergraduate context may no longer work for conducting doctoral research (Williams, 2018). And what might have been praised in previous educational or professional contexts may now be criticised.

In an anthropological context, liminality is often used as a concept to describe the confusion a migrant encounters when entering a new country where customs and practices seem inexplicably different. In the context of the doctoral journey, liminality has often been framed as purely intellectual in nature. Trafford and Lesham (2009: 306), for example, describe liminality as when doctoral students feel 'intellectually confused, are frustrated and recognise that progress is impossible'. However, in the context of the international student, and the mature part-time student, a broader understanding of liminality is essential: students not only struggle with their thinking and writing, but also grapple with 'in-betweenness' related to their cultural and professional backgrounds. By looking at the development of academic identity in conjunction with the professional and personal challenges students face, we frame 'becoming' as a process that has both an individual and social dimension, one that ultimately involves finding out who we are and where we fit in (Mantai, 2019). This process inevitably

involves an inner journey – one that takes place alongside, and may well have an impact on, the academic journey.

This chapter provides the conceptual framing for how we situate the concept of 'becoming' a scholar as one that intersects with a developing sense of belonging. We explore how identity develops, and some of the key challenges facing different groups of students on the periphery of higher education. We describe how individual agency, including the use of different coping strategies, can mitigate some of these challenges. In this discussion, we draw primarily from literature on doctoral identity development, but also student retention and on trends affecting the development of doctoral education more broadly.

The complexity of scholarly identity

Who am I as a researcher? What is my expertise? Where is my disciplinary home? What is my epistemological perspective? Who, among those I read, are my people? Where is my tribe? All these questions involve more than solving an intellectual puzzle and are related to 'belonging' in a wider sense. A sense of belonging in academia, however, develops in tandem with a sense of belonging in other groups as well. Mantai (2019), for example, argues that doctoral candidates' feeling that they belong in personal, social and professional communities is critical to their 'becoming'.

Our point of departure is that a person's academic identity grows alongside and intersects with other aspects of identity, such as the beliefs we have about who we are and how we fit into the world. Even many of the beliefs we have about ourselves as individuals – including thoughts about how introverted or extroverted we are, how intelligent we are, or how creative we are – are shaped by our experiences of belonging to various groups, and how we are positioned (or position ourselves) within those groups (Hogg, 2006). All of us are members of more than one group at a time: our sex or gender, our age, our profession, our nationality, our religion and our social class, as well as many other group identifiers, all coexist and intersect. Some of these are groups we consciously choose to join, such as political affiliations. Other times we are associated with groups by default, such as gender, ethnicity or citizenship, either because of our outward appearance or other circumstances beyond our immediate control. And still other groups, such as 'medical doctor' and many other professional groups, we can only join when others formally confer membership (Hogg et al., 1995).

Although we are members of many groups at one time, the salience of specific aspects of our identity and its relationship to our sense of belonging is likely to depend on the larger context we find ourselves in (Kovalcikiene and Buksnyte-Marmiene, 2015). Nationality is a good example; it might be something I never give much thought to until I find myself in a different country. The moment I arrive, I am aware of my foreignness, but it perhaps does not affect my sense of who I am. I am still me, but I'm me in a different place. After living in a foreign country for more than a holiday, however, 'foreigner' or 'immigrant' might become part of my identity. The feeling of being a foreigner comes partly through the social structures that place me in this group: the rules for visas, the different queues I must stand in at airports or my voting rights. But the feeling of 'foreignness' also comes from my encounters with the unwritten rules and informal customs of my new home (Hall, 1971), such as how to celebrate holidays, how to dress for work or social gatherings, or how to approach strangers to ask questions. And the more different I look from the others in my new place of residence – either by the way I dress, the colour of my skin and hair, or the way I behave – the more I will be reminded by others that I am, indeed, foreign. Some differences I experience might be inconsequential and amusing. I might call something an 'elevator' instead of a 'lift', or I might joke about the temperature of beer and the placement of commas. Other differences are less inconsequential. Proper etiquette where I come from might be directly insulting in another place. What I might see as a respectful handshake might be considered highly inappropriate contact in a different context, resulting in a situation where at least one of us will be deeply offended by the other.

All of us encounter different sets of customs and unwritten rules on an everyday basis (Hall, 1971). For students, changing a university means getting used to new library routines, discovering where to go to meet other students and learning how to find information. This is true even in the absence of moving to a different country. Changing a discipline can mean getting used to completely different ways of understanding the world and writing about it. The same can be true for changing geographical regions, even if the language is supposedly the same: British, American, Australian and Canadian English, for example, all have small, inexplicable differences that vex even the native speaker. The ways that our educational and professional backgrounds have shaped how we write, think and approach problem-solving can also be directly challenged by the expectations and unwritten rules of how research is conducted and written about in a doctoral programme (Koole and Stack, 2016; Ye and Edwards, 2017).

Many of these unwritten rules stem from underlying social hierarchies that place greater value on some behaviours, characteristics, activities or outputs over others. In the modern university context, academic publishing in high-ranking journals is perhaps the greatest source of prestige (Blackmore and Kandiko, 2011). This means that research is considered a more prestigious activity than teaching, and being a teacher is a more prestigious position than being a student. The value placed on academic excellence as measured by journal publications means that the EdD and other professional doctorate programmes are sometimes considered to be less prestigious than the conventional PhD because they have less emphasis on pure research (Poole, 2015).

This hierarchy also means that students coming from a professional background might discover that the things that matter the most in their professional context might not matter at all at the university (and vice versa), which may prevent those with a strong practitioner background from identifying as scholars, researchers or writers (Lawrence, 2017). The extent to which academics feel like they move their way up the hierarchy can also depend on their race, class, gender and employment status (Archer, 2008). For example, the position of gender within the hierarchy of academia can allow women to identify as students, but struggle with embracing all the other aspects of identity that suggest 'expert' (Lawrence, 2017). Similarly, students of colour may face a series of overt and covert obstacles that white students do not (Jaeger and Haley, 2016).

All this means that developing a sense of belonging in academia can be harder for some students than others. Hardré et al. (2019), in a study that looked at factors that could predict whether students would complete a doctoral degree, point out two groups in particular as being vulnerable: (1) non-traditional students who return to the classroom after many years of establishing expertise outside of academia such as educators, social workers, business managers, engineers or health care professionals, who may feel that their professional expertise is treated as irrelevant, and they must start over as novices; and (2) those who come from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds, who have to adjust to both a new language and the unspoken cultural norms of a new country. In addition, academics who are the first in their family to attend a university may not appear different from other students on the outside, but along with navigating unfamiliar territory, they may also find little understanding or support from home about the challenges they face or the aspirations they hold (Gardner and Holley, 2011).

Embarking on a doctoral journey in the changing landscape of academia

Developing a sense of belonging depends not only on various aspects of a person's identity but also on the environment in which they find themselves. Students are not impervious to larger trends that affect the development of the university. For the authors in this volume, increased globalisation and changes in the perceived purpose of doctoral education were of special importance. In the first instance, globalisation and the accompanying emphasis on increased mobility in higher education led to the design of a programme that gave all of us the opportunity to pursue a terminal degree in one country while living in another. As a form of widening participation, this could arguably be viewed as a public good, representative of concepts traditionally associated with cosmopolitanism (Osler and Starkey, 2005) or international-mindedness (Savva and Stanfield, 2018). The fact that the candidates enrolled in the programme needed substantial financial resources to gain access, however, points to more practical objectives at the university level. Adding students to enrolment registers while increasing university income, particularly in the case of international students who pay higher tuition fees, likely served as a strong institutional incentive.

The location of the programme in the United Kingdom is also an important aspect of globalisation. Economic growth and improved job prospects in Anglophone countries (Sharma, 2013), the position of English as a global language (Lillis and Curry, 2010) and the link between the English language and access to elite, internationally recognised universities (Hayden and Thompson, 2013) have all created a type of 'global currency' that is overwhelmingly assigned to education provided in Anglophone countries. This hierarchy is probably most evident in ranking tables, where universities in the United States and the United Kingdom continue to dominate the highest tiers (Center for World University Rankings, 2020; Times Higher Education, 2020; QS Top Universities, 2020). Arguably, this added value does not necessarily translate into a better-quality education per se, but rather implies an increased exchange value which is perceived to be more favourable in international job markets. More importantly, this increased value has the power to draw students from all over the world, as the very existence of our cohort demonstrated.

The emphasis on English as a language of power and the prestige associated with Anglophone universities also creates another more

implicit hierarchy among students, where those with English as a first language become privileged over those who speak English as an additional language (Lillis and Curry, 2010). This privilege is related not only to the relative ease with which those who have English as a first language are able to decode the literature and write about research, but also to the assumptions made about ability – where those with English as an additional language are often made to feel less competent than their peers regardless of their actual qualifications and abilities.

A second trend in the academic landscape has to do with the changing purpose of a doctorate degree. Originally, the purpose of the doctorate was to grant a 'licence to teach' within a specific discipline. This purpose later shifted to the more Humboldtian idea of training researchers, and currently there is a new shift towards providing education to meet relevant needs in society, as evidenced by the current demand for auditing, accountability and quality assurance (Poole, 2015; Wellington, 2013). This ongoing shift reflects a growing debate about whether universities should focus on producing scholars who can carry out discipline-based academic research or emphasise producing professionals who can carry their expertise directly to the job market.

The development of professional doctorates, such as the EdD, is symptomatic of this debate and represents a response to a common criticism from employers that traditional doctoral students lacked applied subject knowledge, practical experience and the overall skills necessary in the workplace (Taylor, 2008; Owen, 2011). Professional doctorates were introduced in the UK in the 1990s, and by 2009 there were 38 EdD programmes nationwide (Hawkes and Taylor, 2016). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, 2014; 30) states that 'professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge'. According to this aim, students enrolled in a professional doctorate should receive training in academic research relevant to their profession, thereby deepening their sense of professionalism and augmenting their practice. But because professional doctorate programmes are situated within a university, and as such are beholden to how the university conceptualises and evaluates education, both students and faculty must navigate this tension (Scott et al., 2004).

This tension plays out in the ways doctoral programmes combine taught modules and independent research, as well as the formats of student deliverables. Conventional PhD programmes have traditionally focused almost exclusively on independent research, with few if any taught modules. In contrast, professional doctorates have emphasised

taught courses, a shorter thesis and perhaps a portfolio approach to evaluation (Scott et al., 2004). These differences are not cosmetic but rather related to the intended purpose of the outputs – whether they should be focused on honing skills that can be transferred to the workplace or represent disciplinary knowledge and skills related to the production of academic research.

The push for increased relevance in doctoral programmes creates an interesting paradox. Whereas experienced professionals represent the 'ideal' because they have direct connections in their respective professional fields, these same qualities can serve to marginalise working professionals with respect to other students. This was the case for our cohort as well. Just as our 'internationalness' set us apart from traditional doctoral students, so too did our close ties with the professional field, making it harder for many of us to fully identify with and embrace a scholarly identity.

Learning to be a researcher

Regardless of how much emphasis is put on ties to the professions and social relevance in general, learning how to conduct research within a particular discipline is still a key aspect of doctoral training (Mantai, 2017). Learning to conduct research involves defining a problem, learning how to approach it methodologically, figuring out what literature to read, learning how to analyse data and think critically, and putting together an academic argument in writing. Moreover, this takes place within a certain academic department, where expectations are often implicit and poorly communicated (Sverdlik et al., 2018).

For EdD students returning to higher education after spending time in the workplace (and with active ties to their profession), something as simple as defining the research problem may be difficult because of the different way that problems are defined and approached in the workplace setting compared to academia. Whereas the aim of research in a professional setting has a practical orientation, the aim of disciplinary-based research is to contribute to an academic discourse. Zambo et al. (2015: 234) observe that EdD students in particular often have 'one foot in the world of practice and another in the world of academe', where the academic world requires them 'to change their perspectives from normative to analytical, personal to intellectual, particular to universal, and experiential to theoretical'. These challenges suggest that the tension between seeing doctoral education as training scholars within a discipline versus

preparing professionals for a workplace outside academia can be problematic in how students are expected to approach their studies.

Moreover, among the different kinds of professional doctorate programmes, the EdD stands out for attracting not only older, well-established professionals who are returning to higher education after a long absence, but also a large number of students who have a background in different disciplines (Koole and Stack, 2016; Scott et al., 2004). For many EdD students, this means that when they return to the university to pursue a doctorate in education, they may not have a strong foundation in the discipline of education from which to draw (Scott et al., 2004). Students moving from one discipline to another, or from a workplace environment to an academic setting, may find their assumptions or previous knowledge challenged by their new setting – which may value a different kind of truth claim, supported by different kinds of knowledge or evidence, and founded on a different kind of logic.

Conducting doctoral research also involves developing a sensitivity to ethics. While most practising professionals are familiar with the ethics governing their profession, ethics related to research might introduce some new dilemmas that might not only be unfamiliar to the EdD student, but also on occasion seem to challenge some of the ethical norms of their profession (for example, obligations to report on or keep confidential various conditions). Even within a pure academic context, ethical considerations governing the carrying out and writing of research are seldom straightforward, and strict adherence to ethical principles at one level might threaten the adherence to ethical principles on another. For example, conducting insider research, or research on easily identified individuals, might force the researcher to make an uncomfortable choice between protecting the anonymity of the informants or providing adequate transparency about methodology to the reader. International students, particularly those who reside in a country other than where they either conduct their research or will have it evaluated, might face what appear to be conflicting, or at least different, sets of expectations for ethics – such as the degree to which ethical review is a formal or informal process, or has an approval or advisory function. Since ethical guidelines are normally developed within a specific setting – both cultural and disciplinary – this might lead to tensions for researchers who are conducting research outside that context (Killawi et al., 2014). For example, written informed consent that is intended to protect informants may be problematic in a context where the signing of such a document is potentially regarded as proof of collusion with parties from a foreign state, thus putting informants at risk.

Ultimately, learning to be a researcher also comes down to learning to write academically. Academic writing involves developing an appropriate voice for the discipline and method being used – for example, using more 'author absent' language in the natural sciences and quantitative social sciences, while developing a unique authorial voice in the humanities and qualitative social sciences (Geetz, 1988; Gnutzmann and Rabe, 2014). It also means understanding how arguments are developed and what constitutes evidence in the field in which the student is writing. While all students struggle with finding their academic voice, EdD students might face the additional obstacle of first having developed a strong professional voice, and may struggle with feelings of frustration when the style of writing that is successful in their practice becomes criticised in an academic context.

Furthermore, because writing a doctoral thesis is perhaps the most ambitious writing project students have ever undertaken in terms of both length and depth, they will also have to learn how to develop good writing habits – which might be particularly challenging for part-time EdD students who maintain a full-time job alongside their studies and may have limited time to write. Moreover, like any other doctoral students, they may experience difficulties in both getting started and letting go of their work (Chapman, 2017). Difficulties in accepting 'good enough' at the same time as learning what constitutes 'excellence' may increase performance anxiety and unhealthy perfectionism (Ball, 2012; Leisyte, 2016; Sherry et al., 2010). Students who are working in a second language may experience increased feelings of impostor syndrome and insecurities about their writing ability, despite overall language competence (Nygaard, 2019).

Supervision and other support

Given the complexity and ambiguity of the research process, the role of the supervisor becomes essential in helping students navigate unfamiliar territory. It stands to reason that the more unfamiliar the territory, and the more the student struggles with a sense of belonging, the more important this support becomes. This is just as true for EdD students as it is for any other group of students, but part-time international EdD students might struggle with issues of physical distance creating additional barriers to communication. Not surprisingly, supervisor supportiveness has been identified as an important predictor of doctoral student satisfaction and success (Dericks et al., 2019; Nesterowicz et al., 2019;

Sverdlik et al., 2018). Components that establish supportiveness include the quality of supervisory engagement (Nesterowicz et al., 2019), the use of structure in providing scaffolded feedback (Kumar and Johnson, 2019; Roberts and Bandlow, 2018) and the ability to point students to relevant resources (Roberts and Bandlow, 2018). The setting of boundaries has also been identified as a practice that holds students accountable and encourages greater independence (Roberts and Bandlow, 2018).

Defining appropriate levels of supportiveness, however, is largely dependent on matching student needs with particular supervisory styles (Gurr, 2001; Dericks et al., 2019). A student who is highly dependent on structured support may feel neglected when paired with a supervisor who takes a 'hands-off' approach (Gurr, 2001). Likewise, a student who is highly autonomous may report similar dissatisfaction when paired with a supervisor who is too 'hands on'. Beyond style preferences, the actual needs of students can also vary. Some students need more help with navigating an unfamiliar university and understanding the formalities, while others might need more help in finding appropriate literature, learning to write for an academic audience or learning the unwritten rules of a new discipline. Matching student needs with supervisor styles can become especially challenging when the students come from different cultural backgrounds or possess a substantial amount of professional expertise; in both these contexts, supervisor strategies that work well with most students may be misinterpreted and thus fall short.

At the centre of the student–supervisor relationship is the student's sense of ownership over their own work. Although the supervisor is meant to provide guidance, it is the student who is ultimately responsible for the final product. The issue of ownership can become problematic, however, when the supervisor's expectations or vision prove different from that of the student. Such moments often call for careful negotiation between the student and supervisor, with the ownership of the research always belonging first and foremost to the student (Wisker et al., 2010). In this way, the setting of boundaries is not something that is limited to supervisors (Roberts and Bandlow, 2018), but is also a tool that is accessible to doctoral students. In other words, part of establishing an identity as an academic also involves knowing what advice to follow, what advice to reject, and how to seek help from alternative sources when the supervisor alone is insufficient.

Indeed, there is little reason to expect that a supervisor can meet all the learning needs of students regardless of whether they are traditional or non-traditional (Sweitzer, 2009). This is perhaps especially true when the students reside outside the country of the educational institution.

Required courses and supervisory sessions are far from the only resources students have. As pointed out by Mantai (2017: 673), scholarly development 'takes place in multiple processes, which are diverse in nature, and usually happen in traditional and non-traditional sites of learning'. Students learn by struggling on their own, by interacting with other students, by taking additional courses offered at the university (perhaps by the library or a skills centre), by expanding their reading beyond that which is specified in the curriculum and by drawing on their previous experiences – either from the workplace or other educational contexts.

Two other important sources of support are financial and social (see, for example, Baltrinic et al., 2013). In a study of 3,092 doctoral students across disciplines, Van der Haert et al. (2014) found that students with no financial support showed the highest withdrawal rate, contrasting with students with research fellowships who showed the lowest withdrawal rate. This remained consistent even when controlling for the ability of the students. Other research has also confirmed that financial concerns related to continued employment and the ability to meet financial obligations were a source of significant pressure (Cornwall et al., 2019; Hockey, 1994). While financial support often comes in the form of grants or fellowships for many doctoral students, these are likely to be far more difficult to acquire for part-time students.

Many part-time students support themselves through their own participation in the workplace, which means that their continued enrolment can be dependent on the security of their jobs (and if they are working in the casualised work environment of higher education, their jobs may be very insecure indeed). At the same time that they are financing their education through full-time work, part-time students juggle competing work demands that often require adherence to strict deadlines. Since doctoral school deadlines are more flexible, these typically take a lower priority (Morrison-Saunders et al., 2010). This, too, can contribute to extended completion timelines and/or increased attrition rates.

Social support is another source that needs to be considered. The opportunities doctoral students have to interact with others help to shape the beliefs they hold about themselves, while also combating feelings of isolation that have been known to contribute to doctoral student attrition rates (Ali and Kohun, 2006; Jaraim and Kahl, 2012; Jones and Kim, 2013). The concept of having 'critical friends' is discussed in the work of Hawkes and Taylor (2016) who note that friends in doctoral cohorts may connect with each other to share similar research interests. For international students, such friendships may have less to do with similar research areas and more to do with drawing on psychological support or

even practical forms of support, such as receiving feedback on writing. For example, Morrison-Saunders et al. (2010) found that writing, rewriting and the repetitive nature of ongoing literature searches contributed to negative emotions among doctoral students. It is likely that these types of challenges are even more pronounced for international students, particularly for those for whom English is an additional language.

Social support, therefore, can take a multiplicity of forms and be instrumental in managing the highs and lows that are a normal part of the doctoral process. Morrison-Saunders et al. (2010) further note that doctoral students experience a wide range of emotions including anxiety, boredom, fear, frustration, loneliness, elation and satisfaction. In group feedback they found that students often expressed relief that others experience the same emotions. This speaks to the importance of feeling an affinity with others and how these connections can build a sense of belonging (Mantai, 2019). A sense of belonging can then, in turn, help to combat feelings of loneliness that are so commonly reported among doctoral students (Ali and Kohun, 2006; Jaraim and Kahl, 2012; Jones and Kim, 2013; Lahenius, 2012; Morrison-Saunders et al., 2010).

Making choices and forging a path

The different impressions from the university, the classroom, supervisors, the student cohort, the workplace and others can, and do, often create a bewildering cacophony of input. Who should I listen to? How is it possible to make sense out of all these sometimes conflicting messages? The individual agency involved in making sense out of the senseless, of knowing what voices to listen to, is strongly related to building an identity as a scholar – regardless of context (Mantai, 2019). And importantly, agency is linked with being able to successfully complete a doctoral programme (Sverdlik et al., 2018).

Developing agency means learning to successfully negotiate conflicting sets of expectations (see, for instance, Kovalcikiene and Buksnyte-Marmiene, 2015). What worked for a student in a previous context, perhaps in a different discipline or country, may not work anymore. Study habits that worked with a previous supervisor and degree programme may not be relevant in a new setting (Ye and Edwards, 2017). Students may also have to learn to navigate the stress that comes from realising that a particular aspect of their identity makes them feel somehow different from those around them, or even prevents them from pursuing a desired course of action.

The identity work that we do in response to such challenges – that is, the work we do to establish, confirm, reject or process different aspects of identity – depends on how we understand our own agency, our ability to manoeuvre in a given context and our ability to cope and adapt. One of the ways people express agency is how they outwardly present themselves in an effort to associate or distance themselves from various aspects of their identity (Hall and Burns, 2009). Again, to return to the example of being a foreigner, I have some degree of choice about how I embrace or reject my foreignness: I can choose to learn the new language and speak it diligently, even at home. I can try to learn the humour, embrace the cuisine and pick up on all the other invisible social cues. And if I look the part, I might even 'pass': others might no longer treat me like I am foreign. At this point, I may no longer feel foreign, and 'foreigner' may no longer feel like a salient aspect of my identity.

Alternatively, I can resist learning a new language, embracing a new cuisine and learning social customs that seem strange to me. I can emphasise my foreignness by choosing to dress differently. Most likely, I will take some sort of middle road – adopting some new customs, resisting others, keeping some things, abandoning others. And my strategy might change over time. I might begin by embracing change enthusiastically only to become more sceptical with age, or vice versa. My experiences might also change other beliefs I have about myself. After years of struggling to understand those around me, I might no longer think of myself as intelligent and a good communicator; or, after distancing myself from my working class background in my former place of residence and embracing opportunities in a new country, I might think of myself as successful and entrepreneurial.

Identity is not fixed, but fluid, responding both to circumstance and the choices made by individuals (Hall and Burns, 2009). Identity development comprises a complex set of interactions between the social groups to which individuals belong, their beliefs about themselves that come about through experience, the various contexts in which they operate, the position they hold within those contexts, and the agency they exercise in responding to these pressures. And there is no guarantee that two doctoral students – even with the same background and facing the same challenges – will make the same choices (for instance, see Ye and Edwards, 2017). Agency can mean choosing to adapt to expectations or taking initiative to challenge expectations – such as actively engaging in self-identification or advocacy. Examples might include taking on more work than is required in order to learn, rejecting the title of 'doctoral student' in favour of 'doctoral researcher' or challenging ideas about who should be

included in the canon of theoretical literature (Trahar, 2011). Becoming a scholar is thus not simply a question of taking some courses and writing a thesis. It is about entering a situation that challenges various aspects of who we already are so that we emerge at the other end in some way fundamentally changed – and belonging to a new community.

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