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Marja Peura

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Dedicated to my sister

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU
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MARJA PEURA: A Journey Towards and Past Doctoral Studies Abroad. Identity-trajectories of Finnish Doctoral Students in Britain
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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation examines the educational and mobility paths of Finnish doctoral students in Britain as part of the wholeness of their life course. The aim of this study is to understand what kinds of meanings the students attribute to their studies in an international context. Increasing global higher education possibilities and mobility together with growing market-orientation of higher education, competition and insecurity in the academic field and working life in general have created a scenery for today's doctoral students to navigate and construct their individual paths. Individual doctoral students' decisions and experiences along the doctoral journey are interpreted against these changes.

This study joins the line of research suggesting a doctoral study journey to represent an identity negotiation process. Doctoral journeys abroad are examined as identity-trajectories constructed throughout life course including life experiences in the past, present and future, also in life-course areas beyond the studies. Attention is payed to the interplay between agency and structure considering that individuals plan, pursue goals, and make decisions in the framework of supporting and constraining structures.

The data consists of narrative interviews of 14 Finnish doctoral students in Britain. Students' narration is considered a way for the individual to make sense of life course and to construct identity. The data is analysed using thematic content analysis and the construction of types.

Four types reflecting different kinds of life paths abroad were constructed from data: sprinters, hurdlers, orienteers and race walkers. Sprinters and hurdlers proceeded straightforward on their paths, sprinters smoothly and hurdlers overcoming obstacles. Orienteers' and race walkers' paths were meandering and long, along which orienteers experienced restrictions, while race walkers seemed to advance pursuing own desires and goals at the time. Moreover, based on study experiences of doctoral students in different groups, four types of career identity-trajectories were constructed: academic career, non-academic career, hybrid career and non-career identity-trajectory. The career identity-trajectories reflect aspirations and aspects of experiences that were considered important and worth pursuing during doctoral studies.

The results reveal heterogeneity of doctoral students in terms of their paths. Students navigate their paths with a range of different goals and resources, indicating that there is not one, but many routes to doctoral studies abroad. Doctoral students narration also indicate that elements constructing doctoral students' identities involve much more than what is needed for an academic career. Even the most talented students experience uncertainty, stress, competition, and doubt, if the future will look bright after the doctorate. Career perspectives are important for many doctoral students, however, the meaning of doctoral studies abroad in the overall life course is much more complex and rich in nuances. This study shows that the whole picture of doctoral studies abroad remains vague if examined solely from the perspective of structures and organisations. In order for policies to be able to succeed and reach the targets, also the complexity of international doctoral studies are to be taken into consideration. Shedding light on the various ways doctoral studies are experienced by those conducting the actual studies, and the diverse paths through which they have embarked on the studies, can help in developing policies and doctoral education towards serving the diverse student body as well as other parties involved.

KEYWORDS: Doctoral students, internationalisation, student mobility, study abroad, doctoral education, higher education, academic career, life course, identity-trajectory, academic identity

TURUN YLIOPISTO
Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta
Kasvatustieteiden laitos
Kasvatustiede
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Väitöskirja, 225 s.
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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä väitöstutkimuksessa tarkastellaan Britanniassa tohtorintutkintoa suorittavien suomalaisten koulutus- ja liikkuvuuspolkuja osana heidän elämänkulun kokonaisuuttaan. Tarkoituksena on ymmärtää minkälaisia merkityksiä opiskelijat antavat opinnoilleen kansainvälisessä kontekstissa. Lisääntyneet globaalit korkeakoulutusmahdollisuudet ja liikkuvuus ovat yhdessä korkeakoulutuksen markkinoistumisen sekä akateemisen kentän ja yleisesti työelämän kasvavan kilpailun ja epävarmuuden kanssa luoneet maiseman, jossa tämän päivän tohtoriopiskelijat navigoivat ja rakentavat yksilöllisiä polkujaan. Yksittäisten tohtoriopiskelijoiden päätöksiä ja kokemuksia tohtoroitumismatkalla tulkitaan näitä muutoksia vasten.

Tutkimus ottaa osaa tutkimuskeskusteluihin, joissa tohtoriksi opiskelu nähdään identiteettineuvotteluprosessina. Matkaa tohtoriksi ulkomailla tarkastellaan identiteetti-trajektorina, jota rakennetaan läpi elämänkulun mukaan lukien mennyt, nykyisyys ja tuleva myös tohtoriopiskelun ulkopuolisilla elämänalueilla. Huomio kiinnitetään toimijuuden ja rakenteiden vuorovaikutukseen yksilön suunnitellessa, tavoitellessa ja tehdessä päätöksiä mahdollistavien ja rajoittavien rakenteiden puitteissa.

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu 14 Britanniassa tohtoriksi opiskelevan suomalaisen narratiivisesta haastattelusta. Tohtoriopiskelijoiden kerronta nähdään yksilön tavaksi ymmärtää elämänkulkuaan ja rakentaa identiteettiään. Aineiston analysointi toteutettiin temaattisena sisällönanalyysinä ja tyypittelynä.

Analyysin tuloksena muodostettiin neljä tyyppiä, jotka todentavat erilaisia ulkomaille suuntautuvia elämänpolkuja: sprintterit, aiturit, suunnistajat ja kilpakävelijät. Sprintterit ja aiturit etenivät suoraviivaisesti poluillaan, sprintterit sujuvasti ja aiturit esteitä ylitellen. Suunnistajien ja kilpakävelijöiden polut olivat polveilevia ja pitkiä, ja niiden varrella suunnistajat kokivat rajoituksia, kun taas kilpakävelijät näyttivät etenevän kohti sen hetkisiä toiveitaan ja tavoitteitaan. Lisäksi eri ryhmään kuuluvien opiskelijoiden opintokokemusten perusteella muodostettiin neljä tyypillistä uraidentiteetti-trajektoria: akateemisen uran, ei-akateemisen uran, hybridi uran ja ei-uran identiteetti-trajektorit. Uraidentiteetti-trajektorit heijastavat niitä toiveita ja kokemuksia, joita tohtoriopiskelijat toivat esiin tärkeinä ja tavoittelemisen arvoisina tohtoriopintomatkallaan.

Tulokset paljastavat tohtoriopiskelijoiden heterogeenisyyden suhteessa polkuihin. Opiskelijat navigoivat poluillaan erilaisin tavoittein ja resurssein osoittaen, että tohtoriopintoihin ulkomaille ei ole vain yhtä, vaan monta reittiä. Haastateltavien kerronta osoitti myös, miten tohtoriopiskelijoiden identiteetti rakentuu paljolti muistakin kuin akateemiseen uraan liittyvistä elementeistä. Lahjakkaimmatkin tohtoriopiskelijat kokevat epävarmuutta, stressiä, kilpailua ja epäröintiä tulevaisuuden näkymistään. Uranäkökulma on monelle tohtoriopiskelijalle tärkeä, mutta ulkomailla suoritettavien tohtoriopintojen merkitys elämänkulun kokonaisuudessa on monitahoisempi ja hienosyisempi. Tutkimus osoittaa, että ulkomailla suoritettavien tohtoriopintojen kokonaiskuva jää hämäräksi ainoastaan rakenteiden ja järjestelmien näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna. Poliittisten linjausten onnistumisen ja tavoitteiden saavuttamisen kannalta myös kansainvälisen tohtoriopiskelun moninaisuus on syytä huomioida. Valaisemalla niitä monia tapoja, miten itse tohtoriopintoja suorittavat opinnot kokevat sekä niitä erilaisia polkuja, joita pitkin opintoihin on kuljettu, voidaan kehittää politiikkaa ja tohtorikoulutusta paremmin palvelemaan moninaista opiskelijakuntaa ja muita tahoja.

ASIASANAT: Tohtoriopiskelijat, kansainvälistyminen, opiskelijaliikkuvuus, opiskelu ulkomailla, tohtorikoulutus, korkeakoulutus, akateeminen ura, elämänkulku, identiteetti-trajektori, akateeminen identiteetti

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In this dissertation I have been writing about doctoral students and their paths. Now it is time to say a few words about my own journey and thank those people that have had an impact on this journey. And what a journey it has been. One that has been filled with so many different emotions that I was not even aware of before. But at the moment my heart is filled with relief and happiness, this journey is finally coming to an end, and other journeys can begin. I feel especially happy to have an opportunity here for expressing my gratitude to people who have made this journey meaningful and worth taking.

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In Uusikaupunki 24.4.2022
Marja Peura

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1 Introduction

When someone decides to enroll for a doctoral study abroad, what is the attraction behind the decision, and what does the individual wish to gain? What do the educational paths of these doctoral students look like? How and where do they see the future with a doctoral degree? Such questions interested me, when I decided to start a doctoral dissertation examining the educational and mobility paths of Finnish doctoral students conducting a doctorate in Britain. The overarching aim of this study is to investigate doctoral studies abroad as part of life course in order to understand the meanings doctoral students attribute to doctoral studies and the international nature of these studies in the wholeness of their life. These students are conducting doctoral studies in an era of increasing market-orientation of higher education, competition in the academic field and working life in general, and widening global higher education possibilities together with increasing mobility (Marginson 2006). This study is positioned in the fields of sociology of education, higher education, and student mobility.

International student mobility is a common feature reflecting the current time. The global number of internationally mobile students in tertiary education has increased rapidly to over five million students in 2017. Student mobility is particularly visible in doctoral education which is increasingly involving international students. (OECD 2019a, 229, 248; OECD 2020a, 232; Shen, Wang & Jin 2016.) The production of doctoral students and mobility of students are both strongly promoted by various, often politically and economically charged rationales internationally, nationally, and institutionally (Aittola 2017; Bao et al. 2018; Kehm 2007, 314; Kehm 2020; Nerad 2014). Highly skilled workers equipped with versatile competences are needed to boost prosperity of knowledge economies (OECD 2008; OECD 2020b). Universities' doctoral education can answer the demand by providing a useful talent pool globally and nationally. Moreover, universities are under pressure for profitability in the increasingly market-driven landscape. Doctoral students as future researchers with innovative ideas are sought after in universities to strengthen their research capacity in order to become prominent players in global competition. Fee-paying international students bring also a welcomed income for universities. In many countries, student mobility has been promoted with procedures

such as lowering the barriers to embark on a study abroad, and presenting a study abroad as an attractive and prosperous option for the individual concerning the future. (Nerad 2010; Shen et al. 2016.) As a reflection, an increased number of individuals are currently obtaining doctoral degrees globally, and a significant proportion of these doctorates are being conducted abroad (OECD 2019a; OECD 2020a).

However, these more official reasonings can only partly explain the increasing student numbers. What such reasonings fail to explain, are the personal motivations and meaning making in the process of doctorating abroad, which can only be answered by the doctoral students themselves. Therefore, this study turns to individual doctoral students and their conceptions of their doctoral study paths, however, paying attention to wider societal questions and the historical context in order to reach better understanding (Mills 1982) and a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of doctorating abroad. Individual doctoral student's decisions and experiences along the educational and mobility paths towards and during a doctorate abroad, need to be interpreted against the changes that have been taking place in the overall society, the context of higher education and doctoral education, and the meaning of the doctorate.

Researchers in various disciplines such as economics, geography, sociology and education have taken an interest in mobile students. Student mobility is often discussed as a feature of migration, especially that of the highly skilled (e.g. Habti & Elo 2018; Kõu, van Wissen, van Dijk & Bailey 2015; Li, Findlay, Jowett & Skeldon 1996; Mulvey 2021; Wilken & Dahlberg 2017; Wu & Wilkes 2017; Ziguras & Law 2006) foregrounding theories such as push and pull, human capital, brain drain and brain gain (e.g. Chien 2013; Furukawa, Shirakawa & Okuwada 2013; Gbollie & Gong 2020; Pan 2011). Student mobility is also largely discussed with regard to internationalisation of higher education (e.g. Bhandari, Belyavina & Gutierrez 2011; Brooks & Waters 2011; Kehm & Teichler 2007; Liu 2021; Teichler 2004).

However, studies on student mobility tend to concentrate on master's level mobility (e.g. Cairns 2017; Wu 2014), and less on doctoral student mobility. Existing studies on the mobility of doctoral students often use macro level perspectives analysing issues such as mobility trends (e.g. Roberts 2012; Shen et al. 2016), student profiles and rationales driving mobility (e.g. Knight & Madden 2010) and competition between universities for graduate students (e.g. Taylor & Cantwell 2015). Studies focusing on the actual experiences of international doctoral students are fewer, and as Bilecen (2013, 669) states those that exist often combine undergraduate and postgraduate experiences. While the macro level perspective upon international doctoral education is surely important, students' own perceptions

on the meaning of international doctoral education in their lives can deepen our understanding on both doctoral education and mobility.

A line of studies exploring the experiences of international doctoral students, has focused on such themes as motivation for a study abroad and to persist studies (e.g. Choi, Nieminen & Townson 2012; Mostafa & Lim 2020; Yang, Volet & Mansfield 2018; Zhou 2015), socialisation and academic engagement (e.g. Deem & Brehony 2000; Sakurai 2014), cross-cultural, cosmopolitan and transition study experiences (e.g. Bilecen 2013; Robinson-Pant 2009; Zhang 2016), supervision (e.g. Wang & Byram 2019) and supportive networks (e.g. Bilecen 2012).

Researchers have called for more comprehensive approaches concerning both mobility (Carlson 2013, 168; Habti & Elo 2018, 18) and doctoral study experiences (Aarnikoivu 2020; McAlpine 2012, 38). McAlpine (2012, 38) has criticised previous studies concerning experiences of doctoral students for concentrating solely on the doctoral study experience, instead of life course as a whole with the doctorate as one aspect of individual's life allowing a broader look on the students' experiences. Research on mobility of students tends to focus on narrow perspectives of motivational factors while the broader picture of the process risks to remain vague (Carlson 2013, 169). Moreover, no study specifically discusses the experiences and aspirations of Finnish doctoral students abroad, and consequently little is known about them, and their education and mobility related experiences, which makes them an interesting group to study.

This study addresses the gap by looking at individual doctoral students' doctoral journeys abroad as processes thoughout life course, affected by life experiences in the past, present and future circumstances, also in life course areas beyond the studies. Life course can be used to examine the significance of education and mobility for the individual considering the influence of other life course domains. According to life course approach the present is understood through interpreting the past and the future, incorporating different life stages and areas, such as going to school, studying, working and family (Elder 1998, 2). The decision to embark on a doctoral study abroad is not considered a one-time event, but rather an expression of the fluidity of life trajectories of the current time (Carlson 2013; Findlay, McCollum, Coulter & Gayle 2015) characterised by individuality and reflexivity (Giddens 1991). The students' experiences are reflected in relation to their earlier education and mobility paths and future goals in the contexts of increasing global international opportunities, and of changing academic landscape of increasing doctoral student numbers and mobility, degree inflation, competition and pressure for productivity.

This study is framed with identity perspective which is common in studies concerning doctoral students (e.g. Archer 2008; Gardner 2008; Hakala 2009) providing a means to investigate the experience of being an academic (Pifer & Baker 2013, 116) and of gradually turning into an independent scholar (Cotterall 2015,

360). Identity as a conceptual frame has proved especially useful to study academics' experiences in the landscape which has changed remarkably in the past decades towards a more global and market driven culture (Pifer & Baker 2013; Ylijoki & Ursin 2013). This study joins the line of research suggesting a doctoral study journey to represent an identity negotiation process changing the way individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by other people (Baker & Lattuca 2010; Colbeck 2008; Cotterall 2015; Hall & Burns 2009; Leshem 2020; Mantai 2017). However, as a response to the calls for capturing more comprehensive approaches for understanding doctoral study experiences and mobility, in this study a doctoral study abroad is considered an identity negotiation process throughout life course with the doctorate representing only one aspect of growing understanding of "who one is, who one wishes to be and who one is becoming" (Cotterall 2015, 361).

Identity construction from life course perspective combines the individual level and the wider context. Situating the research phenomenon, such as a doctoral study abroad, as part of a wider historical and social dimension (Mills 1982), and embedding individual lives into social structures (Mayer 2004, 163) allows a more in-depth view on both mobility and the doctoral study experience. Doctoral students' life courses are individually experienced yet simultaneously socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann 1994). Investigating individual experiences opens up a possibility to learn something, not solely about individual meaning making, but also about the society (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 91). Thus, investigating the students' narration of their doctoral journeys, opens up a possibility to understand how the studies are situated in their overall life course, and how the individual experiences reflect wider social meanings given to doctoral education and international higher education studies.

In this study, identity construction of doctoral students is conceptualised as an identity-trajectory (McAlpine, Amundsen & Jazvac-Martek 2010). Identity-trajectory contributes to the idea of investigating identity construction as a life-long project through experiences in life course. Doctoral students are considered to pursue various life goals in the past, present and future circumstances. Considering identity construction as a trajectory allows the researcher, on the one hand, to be open to the idea of ongoing changes through time in different life areas influencing identity construction, and on the other hand, to simultaneously recognise a certain level of continuity of a stable identity. (McAlpine, Amundsen & Turner 2014.) Identity-trajectory can serve to understand doctoral studies and mobility as a process of becoming mobile doctoral students, resulting from various biographical and social processes linked to wider life course aspirations and plans in different life course areas (Carlson 2013; Findlay et al. 2015; Kõu et al. 2015; Wu & Wilkes 2017).

Existing studies considering doctoral students' identities as trajectories tend to be placed in Canadian (McAlpine et al. 2010) or Australian contexts (Cotterall 2015;

Soong, Tran & Hiep 2015), and less in the British context. Moreover, identity perspective concerning international doctoral students is frequently connected with feelings of otherness (Bilecen 2013; Fotovatian & Miller 2014; Gardner & Holley 2011; Pifer & Baker 2014) implying such feelings to be inherent to a study abroad experience. The current study broadens this picture which I believe to be more complex including individual nuances. Considering how the changing nature of academic work and doctoral studies as well as increasing mobility and various activities beyond the academic are reflected in the students' experiences can provide new insights in understanding doctoral students' identity construction in international contexts.

The concept of identity-trajectory is useful in capturing a doctoral study abroad as a process in time affected by various life areas. Moreover, identity-trajectory perspective pays attention to the interplay between agency and structure considering that individuals are intentional in setting and pursuing goals and making decisions, however, recognising that they act in the framework of supporting or constraining structures. (Elder 1998; McAlpine 2012, 38–39, 44–45; McAlpine et al. 2014, 954.) Social structures as well as personal life events can enable or restrict the individual when making decisions concerning education (Mayer 2004, 164–165). Structures are especially present in the earlier stages of education while later the possibility to make individual decisions increases. By investigating the students' life course experiences, I will bring out the personal life events behind the agency exercised by the students when making their study related decisions, and identify the social structures enabling or restricting these decisions. Highlighting the combination of agency and structure throughout doctoral students' journeys, provides new insight in doctoral study experience since previous research tends to stress the influence of either structural (Gardner 2008; Zheng 2019) or agentive (Borrego, Choe, Nguyen & Knight 2021; Clegg 2008; McAlpine et al. 2014) features, even if recognising their interplay up to some degree. In this study, to complement identity-trajectory, I will also draw on Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) thinking of education as a field where individuals are in pursuit of different forms of capital appreciated in the field. I will employ the concept of habitus, the embodiment of cultural capital, as a thinking tool for considering the interplay of agency and structure in terms of identity construction along educational and mobility paths (Bourdieu 1993, 2004; Peixoto 2014).

The data of this study consists of narrative interviews of 14 Finnish doctoral students conducting doctoral studies in British universities in the United Kingdom. Students' talk about their life experiences is considered a way to make sense of their life course and to construct identity (Cotterall 2015). In narratives, the different life events are connected and identity constructed by talking in present time about transitions to new life phases in the past or in the future (Vilkko 2000, 74). The choices made and action undertaken are given meanings which have been formed in

interaction with the possibilities and constraints of the surrounding society and culture (Eteläpelto 2007).

In this study the concepts of the UK and Britain are used interchangeably referring geographically to the country of the United Kingdom. Students represent different fields in several universities in the UK which according to the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) has for long been among the most popular full degree study destinations for Finns (EDUFI 2019a). There are universities ranging from elite to more average universities (ARWU 2021; Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes & Skeldon 2012; Tindal, Packwood, Findlay, Leahy & McCollum 2015) which provides an interesting frame for studying the meaning of a doctoral study abroad for Finns who encounter a very different academic landscape there what comes to hierarchies and competition compared to Finland. Nordic countries are traditionally known to have a very egalitarian education system, even at higher education levels, and despite the recent changes towards effectiveness and accountability, Finnish university remains rather non-hierarchical (Jalava 2012; Välimaa & Muhonen 2018). Therefore, it will be interesting to explore how the students who have been socialised to a tuition-free system based on principles of equality negotiate their experiences in a different higher education system.

This dissertation is structured the following way. Chapter 2 situates this study into the wider context of student mobility reflecting internationalisation in the changing landscape of globalisation, marketisation and massification of higher education. Chapter 3 engages with the theoretical starting points by discussing life course approach and the multifaceted concept of identity, exploring previous research on doctoral students, and introducing the adoption of identity-trajectory as a frame for this study. The research aims, methods, and methodological considerations are discussed in Chapter 4. The results of this study are presented in Chapters 5 and 6, of which the former answers the first research question and the latter answers the second. To conclude, Chapter 7 provides a discussion linking main findings to wider social phenomena answering the third research question, considers limitations of this study and makes recommendations for further research. Ethical reflections are presented throughout the study instead of in a specific section because such reflections were present throughout the study.

2 Changing Global Landscape of Higher Education, Doctoral Education and Student Mobility

In today's globalised world information and new ideas flow with an increasing speed across the globe. Not solely information, but also people are on the move as never before, or at least they were before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. People are connected in whole new ways by advanced transportation and digital technology enabling them to interact with each other despite long geographical distances physically and virtually. Much of the physical movement is based on the underlying freedom of choice, whether it is for tourism related travel, employment related migration, or for other reasons. However, conflicts and environmental crisis are also forcing millions of people to flee their countries in seeking for refuge as we can witness on the news nearly daily. In their latest report in 2020, the International Organization for Migration reported an increase in global migration to nearly 300 million migrants (IOM 2020) on top of which a tremendous flow of undocumented migration takes place (Rizvi 2019a).

Working life is operating under a set of global economic relations which together with environmental challenges place high demands for future skills, competences and innovations, and lifelong learning is required at practically every employment sector. Hence, there is a growing reliance on immigration to strengthen the labour force of most OECD countries (OECD 2008; OECD 2019b). However, international labour mobility is not only increasing, but also transforming from low-skilled to high-skilled migration (de Wit 2020; Habti & Elo 2018; Recchi & Favell 2009) encouraged by a combination of various policies (OECD 2020b) reflecting how the role of knowledge has become a key resource for national development and prosperity in contemporary societies, and increasingly appreciated for its commercial exchange value (Kauppinen 2014; Välimaa, Papatsiba & Hoffman 2016). Higher education as a center of knowledge has understandably a role to play here. Top scientists, researchers and research groups are considered gate openers for cooperation with global networks which in turn is seen vital within the context of increasing global competition for new innovations and profitable businesses. New

knowledge producers equipped with transferable skills and capacities (Bernstein et al. 2014) to manage in the global arena are needed.

Internationalisation has become the predominant mission of higher education across the globe (Brooks & Waters 2011; de Wit 2020) as "a response to and an expression of the challenges and opportunities connected with globalization" as Rizvi (2019b) has stated. Internationalisation strategies have been established highlighting the importance of an international profile, of gaining status in international rankings, as well as of promoting cross-border education exchange, collaborative international networks, home campus internationalisation, and education hubs and branch campuses as more recent examples (Knight 2013; Martinez 2020). International education and international students are commonly considered as a strategic resource in global competition (Shen et al. 2016, 342) or the "global talent race" (Shachar & Hirschl 2013, 71; Ziguras & Law 2006), and competition for talented students is intensifying (Choudaha 2018, 2). Highly-skilled workers are, into an increasing extent, recruited through international education as students (Rizvi 2005a, 176; She & Wotherspoon 2013; Ziguras & Law 2006) with the expectation for them to later contribute to the employment market of the host country as skilled labour (Nerad 2010, 3). For universities these mobile students are central in their quest to raise the level of internationality, and to become more internationally active, and not least on the basis of the revenue international students generate by paying fees (Choudaha 2018; de Wit 2020; Kehm & Teichler 2007). International doctoral students are important in this respect for nations and universities in order to keep up with global competition since they represent international talents with potential to benefit the country in the future. For universities the number of international doctoral students is considered a significant indicator of whether the university can be called global, or international. (Nerad 2014; Shen et al. 2016, 339.)

From individuals' perspective the growing awareness of global interconnectivity and demand for labour and skilled individuals represent the changing structure of global economy, and even more importantly, also a changing imaginary (Rizvi 2011). People are encouraged with a range of different policies to head abroad for work and study purposes, and to attach interpretations of increasing, often commercial, opportunities to mobility. Before looking closer at student mobility as a central feature of internationalisation (Knight 2013), and before elaborating to doctoral student mobility, I will create a broader context necessary for understanding, on the one hand, the importance placed on internationalisation and mobility in higher education (de Wit 2019), and on the other hand, the change that has taken place in the environment where doctoral studies are pursued. I will do this by briefly discussing the rapid transformation of higher education during the last decades globally and in Europe.

2.1 Growing role of higher education and internationalisation in the knowledge society

University as a dynamic part of a larger society both shapes, and is shaped by the surrounding society (Välimaa et al. 2016) which is constantly changing economically, socially and politically. Nowadays, globalisation being a central feature for all of society (Nerad 2010, 1) these changes have a global nature to an increasing extent. Globalisation, massification (Trow 1976) and marketisation have been the driving forces behind the changes in the context of higher education since the 1980s. All these transformations combined have repainted the global landscape of higher education during the past few decades shaping the role and position of higher education and the way it looks today. (de Wit 2019; Marginson 2018, 3.)

The role of higher education is both an educational and a social process as Trow (1973, cited in Marginson 2018, 5) has expressed. In the context of knowledge societies, this role varies across nations, however, common features are also shared. Universities as traditional producers of new knowledge and as educators of future knowledge producers are considered to be core agents for nations' economic growth (Nerad 2010), placing them in a central position in the development of the knowledge society (Nokkala 2016). Massification of higher education has increased global student numbers dramatically, and also appointed more responsibilities to universities towards progress and well-being in the society, a so called "third mission" of the university. Partly therefore, universities worldwide, also in Europe and in Finland, have been faced with higher education policies requiring them to increase their efficiency and accountability, which is measured by such criteria as the number of completed degrees and produced publications, quality and internationalisation. (Brazzil 2021; Marginson 2013; Schütze, Alvarez Mendiola & Conrad 2012; Rinne & Koivula 2009.) Degree inflation is an outcome many countries, including Finland, have experienced due to increasing participation in higher education followed by an overall educational expansion of population (Aro 2014). Degree inflation forces people to aim higher than before in order to achieve the same job or status.

In European higher education, change in the academic landscape is largely influenced by the EU. The EU has increasingly highlighted the role of education and especially higher education in the integration process. Within the framework of the Bologna Process, the goal was to increase collaboration and to enhance effectiveness of European higher education by creating a European Higher Education Area and a European Research Area. The justifications of EU's actions have changed from references to higher education's importance to the development of the open labour market and a European identity to increasingly stressing its growing importance to the global competitiveness of European economy especially in relation to the United States and rising economies in Asia. (Hyde, Clarke & Drennan 2013, 41; Maassen

& Musselin 2009, 3–5.) The Lisbon summit (EU 2000) statement to position Europe as the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world is clear evidence of that. Besides EU, also the growing influence of supranational organisations, such as the OECD and World Bank, on national policies is argued to be one factor behind the changes in the policy context of higher education in Europe and worldwide (Brooks & Waters 2011, 23, 28, 167; Kehm 2020; Rinne & Koivula 2009).

At the same time with increasing demands for universities to become socially and economically effective, in many countries public support for universities has decreased, their budgets have been cut and the share of competed external funding is growing (Shattock 2009, 2; Schütze et al. 2012, 2). Consequently, universities have been required to respond to market forces with an increasing speed (Kankaanpää 2013; Nerad 2010). Universities' increasing significance in the innovation process has increased research co-operation between universities, businesses and governments that have traditionally had their own responsibilities in terms of research (Hyde et al. 2013, 41; Kivistö & Tirronen 2012, 76–77). Universities have traditionally concentrated on basic research, businesses on applied research and product development and government research institutions on applied research. Etzkowitz (2011, 11) uses the term "triple helix" to describe the narrowing gap between these different research sectors. Critical voices have been raised (see Hyde et al. 2013) that such new modes of knowledge production risk changing the nature of knowledge exposing it to external regulation and monitoring, and potentially leading to situations where knowledge is prescribed from outside.

A shift in higher education's role based on more traditional academic culture and values of freedom, independence and collegiality (Pritchard 2004) towards increasing significance of neoliberal tendencies highlighting economic competitiveness, profit, and efficiency has been criticised for having dwelled higher education into a market logic which has turned its activities commercial and business-like (Brazzil 2021; Marginson 2013; Mok & Montgomery 2021; Rinne & Koivula 2009). Principles of productivity have increasingly started to direct universities' strategies and funding partly replacing the government's role as a steering mechanism of universities (Kivistö & Tirronen 2012, 76; Maassen & Musselin 2009, 3). This phenomenon is reflected in expressions such as McUniversity (Parker & Jary 1995), entrepreneurial university (Clark 1998), academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie 1997) and students as consumers of higher education (Tomlinson 2017).

On the one hand, changes in the financing systems mean more independence for the universities in terms of funding, but on the other hand, changes have led to more external control for efficiency and results directing activities towards reaching the goals. Critiques of increasing neoliberalism within higher education (Pan 2021;

Rinne & Koivula 2009, 189) have interpreted the growing significance of the role of output control, auditing, performance indicators and efficiency as a threat and restriction of autonomy, one of the core principles of universities' functions. Aiming for economic profitability has also led to increasing competition for scarce resources at all levels, between countries, institutions, departments, and individuals. Strive for excellence in research and teaching to climb higher in national and international rankings creates competition between universities and departments across most nations, although varying in intensity. (Deem, Mok & Lucas 2008; Marginson 2006, 2018; Schütze et al. 2012.) Competition for higher rankings is considered leading to differentiation between higher education systems, since a handful of world class institutions are better positioned to benefit their activities in the global competition at the cost of others (de Wit 2020; Li, Shen & Xie 2021; Marginson 2006). Individual academics are also affected by the increasing competitiveness. Continuous search for funding in form of various projects prevails, creating implications on the working culture and everyday practices. Insecurity linked to short-term employment contracts and casualisation is increasingly characterising the academic working culture (Bozzon, Murgia, Poggio & Rapetti 2017; Hakala 2009).

In the light of the broader context briefly described above, internationalisation became one of the most important, and visible, missions of higher education starting from the 1980s, and intensifying especially from the 1990s onwards. Internationalisation is frequently considered a useful tool to tackle the challenges set by globalisation, and for universities to enhance their chances to reach especially the economic goals (Brooks & Waters 2011; Haapakoski 2020). Internationalisation reflects various economic, political, cultural, and societal drivers, however, the more historical vision of international cooperation and exchange of ideas targeting to mutual understanding, peace and human capital development has shifted towards ever increasing market-logic highlighting competition, commercialisation, and status building influenced by political and academic power (Brook & Waters 2011; de Wit 2020; Altbach & de Wit 2015; Knight 2013; Teichler 2004). International education as it looks today has been referred to as an industry creating revenue and enhancing reputation for national higher education systems and individual institutes (de Wit 2020), for example in form of tuition fees supported by benchmarking and ranking systems (Brooks & Waters 2011).

In line with the global trends, also in Finland internationalisation strategies have been prepared in order for Finnish higher education to internationalise its practices and research (MoEC 2017). Low level of internationalisation within the higher education system as a whole was appointed as Finland's weakness in 2015 in a report commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture to review the Finnish Higher Education System in order to improve the higher education system and strengthen Finland's innovation system (MoEC 2015a). The strategies for increasing

internationalisation include such plans as strengthening the visibility of Finnish research internationally and attracting international researchers and students to come to Finland (MoEC 2017).

What is meant by internationalisation of higher education is far from straightforward, and has received attention. According to Knight (2004, 11) internationalisation of higher education is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (primarily teaching/learning, research, service) or delivery of higher education". Teichler (2004, 22–23) describes internationalisation as "the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education relative to an increasing frequency of border-crossing activities characterised by increasing knowledge transfer, physical mobility, cooperation and international education and research". Heriansyah (2014, 165) provides a definition for internationalisation as a "transition process that happens from micro-context (bilateral relationship) to macro-context (multilateral relationship)". Internationalisation has also been looked at as internationalisation at home as opposed to cross-border activity (Knight 2013) which is in the focus in this study. Haapakoski (2020) problematises the definitions of internationalisation often hiding whether the effort is proactive and conscious, or a mere response that is unavoidable.

Approaches to internationalisation tend to be rather normative in nature in the sense that internationalisation is often considered advantageous, and interpreted as beneficial for development at individual, institutional, national, and global levels. Benefits of internationalisation are attached for example to cooperation, cultural exchange, language learning, and increasing mutual understanding (de Wit 2019; Wiers-Jenssen 2012). Without denying these benefits, Knight (2013) reminds about the importance of raising critical awareness of the potential risks and unintended consequences of internationalisation as equally important. The widening gap between the traditional cooperation and collaboration perspective, and the more recent commercial interpretation is particularly troublesome. (Knight 2013.) The tendency to approach internationalisation through a neoliberal lense risks attaching economic rationales as naturally belonging to the process internationalisation (Haapakoski 2020).

Although the more traditional values of internationalisation still remain, they are often, if not totally overlooked, only assumed, and not explicitly articulated nor acted upon in practice (e.g. Knight 2013; Rizvi 2005b). Researchers (e.g. Altbach & de Wit 2015; Choudaha 2018; Mathies & Weimer 2018; Rizvi 2019a) have also raised concern that current trends for increased nationalist politics, such as the UK exiting the EU with "Brexit" and the election of Donald Trump for president in the United States, and religious fundamentalism might give internationalisation and mobility yet another twist towards increased nationalism. This, in turn, according to Altbach

and de Wit (2015) would risk narrowing down the possibilities for an open dialogue and cooperation vital for preventing conflicts and improving tolerance and solidarity in the interconnected and interdependent world.

Internationalisation as a Western paradigm has also received critique for neglecting to acknowledge its role in producing global inequalities, and researchers have asked for new perspectives and framings suggesting to turn the gaze towards power asymmetries and coloniality (Haapakoski 2020; Stein & Andreotti 2016). Critique has been pointed towards a narrow focus concentrated on mobility and its economic drivers at the cost of a more comprehensive approach including all aspects of education as well as various political, socio-cultural and academic motivations. Increasing attention towards internationalisation of the curriculum at home as well as focus on qualitative aspects of internationalisation linked to developing citizenship, employability, and provision of quality research, education, and service to society has been called after. (de Wit 2020; Rizvi 2011.)

Although these calls have been answered, and growing attention is paid to internationalisation from qualitative perspectives (e.g. Heriansyah 2014), there is no denying that international student mobility, and its connection to globalisation and neoliberalism, still play a central role in the internationalisation agenda. Student mobility is also the perspective taken on internationalisation in this study however, giving the voice to students themselves reaches for a wider perspective and considers different aspects and motivations behind doctoral students' journeys abroad, which however are constructed and taking place in a global context. Moreover, despite mobility as an element of internationalisation has been widely researched, research is still scarce in terms of international aspects of doctoral education (Knight & de Wit 2018, xxi; Vital & Yao 2018, 212).

2.2 International student mobility

2.2.1 Increasing mobility – central feature of internationalisation practices and policies

It is widely agreed that one of the main aspects of internationalisation of higher education is the mobility of academic staff and that of students (Kehm & Teichler 2007; Knight 2013, 85; Ryan 2012; Wiers-Jenssen 2012). Internationalisation being high on the agenda of practices and policies of higher education, student mobility is serving as an important strategy for manifesting these (Brooks & Waters 2011; de Wit 2020; Kehm & Teichler 2007) as reflected in the increasing global mobile student numbers (OECD 2019a). Another reflection of the centrality of mobility in terms of internationalisation is the expansion of research on the international dimensions of higher education in the past twenty years, and the identification of

mobility of students and academic staff as one of the broad themes characterising the landscape of research on these issues (Bedenlier, Kondakci & Zawacki-Richter 2018, 108–109; Bilecen 2013, 668; Kehm & Teichler 2007, 264).

The global number of internationally mobile students in tertiary education has increased dramatically within a few decades rising from two million in 1998 to 5,3 million in 2017. The number of internationally mobile tertiary education students within the OECD area was approximately 3,7 million in 2017. (OECD 2019a, 229.) In 2018, at least 1,3 million international students were undertaking tertiary level studies within the EU (Eurostat 2020). The United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia are the countries that host the most international students in the world (Mathies & Weimer 2018, 148; Vögtle & Windzio 2016) while China, India and South Korea (Börjesson 2017) are the most common regions of origin of international students reflecting an asymmetric logic of mobility patterns from the south to the north, and from the east to the west (Van der Wende 2015).

The number of Finnish higher education students taking advantage of a stay abroad has also grown following global trends. In 2016 over 10 000 Finnish higher education students spent a minimum period of three months abroad (EDUFI 2017a). Along with shorter mobility periods, also full degree study is becoming more popular. In 2019, over 9000 Finns studied for a full degree within higher education abroad which is twice as many as ten years back (EDUFI 2019b). The real number of Finnish students studying for a higher education degree abroad is probably even higher because statistics include only the students receiving study benefits from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela). We can assume that not all students study with Kela benefits but have enrolled directly in the higher education institution abroad financing their studies in a range of other ways. (Garam 2016, 14.) This applies especially to those doing doctoral studies. In 2018, the most popular countries among Finnish full degree students were the UK, Sweden, Estonia and the Netherlands (EDUFI 2019a). The full degree students tend to study economics, law, medicine, social sciences, humanities and arts. Humanities and social sciences are popular in the UK and Sweden, law in Estonia whereas medicine and nursing sciences are mostly studied in Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Romania. (EDUFI 2017b, 3–4.)

International student mobility includes exchange programmes and short-term studies abroad as well as full degree studies (Wiers-Jenssen 2012, 472). The role of the latter group has recently become increasingly significant outweighing the former (Carlson 2013, 170; Jokila 2020, 34–35). From the European perspective three different groups of mobile students can be identified. First, there are students from low-income and middle-income countries who move to an economically advanced country for degree study. Second, there are students from economically advanced countries who move for degree study to another economically advanced country.

Third group consists of temporarily mobile students within economically advanced countries. (Teichler 2012, 9–10.) Students in this current study belong to the less researched second group since they study for a full degree and come from Finland, a Nordic welfare society (Välimaa & Muhonen 2018). According to previous research, students belonging to the second group are a rather heterogeneous group with a higher percentage among the doctoral and master's students (Teichler 2012, 10). Movement of the first group is commonly referred to as vertical mobility in contrast to that of the second and third groups which can be referred to as horizontal mobility indicating interaction between somewhat equal partners in terms of knowledge levels (Teichler 2004; Teichler 2012, 9). Student mobility within Europe is very much concentrated on intra-European mobility (Van der Wende 2015), and it has mainly been considered horizontal. European student mobility has also been referred to as "mobility light" meaning that mobility takes place between cultures with less distance from one another. (Teichler 2004, 14.) However, the intra-European mobility landscape is increasingly starting to remind those more traditional and unequal global mobility patterns due to the increasing differences in countries economic situations (Van der Wende 2015).

Mobility as such is not a foreign phenomenon within higher education, but the increase in mobile student numbers has been unprecedently tremendous. Academics have always been mobile, but as the significance and magnitude of internationalisation have grown, the position of mobility and international students have become more central in the strategies concerning higher education (Knight 2013). Also, the very essence of international academic mobility has transformed shifting the paradigm from aid to trade as elaborated by Rizvi (2011, 695). During the colonial period, international mobility was used to reproduce social differentiation with mobility of academics linked to colonial logic of civilising the people in the colonies largely for the purpose of serving the colonising powers. During the post-colonial era, a developmentalist perspective on mobility flourished providing development assistance to the newly independent countries in form of aid programmes such as the Colombo and Fulbright Plan. Over the past decades, the more market-driven commercial logic of international mobility focusing on trade and revenue has been celebrated reflecting the wider trends of internationalisation. (Altbach & de Wit 2015; Rizvi 2011, 693–695.)

Previous research on student mobility has been criticised of uncritically presenting mobility outcomes as merely positive (Wiers-Jenssen 2012, 473). Those arguing for mobility see it as an opportunity for mutual benefits for both the sending and receiving parties in the globalised world in terms of knowledge transfer and intercultural exchanges (Teichler 2004, 10–11) and hence, a source for brain gain and brain circulation (Shen et al. 2016, 346, 349). From European perspective mobility opens up possibilities for horizontal communication as well as collaborative

actions towards shaping the European higher education system (Teichler 2004, 22). For the individual, mobility contributing added value to the degree and increasing chances of finding employment are examples of positive outcomes (Behle 2014, 302). The potential negative effects of mobility have been rarely discussed further in earlier research of the past decades with the exception of some studies discussing mobility from brain drain perspective as a contradictory issue (Jalowiecki & Gorzelak 2004; Logue 2009; Rizvi 2005a; Wiers-Jenssen 2012). However, the growing awareness of inequalities and environmental threats (Rizvi 2021) is leading to researchers increasingly taking up a more critical perspective. Luthra and Platt (2016) have raised uncertainty of the future as a factor for a group of middle-class origin mobile students who are more dependent on migration policies than those students representing more elite groups. Bilecen and Van Mol (2017) remind that time spent abroad can potentially lead to disadvantage creating inequalities or reinforcing existing ones in terms of social origin, gender, and nationality for example.

Proactive institutional behavior (Knight 2004) for encouraging mobility becomes visible in measures facilitating an exchange period or degree study abroad for example in form of policies and funding agendas at different levels (Choudaha 2018; Li et al. 2021; Shachar & Hirschl 2013). In Europe, the Bologna process works as an example of such policy with the harmonised degree structure and a credit transfer system created to promote academic mobility (Vögtle & Windzio 2016, 724). EU financed Erasmus programme from 1987 in turn is probably the most widely known exchange programme (Teichler 2012, 2). Here mobility involves not solely the movement of students between universities and across national frontiers but also a policy instrument function aiming at enhancing personal development and employability (Chien 2013, 50), strengthening European economy, indicating individual universities' dynamism and quality as well as creating a European identity by expanding the students' views on European opportunity structures beyond national level (Neave 2009, 32).

In addition to pro-skills policy measures facilitating mobility, policy measures can do the opposite. Restrictive immigration policies can be politically used to divide students into those more desired and those less (Brooks & Waters 2011; Shachar & Hirschl 2013) making visible the potential which lies within mobility for creating inequalities. Some countries have also established specific policy measures to prevent their best talent from flowing away. Since promoting mobility from the sending country's perspective is largely based on the expectations for these students to return and contribute to national development and the country's scientific progress (Li et al. 2021; Nerad 2010; Shen et al. 2016), the fact that students remain in the host country, or move elsewhere than back home, has raised concern for brain drain (Mok & Han 2016). Brain drain refers to the loss of the more qualified individuals

and highly skilled workers to other countries (Jalowiecki & Gorzelak 2004, 304; Shen et al. 2016, 346; Wiers-Jenssen 2012, 471), whereas in brain gain these people would return and contribute to national development (Yuping & Suyan 2015). The mobile individual is considered as available human capital, a means for economic benefits and a source for skills and competences (Czaika & Parsons 2017; Mok & Han 2016).

Brain drain discussions have frequently revolved around developing countries losing their talent to developed countries. However, scholars have also raised the question of losing highly skilled workers from one developed country to another (Elo 2017; Jalowiecki & Gorzelak 2004, 305; Rizvi 2005a, 176). In Finland, concern for losing highly skilled academics to other countries due to budget cuts, market driven culture, and worsening working conditions and insecure future come up in the news from time to time (HS.fi 2015) especially after the Universities Act 558/2009 reforms in 2010 altering the state ownership to universities being independent legal persons, and the budget cuts during prime minister Juha Sipilä's government 2015-2019. Some countries, such as China, are providing conditional fellowships for their students to study abroad for a period after which they are required to return. Policies can also be directed to attract students to return after having gained a degree. For instance, doctoral graduates from various developing countries are targeted to return with incentives ranging from political assets to better employment prospects in universities and research institutes. (Li et al. 2021; Rizvi 2005a; Shen et al. 2016.)

In fact, in order for the sending countries to benefit from international mobility, return of students is at least partly unnecessary. Students who have acquired international education but stay abroad can serve as important transnational resources for the development of their home countries transforming brain drain into brain circulation and brain bridging (Mok & Han 2016). Koikkalainen (2009, 2013) has studied highly skilled Finnish migrants in Europe, and their experiences of working in other EU countries, in order to find out how transnational mobility affects their identity, and how they negotiate the value of their cultural capital. There is a great potential of expertise in these Finns, as most of them still have a tight relationship with Finland, and they identify themselves as Finns in Europe. (Koikkalainen 2013, 95–97.) Finland's internationalisation strategy briefly mentions also those students who have studied abroad. These people are considered to have potential networks for international cooperation which is why their skills and experience need to be acknowledged on a more official level. (MoEC 2017, 18–19.) At the moment, Finland is risking to lose connection to mobile students, at least on doctoral level, since there is no system to keep track on them. It seems that the creation and maintenance of contacts and networks is dependent on the students themselves and their activity.

2.2.2 Mobile students' rationales and profiles

The unforeseen mobility of students needs to be considered as something more than merely a reflection of policy making (see Li et al. 2021). Students are the ones being mobile, and if their actions are explained by active policy making only, the big picture remains vague. What do we know about individual students and their rationales for an international study? Traditional motivations for students to embark on international studies range from lack of opportunities in the home country, perception of more quality education abroad, prestige, family tradition, social networks, travel interest, possibility to gain international experiences and language skills, pure desire to live abroad to immigration plans (Chien 2013; EDUFI 2018; Rizvi 2011, 697; Wiers-Jenssen 2012). We know from previous studies (Findlay et al. 2012; Rizvi 2019a) that growing awareness of global opportunities mobilises people, and more economically driven motivations have been appearing next to traditional ones, and partly even replacing them. Study abroad is taken up to boost chances for an international career (EDUFI 2018) which can be interpreted as a reflection of growing need to prepare for requirements of the global world and the labour market (Proctor & Rumbley 2018). Mobility can be considered a counter-act towards lack of jobs requiring higher education qualifications, or the growing unemployment of the highly skilled in some countries such as Portugal (Behle 2014, 289; Cerdeira et al. 2016, 68, 76). However, drivers beyond the economic are to be considered, and other life areas and important people need to be taken into account. As Rizvi (2005a, 176) mentions, strong diasporic networks are important cultural drivers behind mobility decisions.

Studies concerning full degree study of Finns can be used as a reference to this study revealing trends in Finnish full degree study in general. Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) has launched a survey concerning Finnish full degree mobility investigating the students' backgrounds, motives and thoughts about returning to Finland as well as careers of people having completed a higher education degree abroad. According to the results of the survey, the reasons to study for a full degree abroad are multiple. The desire to gain international experiences is a main motivation including an aspiration to boost chances for an international career and a pure desire to live abroad. (EDUFI 2018, 2.) The results are in line with the previous study by Garam (2003) regarding Finnish full degree students in international higher education institutions. Garam's study also indicated that some students embarked on full degree studies abroad because they had confronted difficulties when trying to get into higher education in Finland, or because a particular field of study was unexisting in Finland. A possibility to learn languages, new experiences and high level of education were stated as main motivations. (Garam 2003, 58–59, 70–74.) In the survey by EDUFI (2018) four motivation orientations for study abroad were identified: seeker for international experience, seeker for quality education, seeker

for better entry chances and chooser of a familiar option. The most popular orientation was seeker for international experience and chooser of a familiar option was the rarest. Over half of full degree students in a higher education institute abroad had not applied for a Finnish higher education institute. (EDUFI 2018, 3.)

Students in the EDUFI survey (2018) were unable to specify where they would settle after the studies. However, only one fourth were planning to return to Finland. Career and work possibilities were named the most important factor when deciding where to settle after the studies, and these possibilities were estimated to be relatively narrow in Finland. On the contrary, unemployment and poor career possibilities worried these students as well as the general atmosphere of anxiety and narrow mindedness in the society. (EDUFI 2018, 5–6.) Garam's (2003) research indicated that a degree acquired abroad was considered more valuable in the international employment market than in Finland. Finnish employers were considered somewhat sceptic towards a foreign degree. (Garam 2003, 58–59, 72–73.)

Mobile students have repeatedly been considered representing an elite group which is reflected in expressions such as elite transnationals, high skill elite and European elite (see Brooks & Waters 2011), migratory elite (Murphy-Lejeune 2002), and Eurostars - highly mobile class of younger professionals (Favell 2008). They are also characterised by the underlying freedom in their choice of mobility typical for highly skilled migrants and self-initiated expatriates (Habti & Elo 2018) reflecting individualistic motives and migration strategies beyond formal recruitment and chain migration (Braun & Arsene 2009, 50). Previous research (e.g. EDUFI 2017b; Recchi & Favell 2009; Wiers-Jenssen 2012) has shown that internationally mobile students come from higher social backgrounds and have a higher level of education than those not moving. They are known to possess mobility capital (Murphy-Lejeune 2002, 51) resulting from previous international experience of their own or someone in their family forming a specific habitual disposition which favours such experiences to be renewed (Carlson 2013; Kõu et al. 2015; Murphy-Lejeune 2002). Kõu et al. (2015) found out that life trajectories of Indian doctoral students studying in the Netherlands reflected living abroad as a norm for their family, friends and peers. Through mobility students are gaining social and cultural capital which benefits future mobility, or as expressed by Li et al. (1996, 51) in connection with migration - migrating to learn has potential to evolve in learning to migrate.

Finnish full degree students abroad are also a selected group since over half of the respondents in the Finnish National Agency for Education survey (2018) had previous experience of living abroad. One third had a spouse or another family member in the country of study and one tenth had other family ties to the country. Finnish full degree students abroad are more often women, Swedish speaking and from Uusimaa if compared to students in Finnish higher education. They also have more often parents with higher income level than the students in national higher

education. (EDUFI 2018, 4.) Such studies work as reference points also to this current study reflecting the importance of previous experiences and students' backgrounds in terms of their doctoral study journeys. In this study, consideration is taken to students' pasts and backgrounds in terms of mobility to investigate what kind of mobility paths the Finnish students have, and what kind of capitals they attach to their abroad study.

2.2.3 Theorisations of student mobility

A line of studies explains student mobility resulting from factors that on the one hand push students to study abroad, and on the other hand pull them to the country of study foregrounding push and pull theory commonly used to explain migration (Mazzarol & Soutar 2002; see also Chien 2013). For example, the availability of instruction in English, university status, advanced technological capacity of the country, and employment and immigration possibilities function as pull-factors whereas lack of adequate funding, absence of a specific field of study in one's home-country, overcrowding and poor working conditions for academics are some examples of push-factors (Chien 2013; Furukawa et al. 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar 2002; Sehoole 2011). However, in the globalised world such theorisation has been considered inadequate to capture the complexity of mobility (Carlson 2013; Habti & Elo 2018; Li et al. 2021; Rizvi 2019a; Wu & Wilkes 2017).

Researchers (Findlay et al. 2012; Habti & Elo 2018) have pointed out a gap in mobility research concerning life course approach allowing a more in-depth view. Instead of trying to explain mobility as resulting from a one-time rational choice or event with a specific motivation, which is often the case in studies concerning mobile students, another line of research considers mobility more as an ongoing process influenced by various life events and social processes (Carlson 2013; Findlay et al. 2012; Findlay et al. 2015; Kõu et al. 2015). Although motivational factors are important and should not be overlooked, the choice is to be considered more complex than a single action at a certain point of time. In terms of student mobility, previous mobility experiences (Carlson 2013) and future goals and aspirations (Findlay et al. 2012) across the life course have been identified as important parts of the process. In this current research, mobility is considered an important aspect of the identity negotiation process of doctoral students, and linked to wider life course experiences, aspirations and plans in different life course areas.

Rizvi (2011) has theorised student mobility using the concept of neo-liberal imaginary, which I find helpful in thinking about abroad study, first of all as a phenomenon in a globalised context, but also as part of a social process instead of a one-off decision. Neo-liberal imaginary promotes a collective consciousness of an interconnected world where new commercial opportunities exist in areas that have

traditionally been considered as public goods such as higher education. Such thinking has directed students into valuing international education in economic terms. (Rizvi 2011.) Students are increasingly thinking that investment in mobility will give returns in form of differentiating their employment credentials from others and giving them an advantage in future careers by promoting their employability prospects in the global labour market (Findlay et al. 2012; Kõu et al. 2015). Findlay et al. (2012) found in their study that mobile students were highly conscious of degree inflation created by increased participation in higher education, which has caused rising demand for access to world-class universities. Seeking a prestigious university abroad was a strategy to add value to the degree. (Findlay et al. 2012, 120–125, 128–129.)

International student mobility has been discussed with regard to social reproduction and renewal of class differences through education (Brooks & Waters 2011; Findlay et al. 2012; see Bourdieu & Passeron 1977). Student mobility is considered a way to reproduce social advantage by providing symbolic capital transforming into transnational cosmopolitan identities (Findlay et al. 2012). Using neo-liberal imaginary Rizvi (2011) has raised concern for international education becoming largely a private good if serving only for a transnational elite. A study abroad has been identified to represent a technique to stand out from the mass being distinctive from peers, and a distinguishing identity marker of success and social status allowing to pursue membership in a group of transnational elite using mobility to be distinct (Findlay et al. 2012; Rizvi 2011, 693).

2.3 Increasing significance of doctoral education and international doctoral students

Doctoral education as a central part of higher education (Nerad 2010; Shen et al. 2016) has been affected by all the above changes to the role and position of higher education. The role of doctoral education at the heart of universities' research activity as a source of new researchers and knowledge is considered crucial in realising the strategies of the knowledge society at different levels (Aittola 2017; Bao, Kehm & Ma 2018; Nerad 2014; Sin & Tavares 2020). Doctoral students are considered future nation builders for their research and innovation capacity (Bernstein et al. 2014). Doctoral students also conduct a large part of universities' research, and thus indicate the university's research capacity (Bawa, Gudmundsson, Jayaram & Kiley 2014; Hakala 2009). Since policies are encouraging universities to profile themselves as international research universities (Marginson 2006), and funding is largely based on (international) research output (Hannukainen & Brunila 2017), the role of doctoral education is understandably central for that. Doctoral education can contribute to the overall reputation and attractiveness of the university,

which then serves as a valuable asset in the global competition for the best students and rankings for building a global university (Kehm 2020; Nerad 2014; Shen et al. 2016). Motivation especially for international students is often the academic reputation of the host institution (Teichler 2012, 10), and in turn international doctoral students serve as a key indicator of the university's global university status (Shen et al. 2016) and quality (Bao et al. 2018).

Due to its increasing significance doctoral education has been tightly woven into market-driven policy making at institutional, national and even supra-national levels in many countries worldwide, also in Europe, and Finland (Aittola 2017; Bao et al. 2018; Kehm 2007, 314; Kehm 2020; Nerad 2014). Influenced by this, the meanings attached to the doctorate are changing. As Nerad (2010, 3) states, "doctoral education is no longer regarded solely as curiosity-driven pursuit of knowledge in a traditional sense, but as a commodity with economic value, which can be bought and sold in the public market place of research development and policy information". In other words, doctoral education has become a business.

The increasing significance of doctoral education has led to restructuring of doctoral education worldwide (Nerad 2010, 5), and in Europe in particular (Aittola 2017; Bao et al. 2018; Kehm 2020; Van Deynze & Santos 2020). In Europe, the role of doctoral education is highlighted both in the vision of creating the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy (EU 2020, 5) and the European Higher Education Area (Aittola 2017; Kehm 2007). Concern has been raised over the quality, completion and duration of doctoral education which has been identified to be in need of more structure and monitoring. Several reforms have been attempted over the years in Europe to harmonise doctoral education, improve the quality and to increase cooperation and mobility. (Kivistö, Pekkola & Siekkinen 2017; EUA 2005; EUA 2010.)

First, doctoral education was integrated as the third cycle of higher education within the Bologna framework. The integration aimed at strengthening Europe's role in global competition adding an international and competitive dimension to doctoral education. (Aittola 2017; Kehm 2008, 33.) Another central reform was the founding of graduate schools targeted at creating a more unified doctoral training system internationally, nationally and at university level in terms of recruitment, supervision and quality issues amongst others (Bao et al. 2018; Stubb 2012). Since 2005, there has been a significant increase in the number of doctoral schools in European universities. In 2007 less than 30% of European University Association (EUA) member universities had doctoral schools whereas in 2013 their share had increased to over 80% (EUA 2013, 15–17). The founding of graduate schools has partly replaced the traditional "master-apprentice" model of doctoral training, although the model still strongly prevails in Europe (Bao et al. 2018; Kehm 2020). In the Humboldtian tradition (Pritchard 2004) a young academic (apprentice) became an

independent scholar by learning the important traditions and practices from an older colleague (master). The apprentice then grew to become a master who would continue the tradition. This tradition allowed the profession to be reproduced. Moreover, the higher education institutions and especially professors guided higher education policy according to traditions of academic freedom and autonomy of the scholar. (Laiho 1997.) In Finland, since 2014 all doctoral students have belonged to universities' own graduate schools and their doctoral programmes. Within the new system, the doctorate is supposed to be obtained in approximately four years with the help of systematic supervision and funding. (MoEC 2015b; Niemi et al. 2011, 20.) In the traditional model the doctoral process often took several years which meant graduation at a relatively high age which has also been a common feature of Nordic doctoral education (Nerad, Trzyna & Heggelund 2008, 10–11).

Restructuring of doctoral education has not necessarily meant increased harmony, but instead new forms of functional differentiation and local adjustments. A research doctorate, a professional doctorate, a taught doctorate and PhD by published work are among the various different types and models of doctoral education and training proliferating in Europe. (Bao et al. 2018; Van Deynze & Santos 2020.) Such differentiation reflects partly the challenges set for higher education towards a more professional doctoral education. Doctoral education is increasingly expected to meet the needs of employment market wider than the academia and to provide skills, knowledge and competences that reach beyond the academic requirements (Germain-Alamartine & Moghadam-Saman 2020; EUA 2016; Van Deynze & Santos 2020). Increasing demands for more professional doctoral education corresponds also to increasing demands for internationalisation. Doctoral students should be prepared to participate in a global economy and a scholarly community at local, national as well as international levels both inside and outside the academic world (Bernstein et al. 2014; Nerad 2010, 2).

The importance placed on doctoral education and training of new knowledge producers for the knowledge economy is also visible in a considerable increase in global doctoral student numbers. Between the years 2013 and 2017 there was an increase of approximately 8% in the number of students graduating with a doctoral degree across countries within the OECD reaching to nearly 300 000 students in 2017. Should the same pace of growth continue, 2,3% of young people in the OECD will enter doctoral studies at some point. The United States, Germany and the United Kingdom were the countries supplying the most doctoral graduates within the OECD in 2017. (OECD 2019a, 248.)

In line with the global trends, the number of doctoral students in Finnish universities has increased to nearly 18 000 students in 2019 and nearly 1800 doctoral degrees in 2018, which is triple the amount of annual degrees 20 years ago (MoE 2004; Vipunen 2019a, b). The increase reflects the importance given to doctoral

education in Finland where the number of doctoral degrees awarded is one of universities' funding principles (MoEC 2021). However, the number of Finnish doctoral students conducting a doctorate abroad is unknown since no official statistics exist.

As part of an overall increase in global doctoral production, a significant growth is seen in the global number of international doctoral students. The share of international students increases gradually with education level, and international students account for 22% of enrolment at doctoral level on average across OECD countries. (OECD 2020a, 232.) In the United States doctoral education is the most internationalised of all levels of education while the United Kingdom is the most internationalised in terms of doctoral students' international mobility (Shen et al. 2016, 333–334). In some countries such as Finland and Denmark the growth in international doctoral student numbers has surpassed the national growth, and in Scandinavia in general the growth of doctoral degrees awarded to international students has been a lot greater than the growth of degrees awarded domestic students (Van der Wende 2015). Doctoral students' international mobility reflects a similar unequal geographical balance as mobility in general and students are highly concentrated in relatively few universities (Van der Wende 2015). In addition to the United States and United Kingdom, also Canada, Germany, France, Australia and Japan report hosting high numbers of international doctoral students (Shen et al. 2016). However, this situation is gradually challenged by emerging systems of Asia traditionally known as sources of international doctoral students such as China and South Korea (Van der Wende 2015).

Policy measures leaning on the idea that international doctoral students promote the countries and universities' research capacity and eventually lead to economic gains, can be seen as one factor behind increasing numbers of mobile doctoral students (Li et al. 2021; Nerad 2010; Van der Wende 2015). Shen et al. (2016) have made a following summary of the policies of different countries for attracting international doctoral students. First, there are policies that facilitate the entry for students in form of migration, visa and employment policies and enrolment requirements. Second, there are policies that target on guaranteeing funding for a reasonable period of time. Third, the length of schooling has been modified to fit international common practice as has been done in the Bologna process. Fourth, there are policies to set up international graduate schools, and fifth, policies for promoting English language in studies. English speaking programmes are prepared for international students in several non-English-speaking countries such as Germany and France indicating that English is considered as the lingua franca of science and research (Nerad 2010) and of the global economy (Rizvi 2011). And lastly, policies promote international study to students with massive admission information sessions where university representants go to countries such as China

and India in order to recruit. (Shen et al. 2016.) Policies are also targeted to attract recent doctoral graduates to stay with visa regulations, better employment prospects also with regard to post-doc positions, degree recognition, and collaborative efforts between different research sectors (Van der Wende 2015). Although policy measures can significantly ease mobility, such measures are understandably not determining how individuals act in terms of mobility. Earlier research concerning individual motivations and reasonings behind doctoral students' mobility paths will be discussed in Chapter 3 which presents the theoretical starting points of this study.

3 Doctoral Studies Constructing Identity Through Life Course

3.1 Life course approach

Life course refers to a sociological viewpoint to life's construction, and it has been widely used in social sciences often replacing the more psychological viewpoint of life span. Sociologists tend to consider social structures and historical change as main drivers of individual development, whereas psychologists focus more on life's biological determinants. (Bynner 2016, 37; Gilleard & Higgs 2016; Shanahan & Porfelli 2002, 398–399.) Life span or life cycle highlight life's structure as a span or a cycle of recurring predetermined life stages whereas life course describes life more as a process (Vilkko 2000, 78). John Bynner (2016, 28, 50) together with other researchers (see Gilleard & Higgs 2016; Shanahan & Porfelli 2002) suggests moving away from juxtaposing concepts in order to allow more holistic ways to approach life's turns since regardless of viewpoint, the underlying premise of investigation is the continuous development of individuals. As John Clausen (1986, 2, 8) concludes, human development is linked to a certain historical context including constant interaction between the biological, the psychological and the sociocultural. Hence, different viewpoints gained from disciplines such as life course sociology, life span psychology and human biology rather complement than contradict each other. This study takes the more sociological approach using life course approach.

Life course is generally considered more of an approach or a perspective than a theory (Bynner 2016, 27). Instead of a widely agreed all-encompassing definition, life course has a variety of definitions. Life course refers to "a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time" (Giele & Elder 1998, 32) and "in various life domains spanning from birth to death" (Mayer 2004, 163). Vilkko (2000, 75) states that life course is a socially constructed structure and a social institution which helps to represent life in different age-related life stages and role transitions. Life course tells us how lives are socially organised in biological and historical time resulting in social patterns that affect our thinking, feeling and acting (Elder 1998, 9). Thus, instead of life histories of individuals, life courses are patterned dynamic expressions of social structure embedding individual lives into these structures mainly in form of social positions (Mayer 2004, 163–165).

Clausen (1986) defines life course simply as living in time distinguishing three dimensions of time: chronological or biological, social and historical time. The first refers to the chronological order of life events. Social time refers to a socially constructed definition of age as a marker of a certain life period like when a person is considered a child or an adult in a certain society. Historical time offers the lenses through which the world can be viewed. Goal setting is an expression of life's purposiveness and largely influenced by the beliefs and values of the society. We seek our own place and roles in life history although certain chapters are already roughly sketched by the present time and the society. (Clausen 1986, 1–3, 6.)

Elder's (1998) life course principals have been widely accepted as corner stones of life course research (Bynner 2016, 38; Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe 2003). Firstly, human development is to be considered a lifelong process. Secondly, individuals' life courses are shaped by the historical times and places they experience in life. Thirdly, the impact of life events is connected to timing of these events in life course. Fourthly, the premise of linked lives affirms that people are dependent on other people, and that social and historical influences are reflected through a network of shared relationships. Lastly, human agency refers to individuals constructing their lives through being active and making choices in the framework of existing historical and social contexts. (Elder 1998, 2–4, Elder et al. 2003, 11–14.)

Life course perspective accounts for individual choice together with social aspects in determining life course outcomes (Hofmeister 2013, 288). Elder's principles acknowledge how all life choices are made within a framework of opportunities and constraints offered by the existing social structure and culture (Kõu et al. 2015, 1647–1648) offering insight also for this study in understanding the interaction between social structures and individual agency in terms of doctoral students' study paths.

Life course is multidimensional reflecting various interconnected life areas as paths or trajectories along which transitions from one role to another take place (Mayer 2004, 166). All different life course components interact dynamically with each other and the constantly changing environment (Bynner 2016, 39). Certain transitions become more meaningful than others (re)directing life course or strengthening identity (Antikainen, Houtsonen, Huotelin & Kauppila 1996, 9, 103). Education, work and family are among the central life trajectories sequenced by role transitions (Shanahan, Mortimer & Johnson 2016, 4). Transitions such as going to school, forming a family, having children and retiring are seen as phases of change and growth in an individual's life allowing and requiring individual to reflect life's meaning and the choices made. Such transforming nature of transitions is reflected in descriptions such as turning points (Elder et al. 2003; Riessman 2001), meaningful life events (Antikainen 1998, 101), significant learning experiences (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 105), and developmental tasks (Havighurst 1972). Transitions may

follow the expected timing in life or happen unexpectedly. A strength of life course approach lies in its capacity to acknowledge individual variation in the order of different role transitions. (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 87; Elder et al. 2003; Giele & Elder 1998, 32.) Such variation is bound to increase due to growing demands for making individual choices and constructing individual paths in a globalised world with a variety of opportunities available, many of which are increasingly international.

Life course is used in this study for its dynamism and flexibility (Giele & Elder 1998, 32) to approach life as a process of ongoing change and continuity allowing individual variation. Life course approach allows to combine the micro- and macro-level processes and to construct continuity and a dynamic whole when investigating meaningful life transitions over time and in social processes (Anisef, Axelrod, Baichman-Anisef, James & Turrittin 2016, 18; Maunula 2014, 30; Mayer 2004). I will draw from life course approach to investigate development and patterning of central transitions concerning doctoral students' doctoral paths abroad in order to understand how studies are situated in their overall life course. From life course perspective, doctoral studies abroad can be examined as a process in time linking individual experiences and the social, cultural and historical contexts together in past, present and future circumstances. Doctoral students' paths are seen as constructed by the students themselves within the context of social forces, educational and work experiences, future work opportunities and family matters among others (Anisef et al. 2016, 17).

Previous research (see e.g. Maunula 2014) has claimed significant individual variation in doctoral students' educational paths and experiences which is why life course approach is particularly useful to study them. Combining life course approach with doctoral student mobility illuminates that education and mobility are not separate from other life course areas. The approach reminds that of Kõu et al. (2015) who investigated high-skilled migration using the lens of life course demonstrating various life course trajectories surrounding the migration trajectory. According to their research linked lives of migrants and their families are culturally conditioned which requires nesting individuals within the contexts of their meaningful others. (Kõu et al. 2015.)

3.2 The concept of identity

The concept of identity is widely recognised as elusive and multi-dimensional (Castelló, McAlpine, Sala-Bubaré, Inouye & Skakni 2021; Gee 2000; Henkel 2009; McLean & Syed 2015; Sfard & Prusak 2005). The popularity of identity in sciences ranging from psychology, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, history, and education has been explained with its usefulness when focusing on human beings

and the underlying mechanisms of human action (Hammack 2015; Sfard & Prusak 2005, 14). Research on identity having developed within this wide range of different disciplines explains the lack of harmony in the ways to understand identity. McLean and Syed (2015, 1) illustrate the fuzziness of the field by stating that "the field of identity development needs an identity".

Attempting to capture the essence of identity is not only a mission impossible, but an inappropriate one. Instead, the purpose of this current study is to use identity as a device to understand doctoral students' experiences, and especially the meaning they attach to doctoral studies abroad as part of life course. Next, I will present some commonly recognised theoretical viewpoints concerning identity for pointing out the ambiguity of the concept, acknowledging simultaneously that a wide array of other perspectives exists.

Identity has been understood differently at different points in history which is well reflected by Hall (1999) in his descriptions of the enlightment subject, the sociological subject and the postmodern subject. The enlightment subject was considered to have a coherent inner essence, identity, which stayed practically the same from birth to death. The sociological approach considers the individual as a phenomenon with an inner core, however this inner self, identity, is constructed and developed through constant interaction with the society. In the postmodern framework the existence of an inner essence of self is denied. The postmodern demonstrates how the constant and rapid changes in the society create insecurity requiring fluid identities which are continuously created and re-created in relation to social interaction. These identities are relational, discursively constructed from various discourses and positions, constantly in process and molded historically, socially and culturally. (Hall 1999, 21–23.)

Following the sociocultural turn in human sciences the socially constructed nature of identity has been commonly agreed upon (Gee 2000; Hall 1996; Henkel 2005). The essentialist and individualist viewpoints have given way to a socially constructed definition of oneself (Barrow, Grant & Xu 2020; Houtsonen 2000, 15; Mead 1934) with the underlying idea that knowledge and identities are created in a socially constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann 1994) in interaction with other people and social institutions. Identity work refers to identity as something constructed, created, and recreated in interaction between people (Sfard & Prusak 2005, 15) instead of naturally given and biologically determined. Individuals are distinctive and embedded (Henkel 2005, 156), and thus identity is simultaneously very individual and social. However, depending on the theory of identity, the dominating role in identity construction is given either to the individual or the social aspect. The social contexts and processes for identity development are often the interest of sociologist, while psychologists tend to look more into the internal

psychological processes, and identity's connection to behavior. (Eteläpelto 2007, 97–98; Hammack 2015.)

Erikson's (1982) famous theory of individual's psychological development from the 1950s connects identity construction to individual's developmental stages and genetics as well as to social interaction in different contexts. In his interpretation a coherent identity will be achieved through developmental stages within the social framework. In this idea of an achievable identity underlies an understanding of identity as something that will be accomplished at some point. The experience of sameness and continuity independent on time and place are central in Erikson's reasoning. (Erikson 1982, 30, 38, 174, 227; Ruopsa 2016, 36.)

Community and the role of the social in identity construction is highlighted by social theorists. Mead (1934) was one of the central figures representing the sociological viewpoint of identity according to which identity, or the self as Mead expresses, is constructed in interaction between the individual and the society. Mead separates the social and the individual identity by calling the former "the object me" and the latter "the subject I" placing the object me as primary regarding identity construction. According to Mead, the self emerges in a reflexive process where the individual learns to take the attitudes of others, in other words, once the me-component learns to view oneself from other's perspective. The role of the I-component is to react to those attitudes. (Mead 1934, 140, 173–175; Hammack 2015; Miller 1973, 6, 46, 56–57.) Harré (1983) explains the intertwinement of the individual and the social by describing how individual's identity is created by identifying with a certain community and the identity it represents as well as trying to find a personal way to put that identity into practice.

Due to the elusiveness of the concept of identity, many scholars speak of identification instead of defining identity as such. Sfard and Prusak (2005, 15) use the term identifying concerning activity which creates something individual with the help of commonly shared resources, or as they say "combines individual voices into collective discourses". Hall (1999) uses the term identification along with identity, describing identification as constructing identity by sharing something common. This sharing can only happen by leaving something outside. Individuals construct their identity by identifying themselves with communities and practices that they consider meaningful. (Hall 1999, 247–248.) Identity operates as a device to think about sameness and difference at both individual and group level of continuity and change over time (Hammack 2015, 11–12).

According to review article by Barrow et al. (2020) the postmodern theories and theorists have challenged identity arguing against the assumed coherence and continuity of identity in a current world where discontinuity seems more the norm for example due to constant and rapid technological changes. The postmodern perspective draws on the non-continuity of life course interpreting increasing

individualisation in differentiated life stages of late modernity (Giddens 1991) to lead into continuous reshaping and redefining oneself through time and multiple contexts, and hence multiple, contradictory and fragmented identities constructed in discourse (Houtsonen 2000, 17–18; Hall 1999). If the modern idea was to establish a stable and durable identity, the postmodern idea has been to avoid fixation and instead to keep the options open (Bauman 1996, 18; Barrow et al. 2020, 2).

Postmodern thinking about identity being constructed in a discursive reality has been criticised for simplifying identity into something contextual and agile and dismissing the practical and embodied realities (Barrow et al. 2020; Beck & Young 2005; Eteläpelto 2007, 103). Researchers highlighting individual agency in identity construction see postmodernism too concentrated on identities as passively reflecting and mediating the social reality leaving little space for individual agency (Clegg 2008; Eteläpelto 2007, 102; McAlpine 2012). The society's role is acknowledged, however, individuals are considered as active agents in the process of constructing their lives and identities.

Coherence and flexibility, or the role of agency and structure in identity construction, need not be thought of as ruling each other out. Identity as a reflexive project as Anthony Giddens states (1991, 5, 32) strives to sustain a coherent yet constantly revised life narrative in the context of multiple choice. According to Sfard and Prusak (2005) individuals' longing for a certain level of continuity is reflected in the use of past experiences when confronting new situations. They propose that understanding identity as reconstructive and flexible in nature helps to plan for the future as well as to navigate challenges and make sense of varying situations using past experiences as guidelines. (Sfard & Prusak 2005, 16.) Hence, identity construction is not just "amebawise" navigating through different situations and changing contexts (Eteläpelto 2007, 102) without an anchor, but instead draws from earlier experiences and the core-self creating a feeling of continuity to life course. All these different interpretations of identity and its construction can be thought of as complementary, and indicate the importance given to identity in various scientific fields and demonstrate its actuality even today.

3.3 Life course and identity in social change of contemporary modern time

The popularity of life course approach and identity in social sciences date back to the rapid social changes that have taken place in Western societies over the past decades. Globalisation and advances in technology have changed, and continue to change traditional social structures, and a multiplicity of choices is available for individuals to live their life. Insecurity is present in many different social sectors due to changes in working life, unemployment, natural disasters, international terrorism

and global COVID-19 pandemic as a recent example. In terms of education and work, career planning is more challenging than before. It is no longer self-evident to follow a predetermined career path from basic education onwards. Completing a degree does not automatically mean a transition to a certain position in working life. Instead, individuals need to be prepared to gaps in their careers, degree inflation, and lifelong learning. Ability to fluctuate between periods of work, unemployment and education, and openness to find and try out alternative paths are required when careers of people are becoming more insecure.

Modernisation and individualisaton discussions are reflected in conceptions concerning both life course and identity. Earlier, in the more traditional cultures life course followed a relatively normative pattern. Individuals could rely on institutionalised transitions and traditional models in explaining and directing life course. (Findlay et al. 2015; Giddens 1991; Shanahan & Porfelli 2002; Saastamoinen 2006.) Identity-models on offer were relatively stable and often inherited or transmitted within families. Social identities were more or less predetermined by social class, gender and working life position. Identities were tied to concrete practices concerning living and ways of life, something that could be expected or accounted for. (Saastamoinen 2006, 141.) Consequently, it was natural to understand identity as constructed through a process of socialisation mediating the individual's personal and social reality. Socialisation is the traditional approach to describe the process in which an individual develops to become and act as a member of the society. In the process of socialisation, the individual learns the values and beliefs of the society, and how to act upon them. Socialisation happens in interaction between the individual and surrounding society represented by other people. (Antikainen 1998, 14–15, 102; Gardner 2010, 63.)

Following societal changes and breakdown of linearity in life course, different problems and goals become important requiring new ways to approach life. The processual, dynamic (Vilkko 2000, 78) and spiral nature of life (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 99) is emphasised when people move fluidly between different roles and statuses, or occupy multiple roles simultaneously (Anisef et al. 2016, 19). Interpreting life course transitions also through crisis and ruptures which open up between the accustomed life stages is necessary and creates space even for new life stages (Vilkko 2000, 76–77; see also Bynner 2016, 50). Vilkko (2000) illustrates alternative, albeit complementary, ways for approaching life using three metaphors. Life as a cycle reminds life span view, life as a continuum reminds life course view, and life as a compilation of mosaïc life events reflects the postmodern thinking. (Vilkko 2000, 78–80.)

In the contemporary modern time, the role of individual choices increases in terms of constructing life course and identity transforming them into individual's personal projects (Giddens 1991, 32; Shanahan & Porfelli 2002). Individuals are part

of multiple communities and increasingly independent and differentiated fields of social action which offer alternative identity-models, and within which different kinds of identities are constructed (Houtsonen 2000, 21). Choices are (supposedly) increasingly made by active and individual decisions according to personal preference and goals rather than expectations of the family or the society giving more room to individual variation (Hofmeister 2013). In a similar vein, traditional social identities such as class, gender, and race are seen to be produced and constructed by individuals themselves instead of being predefined externally making them somewhat blurred social categories (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 91) and even insignificant according to critical views (Erola 2010).

Increasing individualisation is not to be translated automatically into increasing freedom for individuals to choose the direction of their life course. Responsibility for directing one's life by setting goals with more personal characteristics increases requiring reflexivity (Giddens 1991) which is the ability to estimate different alternatives, including potential risks (Beck 1992; Saastamoinen 2006). Individuals are confronted by an obligation and a need to make one's life meaningful, and identity work is a way to construct a personal biography that is reflected in individual choices and planning (Antikainen & Komonen 2003; Hofmeister 2013). The reality of today characterised by individuality, choice, and fragmentation (Giddens 1991) can complicate the choice making and identity processes especially in transition stages (Eteläpelto 2007, 95; Hofmeister 2013) since commonly shared existing narratives fit poorly as guidelines (Vilkko 2000). Privilege of freedom easily transforms into a burden to handle change, tolerate insecurity, and take responsibility for the outcomes of choices made, regardless of them being good or bad (Hofmeister 2013; Shanahan & Porfelli 2002).

Hofmeister (2013) argues that social structures remain powerful, however, their role has been masked by dominance of individualisation discourse. In terms of education, development towards freedom and responsibility for molding a personal path, has potential to benefit those with required resources at hand, and increase the risk for drifting and dropping out for those without. As earlier research has shown, structural influence is vividly present playing an important role in both educational and mobility paths. Research has widely shown, for instance, that educational life course is a chain of choices and selection affected by family's socio-economic background from early on (Kivinen & Rinne 1995; Seppänen, Kalalahti, Rinne & Simola 2015; Tikkanen 2019) and reaching to university level (Mullen, Goyette & Soares 2003; Nori 2011; Reay 2018). Study abroad is frequently shown to be more popular amongst individuals from higher social class background, a selected group of migratory elite possessing mobility capital (Murphy-Lejeune 2002) in form of previous own international experience, or that mediated by the family (Recchi & Favell 2009) which applies also to Finnish students (EDUFI 2017b, 5–6; Wiers-

Jenssen 2012, 478–479). Instead of losing significance, social structures remain and have potential to increase their significance concerning educational paths in the individualised contemporary era (Tikkanen 2019).

3.4 What do we know about doctoral students?

Researchers internationally, as well as in Finland, have taken an interest in doctoral education and doctoral students providing a plethora of studies from different perspectives. According to Aarnikoivu (2020) previous research on doctoral education can be categorised into 15 wider, often overlapping, themes: supervision, mentoring, and support (Aittola 1995; Löfström & Pyhältö 2020; Wang & Byram 2019); careers and employment (Dufty-Jones 2018; Etmanski, Walters & Zarifa 2017; McAlpine & Turner 2012); identities and agency (Archer 2008; McAlpine & Lucas 2011; Pappa, Elomaa & Perälä-Littunen 2020); knowledge production (Vekkaila & Pyhältö 2016); mental health and wellbeing (Hunter & Devine 2016; Schmidt & Hansson 2018; Stubb 2012); writing and publishing (Ciampa & Wolfe 2020); development of doctoral programmes and curricula (Du Preez & Simmonds 2014); socialisation and access to research cultures (Gardner 2010; Mendoza 2007; Weng 2020); degree completion and funding (Grote, Patrick, Lyles, Knight, Borrego & Alsharif 2021); female doctoral researchers (Maunula 2014; Schmidt & Umans 2014); doctoral experience, learning, and satisfaction (Vekkaila & Pyhältö 2016); motivation, background, and commitment (Nori, Peura & Jauhiainen 2020); doctoral journeys (Gravett 2021); international doctoral researchers and mobility (Bilecen 2013; Sakurai, Vekkaila & Pyhältö 2017); and quality and assessment (Clarke 2013). The most common themes out of these 15 categories were supervision, mentoring, and support; writing and publishing; doctoral experience, learning, and satisfaction; and careers and employment (Aarnikoivu 2020).

From the perspective of this current study, previous research focusing on doctoral experience and doctoral journeys combined with identities and agency were considered most relevant for closer scrutiny. Since the doctoral experience in this study is approached holistically as a process through life course, previous studies on students' motivation and background concerning doctoral studies and mobility as well as international students' experiences were also scrutinised. Careers and employment appeared very significant for the construction of students' identities during the analysis process, and for that reason some aspects from previous research on career themes are included here. Next, I will introduce previous research investigating the academic experience, especially that of doctoral students, and discuss the central points. These studies work as reference points to this study outlining the complexity of constructing identity in a present-day university (Barrow et al. 2020; Pick, Symons & Teo 2017). Despite the tremendous advances of previous

research on this area there are certain points to be discussed here that require attention.

3.4.1 Academic identity and doctoral students

Currently, in the middle of changes in the academic world and the overall society, academics among other social groups are trying to figure out their identity (Barrow et al. 2020). Identity has proved useful as a conceptualising frame in higher education studies examining the experience of being an academic and attempting to understand the academic world, academic career, and individual academics (Castelló et al. 2021; Pifer & Baker 2013, 115). In addition to using identity to study the experiences of established academic staff, it is also commonly used to examine the experiences of potential future researchers, namely doctoral students. Archer (2008) has discussed their constructions of academic identities and how they negotiate the pressures of today's academic world. Hakala (2009) has explored doctoral students' motivations and central identity related questions in the context of entrepreneurial university. Henkel (2004) has brought up how current science policies challenge academic identities having implications also on doctoral education and students. Mantai's research (2017) shares light on academic identity development through moments doctoral students feel like a researcher while McAlpine (2012) and McAlpine et al. (2014) use identity-trajectory to trace doctoral students' experiences. However, identity framework is less common with regard to international doctoral students despite some exceptions (e.g. Bilecen 2013; Cotterall 2015; Fotovatian 2012; Fotovatian and Miller 2014; Thompson, Morton & Storch 2016).

Studies using identity framework for examining doctoral students' experiences frequently claim that identity is an integral part of doctoral studies alongside knowledge and producing knowledge (Castelló et al. 2021, 568; Green 2005). As Cotterall (2015) states identity construction is embedded in doctoral studies because the studies change, not solely the ways individuals define themselves, but also how they are being defined. The doctoral study learning processes are closely connected to individual's understanding of who one is, who one wishes to be and who one is becoming. (Cotterall 2015, 361.) In other words, the processes are connected to identity.

The underpinning theme in many studies concerning identities of doctoral students is the students' development into researchers and them learning to become doctors (Baker & Lattuca 2010; Cotterall 2015; Leshem 2020; Mantai 2017). Identity in these studies is often referred to as academic identity or research identity, the foundation of which is frequently traced to doctoral education (Hakala 2009; Henkel 2004, 168). A doctoral study has traditionally represented a socialisation period into the academic world aiming at legitimating the academic expertise

(Gardner 2008, 326), and reproducing the academic profession (Henkel 2004, 168). Understanding of oneself as a doctoral student and a future doctor is negotiated within the practices of doctoral studies and academic work. Through these negotiations, students construct an academic identity which is traditionally considered rather stable. Henkel (2004) reasons referring to Clark (1983) that this understanding of stability stems from the strong association of academic identity with the membership of two key communities providing the boundaries and shared values for identity building. The first community is the university institution which has been the social context within which individuals interact and build their identities. The second community is the discipline which has provided the common practices and beliefs to be shared. (Clark 1983; Henkel 2004, 168–169; Henkel 2009.) The disciplines have been described as tribes, the members of which share a disciplinary identity which is manifested in discourse (Becher 1989).

However, according to current understanding, the context for identity building of academics is no longer limited to the university institution and the discipline, although their role still remains significant (Billot 2010; Clegg 2008; Henkel 2005, 166). As discussed in Chapter 2, the university and doctoral education have undergone major changes in the past decades due to globalisation and policies emphasising profitability, efficiency, and internationalisation. Hence, the boundaries of the academic practices have extended beyond the organisational context of the university as the work is conducted in and out the university, in networks and in cooperation with industries creating memberships in communities other than the university. "Universities and academic life are becoming more complex and differentiated spaces" (Clegg 2008, 330) where scholars will have to adapt to multiple roles reaching beyond the traditional ones of the teacher and researcher (Pifer & Baker 2013, 120–122). The scholar might be working as an entrepreneur, a communicator, a manager or a negotiator with regard to the use of their scientific contributions (Henkel 2004, 173).

Consequently, the idea of the university institution and the discipline as sources of values to be identified with, has become contradictory. Traditional academic core values such as academic freedom, autonomy and collegiality still persist (Archer 2008; Hakala 2009), however they are confronted by individuality, competition and value for money (Clegg 2008; Henkel 2004; Ylijoki & Ursin 2013) emerging from the changing academic landscape of audit culture, profit seeking, managerialism and constant search for research funding. Researchers' effectivity and ability are increasingly defined through the production of international publications (Hannukainen & Brunila 2017) which function as essential symbolic capital should one strive for an academic career. More and higher quality degrees and publications need to be produced and all output should have value for money (Ylijoki & Ursin 2013, 1136). Although such performance-based culture is present in some form in

the academic world thoughout the globe, it varies in intensity across countries being considerably stronger in the UK than Finland for instance (Pyhältö, Peltonen, Castelló & McAlpine 2020; Shin & Jung 2014).

Following such development, studies have brought up a concern regarding the implications of changes in the academic landscape to the construction of academic identity which is feared to be under fragmentation and crisis (Billot 2010; Henkel 2004; Ylijoki & Ursin 2015). However, since not only the contexts shape identities, studies have also focused on the interplay of individual agency of academics and structures (Archer 2008; Clegg 2008; McAlpine 2012) taking into consideration how individuals are influencing as well as being influenced by the surrounding contexts and conditions. The university and its doctoral education are social contexts within which identities are constructed and modified in social interaction. In turn, norms and practices of such contexts are shaped, reinforced, and challenged by identities. (Pifer & Baker 2013, 116.)

Pick et al. (2017) have outlined research on academic identity having developed through three waves. The first wave identified academic identity as an important research phenomenon, and fragmenting as a result of contradictory values, multiple functions, and loosening institutional boundaries of higher education. The second wave portrayed the interaction between agency and structure drawing attention to social construction of academic identity. During this wave, researchers pointed out the importance of tensions that arise between external forces reflecting fragmented identities, and the desire of academics for creating more coherent inner self-understandings. Third wave, turned the focus on individuals and the possibilities for building more coherent identities despite tensions created by structural changes and pressure. (Pick et al. 2017, 2.)

According to various studies (Henkel 2005; Leshem 2020; Ylijoki & Ursin 2013, 1147) the ways to understand and enact academic identity have become multiple, diverse, polarised and contradictory. Ylijoki and Ursin (2013, 1147) illustrated the polarisation of academic identities by distinguishing nine narratives ranging from being a resistant rebel or a loser to being a change agent or simply a winner reflecting different understandings of being an academic in the current university. However, the widening boundaries of academic work have also potential to create new possibilities and frames of interpretation for the formation of academic identity. Clegg (2008, 340–341) claims interestingly that since identities are actively shaped and developed in response to structural changes and external contexts, creation of hybrid identities that remain unaffected by all the pressures of efficiency is more probable in institutions that are less world-class.

Naturally the changes in higher education and doctoral education are reflected also in the doctoral study environment (Hannukainen & Brunila 2017; Henkel 2004; Kouhia & Tammi 2014) and consequently in identities of doctoral students. Archer

(2008) reflects if it is possible to construct an academic identity without being a neoliberal subject while Hakala (2009) discusses doctoral students' academic identity as being constructed from a combination of traditional elements as well as new interpretations. What becomes apparent from previous studies concerning identity construction of academics in the current university conditions, is that doctoral education can no longer be regarded as a socialisation process into a fixed identity or an automatic pathway leading to an academic career (Pifer & Baker 2013, 117). According to Hakala (2009) doctoral students' identity work revolves around questions which reflect the entrepreneurial nature of today's university and the many challenges faced by doctoral students who often work with short-term contracts: what kind of research should I do? What kind of tasks should prioritise? Am I good enough? What about the future? Feelings of insecurity and anxiety are strongly present in their identity work in the competitive environment. (Hakala 2009, 180–185.)

The above questions are relevant still today for doctoral students who are expected to publish, preferably in international and highly ranked journals, apply for funding, communicate, organise and attend seminars, act as change agents, experts and leaders, teach, do administrative work, give feedback, create and maintain networks nationally and internationally and integrate into various research groups (Blessinger & Stockley 2016; Kouhia & Tammi 2014). Along with all these tasks they should complete the dissertation in time. If competitive elements are brought up as desirable and appreciated without alternatives, it can lead to challenges for those who are only at the early stage of constructing their academic identities (Ylijoki & Ursin 2015). Pressure to perform as an agile, productive and flexible neoliberal subject easily clashes with the insecurities of a novice only growing and learning to become a researcher (Hannukainen & Brunila 2017; Kouhia & Tammi 2014). Insecurities and pressure to achieve and maintain a high academic profile can lead to an emotional burden, feelings of stress, inadequacy (Pappa et al. 2020) and even mental health and well-being issues which are relatively common among doctoral students (Jones-White, Soria, Tower & Horner 2021; Schmidt & Hansson 2018). Archer (2008) concludes more positively that despite the fact that subjects exist within contexts, they can find spaces of resistance. She brings out the agency of doctoral students by revealing their criticality and efforts to be resilient while being conscious of their experiences as structurally located up to some degree. (Archer 2008, 282.)

The current goals of higher education and doctoral education policies are closer to the ideals of hard sciences than soft sciences (Becher 1989; Peura & Jauhiainen 2018) which might place some students at greater risk for experiencing challenges and creating conflicting identities than others. This has been a concern especially in the soft sciences (Deem & Brehony 2000; Hakala 2009). If the practices and values

academics associate with doing research within their discipline strongly differ with lived experience or what academics feel is expected from them, contradictions of identity are bound to appear. For example, in hard sciences research is traditionally conducted in large research groups or projects often including co-publishing with the rest of the group whereas in soft sciences it is more common to work alone. Hard sciences are also more used to have cooperation with industries or business outside the academic world with research outcomes often leading to practical applications which is less common in soft sciences. (Deem & Brehony 2000.)

3.4.2 Heterogenous groups, motives, goals, and backgrounds

In addition to the academic landscape looking different today, also the academics are an increasingly diverse population (Bernstein et al. 2014). In a similar vein the student body entering doctoral studies is more heterogeneous (Bao et al. 2018) including groups such as part-time doctoral students (Deem & Brehony 2000), first-generation students (Gardner 2013), international students (Bilecen 2013), and female doctoral students (Maunula 2014) with various goals and motives (Fotovatian & Miller 2014; Sakurai et al. 2017), backgrounds (Jauhiainen & Nori 2017), career histories and responsibilities reaching beyond the university (Pearson, Cumming, Evans, Macauley & Ryland 2011). Therefore, it can be assumed that neither are the paths towards and within doctoral education, nor the experiences along those paths identical. Focusing solely on doctoral study experiences and academic identity overlooks the fact that students have multiple goals including those other than academic (Skakni 2018), and they engage in various activities also outside the university which affect their experience (Fotovatian & Miller 2014). Consideration of their pasts, motives and goals together with issues such as class and gender (Clegg 2008, 341–343; Pifer & Baker 2013, 125) can bring a deeper understanding of their experiences potentially giving way for reframing the academic experience which will be discussed next.

Doctoral studies are taken up for many different reasons shaping doctoral students' experiences along the way (Skakni 2018). Sakurai et al. (2017) created four motivation profiles of doctoral students for starting doctoral degrees that differed in terms of career orientation and interest in research. The four profiles identified were high career-oriented, high research interest-oriented, low career-oriented, and low research interest-oriented. Overall, the interest in research was a more common reason to embark on doctoral studies than career orientation, and the largest percentage of doctoral students belonged to the high research interest-oriented profile. International students were more likely to emphasise interest in a career than domestic students. (Sakurai et al. 2017.) Career as a motivation factor for

international students has come up also in other studies (e.g. Peura & Jauhiainen 2018).

In Skakni's (2018) research doctoral students' main motivations were a desire to meet the expectations of others, a strive for self-actualisation or intellectual challenges, and the willingness to develop professionally or to broaden career opportunities. Meeting the expectations of others included encouragement from a professor, and aspirations of significant others. Self-actualisation was elaborated as an opportunity for personal development, while intellectual challenges reflected a passion for intellectual work. An aspect of personal development visible in first-generation students' motivation was social mobility. Doctoral studies were also considered an obligatory stage for a further career reflecting a rather pragmatic approach. (Skakni 2018.) Other studies concerning doctoral students' motivations (Brailsford 2010; London et al. 2014) correspond to those of Skakni (2018) in revealing that motivations for a doctoral study are multiple indicating that also experiences shaped by these are various.

Studies investigating why individuals specifically decide to go abroad for pursuing their doctoral degree are far fewer. Yang et al. (2018) studied Chinese doctoral students' motivations for embarking on a doctoral study abroad which according to them ranged from factors related to a combination of expectancy for success and perceived value of doctoral studies. In their study five major motivations were revealed: enriching life experiences, self-cultivation, broadening perspectives in research, improving career prospects and contributing to life betterment. (Yang et al. 2018.) Personal growth and development motivated students in the study by Mostafa and Lim (2020) while Zhou (2015) found that also immigration plans and utility value of the degree were considered important. Studying for a doctorate abroad is a career commitment for some individuals who seek to increase their career chances and gain advantage in the employment market (Ahmad, Hassan & Al-Ahmedi 2017; Li et al. 2021; Yang et al. 2018). Mobility period abroad, often at post doc stage, has become a necessity, although not a guarantee, for enhancing one's academic career chances (Cantwell 2011; Puhakka & Rautopuro 2020). Heading abroad already for a doctorate can be a strategic move to complete a mobility period earlier. Academic career opportunities look very different between countries and institutions which can also be seen as an underlying factor behind increasing mobility of doctoral students. Scientists appreciate good working conditions, funding opportunities, and in general opportunities for advancing their research interests. (Van der Wende 2015.) In case unavailable in the home country, individuals might be attracted to search for such opportunities elsewhere already at doctoral stage. In the study by Kõu et al. (2015) a doctorate abroad represented opportunities for financial gains and career advancement as well as experiencing other countries and cultures. A PhD from abroad has value for individuals, however

the value remains unequal between different institutions, all foreign doctoral education is not equally valuable, more prestige universities are more valuable in terms of employability outcomes (Müller, Cowan & Barnard 2018). These results correspond partly to those studies concentrating more generally on higher education students and degree study abroad (Chien 2013; EDUFI 2018; Findlay et al. 2012; Wiers-Jenssen 2012).

Doctoral education experiences are also varied as are the motivations, and studies may present extra challenges to students who see themselves as different from the majority (Pifer & Baker 2014, 14–15). International (Fotovatian & Miller 2014; Sakurai 2017; Pappa et al. 2020), first-generation (Gardner 2013; Gardner & Holley 2011), and female doctoral students (Schmidt & Umans 2014; see also Barrow et al. 2020) have been presented by previous research as some examples of groups that often face challenges along their academic endeavours. International students can have difficulties in becoming part of peer student cultures and academic cultures (Deem & Brehony 2000, 162). Issues with stress, time management, work-life balance and casualisation have come up in female doctoral students' study experiences (Maunula 2014; Schmidt & Umans 2014) which reminded a juggling act between different roles of an academic and a mother (Brown & Watson 2010). Lack of useful capital in form of family's collected history and knowledge to inform the doctoral study experiences or more concretely in form of financial constraints, difficulties in breaking the chain of their backgrounds, and living in two worlds, that of their upbringing and that of doctoral studies are among the challenges reported for first-generation students (Gardner 2013; Gardner & Holley 2011). For all these groups, feelings of otherness have been reported to be present in different forms such as imposter syndrome (Gardner & Holley 2011), cultural stereotyping and language switching (Bilecen 2013), being labelled as an international student (Fotovatian & Miller 2014), and mismatch between the student's habitus and support provided (Naidoo 2015).

Supervision has repeatedly and throughout the years been identified as one of doctoral studies' core elements that concerns the study experience of practically all students at some level (Aittola 1995; Hall & Burns 2009; Löfström & Pyhältö 2020; Pyhältö, Vekkaila & Keskinen 2012; Wang & Byram 2019). A successful supervision experience is especially relevant in the beginning of studies (De Clercq, Devos, Azzi, Frenay, Klein & Galand 2019) since such an experience can lead to a successful completion of the dissertation while a less successful experience can cause anxiety and even lead to attrition (Pyhältö et al. 2012; Wang & Byram 2019). Positive communication between the supervisor and the doctoral student that includes supporting various aspects of doctoral studies and future visions promotes a shared understanding in terms of aspirations and experiences (Sakurai et al. 2017). Supervision plays an important role also in terms of doctoral students' identity

construction and developing research confidence (Cotterall 2015; Wang & Byram 2019).

3.4.3 Doctoral students and career plans

Doctoral students have traditionally been employed by universities after the doctorate which is no longer self-evident as the jobs available in the universities are lacking behind with the pace of the number of doctoral students. Thus, the doctorate is no longer a guarantee for a university position or an academic career. Development towards a market-driven culture in universities has created a group of short-term project workers, many of which are doctoral students, often on soft fields, and working under insecure conditions (Aarnikoivu, Nokkala, Siekkinen, Kuoppala & Pekkola 2019; Hakala 2009, 175; Passaretta, Trivellato & Triventi 2019). Since career trajectories of academics have become less predictable and more diverse (Bernstein et al. 2014; Siekkinen, Kuoppala, Pekkola & Välimaa 2017), instead of considering the doctorate as the end point of expertise (Deegan and Hill 1991, 324) it is increasingly seen rather as a first step towards becoming an independent researcher (Henkel 2004). In Finland as in several other European countries, a four-step research career model was created for describing the different phases of a researcher career in order to develop doctoral education and to help in building a researcher career. A PhD is situated on the first step of this model and professors on the top. (Aarnikoivu et al. 2019; Välimaa et al. 2016.) However, the model was not meant to be interpreted as a normative researcher career path, although such an interpretation is ever more common.

Research has shown that the increasing number of doctoral students, decreased academic posts and growing insecurity is leading to a situation that more doctorate holders are looking for employment outside the university, either because they want to, or because they are obliged to (Aarnikoivu et al. 2019; Bloch, Graversen & Pedersen 2015; Dufty-Jones 2018; Etmanski et al. 2017; Germain-Alamartine & Moghadam-Saman 2020; Siekkinen et al. 2017). According to Neumann and Tan (2011) more than half of the doctorate holders globally can expect to be employed outside the academic labour market. In terms of development of doctoral education, Finland follows international trends emphasising working life relevance especially outside the academic employment market (MoEC 2015b, 90). However, according to Pedersen (2016) doctoral masses and non-academic employers might not meet since employers are often unaware of the competence of doctors. Moreover, in their research the degree did not reflect better income which could lower the interest to gain a doctoral degree if interested to work in the private sector. (Pedersen 2016.)

According to Passaretta et al. (2019) doctoral graduates from soft sciences have experienced a stronger decrease in academic career opportunities than those from

hard sciences. What the employment prospects outside the university look like depends also on the discipline, since the situation seems to be better for doctorate holders on hard disciplines than those on soft reflecting a stronger connection between the academia and labour market within hard sciences. (Passaretta et al. 2019.) Unemployment is also reality even for doctorate holders, although still a relatively limited phenomenon. Discipline is also a significant indicator of prospects, and doctoral graduates from hard sciences are more probably employed after some years from the doctorate when compared to graduates from soft sciences (Passaretta et al. 2019). In Finland, the unemployment at doctoral level has increased more rapidly than at any other educational level, although doctorate holders still have a better employment situation than higher educated in average (MoEC 2016, 23–24). Against such context opportunities to start conducting a doctorate abroad might sound appealing.

3.5 Identity-trajectory framing this study

As previous studies scrutinised above have shown, conducting a doctorate is a complex phenomenon often fruitfully examined from a specified and well-defined perspective. Previous studies have provided an array of ways to understand why doctoral studies are pursued as well as how studies are experienced. However, there are only a few studies that combine several perspectives in order to reach a more comprehensive understanding of doctoral studies (Aarnikoivu 2020; Maunula 2014; McAlpine et al. 2014) and the doctoral study experience. Investigating such a multifaceted and complex phenomenon can benefit from a more holistic approach that acknowledges the influence of several different aspects and the complexity of the context (Habti & Elo 2018). Identity-trajectory is used for framing this study in order to reach a holistic perspective of doctoral students' journey as an identity development process throughout life course in a context wider than the studies acknowledging the influence of agency and structure.

3.5.1 Introducing identity-trajectory

McAlpine et al. (2010) have introduced identity-trajectory as a complementary view of identity development of academics. The construct of identity-trajectory emerged from their investigation of early career academic experience. They proposed viewing academic identities as trajectories through time, as combinations of the past, present and future intentions integrating the attempt to become an academic to a broader life task of aiming to become a certain kind of person. (McAlpine et al. 2010, 134.) Since the notion of identity-trajectory first emerged, researchers have developed the concept further (McAlpine 2012; McAlpine et al. 2014). Instead of referring to

academic identity trajectory (McAlpine et al. 2010), identity-trajectory has been proposed (McAlpine et al. 2014), and is also used in this current study, since academic identity-trajectory is easily connected solely to the academic context and development of an academic identity, whereas the use of identity-trajectory allows a broader perspective. Academic identity is often viewed as an entity separate from individuals' personal life, however, in identity-trajectory the personal plays an important role incorporating core features of life such as background, family, and future plans, also those non-academic, to the doctorate experience (see also Maunula 2014; Pearson et al. 2011). Identity-trajectory situates the doctoral study experience as part of individual's fuller life taking into consideration that life for doctoral students, as for the rest of human kind, happens also beyond the academic sphere on the personal arena (McAlpine et al. 2014) influencing also the academic experience and future planning.

Identity-trajectory includes also the time perspective by acknowledging that the individual's past, present and future circumstances are related and in interaction. On the one hand, past experiences and future expectations have an influence on decisions and current intentions, and on the other hand, current experiences influence how one perceives the past and the future and invests in doctoral work (Maunula 2014; McAlpine 2012; Pearson et al. 2011). The use of trajectory incorporates not solely the dimension of what really happens, and has happened, but also what is imagined and considered possible (Holmberg, Kalalahti, Varjo & Jahnukainen 2019, 107), and identity as a trajectory embeds a notion that individuals are seeking to become someone instead of being someone (Cotterall 2015; Soong et al. 2015).

In line with several other approaches concerning academics and identity development (Ai 2017; Archer 2008; Clegg 2008) identity-trajectory places a central role on individual agency. Individuals are viewed as intentional agents contributing to their own journey in setting and pursuing goals and making plans and decisions towards understanding and becoming the person of their aims and intentions. Individuals seek recognition through their actions and intentions for becoming who they intend to be. Identity-trajectory allows the idea that individuals' plans and goals can change during journey. (Cotterall 2015; McAlpine 2012; McAlpine et al. 2010; McAlpine et al. 2014.) Connecting agency and personal aspects of people's lives, as is done in identity-trajectory, embeds the academic with the personal taking into consideration how the individual's intentions, personal values, responsibilities and resources are negotiated in the academic context and influencing the students' experiences. Individual agency and personal lives can support or complicate the doctoral endeavor, and are therefore central within questions that are related to decisions concerning doctoral study as well as investment in the studies. (McAlpine 2012, 44–45; McAlpine & Amundsen 2016, 17.) For instance, support from family members has a positive effect, whereas illness in family may add difficulties to the

journey. People also attend doctoral studies in different stages of life meaning that they are personally involved in various life tasks. For one, this could mean balancing family life with doctoral studies, and for another, it could be a matter of planning to have children.

Although agency is highlighted in identity-trajectory, the interaction of agency and structure is recognised. Individuals are considered to act in a framework of supporting and constraining structures (Cotterall 2015; Elder 1998; McAlpine 2012, 38). To conceptualise the interaction of agency and structure, McAlpine (2012) proposes using the construct of opportunity structures and horizons for action. The former includes available opportunities at any given time, while the latter means the options the person considers as personally relevant and possible. (McAlpine 2012, 39–41.) For example, in terms of career, people make plans and decisions based on knowledge or an image they have on available work opportunities. Gradually through gaining experience they can get knowledge on more opportunities and also become more aware of how realistic different options are. Based on this information, through past experience and different networks they can start forming an idea on what is personally desirable or even achievable. (McAlpine & Amundsen 2016.)

Identity-trajectories can be investigated as three strands representing doctoral work: networking, intellectual and institutional. Networking represents current or past relationships such as peers, supervisors or other colleagues but also textual relationships created through reading previous research. The act of networking often serves as a resource that supports development. The intellectual strand in identity-trajectory includes contributions to the field such as publications. The institutional strand means organisational responsibilities such as teaching as well as organisational resources such as office space and supervisor availability. Various procedures and policies prevailing in different institutions have potential to create a supporting or refraining structure for progress. These three strands representing academic doctoral work should be considered as intertwined instead of separate entities. (McAlpine 2012, 41; McAlpine et al. 2014, 962–965.) For instance, supportive networks among colleagues can provide useful information concerning work opportunities, collaborative projects for enhancing the intellectual strand, or funding opportunities for strengthening the institutional strand.

How individuals invest in these different strands reflects the historical time and the prevailing policies as well as own goals and intentions (McAlpine et al. 2010, 139). Building up extensive academic networks is often presented as a requirement in today's university if one is heading for an academic career. However, such networking activity is not natural for all. Investment in networking is more than a question of becoming aware and responding to existing demands for building up one's career. It is also dependent on availability of different techniques and technologies as well as funding resources for attending conferences for example.

Moreover, publications are currently highly important for the future of academics as competition becomes tougher. Many institutions also get their funding based partly on the number of publications. Still, an automatic assumption that everyone in the academic world strives to obtain as many publications as possible is too simple.

3.5.2 Identity in this study

Researchers claiming to use identity to frame their studies have been criticised for leaving the concept of identity more or less floating in the air without giving identity any explanation or a proper definition (Barrow et al. 2020; Castelló et al. 2021; Sfard & Prusak 2005, 15). To call after a definition, is not to imply that an all-encompassing universal definition should or could be found, but simply to encourage researchers to think about the theoretical foundation of their research elaborating how they understand identity because it inevitably guides the process and interpretations made (Castelló et al. 2021). This suggestion guided me to utilise the dimensions of identity constructed by Castelló et al. (2021) for elaborating starting points of this study towards thinking about identity. They conducted a review of studies that focused on research identity with an aim to reveal the dimensions for defining identity in them, and to capture the variety of theoretical underpinnings in relation to these dimensions. While recognising the plethora of ways identities are understood and studied in all different fields, and that dimensions of Castelló et al. (2021) offer only one perspective out of many to be used for thinking about my own stance towards identity, they fall outside the of the scope of this study.

According to the analysis of Castelló et al. (2021) the reviewed studies relied either on constructivist, critical realism, or transformative frameworks. In terms of the dimensions for defining identity four dimensions were differentiated: individual versus social, stability versus dynamism, unity versus multiplicity and thinking versus action. (Castelló et al. 2021.) Castelló et al. (2021) integrated in their analysis the theoretical starting points of the reviewed studies with the dimensions of identity, and managed to separate four characterisations of researcher identity: transitioning among identities, balancing identity continuity and change, personal identity development through time, and personal and stable identity. Studies reflecting "transitioning among identities", understood identity as socially constructed and dynamic, accepted multiple identities, and claimed their approach constructivist in nature. Studies reflecting "balancing identity continuity and change" defined identity as socially constructed, but differed from the previous group by referring to one identity or to moving from an identity to another instead of multiple identities. These studies varied concerning the theoretical approach and relied either on constructivist, critical realism, or transformative frames. Studies reflecting "personal identity development through time" defined identity as dynamic and mainly individually

driven, however acknowledging the role of contexts. These studies often relied on critical realism as theoretical frame. The last group reflecting "personal and stable identity" viewed identity mainly as unique and stable accepting the idea of change in transitions. Social characteristics were considered important in constructing identity. These studies relied on the constructivist framework. (Castelló et al. 2021.)

The characterisations of Castelló et al. (2021) incorporated a variety of conceptualisations of researcher identity revealing differences especially in relation to their stance to dynamism, action, and the interaction between the dimensions of identity and chosen theoretical frames. While the theoretical frame was necessary to grasp the approach used in the study, it was insufficient for revealing the research identity stance. For example, constructivist approaches were used in all four categorisations, thus instead of being specific to the concept of identity, theoretical assumptions reflected more generally how the study viewed the world and research. (Castelló et al. 2021.)

I reflected the stances of this current study in relation to dimensions categorised by Castelló et al. (2021) and came up with the following. Of the four research identity characterisations (transitioning among identities, balancing identity continuity and change, personal identity development through time, and personal and stable identity) established by Castelló et al. (2021) this current study falls somewhere in between "transitioning among identities" and "personal identity development through time".

In this study, I draw on the socially constructed view on identity and join an array of researchers taking a constructivist stance to examine identities of academics (Barrow et al. 2020; Castelló et al. 2021; Cotterall 2015; Hakala 2009). In identity, the social and the individual intertwine, and through investigating identity, it is possible to understand the processes where the social and the individual encounter in life course. I will use identity, instead of self, for highlighting the relational process between the personal and the social, instead of the internal psychological processes (Hammack 2015, 12). I share the view of communitarian theorists such as Mead (1934) and Harré (1983), and consider communities, such as the university and doctoral studies, as linked to identity construction. However, I also consider individuals as active agents with motivations, goals, and intentions in determining the dynamics of social life and their activities (Sfard & Prusak 2015, 15). I consider individual agency and social structures as mutually powerful and in constant interaction in identity construction. This stance is reflected in this study in the use of identity-trajectory (McAlpine 2012) which highlights agency but acknowledges the role of structures, and the use of habitus (Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995) to complement identity-trajectory in order to overcome juxtaposing agency and structure.

Identity in this study is considered dynamic meaning that development requires constant negotiation between previous, present, and future experiences, and between stability and change in time. Identity is also considered flexible, however, not in a sense of being completely fluid and constantly changing (Hall 1999). Taking a stance towards the dimension of unity and multiplicity in this study is twofold. On the one hand, identity in this study is reflected as unified resulting from negotiations between stability and change (Hammack 2015; McAlpine 2012). On the other hand, the idea of multiple and even contradictory identities is accepted. Gee's (2000) reasoning combines these views when he states that identity as he understands it is "being recognized as a certain "kind of person" in a given context". Identity is multiple what comes to individuals' performance in the society, however identity holds an "internal state" or a "core identity" that remains more stable across contexts. (Gee 2000, 99.) In everyday life individuals take identities for granted up to a certain point meaning that in social interaction we assume people to have a certain identity, which is reflected in their actions in different situations. For example, national identities are rather stable (Hall 1999, 6). Acknowledging coherence in identity allows a possibility for change and development, instead of implying that identities are fixed and rigid (Alasuutari 2007, 175; Erikson 1982; Hammack 2015, 12). In this study, coherence is especially implied in the use of narratives which posit that individuals construct continuity in identities by seeking to produce coherent life stories and connecting events for creating a sense purpose and meaning throughout life course as a social process (Hammack 2015, 21–23). Thinking versus action dimension in this study falls slightly towards action dimension. Without denying the role of thinking in constructing identity, identity in this study is shaped and constructed by participation in different contexts (Mead 1934; Harré 1983).

3.5.3 Doctoral studies abroad as an identity-trajectory

The aim of this study is to examine the meaning of doctoral studies abroad as part of comprehensive life course of Finnish doctoral students studying for a doctoral degree abroad. In this study, I draw on the idea of identity-trajectory (McAlpine 2012) for considering a doctoral study experience abroad as an ongoing identity development process throughout life course instead of a monolithic entity or a product to be obtained (McAlpine et al. 2014). The objective is to use identity-trajectory as a tool to operationalise the wholeness of doctoral students' life into events before, during and after doctoral studies that are relevant for understanding their doctoral study abroad journey, and into structural and agentive elements promoting and restraining the journey as presented in Figure 1.

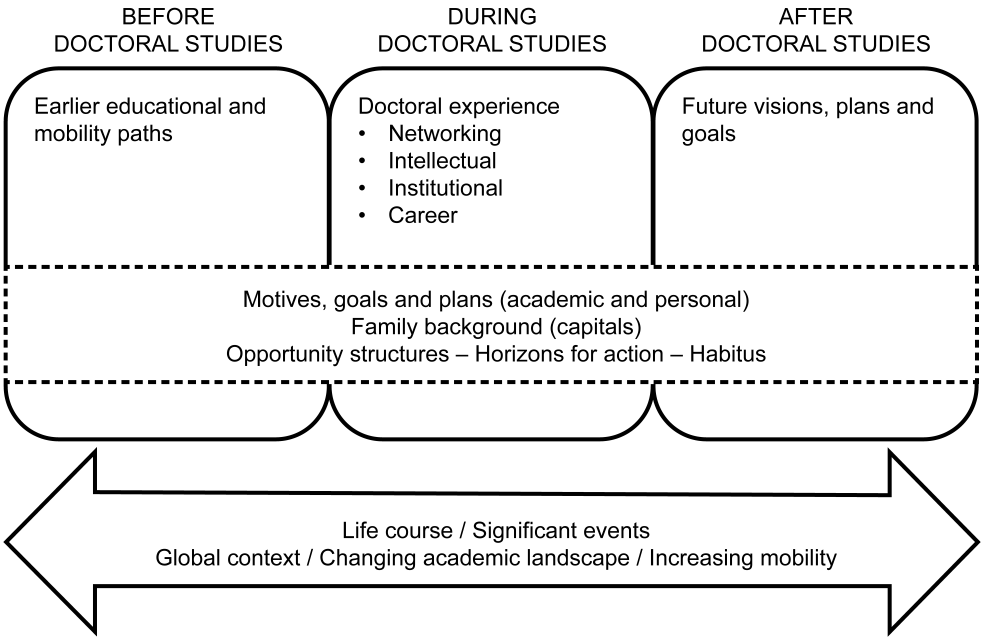

Figure 1. Doctoral journey as an identity-trajectory (modified from McAlpine et al. 2014).

As in identity-trajectory, doctoral work is considered to include networking, intellectual and institutional strands, and attention is given at all times to events at both academic and personal level, since they are considered interrelated. What is new with my approach compared to that of McAlpine et al. (2014), is the additional career strand that I have created to complement networking, intellectual and institutional strands. The analysis process which led to creation of the career strand is presented in Chapter 4. What is also new with my approach, is the focus on the comprehensive earlier life course of doctoral students and the factors associated with their decision processes concerning education and mobility since early years. I have not solely taken into consideration the influence of past experiences and intentions, but also the students' family backgrounds on how they construct way forward on their paths and invest in doctoral studies. Moreover, I have applied the construct of identity-trajectory for tracing the students' earlier educational and mobility paths in order to write the type descriptions. Holley (2013, 104) has stated that the pathway to doctoral education is shaped by educational experiences throughout the person's life. Since doctoral students in this study are conducting a doctorate abroad, in addition to their educational paths as shaping factors, also their mobility paths are considered influential.

In this study, I concur with the perspectives according to which identity construction is a matter of interplay of agency and structure, and in which structural

elements, institutional or social, are considered generating and restraining agency. Identity-trajectory places strong impact on agency and by no means is that impact denied in this study. On the contrary, agency is considered as an important element along the students' journey for constructing their way forward. Agency in this study includes individual motivations and goals both academic and personal, efforts to plan and take initiative in constructing individual paths. In other words, both agentive perspectives concerning one's future as well as concrete actions taken in order to achieve them are included (see Borrego et al. 2021). However, in order to avoid overshadowing the impact of the structural by placing agency in front, I have turned to Bourdieu's thinking (1993) to complement identity-trajectory and the constructs of opportunity structures and horizons for action included in its conceptualisation. It is less common to combine Bourdieu with identity-trajectory, but instead earlier research has shed light on the structural perspective with represention of identity-trajectory within nested structural contexts (McAlpine & Amundsen 2018; McAlpine, Keane & Chiramba 2022; McAlpine & Norton 2006; McAlpine, Skakni & Inouye 2021).

Bourdieu's (1993) concepts of field, capitals, and habitus work as additional thinking tools (Vanttaja 2002) to reflect and understand the students' experiences and conduct in a social context of education during the early years and later in doctoral education, and the meanings they appoint to a doctoral study abroad in relation to their earlier study and mobility experiences as well as future aspirations. According to Bourdieu, social world is divided into different areas or fields, such as the field of education or the academic field, where individuals are in pursuit of different forms of capital, a set of resources appreciated in the field. In the field of education individuals compete over access, grades, and status for example. A field has its own logic, and resources that are valuable on one field may not carry the same value nor lead to recognition in another field. Bourdieu refers to three forms of capital: economic capital in form of material and financial assets, cultural capital as knowledge and skills, and social capital as assets in form of contacts and networks. The pursuit of valued resources is reflected in habitus, which is a socially produced embodiment of cultural capital, such as attitudes, taste, education and linguistic competence. (Bourdieu 1986, 1993; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995; Muhonen 2014; Peixoto 2014.)

As in identity-trajectory, opportunity structures in this study are used to refer to those possibilities and options doctoral students talk about as available along their paths and especially concerning their meaningful events. Horizons for action are considered those opportunities they talk about as personally relevant and plausible. Doctoral students' awareness of various educational and mobility opportunities, and negotiations on their own relation to these opportunities are interpreted against their backgrounds and earlier experiences to understand how (un)availability of various

capitals is reflected in their habitus, and thus promoting or restricting their journey. Students' negotiations are also interpreted against their own academic and personal life goals, aspirations and future plans along the life course path influenced by the prevailing social contexts.

In this study the academic world with its doctoral education is the field where doctoral students operate equipped with a set of varied capitals pursuing valued and aspired resources. In a wider sense, this field belongs to the field of education and more specifically global higher education (Marginson 2008). Taking a closer look at the students' paths not solely during doctoral studies, but also towards studies more generally, opens up a possibility to see different ways and stages for gaining valuable resources and their impact for the students' conduct along the way. The concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1993, 1995) is used to understand the interaction of agency and structure in the field. Habitus links agency and structure since individuals make choices, but the choices are always connected to a cultural context not chosen by the individual. Habitus builds on earlier experiences, and is influenced by family background and the life circumstances, and in turn, habitus influences individual's understanding and interpretations of the world predisposing them to act in a certain way. (Muhonen 2014; Vanttaja 2002.) Habitus that conforms with the values and expectations of the field helps to act in the field and produces agency, while habitus that is not at ease with the field, can make navigating the field more complex (Bourdieu 1993; Peixoto 2014). For example, in terms of education, a habitus that has been shaped through life history and family resources to respond to school's requirements facilitates managing in school. In terms of student mobility, research has shown that mobility capital can be transferred within families and become a part of individual's habitus as an international orientation (Carlson 2013; Lee 2021; Murphy-Lejeune 2002). I consider habitus becoming visible in identity when students talk about the meaningful events during their journey, and how they relate to these events in terms of education and mobility, and especially in a highly hierarchic field such as the academic world (Bourdieu 1988).

4 Methodology and Methods

This methodology and methods chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I present the research aim and research questions. Secondly, I discuss narrative life stories as research data followed by the description of the focus group, and how the interviews and the analysis were conducted. I have included in the descriptions also the challenging moments, points of pondering and making decisions to eventually alter the way I had initially planned to proceed. Welcoming challenges and being open and honest by sharing the ups and downs as part of the research process, instead of attempting to present the process as polished and straightforward smooth, is a way to embed ethical considerations to the research process as a whole, and to increase its credibility (Ennser-Kananen, Saarinen & Sivunen 2018).

4.1 Research aim and research questions

This study focuses on the life course experiences of doctoral students studying abroad by examining individual narratives of Finnish doctoral students in Britain about their experiences along the educational and mobility paths. This research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of a doctoral study abroad. The overarching aim of this study is to investigate doctoral studies abroad as part of the wholeness of life course in order to understand the meaning of these studies, and their international nature, in the life of interviewed doctoral students. The results can be used to develop graduate and post-graduate education in Europe and in Finland, especially concerning internationalisation, as well as to develop career planning of doctoral students. Further, in order to reach the aim, the main research questions guiding this research are as follows:

1. What kinds of identity-trajectories of doctoral students studying abroad are constructed based on their doctoral journey descriptions before the doctorate abroad?
2. What kinds of career identity-trajectories of doctoral students studying abroad are constructed based on their doctoral journey descriptions during the doctorate abroad?

3. How do the constructed identity-trajectories of doctoral students reflect wider meanings of higher education and doctoral education?

My interpretations of the data are guided by certain premises. The first premise shows my consideration of the current society and the academic landscape as contexts for doctoral students' journeys in this study. I understand the individuality and reflexivity of the late modern society, and the current state of the academic world with increasing internationalisation, market-orientation, competition, insecurity, effectivity and excellence as creating a scenery against which the doctoral students' experiences and meanings they attribute to their studies can be understood. The respondents interviewed in this study have mainly lived their childhood and youth in a Finnish society in which the right to go to school belongs to everyone. They have gone to school and gained a master's degree in a Finnish educational system renowned for principles of equality from basic education up to higher education (Antikainen 2006; Simola 2015; Välimaa & Muhonen 2018). While the interviewed students have been proceeding on their educational paths, the academic world has undergone major changes concerning managerial practices, funding, massification and internationalisation among others making the academic environment increasingly competitive highlighting effectivity and productivity as discussed in Chapter 2. The interviewed students have been conducting their doctoral studies at the time of these changes in the academic world and also the society in general concerning uncertainty of employment on the one hand and global competition for talented workers on the other. Therefore, the meanings these students attach to doctoral studies and their international nature are of interest, and have also potential to tell something about the wider meanings attached to higher education and international doctoral education.

As a second premise, I consider past experiences and background of the students such as the parents' education level, together with future aspirations and plans as influencing the students' experiences and choices during their journey. Data collection and interpretation are based on the idea that the meaning given to a doctoral study abroad is constructed on the one hand through previous schooling, mobility and other life experiences, and on the other hand on future goals and aspirations. I also consider how the students have experienced and interpreted conditions and circumstances during their doctoral study journey in relation to their family background and resources available (see Muhonen 2014).

4.2 Narrative life stories as research data

Individual life stories are currently relevant research objects, and researchers using life course approach have been increasingly turning to life stories and individual narratives as sources for investigating individual lives and the society. According to

Vilkko (2000, 80) "life course no longer narrates us but we narrate our life course". On the one hand, individual life stories offer a chance to emphasise the role of individual choices and reflexivity in an individualised society. Production and reproduction of social identities are currently increasingly studied as individual level processes since such social identities as social class, age and gender have become unclear. However, on the other hand, through investigation of individual life stories the micro and macro level analysis can be combined. Individual life histories open up a window for the investigation of personal experiences of individuals, as well as the conditions and practices of the surrounding society. Using individual life stories in life course research shows that reinterpreting past experiences opens up a possibility to describe life course at the time of change. (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 91, 98; Vanttaja 2002, 68–69.)

The use of biographies for research purposes is nothing new. In social research reference is often made to Thomas and Znaniecki's (1984) pioneering work (Hyvärinen 2016). Studies have used different names for biographical data such as autobiography, biography, life history, life story, personal history and oral history. According to Vanttaja (2002, 67) the concepts have their similarities and differences, but they can also be used as synonyms as is done in this study. Common to biographical data is that they portray the individual's view in connection with the history of one's own life and the larger context of the society (Antikainen et al. 1996, 17–18).

Narrative perspective in this study refers to the way individual's understanding of oneself and the surrounding world happens through stories (Heikkinen 2015, 162; Muhonen 2014). In addition, people have a tendency to think about life experiences as entities with a beginning, middle and the end. Interviews are considered purposefully collected narrative life stories (Hyvärinen 2016) that individuals produce to construct a coherent life course from past to present (Heikkinen 2015, 157) reaching up to the imagined future (Estola, Uitto & Syrjälä 2017; McAlpine 2012, 38). These stories are stories about individual educational and mobility paths, and they are a part of a larger life history consisting of other types of stories. In this study, narrative life stories are used as research data and a means to study doctoral students' experiences as opposed to using narrative as a method of analysis (Antikainen & Komonen 2003; Polkinghorne 1988; also Isopahkala-Bouret 2018).

Identity is seen to find its expression in stories, and narrative life stories provide a useful source for investigating identity (Riessman 2001). Stories help people to express identity and orientate to the future (Hyvärinen 2017a) revealing the aspirations and motifs of individuals, and showing connections between events, and demonstrating the agency of individuals (McAlpine et al. 2014, 955). The world around is changing and is full of ruptures but narratives offer means to handle the change by negotiating continuity in identity. Narrative view of identity considers

identity constructed and represented in the process of narration (Riessman 2001), and highlights coherence and continuity which develop over time in life course when individuals link events and experiences in form of a personal life story or a narrative (Hammack 2015). Sfard & Prusak (2005, 14) extend the definition from identity taking shape in stories into identity being a narrative. The act of telling about one's life experiences to themselves or other people is a way for individuals to make sense of their life course, find meaning in everything that is happening around, and to create and preserve continuity between the past, present and the future instead of merely describing it (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 87–88, 99–100; Vilkko 2000, 81–82). Despite the narrative being a way to understand the continuity and constancy in identity, narrative also provides means to describe identity as changing over time (McAlpine 2012, 38).

I see the doctoral students' stories as a way to socially and subjectively construct their own reality concerning a doctoral study abroad (Zhou 2015, 722). Through these stories I want to understand how the students explain their journey to themselves and to me the interviewer, and what the relation of these explanations is to the experienced meaning of a doctoral study and a study abroad in the current time (see Muhonen 2014). Meanings are constructed through stories (Antikainen et al. 1996, 24) which makes narratives useful for investigating the meaning of doctoral studies abroad in the life course of the interviewed Finnish students. When individuals describe their life experiences, they include events and experiences that are meaningful to them. In these descriptions the individual and the collective intertwine, since they are connected to the cultural context of the individual, and although told individually, they are based on a more collective storytelling and cultural models. It is important for the researcher to acknowledge such premises for producing life stories. (Sfard & Prusak 2005, 14; Vanttaja 2002, 67–68.) Life story is connected to the events the individual has experienced and interpreted, and to the way the individual tells about these experiences and interpretations (Antikainen et al. 1996, 17–18). Thus, narratives have a potential to represent more collective meanings and enlighten the contemporary beliefs about the role of doctoral studies and the international nature of the studies (Mills 1982; Riessman 2001).

4.3 Focus group

The data for this study constitutes of 14 narrative interviews of Finnish doctoral students conducting a doctorate in a British university. I found the interviewees for this study via my own contacts and social media. Initially my aim was to find students conducting a doctorate abroad and not specifically in Britain. However, I soon realised that without any official records on the students' whereabouts, it was complicated to reach them. I spread the word amongst my colleagues, that I was

looking for interviewees conducting a doctorate abroad, and some interviewees were found this way. They were studying in British universities and could inform me on various channels for reaching more interviewees there. At this stage, in order to save time and to secure a successful data collection, I decided to concentrate on finding doctoral students in British universities. I used various Facebook groups serving for Finns in Britain to request for interviewees to take part in my study. Examples of such groups are Finnish people living in London, britanniansuomalaiset (Finns in Britain), suomalaiset UK:ssa (Finns in the UK), Lontoon suomalaiset (Finns in London) and Finnish Science in the UK, ISO ry –The Finnish Student Society of Great Britain. In addition, I was able to share the interview request in some Facebook groups for Finns studying in specific British universities. A useful site was also a Facebook group serving for Finnish academics through which I managed to reach people who were interested in being interviewed for my study. As explained above, especially in the beginning I reached some interviewees also by a snowballing method (see Koikkalainen 2013) meaning that one interviewee suggested me to contact someone they knew who was also conducting doctoral studies in Britain and could be interested in joining the study.

The interviewed doctoral students were conducting their doctoral studies in British universities at the time of the interview, or they had completed the studies less than five years ago. I considered it important that not too many years had passed since their time of doing the doctorate so that their experiences could be remembered without too much effort. All the interviewed doctoral students have completed basic education and upper secondary level education in the Finnish school system. They also have a master's degree from a Finnish university which reflects my consideration of them having experience of studying within the common context of equal Finnish higher education system. Their master's degrees were from seven different universities in Finland.

Ten interviewees were female and four were male. The average age of the interviewees at the time of the interview was 35 years. The youngest was 27 and the oldest was 55 years old at the time of the interview. The average age for them to start doctoral studies was 30, and the median age was 26,5. The interviewees studied in 11 different universities in Britain in several different fields and they were at different stages in their studies. Nine of them studied pure or applied sciences, while five studied social sciences, humanities or humanities related sciences. For research ethical reasons, in order to protect the anonymity of the respondents, I named each participant with a pseudonym (Ranta & Kuula-Luumi 2017). Moreover, I will not reveal the names of the universities nor the study fields in detail. However, I consider it important to divide between natural sciences and human sciences since the practices and traditions vary considerably (Becher 1989) At the time of the interview, eight interviewees were still conducting their doctoral studies, five had completed

the doctorate and one had put the studies on hold. Those interviewees who had already completed their studies, had completed them within the last five years from the time of the interview, most rather recently within the last two years.

When I asked about the format of the dissertation, nine interviewees said they were doing a monograph while five said they were doing an article-based dissertation. I noticed that some of them were somewhat unsure what was meant by an article-based dissertation. I explained the Finnish system in which the dissertation is either a monograph or based on published articles, and that currently the latter is very common. Based on that the interviewees said what they were doing. A common answer was that they did not have a choice between the two but were expected to do a monograph. The interviewees were studying with different types of funding: scholarship granted by the doctoral programme or the faculty, a foundation grant, a benefit organisation grant, project funding, research council funding, a fee waiver, work outside the university or the combination of different funding sources. Some were also teaching at the university for extra money and/or partly self-funded the studies.

Five interviewees were married while nine of them were unmarried. Four of the nine who were unmarried stated being in a relationship. One mentioned being divorced. Three interviewees had children, two of them already at the time they were studying for the doctorate, and one of them had children just after having completed the doctorate. Twelve interviewees were studying or had studied full-time and two studied or had studied part-time. All of them spoke Finnish as a mother tongue.

The interviewees came from families in which either both or one of the parents had a higher education degree, and from families in which neither of the parents had a higher education degree. Five interviewees were from families in which both parents had a higher education degree. Two came from families in which one parent had a higher education degree. Six interviewees came from a non-academic background as neither of the parents had a higher education degree. One interviewee was unsure of the other parent's education. He first assumed that neither of them had a higher education degree, but added that possibly one of the parents had completed a lower higher education degree later on in life. Some interviewees talked about their siblings who also had a higher education degree. Two interviewees told that their parents had not been in general upper secondary education, and thus had not done the matriculation examination. Four interviewees had a parent with a doctoral degree or a licentiate degree. One interviewee had a sibling who was conducting doctoral studies. Some told about other relatives having a doctoral degree. The heterogeneity of the group is appreciated since it reflects the diversifying student body distinctive of current doctoral education (Bao et al. 2018) and helps to increase understanding a phenomenon of conducting doctoral studies abroad.

Initially I was aiming at comparing the experiences of doctoral students studying in highly ranked world-class universities with the experiences of students who were studying in universities ranked less world-class. However, at a relatively early stage of data collection I decided to abandon this aim. As already explained above, data collection turned out to be a challenging task with no need for an additional layer of complexity concerning the choice of universities. Moreover, I considered it too complicated to define a university world-class or less world-class in a sustainable way due to the ambiguity of rankings. A definition based solely on the overall ranking of university would be insufficient, because there can be considerable discipline-based differences on how the university is ranked. The same university can be ranked on top level concering certain disciplines and less on others. In order for this study to reach its aim I considered it sufficient to explore the interviewed students' descriptions on their experiences concerning conducting doctoral studies in a university abroad.

The interviewed doctoral students were conducting a doctorate in British universities, which is why I will include a brief description of the UK doctoral study context here. However, the aim of this study was not to study British doctoral education system, nor specifics of students' experiences concerning the UK context, or compare them with another context, and thus I consider it sufficient to include a rather general description. The higher education system in the UK is a highly differentiated and stratified system with hierarchies, and the quality of its universities is renowned world-wide. There are universities like Oxford and Cambridge that occupy an elite university status, universities that are considered more at the bottom of the strata and those that lie there in between. (Findlay et al. 2012; Tindal et al. 2015.) The UK is among the most popular destination countries for international doctoral students, and over 40% of doctoral students in British universities are international students (OECD 2020a). Traditionally a PhD was the only doctoral level qualification to be obtained in the UK, but several other differently structured professional and practice-based degrees currently exist alongside the PhD. Due to diversification of degrees, research results can be communicated in various ways ranging from a dissertation, to a portfolio or a doctorate by publication. In addition to formal research training, these programmes are increasingly providing also a wide range of generic skills. (Clarke 2013; Park 2005.) The UK has been identified to have strong performance-based structures for accountability (Shin & Jung 2014). Regular assessment of doctoral programmes takes place in order for programmes to reach agreed targets, and studies are expected to be completed in three years. Doctoral students pay fees which can be considerable depending on universities. (Pyhältö et al. 2020.) Master's degree is increasingly popular, although not a prerequisite, for embarking on doctoral studies (Park 2005).

4.4 Conducting interviews

I started the interview process with a pilot interview. The idea behind conducting a pilot interview was to test if a narrative can be provided regarding my study interest, and if such a narrative would allow me to answer my research questions. Pilot interview is also a good opportunity to practice interviewing and to test interview questions to improve reliability (Eskola & Suoranta 1998; Hyvärinen 2017b). I found the pilot interviewee via my own contacts in my university. I contacted the interviewee via an e-mail where I introduced myself and my study. We agreed for the pilot interview which was conducted at the end of 2018.

The pilot interview lasted for approximately two hours. I had prepared questions for the interview around themes I considered relevant, and which were grouped chronologically starting from childhood and proceeding to the present and the future. However, at the start I just told the interviewee that I was interested in their journey towards doctoral studies abroad and their experience of conducting doctoral studies abroad. I asked the interviewee to tell me freely about matters that they considered worth telling concerning the journey instead of me guiding the course of the interview too much along the way. I had prepared to ask more specific questions around the preliminary themes in case needed but the interviewee provided me with a rich and lengthy narrative. I asked them to specify some answers along the way, in order to make sure I had understood what the interviewee meant. At the end, I asked a few complementary questions that I thought were relevant in order to understand the whole.

Pilot interview turned out useful in many ways. The narrative provided by the pilot interviewee helped me, not only to test if there was a point to my study, but to get assured that a narrative providing answers to my research questions could be generated by asking the interviewee to talk freely about their journey without me as the interviewer attempting to control meaning (Riessman 2001) by leaning on specific interview questions. The pilot interview also helped me to specify my research questions (Leinonen, Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta & Heiskanen 2017) into examining different constructions of life trajectories. Pilot interview was left out from the analysis.

The interviews for this study were conducted over Skype during spring 2019 except for one that we were able to conduct face to face as the interviewee was in Finland at the time. We agreed about the time of interview over e-mail or Messenger. Gaining the interviewee's trust is very important for conducting a successful interview (Eskola & Suoranta 1998), and for building that trust consideration for research ethics is of utmost importance. At the beginning of each interview, I openly told the respondents about the purpose of the study being gaining understanding of the meaning of doctoral studies abroad in the wholeness of individual's life. From the beginning, I highlighted the anonymity of all participants and introduced the Data

Protection Notice (tietosuojailmoitus) which I had sent to everyone by e-mail before the interview (Ranta & Kuula-Luumi 2017). I asked the respondents if they agreed with the content of the Data Protection Notice and the fact that I would be recording the interview. I also told that I was the only person with access to the recordings. Everyone agreed and we continued with the the actual interview. I pointed out that their participation was completely voluntary, and they could ask me to stop the interview at any time in case they wanted to withdraw (Ranta & Kuula-Luumi 2017).

First, I collected some background information from the respondents concerning for instance their age, the year they started doctoral studies, the year they finished (if they had already finished), the discipline, funding, the form of dissertation, if they studied with a full-time or part-time student status, the university in Finland where they studied for master's degree, their mother tongue, the marital status, if they had children, and the parents' education level. This information was important to get an overview of the respondents, but the questions also worked as openings for the actual interview. These questions worked as ice breakers and gave us something to start with. I considered it very important that I could create a nice, relaxed and safe atmosphere for the respondents in the beginning (Hyvärinen 2017b).

For the actual interview, I asked the interviewees to tell me freely about their doctoral study journey, encouraging them to reflect and describe what they personally considered meaningful regarding the journey, and important in order for understanding the journey. Assured by the pilot interview, I did not lean on interview themes, since I was confident, that this introduction would allow the interviewee to provide me with a narrative capturing their personal view of the course of their doctoral journey. I expressed they could start from whatever life phase they considered convenient, all the way from childhood if they considered it relevant for their journey, or from later on in case that felt more relevant. Moreover, I asked the doctoral students to vision their future in their descriptions of the journey. My goal was to make the respondents feel that I was interested in what they wanted to tell me, and that I was not expecting a certain type of story. I also considered it important to mediate a feeling that I valued their individual experiences and was interested in hearing how they had experienced the journey. (Hyvärinen 2017b.)

I let the interviewees talk without interrupting, and asked them to specify only if it felt necessary in order to keep up with their story. I nodded and made short comments by saying aha, yes, etc. while the interviewee was talking in order to show that I was listening and interested (Hyvärinen 2017b). Once they had told their story, in some cases we went back to a life phase that seemed important, and the interviewee opened it up some more. I had prepared a list of support questions around certain themes I considered useful for shedding light on their journey, such as childhood and youth school experiences, which mostly came up in the spontaneous telling of the respondents. In case they did not, I asked if there was something around

the theme that the respondent wanted to add. In several occasions they did add something. After each interview I made notes about my thoughts and feelings concerning the interview process which served as helpful tools once proceeding to the actual analysis of the interviews (Ruusuvuori, Nikander & Hyvärinen 2010, 13). The interviews lasted from 55 minutes to one hour and forty-five minutes, in total approximately 17 hours. I transcribed the interviews nearly word by word on 231 sheets of paper. I only left out expressions such as like (niinku) if they were repeated several times and seemed irrelevant for the story to be understood. During the transcription process, I became more aware of the content of the interview, and the process worked as a tool for familiarising myself with the data. At this point, I added more notes and comments that came to my mind during the transcription process.

4.5 Analysis process

In this section, I have aimed at being precise and clear when explaining the many stages of the long and systematic analysis process in order for other researchers to evaluate and compare the process and interpretations made with relevant previous research (Braun & Clarke 2006; Ruusuvuori et al. 2010). I conducted the analysis manually without using any software platform. The starting point of the data analysis can be located already in the time of conducting the interviews, since I wrote down my preliminary thoughts about our discussions with the respondents after the interview. In addition, the transcription process worked as an initial orientation to the analysis of the data (Maunula 2014).

There are different ways to proceed with the analysis of individual life stories or narratives (see Isopahkala-Bouret 2018; Riessman 2008). In this study, I focus on qualitative analysis of several life stories. The method of analysis of the data I have employed is thematic content analysis which led to construction of types. Thematic analysis is a widely used and flexible method for qualitative research, that applies for a variety of theoretical and epistemological approaches, types of research questions and topics. Thematic analysis helps the researcher to identify, analyse and report patterns, and to find the essential in their data in relation to the aim of the research acknowledging an active role of the researcher in this process. Thematic analysis allows to examine how individual meanings and experiences reflect a range of discourses present within the society. (Braun & Clarke 2006.)

Thematisation is necessary in order for the researcher to continue with typification which is another method used to analyse qualitative data. In typification the data is examined looking for commonalities and differences after which the data is grouped into similar types of stories. Combination of elements from several stories can be presented as ideal types, which are constructions made for research purposes, and should not be considered reflecting any individual as such. Typification as a

method considers cases deviating from the more general as interesting and enriching, instead of representing threats. The use of thematic analysis and the construction of types allows to present the data in a compact and clear way, however, without losing its various dimensions and versatility. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998; Maunula 2014; Vanttaja 2002.)

The analysis process that led to construction of type descriptions of paths to doctoral studies abroad is presented in table 1. Next, I will describe in detail how the process was conducted.

Table 1. Steps of the analysis process to construct type descriptions of paths to study a doctorate abroad.

1.	Initial orientation to the data
2.	Several readings of the data
3.	Colour coding of the data by life stage
4.	Identification of preliminary themes concerning educational and mobility experiences in each life stage
5.	Identification of meaningful events
6.	Construction of chronological interview summaries around meaningful events
7.	Identification of themes for each life stage based on the content of meaningful events
8.	Collecting themes on excel by life stage for each interviewee and identifying patterns
9.	Initial grouping of stories into two types of paths to study a doctorate abroad based on similarities and differences in the overall impression of education and mobility paths before doctoral studies and the initial motive to move abroad
10.	Grouping stories into typical paths to study a doctorate abroad based on similar types of stories as a whole and similarities and differences in theme areas based on meaningful events before doctoral studies
11.	Further analysis of stories and construction of type descriptions reflecting the similarities and differences in the descriptions of the stories and content of themes using concepts of agency, personal, past, opportunity structures and horizons for action adapted from identity-trajectory

I started the first round of the analysis process by reading through each interview several times and making marks on the sides of the transcripts. Each time my understanding of the topic and the content of the data increased. Having gained a preliminary image of the data, I proceeded with temporal coding of life stages that the interviewees talked about in the interviews. I coded each section of the individual interviews manually using different colors for different life stages to highlight them in the text. Main life stages that the interviewees talked about during the interview were childhood and youth, higher education studies, working life, application process for doctoral studies, moving abroad, family life, the beginning of doctoral studies, during doctoral studies, and after doctoral studies. After doctoral studies

included events that had happened after the doctorate for those who had already completed the studies, and mainly talk concerning future plans for those whose studies were still ongoing. The order of these stages in life course varied between respondents, and all stages were not present in all interviews. For example, some interviewees had moved abroad before doctoral studies, while others moved abroad for their studies, and only some respondents had a family of their own, and included talk concerning family life in the interview. At this point, I also coded if the life stage concerned time before doctoral studies, time during doctoral studies or time after doctoral studies. A life stage could be situated only in one of the three time periods or more. For example, childhood and youth as a life stage naturally concerned only time before doctoral studies whereas working life was a stage that could be situated in all three time periods.

Next, I proceeded with examining each life stage separately for each interviewee from the point of view of educational and mobility paths, and made notes concerning what kinds of experiences were talked about in different stages. In other words, I identified preliminary themes for each life stage concerning educational and mobility experiences. For example, childhood and youth was as a life stage in which the interviewees talked about their childhood school experiences: what subjects interested them, how they did at school, parents' attitude towards school, and they talked about travel experiences they had (not) had with childhood family. Preliminary themes helped me to organise the multilayered content of the data. At this stage, the analysis was deductive since the themes I started to look for in the data were based on my preliminary understanding of the content. Therefore, some of the preliminary themes came up rather logically, because I had asked about them, and some were brought up more spontaneously. Experiences in higher education studies, such as thesis work and international experiences, were spontaneously brought up by all the interviewees, while many talked about childhood and youth experiences after I asked to tell about these experiences. At this point, I did not analyse the preliminary themes more deeply nor did any further organising or merging of themes into main and sub-themes.

During the coding of main life stages and preliminary themes, I had noticed that among them for each interviewee there were events and experiences that were brought up as central concerning that specific life stage or even the whole journey. I decided to continue with the analysis more inductively going through the interviews systematically in order to identify these events which I have called meaningful events (see Antikainen 1998; Antikainen et al. 1996). Bringing light to significant events and experiences is a way to investigate what the individuals consider worth telling concerning doctoral studies abroad, and how certain events have directed the course of their life. In this study, following the example of Antikainen et al. (1996) with regard to significant learning experiences, themes that the interviewees talked

about when describing meaningful events in their lives were considered elements constructing identity. Telling about significant events in one's life is a way to construct identity and to form a picture of life course as a continuum. Parts of life story that become more meaningful than others actually form the person's identity. (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 88; Antikainen et al. 1996, 21, 53.)

Events or life phases were coded as meaningful if they were named as such by the interviewee, or if they were given more space and weight in the stories, and seemed relevant for understanding the whole story. The identified meaningful events, some more important than others, were either turning points where significant changes took place, or otherwise dense moments in life that influenced the direction taken in life. For example, several interviewees described the exchange experience during university studies as meaningful concerning the future. The interviewees learned about international study possibilities which they thought of not having had heard of otherwise. One interviewee used the term turning point in life in connection with meeting her future husband. The event turned out to be significant concerning future decisions to move abroad for example. The beginning of doctoral studies was coded as a meaningful event for many, although the interviewee did not necessarily call it meaningful. However, the descriptions concerning the beginning were spontaneous, and often included a lot of challenges which were tackled.

After having identified the meaningful events in different life stages for each interviewee, I continued by summarising each interview chronologically by life stage around the coded meaningful events. The summaries reminded a life-line presenting the individual's life as a line of chronological events (Antikainen & Komonen 2003, 88). However, in the life-line, life is reduced to a line of events, whereas in the summaries also the content of those events is present. I continued by collecting the sections concerning time before doctoral studies from each interview summary on one pile, sections concerning time during doctoral studies on one pile and sections concerning time after doctoral studies on one pile. Having done that, I started scrutinising each pile more systematically in order to construct themes based on the content of meaningful events for each life stage temporally. The preliminary themes were helpful at this stage, and guided the construction of themes into the following: childhood and youth *(school experiences: image of student, transition to upper secondary level; international experiences; experiences concerning childhood family and home environment*; *meaningful hobby*; *plans for own family*; *work experiences)*, higher education studies (*transition to university*; *study experiences; thesis work; international experiences; personal relationships)*, working life (*employment prospects; career change; obligations)*, application process for doctoral studies (*motives and goals for applying; the process of applying*), family life, moving abroad, the beginning of doctoral studies (*challenges in the beginning*), the time during doctoral studies (*time limits; student status; teaching; funding;*

supervision; networks; publishing; work-life balance) towards the end of doctoral study and after doctoral studies (*future aspirations; work; personal relationships)*.

Having identified themes based on the content of meaningful events, I used an excel sheet to list all the interviewees on rows and themes on columns organised by life stage. For each interviewee, I highlighted their meaningful events. Once the data was on excel, it became visible that each interviewee had several events situated in different life phases which seemed meaningful concerning their overall doctoral study abroad journey. Some events took place already before doctoral studies, there were events that happened during the actual studies and events that happened after the studies. I also realised that there were similarities and differences between the interviewees concerning what kind of events were considered meaningful and which life stage these events were situated in. For some, earlier school experiences turned out to be more meaningful than for others, whereas higher education studies included meaningful events for all. Themes constructed patterns joining the interviewees stories together as well as separating them.

While going through the interviews, identifying and locating meaningful events, I had made a remark concerning the shape of described educational and mobility paths towards doctoral studies abroad. The interviewees described either rather straightforward paths towards doctoral studies abroad or paths that were more meandering. Moreover, those interviewees who described straightforward paths had also moved abroad in order to conduct doctoral studies, whereas those on a meandering path described mainly other reasons for initially deciding to move abroad.

In order to answer the first research question, I decided to continue the analysis with an aim to construct *typical paths to doctoral studies abroad* based on doctoral students' descriptions of their educational and mobility paths before doctoral studies thematically and as a whole (see Vilppola 2021). I started by dividing doctoral students' stories into two types of life course paths towards doctoral studies abroad based on similarities and differences concerning the overall impression of their educational paths and international paths and the initial motive for moving abroad: *straightforward path to study a doctorate abroad* (9), *meandering path to study a doctorate abroad* (5). Students on a straightforward path followed the anticipated educational transitions leading to higher education studies, continued to doctoral studies more or less directly after master's studies in Finland, and moved abroad in order to study for a doctorate. The average age for students on a straightforward route to start with the doctoral study was 26 years. All but one student on a straightforward educational path studied natural sciences and engineering, and mostly in world-class universities.

Students on a meandering path described educational trajectories that were not straightforward in relation to doctoral studies. They entered doctoral studies via

multiple educational routes after having taken some detours on the way in different stages of their lives. These detours meant that they completed more than one educational degree after upper secondary level education and/or spent several years in working life before starting doctoral studies. Thus, the path to doctoral studies for the students on a meandering educational path was commonly rather long. The average age for students on a meandering educational path to start a doctoral study was 38 years. The students on a meandering educational path described their previous international experiences as turning points that have guided their way abroad. Through telling about their international experiences, they provided an explanation for their decision to move abroad. In these descriptions, it became visible that they had moved abroad mainly for other than doctoral study reasons. They had moved abroad for personal relationship reasons, for work, or for university studies other than a doctorate illustrating how international study is not solely about education, but is linked to wider life course trajectories - previous and future - such as work and family (Carlson 2013; Findlay et al. 2012; Kõu et al. 2015; Wu & Wilkes 2017).

I continued scrutinising the story summaries of doctoral students on a straightforward path and a meandering path in order to find typical paths to study a doctorate abroad. I looked for similar types of stories concentrating on the overall impression of the content of the story as a whole and of themes based on meaningful events from the perspective of education and mobility. This led me to group doctoral students on a straightforward path into two groups, that I named *sprinters (7) and hurdlers (2),* and those on a meandering educational path into two groups that I named *orienteers (3)* and *race walkers (2)*. I chose these names from the world of sports since I see the world of athletes having a lot in common with the academic world and current doctoral education for example in terms of competitiveness as well as long-term commitment and persistence required if heading for top results. Sprinters proceeded smoothly on the educational path, their experiences along the way seemed mainly problem-free and their educational transitions were rather self-evident. Hurdlers also proceeded rather straightforward on their educational path, but their educational transitions required negotiations, and they experienced some difficulties on the way that they were able to overcome. Sprinters and hurdlers studied mainly natural sciences and engineering. Orienteers described educational paths along which they had at times been unable to follow the path they would have preferred at the time for one reason or for another. Later on, when the life circumstances allowed, they managed to follow their own interests. Orienteers studied in soft fields in less reputed universities. Race walkers' paths were also long including completion of several degrees and/or alternating between studying and long periods in working life. However, their path was described as a result of preferred choices without much negotiations required at the time, which made the

path seem like a rather natural continuum despite the meanders. Race walkers were studying economics and natural sciences in world-class universities.

At this stage for further analysing the paths of the four groups, and in fact partly already at the grouping stage, I used concepts of agency, the personal, the past, opportunity structures and horizons for action, adapted from identity-trajectory (McAlpine 2012; McAlpine et al. 2014) as analytical tools to help me to reflect the similarities and differences in the descriptions of the stories and content of themes and eventually with the construction of the type descriptions. Agency referred to doctoral students' efforts to be intentional, to plan and to proceed on their path despite possible constraints (McAlpine 2012), and was helpful in examining and evaluating the experienced (un)smoothness, (non)self-evidence of certain choices, and efforts needed to overcome eventual barriers as the students proceeded on their educational paths. The personal referred to the embedding of educational experiences within broader lives (McAlpine 2012), and was helpful in examining and evaluating also the factors beyond school that influenced the doctoral students' educational paths such as family. The past referred to the influence of past experience on present intentions and imagined futures (McAlpine 2012), and was useful in understanding the students' experiences and decisions being connected along the paths. Opportunity structures referred to what the students understood as the available (international) educational opportunities, and horizons for action as the options they considered as personally attractive and possible (McAlpine 2012). All these concepts were useful thinking tools in understanding the connection of different life events in the students' descriptions to the overall doctoral journey. In addition, they helped to examine how students with different family backgrounds described their paths. Examples of the analysis process and the adaptation of identity-trajectory can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. Type descriptions are tools for understanding different doctoral study paths. They are constructed from several stories based on themes and the overall impression of the story. Hence, instead of strict categories, type descriptions allow doctoral students to find themselves in several types (Maunula 2014; Vanttaja 2002). In Chapter 5, I will present the type descriptions and answer the first research question.

Next, I will present in detail how the analysis process, that led to construction of career identity-trajectories presented in Chapter 6, was conducted. The career identity-trajectories were constructed based on doctoral students' descriptions of meaningful events concerning their doctoral study time and after. Examining meaningful experiences from the point of view of what doctoral students on different types of paths found challenging or promoting the journey, ensured bearing in mind doctoral students' pasts, imagined futures and personal life. Instead of focusing specifically on career trajectories, the initial aim was to examine what kind of elements were described as central during the actual studies. While conducting the

analysis, I made a remark on career plans and desires playing an important role in how doctoral students related to these central elements in their descriptions. The steps of the analysis process that led to the construction of four different career identity-trajectories are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Steps of the analysis process to construct type descriptions of four career identity-trajectories. Steps from 1 to 8 had been conducted already in connection with the construction of type descriptions to study a doctorate abroad, and are presented in Table 1.

9. Locating the thematic content of theme areas concerning doctoral study time and the future into networking, institutional and intellectual strands
10. Examination of similarities and differences in experiences of doctoral students on different paths in relation to networking, institutional and intellectual strands
11. Creation of career strand as the fourth strand
12. Construction of career identity-trajectories based on similarities and differences in experiences of doctoral students on different paths in relation to networking, institutional, intellectual and career strands and the overall impression of the journey

I started the analysis by examining closer the summaries that I had constructed for each interviewee around themes identified as central concerning the actual doctoral study time and the future. In order to examine similarities and differences concerning doctoral study experiences and future reflections, I used identity-trajectory to locate the thematic content of meaningful events into three strands known to contribute to engaging with academic work - networking, intellectual and institutional (McAlpine 2012). In the networking strand, I located research groups, post docs, peers in Britain and Finland, seminars and conferences, guest lecturers and other researchers' texts. In the institutional strand, I located supervision, student status, time limits, funding, pressure, teaching and other responsibilities, and international environment. In the intellectual strand, I located writing the dissertation, time, publications, and competition. However, while doing this, I noticed that these three strands turned out insufficient for interpretation. Doctoral students included frequent references to career, such as what kind of career they were planning for themselves, what elements they appreciated concerning work and whether their career plans had changed during studies. This observation led me to add a new strand to identity-trajectory that I named career strand. These four strands reprensenting doctoral work are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Four strands of doctoral work (adapted from McAlpine et al. 2014).

Networking strand	Institutional strand	Intellectual strand	Career strand
research groups	supervision	writing the dissertation	academic career
post docs	student status	time	non-academic career
peers in Britain and Finland	time limits	publications	no career
seminars and conferences	funding	competition	combination of academic and non-academic career
guest lecturers	pressure	stress	
other researchers' texts	teaching and administrative responsibilities		
	international environment		

As I continued with the analysis, it became clear that career strand framed the students' experiences in relation to all other strands, and influenced how doctoral students related or (did not) to them. Depending on career plans and aspirations, different aspects of study experiences were considered central and worth making an effort, and thus elements used for constructing one's identity. Doctoral students' descriptions revealed the construction of four types of career identity-trajectories during studies: academic career, non-academic career, hybrid career and non-career identity-trajectory. An example of analysis leading to construction of an academic career identity-trajectory can be found in Appendix C. Doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories, mainly sprinters and hurdlers, planned academic research careers in the future and reached to achieve capitals relevant for success in the academic field. They relied on elements of the networking, institutional and intellectual strand known to contribute to the construction of an academic identity (McAlpine 2012). Construction of non-academic career identity-trajectory was mainly described by sprinters who had entered doctoral studies with a goal for a career outside the academic world. For them, important events during doctoral studies related to progress with the dissertation, doing and performing, instead of building up confidence and learning to do academic research work. Instead of highlighting the role of supervision and large support networks, they described leaning on their own agency concerning progress. Doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories were the two race walkers and one sprinter. They were open to different career alternatives concerning the future. This openness allowed concurrent investment in multiple profiles reflecting flexible identities. The fouth career trajectory, non-career identity-trajectory was constructed by orienteers

with other goals than a career for conducting doctoral studies. They were developing a research identity which often contradicted with another strong dimension of identity they had, such as a parent identity, reflecting the doctoral study time through acting and balancing contradictory identities. In the following Chapter 5, I will present the type descriptions of doctoral students on different paths to doctoral studies abroad, and answer the first research question. In Chapter 6, I will continue with the presentation of career identity-trajectories of doctoral students answering the second research question.

5 Straightforward and Meandering Paths to Doctoral Studies Abroad

5.1 Sprinters

Sprinters' educational paths seemed rather straightforward and successful. Overall impression of early childhood and youth school history of sprinters was that they did well at school and considered education important. The main tone in their descriptions of their educational paths was positive and their paths seemed rather problem-free. They reminded sprinters advancing smoothly and efficiently on a clear track. They told about a school-positive home background in which parents encouraged their children, but let them make their own choices concerning school. Generally, earlier school years and general upper secondary education worked as opportunities and spaces to find one's interests and strengths. Sprinters continued to higher education either directly or shortly after general upper secondary education without giving much thought for other alternatives. They entered the university fairly smoothly and progressed well with their studies. Their significant life course experiences before doctoral studies were mainly situated in their university study time concerning international experiences and/or research. Especially towards the end of master's studies they started to think about their future career and the options they had. They continued to doctoral studies rather quickly after having gained a master's degree for employment and/or research-related reasons. Going abroad seemed like a rather self-evident choice for sprinters.

5.1.1 Smooth progress on the educational path

Sprinters described their childhood and youth experiences mostly on request rather than spontaneously showing that for them it was natural to acquire a good education. The early educational paths did not appear to be something special or specifically relevant concerning the decision to start a doctorate abroad. However, when I asked about their childhood and youth, they talked about earlier school history by providing an image of themselves as students, they talked about family's attitude towards school and the support they received.

Self-evidence of proceeding on the educational path was common in sprinters' descriptions concerning their paths. For the most, the transition to general upper secondary school after basic education seemed like an unconscious or an automatic choice, which was not described in much detail, but allowed keeping options open for further studies. Transition was more determined for some sprinters than for others. In the more determined reflections, sprinters mentioned that they wanted to go to general upper secondary school in order to continue to university, and to get a good profession or a job. Despite the fact that in Finland both upper secondary level degree paths enable to proceed for tertiary studies, the general impression is that general upper secondary school prepares for further studies, while vocational education and training leads directly to working life (Kalalahti, Zacheus, Laaksonen & Jahnukainen 2019, 72).

Sprinters continued to university studies either directly or rather shortly after general upper secondary education. Continuing shortly after general upper secondary school meant that the students started university studies after having completed military service, spent a time-out year for different reasons or studied for a while in the university of applied sciences or in open university. Sprinters mostly stated shortly that after general upper secondary school they continued studying in the university. Sprinters exercised agency by reporting plans in relation to their university studies, although they varied in degree of specificity. Some were more goal-oriented than others. Plans varied also in terms of in which life stage they became aware of their study interests. For some, it was clear from early on that they would continue to university on a specific field, while others got reaffirmed latest in general upper secondary school what they were interested in, and decided to continue in the university. It seemed natural to continue studying the subjects one enjoyed, and was good at.

> Well, I mean I knew already in general upper secondary school or in comprehensive school that I want to study a maths-related field. So that's why I chose (name of the university)…and I applied and got straight in after general upper secondary school…I always thought I'd go to university, nothing else ever crossed my mind. (Ossi)

> I did not even think about else than first to go to general upper secondary school and then to university. I feel I never had anything else in mind. At the time I wanted to be a doctor and I had taken the courses to prepare for it in general upper secondary school… (Emma)

> I got confirmation in general upper secondary school that I want to study natural sciences (specific subject). It had not been my goal for ever to study in the

> university but because I got interested in (specific subject) in general upper secondary school, so for that reason it was self-evident to go somewhere where I can study this subject. Oh, that is studied in the university, so let's go to university. (Tarja)

Natural sciences and engineering fields were the preferred fields for most sprinters. Sprinters did not all get into their preferred field the first time, but spent a year studying something else and changed to a more preferred field, or decided to continue in the field they had started for different reasons. They had made alternative plans in case they did not get into the preferred field. Often this meant that they could enter another field with their matriculation exam papers. For example, medical school was a preferred field for some who did not get in but entered natural sciences instead. However, many also told having realised along the way that they actually enjoyed the alternative field and stayed, or they thought it was wiser to continue for practical reasons. The use of alternative routes shows that sprinters had knowledge about existing opportunities for entering the university, and were able to use them because their matriculation exam grades were good.

> I knew I will get into natural sciences with my papers…at the time it was a plan B for many. (Emma)

Sprinters progressed rather straightforward with their higher education studies without difficulties. They did well in their studies, and also adjusted to the academic environment mainly fairly easily regardless of their family background which can be interpreted as a reflection of the less elitist nature of the Finnish higher education system (Välimaa & Muhonen 2018). The students appreciated the Finnish higher education system for requiring and allowing independent decision making. For example, when choosing secondary subjects, they felt it was possible to make choices according to one's interests.

Examination of sprinters' stories on their earlier school years pointed to agentive individuals advancing on the educational path towards university studies. However, agency seemed easy and effortless for sprinters, almost as if they unconsciously exercised agency by merely advancing on the educational path without even realising that decisions were made on the way. Although sprinters differed from each other concerning in what stage of life they became aware of their interests and of the educational possibilities available, they had commonly no trouble to consider these opportunities as also available for them personally.

5.1.2 Good students and encouraging families

Self-evidence in terms of progress on the educational path seemed to be related to managing well at school. Sprinters had an image of themselves as either very good at school, or maybe not the best students, but students who did well overall. School required more effort for some sprinters than for others, but they all moved forward without too much difficulties. Some told how they considered themselves as responsible and diligent towards school already at lower levels, while others started to put in more effort consciously later on in general upper secondary school. Raehalme (1996, 116–118) talks about internalising "the plot of school" to explain a strategy to manage at school which some students seem to grasp earlier, some later. Miro was one of the sprinters who caught the plot a little bit later. He described realising in general upper secondary school that if he just took care of school duties, he would manage well. He made a rather conscious identity shift from someone indifferent towards school to someone performing well and succesful. His description is a good example of how sprinters seemed to be able to merely decide to do well at school.

> …in general upper secondary school I started to make an effort…I was a bit lazy and kind of should I say good-for nothing, well not a bad guy but anyway, I was drifting for quite a long time, and then in general upper secondary I got a grip of myself. I realised these basic things that if you do your homework your grades get better…I created this overachiever identity. (Miro)

Sprinters had favourite subjects at school, and the subjects they were good at. Especially sprinters from natural sciences and engineering described how they noticed during school years that they were good at mathematical subjects. These subjects were easy for them, and they felt they had natural talent concerning natural sciences and mathematics. Many sprinters also enjoyed studying languages, especially English, which they were good at.

> Well, I was never really into studying but I guess I was naturally good at maths and physics and they were like the only subjects I liked and enjoyed studying while all those others like Finnish were not that interesting. I wouldn't say I was a top student, maybe average, but in maths and physics I was above average and I wanted to get into general upper secondary school which is why I studied the other subjects a bit better as well. And I always liked to study English, and I studied it really hard in lower secondary school and in general upper secondary education… (Ossi)

In addition to managing well at school, self-evidence in terms of proceeding on the educational path seemed to be related to sprinters' home environments. Sprinters described their childhood family as supportive or appreciative towards school. Appreciation towards education at home seemed to reflect an attitude of similar kind among sprinters already when they were young. Five sprinters came from families in which both or one of the parents had a higher education degree. Two came from families in which the parents lacked a higher education degree. Regardless of the parents' educational background, parents were encouraging and expressed that they valued school and considered it important. Encouragement felt good, strengthened the motivation and influenced the image sprinters had about themselves as students. Positive feedback and the feeling of being good at something encouraged to carry on with studying. Education had a legitimate place in the families' life and knowledge concerning opportunities were available. Some parents were willing to pay expensive preparatory courses for university studies reflecting the importance they placed on education as well as having resources to support their children's education. In some cases, cultural environment was considered as possibly having guided educational and career choices towards the same field as the parents. Knowledge concerning useful skills, such as learning English, in the future was transmitted within many families and helped to make choices regarding future studies.

> …I think the interest in natural sciences dates back to earlier childhood…at home I have always been encouraged, and my parents made sure that homework was done. I remember they said that you should invest in English, because that's a language you will need. And I remember that I always got a little price for good results, kind of a cheer…I always did well at school, and I remember that encouragement and the atmosphere came from my parents and from home that school is important and worth the effort…for the university I went for a preparation course which my parents said that they will pay… (Emma)

In this respect, it needs to be reminded that it is possible that young people sometimes interpret the encouragement efforts of family and relatives as pressure. One sprinter told about moments of feeling pressured towards a certain educational direction after she had revealed her future dreams. However, encouragement mostly meant no interference with sprinters' school work, on the contrary, the students appreciated their parents for trusting and letting them be independent without pressure to succeed. They felt no need for the parents to participate more, because they did well anyway. Especially those sprinters whose parents were less educated, stressed how the parents did not set requirements for them to make top grades, but showed that they considered education as important in order to get a good job for example. Academic families tend to consider education as self-evident, whereas in less

educated families, education is often considered a duty or a possibility (Vanttaja 2002, 98).

> I have always been naturally really independent concerning school and I have always liked school and I always did well. It has probably been rather easy for my parents, but they were very encouraging, and it is not that they have automatically expected that I do well and always get top grades and stuff. But very much like, they have always let me go and do and they have trusted that I do sufficiently well and then school has just kind of been taken care of by itself. (Tarja)

> My dad was always very assertive concerning school and he said that I need to study in order to get a good job. He has always been like that, but my parents have never kind of pushed. (Teemu)

The parents' attitude can be considered rather typical and common for Finnish parents with regard to school. Parents value school, and show an exceptionally high level of trust towards school and teachers (Simola 2015). Based on that trust, school is expected to be taken care of by teachers and children without parents having to interfere too much.

Sprinters' stories made visible how the cultural environment from home mediates values and interests influencing the attitude towards school and the value placed on education (Vanttaja 2002, 96, 102). In their stories, education is an undeniable part of their identity, simultaneously valued and self-evident up to the extent that earlier school year experiences are not spontaneously included as having influenced their current educational status. Encouraging home environment towards schooling and education in general as well as managing well at school prepared sprinters for smooth and steady straightforward educational trajectories along which it was possible to head for preferred interests and goals. Sprinters had knowledge concerning the importance of managing well in education with regard to the future. Increasing knowledge concerning own abilities further contributed to putting effort into studying. Their habitus was a proper fit with school from early on (Muhonen 2014, 30–33), and reflected confidence sprinters had gained in their potential. They were able to turn this confidence into proper action to proceed on the educational path. Although it is not possible to draw generally applicable conclusions based on a few interviews, it seemed that especially sprinters with highly educated parents came from home environments and cultural contexts which had opened up university education as a valid and desirable option for them. Educational inheritance is commonly known to exist (e.g. Becker & Hecken 2009; Pfeffer 2008), and also in Finland children of highly educated parents are more likely to proceed to university

studies than children of less educated parents (Nori 2011). However, not all sprinters had highly educated parents, reflecting that a positive attitude towards education and a habitus conforming with school's practices can be mediated also in families without educational capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995; Vanttaja 2002).

5.1.3 A doctorate abroad represents distinction in the non-academic employment market

Sprinters continued to doctoral studies rather directly after having completed their master's degree. For some it took more time than for others to find out where exactly they wanted to do their doctoral studies, and how to find funding for studies, however they had made the decision to head for a doctorate. When sprinters described their motivations and goals behind the decision to head for a doctorate, they commonly reflected back to their university study times. However, themes they described as significant concerning their motivations and goals differed in relation to their career orientation. All sprinters were career oriented, however, some of them declared being mainly interested in working for a company in business life or other sectors outside the university, while others showed more interest towards an academic career. I divided sprinters into two groups according to their career orientation with regard to their motives and goals for a doctorate: *sprinters orienting for a career outside the university (3) and sprinters orienting for an academic career (4).* Sprinters who were heading for a career outside the university at the time of applying attached work-related meanings to a doctorate, whereas those sprinters who were heading for an academic career highlighted their interest in doing research. Sprinters also differed from each other when they talked about their interest for heading abroad for their doctorate. The non-academically oriented sprinters considered a doctorate abroad as a possibility to increase the employability value of the degree. Sprinters heading for an academic career saw the doctorate abroad more as an opportunity to follow individual research interests.

Sprinters, who expressed interest primarily towards a career outside the university in business life or within industry, were all in the field of natural sciences and engineering. They studied for a doctorate in a world-class university. They connected the interest for a doctorate abroad to extrinsic motives related to working life and especially for better career opportunities in their field. A doctorate from abroad was an investment in future career allowing also some extra time to think about the future. In their stories, the students commonly described a work-related meaningful event during their university studies concerning the decision to apply for a doctoral study abroad. These events were mainly taking place at the time the students were about to complete their university studies. They talked about either looking for opportunities for going abroad for a doctorate, or described these

opportunities more or less occurring. In addition, they talked about their earlier international experiences in relation to their decision to head for a doctorate abroad.

In the stories of two sprinters heading for a career outside the university, a doctorate was described as a must for continuing in the sector they were interested in. They described the unemployment situation of graduates having affected their decision to do a doctorate. These sprinters told having noticed during their university studies that the employment situation was alarming concerning the future, and that a master's degree was insufficient for employment. They woke up to the employment situation during their studies through work experiences such as conducting a thesis for a company or research-related summer jobs. They also talked about unemployed fellow students after graduation, and about their own difficulties at the end of studies to find a job.

> …already at master's stage I had the idea to go work with research and product development in a company, and I knew that in order to do that you need to have doctor's papers…during the last years of university studies, the idea of a doctorate started to grow because I had seen how some friends who had graduated before had not found a job with their master's degree papers and they were from my field. (Emma)

Two sprinters expressed feeling that their studies were automatically orienting them towards continuing with a doctorate which they thought was contradictory. Although they had noticed that a master's degree is insufficient for employment, they had also learned that neither is a doctorate a guarantee for employment. Teemu's description below is a good example of becoming aware of the reality of degree inflation (Aro 2014). He told how in Finland, there are so many doctorate holders trying to fight for scarce jobs, that a doctorate represents no guarantee for finding a job. If everyone continues for a doctorate after master's studies, there will not be enough jobs for all. A doctorate seemed like a routine choice, and it was nothing special as such, while a doctorate from abroad represented a possibility to be distinct and different from the mass that stayed in Finland to do it.

> …I had a summer job there and I remember the boss telling me that they have this policy that to these new jobs, I mean when people retire, they don't hire new people. Primarily they look if that position is needed, if it is possible to cancel that post and if that is not possible then they look if someone could do it on top of their own work. And only if that is not possible then they start recruiting new people. And this was my first summer job in the field and what the boss said was a good wake up call for the employment market. Before what we have been told is that there is employee shortage and there will be posts when people retire and

> so on. In the beginning of master's studies that was told. So, it was good to hear for the first time from someone who works in the field how it really goes…after graduation I tried to get a job in industry where I had done my master's thesis, but they had nothing for me…my eyes opened, damn, there is no retirement bomb here and no guaranteed jobs after graduation…when you saw that all study mates continue with doctoral studies, what on earth are they going to do after that…for me it was obvious that I don't want to do a doctorate in Finland. (Teemu)

Some level of disappointment concerning the field of study was present in these sprinters' stories. They expressed doubt concerning the value of their master's degree. If a doctorate will be considered an automatic continuum for all in certain fields, what is the point for studying for a master's degree in the first place. It is noteworthy, that sprinters were describing the thoughts they had while they were studying or while they were about to finish their studies in Finland. Their experiences reflect a social reality in Finland at the time. The unemployment levels on certain fields such as natural sciences, have been alarming at master's as well as at doctoral stage the previous years (Akava 2021; MoEC 2016) creating concern among graduates.

A doctoral degree from abroad worked as a solution to be distinct also in a situation where unemployment concerns were not present. Ossi had an opportunity to continue in working life straight after his master's studies, however while conducting his thesis in working life he had realised that entering a routine working life was an unattractive choice straight after studies. Instead, a doctoral degree from abroad would provide some extra time to think and find a personal route before making decisions concerning future work. Extra thinking time for future plans was also mentioned by other sprinters. Ossi considered a degree from a good university abroad as important for future employability, and a genuine possibility for increasing the value of the degree. A doctorate from a good university abroad would give him something to be used for standing out especially in the international employment markets.

> I did not want to continue with routine life yet, and studying for a doctorate is a good investment for the future, it's like this merit that you can get…I wanted to go to a good university to get some better material for my cv. I'm not saying that nothing else would go but I mean some universities are more known than others…and I thought that if I want to work abroad then it is easier to find a job if the degree is from an internationally known university. (Ossi)

Sprinters' stories revealed that earlier experiences influence imagined futures (McAlpine 2012), and thus decisions taken concerning education. In sprinters' descriptions, gaining a doctorate from abroad can be interpreted as a strategy to acquire valuable capital against the reality of educational inflation. Studying for a doctoral degree abroad was a way to gain distinction in the employment market in Finland where a doctorate is no longer enough because of its popularity. A degree from a good international university, which were available in the UK, would further add to the degree's value especially concerning international employment markets (Lee 2021).

5.1.4 Mobility and social capital contribute to going abroad

Sprinters heading for a career outside the university, talked about their earlier international experiences in relation to their decision to head abroad for a doctorate. For these sprinters, the knowledge concerning possibilities to head abroad for a doctorate was already a part of their opportunity structure because of earlier international experiences, or they became aware of the possibility through other people, such as thesis supervisor. Either way, they had earlier international experiences that helped to adapt the thought as personally viable, and thus part of their horizon for action. Their experiences can be interpreted as having formed a specific internal disposition towards looking for more such experiences, and acquiring useful mobility capital (Carlson 2013, 172; Murphy-Lejeune 2002).

Sprinters heading for a career outside the university had all travelled quite a lot with their families when they were young, or they had travelled during university studies, or both. Sprinters who had travelled since childhood described an interest for travelling and getting to know the world, other cultures, and languages as familiar to them and as part of their families' way of life. The importance of learning English had been pointed out already at home. Even if sprinters had no travel experiences in childhood, they talked about an exchange period during university studies as a personally enriching experience which opened up the horizons for international opportunities. Threshold for living abroad was considered lower and the idea of being in a foreign country was less scary due to these earlier experiences. Their experiences suggested the presence of a structural type of social embeddedness of mobility equal to that found in Carlson's (2013) research. Structural embeddedness refers to various opportunities for mobility and international networks present within the higher education system as opposed to the more relational embeddedness of encountering with a certain person with information on international opportunities. (Carlson 2013, 173–174.)

Sprinters were interested in adding to their existing international experiences, to learn more about the world, different people and languages by taking part in

international activities also in Finland, such as tutoring for international students after having returned.

> We lived abroad for one year when I was small and we had made a lot of holiday trips and so on, so in that way going abroad was not at all a scary thing for me. I like to travel and live abroad. For some it could be like, if you had not been really anywhere, so it could feel scary to go but for me it was not a big step…I had this interest in the culture which I did not know about and started to find out for curiosity if there was a possibility to go on exchange. And I studied the language during university studies…and went on exchange which was a nice experience with a lot of international people…you get to know a whole lot of people from different countries…and it was a spark to become a little bit more international also in Finland…and I had this interest already at bachelor's level to get to know new people, international people…(Ossi)

Doctoral studies abroad presented a possibility to continue with getting to know new people and cultures and creating useful networks. Earlier research has pointed out the quest to acquire social and cultural capital as one of key drivers of international student mobility (see Brooks & Waters 2011; Carlson 2013; King, Findlay & Ahrens 2010). Sprinters heading outside the academic world told that Britain as a study destination felt familiar because of earlier experiences and because of the possibility to conduct studies in English. Their English skills were good because they had considered the language useful, and had learned it at school, during the exchange and/or other travel experiences. Some had conducted the bachelor's and master's thesis already in English.

Although heading abroad for a doctoral study seemed almost as one more self-evident choice after the ones made earlier, the decision was not completely automatic for all these sprinters. Emma had been travelling quite a lot with her family, and she had also been on several shorter exchange periods for language studies. She was about to leave for an exchange period during university studies, which actually changed for a doctoral study abroad, after her thesis supervisor threw the idea in the air. She did not automatically embrace the idea for a doctoral degree abroad. Encouragement from supervisor and peers helped to make up her mind. Emma also had the existing desire to go abroad which had been influenced by her earlier experiences, and probably contributed to making the decision.

> We have travelled quite a lot in the family…I have been on language courses…and I did this exchange in general upper secondary and I thought that it would be nice to do a longer exchange…during university studies I had planned an exchange, because I had intended, that I want to go abroad a little if

> I have a chance and it was on my mind all the time that I want this experience abroad and an international experience in this country because I had studied the language. And I remember this exchange was about to happen when my thesis supervisor came up to me and said the there is this doctoral programme starting in (the university name) where they are looking for international students. And that I should apply, and I thought of it and at first I thought that I definitely will not apply because I did not think I would get in, and it felt kind of strange to go abroad to do it, although I had it in my mind that I will do a doctorate, because I knew that in our field it is needed…but because I wanted to postpone everything with the exchange. But then I talked with the research group members who were doing a doctorate and they encouraged that of course you will apply and there is nothing to lose. (Emma)

Considering the influence of other people to individual decision making, Emma's account signals the relational aspect of social embeddedness of becoming a mobile student (Carlson 2013, 173) intertwining with the structural. The contacts (relational) Emma had through university studies (structural) were valuable social capital that contributed to going abroad in form of providing knowledge concerning opportunities as well as encouragement. Other people's role as such "information brokers" to unknown opportunities was proved significant in Carlson's (2013) research concerning processes of becoming a mobile student. In one sprinters' story, there was also a description concerning a family member who had been working in a university abroad and made visible that such an opportunity exists. Social capital in form of networks from home and study environments are examples of social embeddedness that can be influential concerning educational choices providing useful knowledge about opportunities and helping to understand how the educational system works.

In the stories of sprinters heading for a career outside the university, it became evident that for them a doctoral study is the main reason for being abroad. They showed a growing need to study for a doctorate for employment reasons, and to add value to the degree by going abroad, although for some the goal was more conscious than for others. A doctorate from abroad can be considered to translate into symbolic capital that these sprinters planned to use as a distinguishing identity marker when pursuing their future careers (Findlay et al. 2012, 128). In addition, their stories reflect motivations that lie behind international student mobility on a more general level. Learning languages and intercultural awareness together with improving employment prospect have been identified as major motivational factors for abroad study (King et al. 2010, 23–24). A doctorate abroad was considered by these sprinters as a possibility to construct an individual path eventually resulting in cosmopolitan identities (Findlay et al. 2012, 128) with new experiences, cultures,

people and languages playing an important role. For these reasons, a thought of doing a doctorate abroad found space in their horizon for action. Due to earlier international experiences and social contacts in their university and home environments they knew that opportunities to study in reputed universities existed abroad, especially in the UK.

5.1.5 A doctorate abroad represents access to a research career and a possibility to pursue own research interests

Sprinters orienting for an academic career studied natural sciences and social sciences in world-class as well as in less reputed universities. Sprinters orienting for an academic career talked about research-related experiences during their university studies as meaningful concerning their motives for applying for a doctorate abroad. These experiences ranged from the thesis process to various other research-related events such as research project work. These events were interpreted in relation to working life like in the stories of those heading for a career outside the university reflecting extrinsic motivations. Research-related events were good opportunities to get working experience in research environments and to develop research skills. However, in these sprinters' descriptions the interest for research itself was highlighted, unlike in the more business-oriented sprinters' stories reflecting also more intrinsic motives for applying.

Sprinters orienting for a career within the university told how they noticed during the research experiences that they enjoyed doing research, and were good at it. These events could be interpreted as being meaningful for their emerging research identities as the events gradually constructed the sprinters' sense of selves as research-oriented. Sprinters orienting for a career within the university described feeling that research work suited their personalities allowing autonomy and independence, which are traditionally considered as core elements of academic identity (Henkel 2004). In addition to research, some of these sprinters talked about their interest for teaching which they would be able to do as part of an academic career. Positive feedback concerning research skills from thesis supervisor strengthened academic confidence. These sprinters got confirmation that they wanted to do academic research work in the future. However, in order to be able to do that, they needed a doctoral degree.

> During the master's studies I noticed already that I really liked to do the thesis and research, and I wanted straight away to do a doctorate…it was clear all the time that I want to be an academic… I got very good grades for my thesis (bachelor's and master's)…those thesis I was just, I liked them so much…it was something I really enjoyed…especially doing independent investigating, and

> when you independently have to find out about a bigger issue. That was the nicest thing about it. (Miro)

> …the master's thesis went really well and my supervisors liked me a lot, and I liked doing the thesis a lot. And I got some extra projects on top of the thesis, and I did those alongside the master's studies. And then I realised suddenly that I really like doing research and when your supervisor asks you to do more stuff, well that was a kind of boost for confidence and you think that maybe I am good at this. You start to think that this is nice, the lab where I worked the people and the style, when you noticed how they worked, that they work a lot but it is very free, nobody controls your hours or anything, everybody knows that you do your work and that's enough…during the last year of master's studies, it somehow came, that well if I want to do research then, at least I had then and I still do have an image that if you want to do research especially at the university, then you kind of should, have to be a doctor. (Tarja)

> …during studies the interest towards my field has grown, and a doctorate felt like a natural continuum, and I felt that it also suits my personality. Making science suits me and feels like a nice activity…(Fanni)

Sprinters heading for an academic career make visible how research identity, which is often considered developing during doctoral studies, can start to emerge already during master's studies. For sprinters heading for an academic career, a doctorate represented access to an academic career providing required legitimation of expertise in order to work as a researcher. Their awareness of opportunity structures had widened latest during their research experiences in the university, when they had learned that in order to proceed with doing academic research work, they would need a doctoral degree. In other words, the preferred identity was centered towards an academic career, requiring a doctoral degree to be developed further. Expressing such thoughts revealed that these sprinters had adopted the idea promoted by the current educational policy concerning a doctorate as a minimum requirement for a researcher career (Välimaa et al. 2016).

In some fields, mainly natural sciences, the idea of a doctoral degree as a minimum requirement for an academic career seemed to have been taken even further. A doctorate from abroad seemed essential for a researcher career because of current science policy requirements for researchers' international mobility and co-operation (Academy of Finland 2020). As Fanni here describes, a period in an international research environment would be required at some point of the career anyway, and thus might as well be carried out by doing a doctorate abroad.

> …in my field it is also common practice that latest after the doctorate you will do a post doc somewhere abroad. So, it was like going abroad would be ahead at some point anyway. (Fanni)

A research period abroad was considered a natural part of a research career which was why carrying out doctoral studies abroad settled naturally as a part of one's emerging research identity as well. According to Li et al. (2021) students heading for academic careers often follow a career script defined by higher education institutions and governments. Heading abroad already for a doctorate could be interpreted as a possibility for Fanni to get a head start with regard to a researcher career. She would already have a mobility period when looking for opportunities after a doctorate compared to those who would wait until post-doc stage before heading abroad. In Bourdieuan terms, good feedback and experience from research environments gave them confidence which strenghtened habitus and oriented towards gaining valuable cultural capital in terms of an academic future which in Fanni's case was a doctorate abroad (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995; Vanttaja 2002).

A doctorate abroad was also considered essential and rather natural in order to be able to continue researching the very specific topics sprinters heading for an academic career were interested in.

> …I knew that I don't really have other possibilities. If I want to continue with this topic, I have to go somewhere abroad to do it. I knew that in Finland, the circles around this topic are so small…during the master's studies, my research interests started to become so specific, so it was kind of automatic that I have to find the doctorate somewhere abroad…it was logical that if it is not possible here, I know abroad it is, so it was self-evident, ok, I will go there…I was very topic oriented and I was not willing to bargain for that. (Tarja)

According to these sprinters, going abroad, especially to Britain, allowed to be involved with a wider range of research areas and topics compared to what was on offer in Finland. Siiri found out that in British universities there was a possibility to approach her study interests in a completely new way. For her going abroad offered a unique possibility to apply her study interests in new contexts she had been unaware of earlier.

> …going to Britain, there was this peculiarity, that for me it was kind of not a complete but partly a change of study area…when I was looking for doctoral study places and different options, this topic popped up straight away…and when I found this project from the web I felt straight away that I had never

> thought that I could apply my knowledge of my field in these other contexts. It was something totally new and then I started to get really interested…(Siiri)

In case the personal research direction remained unclear, as was the case with Fanni, going abroad was considered valuable providing a platform for reflecting the future direction. Extra time and an inspiring environment were considered useful for searching one's research interests and for allowing a researcher identity to grow. Britain was considered a destination where the possibilities to conduct interesting research were available.

> …in Britain they do cool stuff…towards the end of master's studies, I was still looking for my own scientific identity, kind of my own interests in my field…It (the programme abroad) just felt like an option that made sense because at that point for me it was not completely clear which research area I experienced meaningful. So, to be able to reflect that. (Fanni)

It seemed that for sprinters orienting for an academic career, going abroad for a doctoral study was not always a question of going abroad as such, but instead it was a question of certain opportunities being available abroad, and especially in Britain. In addition to a possibility to study specific topics, these opportunities could be availability of funding, opportunity to study in a prestigious university, to work with a top research group and/or under guidance of a supervisor with high academic merits. Similar results were found in the study of Yang et al. (2018). Had the same opportunities been available in Finland, some of these sprinters had probably considered doing a doctorate in Finland. Their stories revealed that a funded position, status of the university, research group and/or supervisor mattered which indicates that these elements were considered valuable capital in the quest for an academic career, and for constructing an emerging researcher identity further.

> I was really interested in this very famous and excellent research group concerning these topics. During master's studies I had already done some cooperation with these researchers abroad. And I thought it would be really nice to go there…I wanted a position with funding clear because I know the time limits in Britain are strict. It is more or less three and a half to four years so I did not want any extra stress for kind of applying for funding. (Tarja)

> …the university, well it did matter considering how much organising it required concerning personal life, so I had not gone wherever, I mean it (the university) did add value to it, in a way that all the organising is worth it, the name and all. Or I mean that I don't want to pretend that it was totally irrelevant. (Miro)

> …close to graduation from the university I started to think in which research group I would like to continue and it felt interesting to go abroad…and of course I preferred a university with something more to offer than in Finland…it could open your eyes and you could learn something you never imagined learning or seeing, and then also this networking side…(Fanni)

A doctoral study was the main reason for going abroad for sprinters heading for a career within the university as it was for sprinters orienting towards a non-academic career. A doctorate became part of their horizon for action representing a means to continue involvement with a matter of their interest, that is, doing research. For them, a doctorate represented necessary and minimum capital needed in order to enter the academic world. Thus, gaining a doctoral degree from abroad can, at least partly, be interpreted to represent a strategy to acquire valuable capital and as having been predisposed by habitus (Muhonen 2014; Vanttaja 2002). However, whereas sprinters heading for a career outside the academic world considered a doctorate abroad as capital relevant in the non-academic field, sprinters heading for an academic career saw a doctorate abroad as a possibility to add to the degree's competitiveness especially in relation to the academic employment market. Walker and Yoon (2017) talk about doctoral capital meaning a set of capitals seeming to be relevant to academic success. A doctorate abroad settled in these sprinters' horizon for action because they were interested in specific research topics and research directions, prestigious universities, top supervisors and research groups which were available abroad, and especially in Britain. Pursuing these would allow to add value to doctoral capital as a distinguishing identity marker (Findlay et al. 2012, 128) for constructing an individual and distinct research path.

5.1.6 Creating networks concerning international opportunities during studies in Finland and abroad

Sprinters orienting for an academic career talked about international experiences in relation to their decision to head for a doctorate abroad as did sprinters heading for a non-academic career. Sprinters heading for an academic career varied quite a lot concerning how much personal experience they had for being abroad. Some had spent longer periods abroad, although without their families, while others had hardly made any trips abroad. Those who had spent longer periods abroad had been on exchange during general upper secondary school or studied in a university abroad for a while. During their international experiences they had learned about possibilities to study abroad which led to plans for further studies abroad. Their experiences reminded those of sprinters heading for a career outside the university.

International experiences, that sprinters orienting towards an academic career talked about, included more than those that had happened abroad. Not all of these sprinters had spent longer periods abroad, and even if they had, they mainly talked about having become aware of international possibilities through studying in international programmes in Finland and/or through research work experiences during university studies instead. These experiences helped to build up self-confidence especially concerning language skills, English in most cases. During the international experiences abroad and in Finland, it was possible to learn a foreign language in an authentic environment or at least to use a foreign language daily. Some of these sprinters had also conducted their thesis in English like some sprinters orienting outside the academic world. Structural type of social embeddedness of mobility (Carlson 2013) is reflected in these experiences as was in the stories of sprinters heading for a career outside the university.

International experiences provided chances to create international networks that led to experiences of relational embeddedness of mobility (Carlson 2013). Networks were considered important because they worked as helpful sources of information. Especially the opportunity to meet international people offered a chance to share experiences and to learn about possibilities to study or work abroad. These people were also reference points and sources of reassurance for thinking about own possibilities for going abroad for doctoral studies. International opportunities were converted to valid and attractive options, something worth pursuing as well as personally achievable.

> …during studies in an international programme in Finland I got confident with using English and I thought that I could manage in everyday life in an English-speaking environment. And the idea I got there during the studies that I would like to go study abroad. I had heard there, there were a lot of international people, you could meet a lot of people and kind of create networks, and you heard a lot of stories from people who had decided to go study in the UK for example…and I had this spark on the back of my head that I would like to do a doctorate. And because the others, it was partly that also, in that progamme where I studied, it was quite research, method and scientific practice oriented, and most of that cohort they said that absolutely they were going to do a doctorate, and because we talked a lot so it gave even more spark for me that I also want to go…(Siiri)

The work within projects during university studies in Finland included international networks and contacts with other researchers abroad. These inter-personal networks (McAlpine et al. 2014, 962) were useful social capital, and opened up the opportunity structures for research opportunities like Tarja had explained earlier concerning her knowledge about a top research group and possibilities for researching specific

topics of her interest. One sprinter heading for an academic career, Miro, also told how he became interested in a specific researcher's ideas through international research papers, and the desire to exchange thoughts led to action to find out more about international opportunities by contacting the specific researcher. His experience can be interpreted as an example of inter-textual networking which is acquired through reading and considered essential in terms of progress with one's own research (McAlpine et al. 2014, 962). In fact, in this sprinter's case inter-textual networking turned into inter-personal. Miro succeeded first in creating a discussion between previous research and his own, which initiated inter-personal networking when Miro contacted the researcher behind these texts, and which guided him to eventually study abroad.

> I had this rather specific research interest already at master's thesis stage…at that point I had a feeling that nobody in Finland can this topic, and this professor mastered it. When I bumbed into this work where this professor goes through the topic very thoroughly, well that was kind of a big moment for me. Here we have someone who writes about exactly the same interests that I have. That was something…and I contacted this person with a long list of specific questions, which was why I think the professor also got interested in me. (Miro)

Going to Britain felt familiar to sprinters orienting for a career within the academic world because they had been there themselves, they had acquaintances there and/or because of the English language. Although they considered English as the language of science no matter where they decided to go, they thought a Western cultural environment would make adapting easier.

> …and I definitely wanted an English-speaking environment, I could not imagine spending a longer period somewhere in a non-English-speaking environment. (Siiri)

> …Britain influenced positively the thought of going. I got the feeling straight away that I know the country. I like it and I have been there many times. It might had been different if the position was anywhere else in Europe. Or somewhere that I hadn't been or didn't know. English being the language of science, it kind of would not matter if you go to Spain or Germany or anywhere really, you know you could manage with English, but maybe it did make applying easier. You thought that life outside university and communicating would be easier…(Tarja)

> …but I did not want to go too far away. I was thinking about something inside Europe, I thought it would be culturally easier, and being a well-fare society like Britain it sounded easy from a practical point of view. (Fanni)

Sprinters orienting towards an academic career revealed through their stories, that gaining useful mobility capital for planning international studies is possible through own mobility experiences abroad, as well as international study experiences within higher education in Finland. Their stories can be interpreted to address that going abroad for a doctoral study was not solely about gaining formal knowledge, but also about socially and culturally constructed knowledge concerning the reputation of certain universities and research groups as well as the value they could add to one's doctoral degree (Findlay et al. 2012, 128). Whether the knowledge concerning international opportunities was received through own mobility experiences or international experiences in Finland, the opportunities started to appear personally relevant because they resonated with these sprinters' interests, and their preferred identities: the desire to continue with an academic career doing research and lack of possibilities to continue with own research interests in Finland. Encouragement received from supervisors and peers further contributed to heading abroad.

In addition to describing motives and goals for a doctoral study abroad, all sprinters commonly described the actual application process for a doctorate. Sprinters were about to study in a different country which probably at least partly explained why the application process was described in more detail than in the stories of students on a meandering path who were mainly living in Britain at the time of applying. Sprinters described the application process as fairly labourious requiring a lot of active initiative and independent search for information from different sources. Sprinters talked about funding as vital for taking a risky step concerning moving abroad. Going abroad was considered a risk since there were no guarantees that all would go well. Tuition fees were considered very high, and on top of that also everyday living would be full of expenses. Moving abroad was considered easier if funding was in order. Some only applied for funded projects.

Many sprinters were called for an interview before they were granted a study right. Some travelled to Britain for the interview which they considered an act of motivation and also a possibility to see the place and the people. Some did the interview via Skype. The possibility to go for an interview in another country can on the one hand be considered an expression of having required resources for that. In other words, they had sufficient economic capital for arranging such a visit concerning flights and accommodation for example. On the other hand, the act of flying for an interview as well as using Skype, can be considered as expressions of transnational interconnectivity (Rizvi 2011, 697). Study places and jobs are searched across national borders in a world which is increasingly integrated into wider global

networks. Sprinters searched information concerning applying from the internet, and using existing networks and contacts in the university and other social circles. They approached specific supervisors and research groups abroad they wanted to work with. Individuals take use of global networks for making future strategies, and for planning personally suitable ways of taking advantage of various opportunities offered in the interconnected world (Rizvi 2011, 697). Earlier experiences and imagined futures influenced not only opportunity structures and horizons for action, but also materialised into taking action towards the actual application process.

5.2 Hurdlers

Hurdlers proceeded on the educational path rather straightforward as did sprinters. The main tone in their descriptions was also mainly positive and they managed very well at school. However, hurdlers' paths to general upper secondary school or to university lacked the easiness and self-evidence that was present in sprinters' paths. Hurdlers told about both transitions requiring negotiations and active decisions from their part because of various obstacles. Hurdlers were able to overcome the obstacles reminding a hurdler overtaking hurdles on the track without stumbling, seemingly easy but requiring effort. Hurdlers told more spontaneously about their earlier school year experiences than sprinters did. In general, their life seemed less care-free when they were young for different reasons, such as family issues or own teenage anxieties. They also described less encouraging home environments concerning school. They were not slowed down by the obstacles on their way, on the contrary, their stories revealed a great deal of agency despite constraints. They took care of their own schoolwork and made independent, albeit often unconventional choices, which turned out to be useful in the future. They showed that it was possible to proceed on the educational path rather straightforward by advancing step-by-step without specific plans or encouragement from home. Becoming aware of own talent and skills accompanied with some encouragement from significant others can help seizing opportunities along the way. International research experiences were significant for them concerning their decision to head abroad for a doctorate. Hurdlers studied natural sciences and engineering and conducted a doctorate in a world-class university.

5.2.1 Significant others and talent lower the hurdles

Common to hurdlers' stories were descriptions of obstacles that complicated proceeding along the earlier educational path. Laura, who came from a working-class background, revealed in her story how even with good grades, the decision to follow an academic route is not automatic if education remains unpresent in

everyday-life experiences. Laura told, that her parents had not encouraged her at all along the way or showed appreciation towards education. In her story, there were indications that lack of cultural capital at home complicated her decision making. According to previous research (e.g. Käyhkö 2013, 23; Reay, Crozier & Clayton 2009; Vanttaja 2002) in less educated families, life does not necessarily revolve around school and education related questions. If a person is not educated, questions related to school and education can seem foreign. Lack of possibilities to negotiate educational choices might complicate choice-making in these families.

> …I am like the first one in the family to go to general upper secondary school, so there was never really any expectations or assumptions about going to one of the best universities in the world…other family members have degrees from vocational education and training, and have been unemployed also longer periods, and there were challenges with my siblings…well, my family has never been that encouraging. I mean I guess they just don't understand that studying can be really hard and because I have always managed so well with school….I can't do anything with my hands and I have always been more a reader person than handy so for that going to general upper secondary school was maybe evident…in general upper secondary school I did well in mainly all subjects but I noticed that maths and natural sciences related subjects, maybe don't necessarily interest me but they are easier…but I remember having this conversation with my group leader or this teacher because I was fed up with all being so theoretical and I threatened that I will just go to applied sciences, but this teacher said that no way that I can do that because my grades are so good that of course I have to go to university…but as I did not have anything that interested a lot, I chose this field because it sounded practical…although later on I ended up studying the most theoretical stuff. I got in with my matriculation exam papers. (Laura)

In Laura's story it is visible how to continue directly to general upper secondary school does not necessarily mean orientation towards university studies, but can also reflect individual tendency towards reading more than doing (Käyhkö 2011, 422; Käyhkö 2013, 24). Although Laura had noticed during the educational path that she was "more of a reader than handy", the seemingly natural choices to follow an academic path required negotiating and active decisions from her part. In her horizon for action practical routes were more familiar through examples of her family members. Thus, making decisions to continue on the academic path meant acting against the more familiar identity model present in the home environment. However, she managed to encompass a practical element into her choice of field in the university reflecting the presence of a strong practical orientation as part of her

identity. Although Laura's story showed that education is not necessarily considered as a value in itself in all families, it needs to be remembered that working class families differ from each other, and in many, education is very appreciated as was seen in some of sprinters' stories earlier. (Käyhkö 2011, 419–421; Käyhkö 2013, 23.)

Unlike Laura, the other hurdler, Taru, had interest and talent, as well as examples in the family, concerning both academic and the more practical orientations. It seemed that having all these options available actually complicated her decision-making. She managed very well at school which pointed towards the more academic route, however her childhood home environment opened up practical alternatives and especially arts as equally, if not even more attractive. Even when she had decided to go to general upper secondary school, she had a hard time choosing between differently specialised programmes. A proper career vision appeared to her something one ought to have when she looked at her peers. Lack of clear future direction caused anxiety, and a need to negotiate between different routes. Her story reflects that she had internalised the dominant narrative of today's society setting requirements for finding individual routes.

> …when I went to school, I lived with my parent…and we were quite poor…however it was single parent's own choice of bohemian life style…I never really felt we were poor for real…when I went to school, my parents' attitude towards it, well I guess it was quite normal. My parents, well I was always quite good at school, so I felt that they were not that interested in my school, and the parenthood energy was needed elsewhere in the family. I felt I did not need that much either…or I was an anxious teenager who thought of all these radical options after basic education, and that I will become a craftsman…but it was my close relative who talked me out of that and told me that you have time to do other stuff later on, but first you will get yourself a good education…but I was lost also in general upper secondary school, for what to do, and I changed between these differently oriented schools…I was all the time like I have to choose a calling or a path and to know what I want…everyone was spaced out in general upper secondary school but then all my friends started to find their own thing, and I just didn't, I tried and tried, and I just couldn't find it, and then finally I went to university and I still had not found it…(Taru)

Previous research has shown that although most young people continue to secondary studies, the transition phase can be fragile due to reasons connected to their life circumstances. The process of growing up and becoming an adult and difficulties in finding an educational direction that feels suitable can complicate choice-making. (Niemi, Kalalahti, Varjo & Jahnukainen 2019, 60.) Discourse highlighting

individual routes, choices and possibilities can actually become a restraining structure for young people to construct identity, especially those who have trouble in acknowledging their own interests and in finding a personally suitable direction in order to construct an imagined future.

Although the obstacles described in hurdlers' stories were different, unfamiliarity of the academic path for Laura, and difficulty in finding a personal route for Taru, there were common themes which seemed to lie behind the difficulties as well as how to overcome them. Hurdlers' home environments were less supportive than those of sprinters, and they lacked encouragement from their parents concerning school. According to their stories there were more urgent issues to be taken care of in the family than those related to school. Both hurdlers described other members in the family needing the parents' attention for various reasons. There were also descriptions of family's modest economic situation which was not present in sprinters' stories. Hurdlers highlighted no special need for more support from their home environments, because they managed very well at school, and school was easy for them throughout basic education and general upper secondary education. Hurdlers were talented in several subjects, and especially mathematics and/or natural sciences seemed easy for them.

In addition to being talented, hurdlers described an incident of having a possibility to negotiate their future educational paths with someone other than parents. In Laura's story a teacher was mentioned as the one who encouraged to continue on the academic path. Taru described a close relative as an important figure concerning her negotiations between academically and practically oriented routes. Getting support in an important transition was significant concerning their future education since without the support they might had ended up choosing otherwise. Lack of support or attention from home concerning school is not automatically leading to reduced educational possibilities. Looking at hurdlers' earlier educational paths, it seemed that natural talent compensated the lack of family support up to some degree, especially because some support was available from other sources (e.g. Vanttaja 2002, 122–127). Becoming aware of one's talent and skills during school years can strengthen identity, and open up the horizons to advance on the educational path. Support from significant others can also play an important role in influencing how the students perceive the educational opportunities and their own potential in relation to these. These significant others clearly contributed to hurdlers' agency to start leaning towards a more academic orientation as part of their identity.

5.2.2 Feelings of otherness and unconventional choices

Hurdlers entered the university straight after general upper secondary school in fields they were good at and/or interested in. However, they expressed having experienced

some difficulties also during their university studies that had to do with feelings of otherness and feeling like an outsider in the university environment. Laura's story is a good example how coming from a non-academic background can complicate socialisation to the academic environment which is supposedly free of class, but still reflects certain middle- and upper-class values and practices (Käyhkö 2013, 25). She had seen her study mates, whose parents had a degree from the same field, follow "a norm career path" which they considered self-evident. They had it in their blood to choose subject combinations and summer jobs which were relevant in the field. In Bourdieuan terms, they had embodied cultural capital and their habitus conformed with the social environment of the university (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995, 159). Laura told how she had no previous knowledge concerning the unwritten rules of the academia which led her to make choices that others considered odd, such as a training period abroad, instead of in Finland, which was conventionally done in the field.

> I don't have this model, which has maybe influenced why I am here, I mean, many study mates their both parents or at least the other one was in the field, so they kind of had this model from home how we should live and what our career path should look like. But I have never had that, and I have just kind of proceeded in a way that ok, this point is done, so what should I do next, well that sounds interesting, let's try that…in a new environment you feel that there is a lot to learn, I mean there are these unwritten rules…they talk about stuff that I was not used to…when I decided to go abroad for a trainee period they questioned it, why do you go there. It was something that people were not expected to do. (Laura)

Similar kind of feelings were present in Taru's story when she talked about difficulties of adapting a student identity. She was continuously uncertain about what to do in the future, and found it difficult also to conform to university's every-day practices such as doing exams.

> …I was interested in what I studied but I was interested in everything else as well, and I had no idea what I want to do. And the first years of studying just went by suffering from all this pain of becoming an adult, and I just studied the field, but I felt all the time that it is a sidetrack in my life. That the main things are totally different. For me studying was very easy, I never had to put much effort to it. I did not know anybody at the university, I did not hang out much there, and I had no identity as a student…I was really anxious because I did not know what I want to be, I had no plan…I didn't believe much in exams as a good method for learning, because I preferred writing, you learn better when you write

> yourself. So, I suggested that I write essays instead of exams…and they said that ok…I found it hard being at the university, so this way I could be at home and write essays. (Taru)

Hurdlers' stories reflected that despite the less elitist nature of the Finnish university, a norm university student model is present at least in some universities: this ideal student is determined and goal oriented and navigates academic practices "as a fish in the water" as described by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1995, 158–159). The portrait of a norm student became visible to hurdlers when their habitus was unfit with the environment causing feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and marginality during academic studies (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995, 159; Käyhkö 2014, 6; Reay 2018; Reay et al. 2009).

Instead of letting the challenging experiences restrict, hurdlers described acts of agency. They did not follow a norm path towards a clear career vision, nor did they conform to traditional practices. They made choices that felt good in the moment, even if those choices were often unconventional in relation to university's every-day practices. Hurdlers managed to make these choices partly because studying was easy without requiring much effort from them. Moreover, lack of a tradition to follow seemed to open up the horizon for choosing otherwise. Flexibility of the education system contributed to making these choices as well, like Taru's essay writing instead of exams pointed out. Possibility to make independent choices actually opened up space for unusual combinations which turned out to be useful in the future. Especially hurdlers' choice to do a research training abroad proved out to be very significant for their identity construction in terms of discovering their personal interests and individual routes in relation to doctoral studies abroad as can be seen next.

5.2.3 Inspired by international research experiences - a doctorate abroad represents access to do world-class research

Hurdlers made the decision to continue with a doctorate during their master's studies. They reported a need for reflecting where exactly they wanted to go, but continued rather straightforward. When hurdlers reflected back on their motivations and goals behind their decision to head for a doctorate abroad, their descriptions reminded those sprinters who were heading for a career within the university. They reflected back on their university study times, and especially those instances that had to do with getting inspired for doing research. However, their descriptions were characterised by a high level of international research experiences abroad which guided their way.

The various research experiences during hurdlers' studies were turning points, which started to guide their actions. These experiences were the real sparks for their further decisions to look for more research opportunities. Thesis process as well as other research-related experiences were inspiring moments during which hurdlers realised that they were good at research-related tasks. In addition to all the positive comments concerning the research process, hurdlers described it as a challenge and a hard process including a lot of insecurity and frustration when nothing seemed to work. Despite these remarks and feelings, they considered research as something they would like to do. The process offered them the kind of challenges and learning opportunities they were longing. Doing research taught them to be persistent without giving up, which they appreciated. They realised that continuing despite setbacks opened up possibilities to create new ideas and viewpoints.

> …maybe it all started with the bachelor's thesis, and I got the best grades for it and got this possibility to do a work trainee period…instead of working in conventional jobs, I suggested doing this trainee period as a researcher abroad…before that I did another research training which I liked a lot and I started to get this feeling that this is nice, this researching. I had been interested in the field but more on the level of knowledge but once I understood that it is not a question of knowledge but actually about the unknown, that's when it becomes interesting…when I left for this training period abroad…and things went wrong there with research as well…but at some point there I went crazy for this research and I started to get interested in the answer to the research question…I could do my master's thesis on the same and then I started to feel that this is my research. I have collected data, I have an idea and I wanted to find out, and it is very difficult, everything goes wrong like always in science…I don't give up and in Finland it is relaxed and possible not to graduate that fast…I could take my time and analyse and learn…and when I finally started to understand how statistics work that was like the final nail to the coffin, can I say it like that, I want to do this because this is so different from everything else and that you can find out something that nobody else knew before. In my opinion, there is something magic about it. I was hooked on it. And I thought that this is like the coolest thing there is. And then really when I returned my master's thesis, I knew already that I want to continue doing this. I was not sure in what form, I did not have an ambitious career plan but I knew I wanted to continue with this thinking process…science is an unsatisfying career because nothing ever works, or at least not how you thought it would, there are big risks but I felt that suited me because I don't need things to work necessarily, I am not interested in the end product but I just like doing this. And I mean what influenced as well was that I was good, and always got the best possible

> grades…and then everyone started saying I should quickly apply for doctoral studies…(Taru)

> …when I did my thesis in a research group they started asking if I was interested in doing a doctorate. I had not really thought that I could do it, or maybe somewhere in the back of my head, but not actively…in the beginning it was more like a doctorate legitimates to do research if I want to stay in the academic world, so at least there would not be any formal obstacles…this colleague of mine was doing a doctorate abroad and said that you can't stay there, come here… I had been doing research-oriented summer jobs abroad…mainly I have been abroad and in universities and, well, in research environments…and when I left for this trainee period abroad, I was nervous, do I know English, and how will I manage, but I met wonderful people and it was nice and eyes opening…and after that it was always easier to go…(Laura)

Doing research made hurdlers feel that they had found their own thing, and that they wanted to continue with doing research in the future which required a doctorate reflecting both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Supervisors' encouragement and good results strengthened their confidence. Being suggested to proceed for a doctorate made them think about the option of doctoral studies as personally viable. The desire for becoming a researcher had gradually started to form a part their identity.

Many research experiences that hurdlers talked about had taken place abroad. Hurdlers had not been mobile all their lives. They did not describe significant international experiences during childhood or travels with family. For them, the international experiences were situated in their university study times, and were closely tied to their research interest. During the international research experiences hurdlers learned what kind of opportunities were available abroad, and one international experience was followed by another. They met people who worked with research tasks abroad and could give them suggestions and information concerning applying for doctoral studies abroad, and especially in Britain. Hurdlers also described challenging occasions during their international experiences which required independent decision making and active initiative. These experiences worked as proof that one can manage in an international environment, and it was easier to think about going again. Managing well in international research environments strengthened their identity by further developing their confidence for their research as well as English language skills. Hurdlers' stories were good examples of structural embeddedness of mobility (Carlson 2013) showing how in a Finnish university it is possible to become mobile gradually as a result of own activity without previous mobility capital all the way from childhood. Various

exchange and research programmes were available and easily reached, or they could be negotiated as alternatives for the more conventional domestic training periods.

Hurdlers' stories reminded stories of academically oriented sprinters when they talked about the importance of the university's status and the research group for their decision to go abroad. Hurdlers wanted to work with people who shared their research interests, and they wanted to work in a university which could offer the best conditions and resources in their field. For that, they felt they needed to go abroad. Hurdlers were not specifically heading to the UK, but universities and research groups that met their criteria were found there. In these stories a doctorate abroad was about socially and culturally constructed knowledge (Findlay et al. 2012, 128) concerning where to study and in which groups for reaching the best possible research experience. Earlier research has also pointed out that when choosing a university students consider it important that the university is up to date with the most novel practices in their specific field (see Partenie 2019).

> …this university is in my field one of the best in the world and in Europe, so it was something like let's see if I can do this……and this colleague of mine told that they do very cool stuff there (university abroad)…my colleague could recommend this professor who is a big name in this field, and this colleague told me to mail this professor which I did…and I checked what kind of people worked there…so I went kind of university first…checked the rankings and which ones were in my field. (Laura)

> …I have done a comprehensive mapping, I went through all the labs in Europe where they research themes, every researcher, I read all their papers, and cv, and looked with who I would like to work. Who could, I went through a list of the most interesting research questions, and then when I after the thesis knew what I wanted to investigate I started to look for someone to do this research with…For the first time in my whole life, I knew what I wanted to do, and I will try it, and I succeed or fail but for me it is that at least I have tried to the full…I had decided that I will try to get into a very good university just to be able to carry out crazy and ambitious projects, because they have the money and resources for that. (Taru)

Hurdlers who had so far proceeded step-by-step without a clear direction, had turned into determined actors working towards a preferred goal to do research concerning the coolest and the most interesting research questions. Their stories reflect the transformative nature of habitus which has a quality to be changed and reformed through experiences across life course (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995; Vanttaja 2002). A possibility for doing international academic research was their own thing they had

found after having advanced rather sporadically before. Applying for top universities required self-confidence and determination which they had gained through earlier experiences. During a doctorate it would be possible to test individual limits and see if one was capable of managing with such a demanding project. A doctorate abroad can be interpreted to represent access to do world-class academic research for hurdlers. They had learned about importance and availability of funding which could be interpreted as an indication of their increased knowledge concerning the academic world through their previous experiences. Although they did not explicitly express heading for an academic career at this point, their goal-setting indicates that they were starting to prepare for it.

Hurdlers had advanced on the educational path without really following a specific goal. They seemed to have drifted to study because they were talented, but lacked a clear direction. However, their stories revealed that instead of drifting they had been making active decisions. Since the early school years, they talked about personal circumstances setting some hurdles on their way. A good education was not a core element of their identity since childhood. By negotiating between different alternatives and making choices gradually in each situation, they managed to advance fairly straightforward on the educational path, and to find a personal direction, which is well reflected in Taru's comment.

> It is easy to say like this afterwards, and I have said it to my students, that thinking that you know where you are heading, you work hard for it, well it might not be any better strategy than just wander around with an open mind and choose at each moment what feels best, because like that you can end up in places you could not even imagine. (Taru)

Hurdlers' stories could be interpreted as descriptions of constructing identity by overcoming obstacles. But even more, their stories revealed paths of very talented individuals who have been constructing their own path by choosing otherwise, and in the moment. Hurdlers had not made plans aiming at a certain educational outcome, which created feelings of uncertainty at times, especially when they compared themselves with peers who seemed to have found their direction latest in general upper secondary school. However, hurdlers made decisions at the spot just to see what is around the corner. They exercised agency despite constraints (McAlpine et al. 2012; Reay et al. 2009) when constructing their identities by showing initiative and making independent decisions concerning which practices encountered they chose to pursue as part of their identity. They jumped the hurdle when it was in front. Both these students did exceptionally well with their studies and talked about a significant other who encouraged them at an important educational transition stage which strengthened identity and helped to advance. Partly, also the flexibility of the

Finnish higher education system allowed making independent decisions and constructing individual routes. It was possible to proceed at one's own pace, and to reflect different decisions without a strict time limit for graduation.

5.3 Orienteers

Orienteers' educational paths were long including gaps and ruptures. They completed several educational degrees before entering doctoral studies or worked longer periods between periods of study or did both. Two of them had a family and children when they started doctoral studies. It took time for orienteers to find their own interests, and even when they did, they were unable to proceed with their preferred choices directly for various reasons. Their life circumstances at the time directed the choice-making. They seemed to proceed on the educational path as an orienteer seeking for the control point, but instead of choosing the fastest route they ended up wandering in the terrain with hills and cliffs and stopping to check the map at intervals. They all found their way, but only after various detours. For orienteers, the detours actually guided them towards their educational as well as international interests.

Orienteers had significant life experiences in their earlier school years, as well as later stages which they considered relevant for understanding their overall educational journey. Orienteers found their interest for research during their university studies, but for them it took some time before they were able to proceed with a doctoral study. Their decision to head abroad had to do with family, relationship, or study issues, although other than a doctorate. Their home environments reminded those of hurdlers. They told about less supportive or rather non-chalant home environments concerning school. In families where education was basically appreciated, the parents lacked resources to discuss education-related questions which were not part of the family's everyday practices. Orienteers came from families in which the parents lacked a higher education degree.

5.3.1 Unsupported choice-making leads to educational ruptures and drifting

Orienteers told rather spontaneously about their earlier school years. They were basically good or average students at school. However, they told about various challenges that complicated making future plans and choices when they were young. Orienteers told about negative school experiences and/or challenges in personal life such as family problems or illness in family that had reflections also concerning school. Sometimes the challenges seemed to be related to youth as a life stage and difficulties in finding own interests. Unifying in these experiences was that

orienteers were rather alone when making their decisions concerning educational paths which complicated the choice-making. Orienteers reminded hurdlers what comes to experiencing obstacles on the educational path, with the difference that orienteers were slowed down and restricted by the obstacles for proceeding smoothly on the educational path.

Miia's story is an example of how young people can make rather drastic choices if left alone to make them. Miia left school after basic education although she had been doing very well at school. She told having on the back of her mind a desire to get an education, but at the end of basic education she had other things in life which started to be more interesting than school work, such as going abroad and having a family. Her decision to follow own interests seemed natural at the time, and she did not talk about any negotiations about her educational future at the time. Although her family basically had an appreciation towards education and as Miia expressed, "there were expectations that something is done", she told that her parents were not really interested in her schooling, and school-related issues were not commonly shared. Miia assumed that partly the attitude was a reflection of the era. It was several decades ago that she had been to school, and at the time parents were generally less involved in their children's schooling. However, she also talked about illness affecting the family which in her case meant that she was forced to be independent from early on and to take responsibility for her own decisions.

> …I always wanted to go abroad, and I was quite young when I…with my future husband quite soon we moved abroad. I was always good at school but at the time school did not interest me much. But I always had that what if, because in the family many have a higher education degree…My mum had lower education, and so did my dad. But still there were some expectations that something is done…my parent was ill when I was young and I had to be very independent concerning school…but school was easy and I did not have to work hard…it was a different time also than today when parents are very much involved…sometimes I did my homework but more often I did not. (Miia)

For Miia, the decision to leave school after basic education without continuing to upper secondary level at the time was strongly influenced by a personal relationship. Individuals make decisions about where (not) to study and work based on personal relationships (McAlpine 2012).

Other orienteers proceeded to general upper secondary school rather automatically, but talked more about the transition after general upper secondary school as posing some challenges. Reetta's story here is a good example of how a combination of problems at home, and teachers' negative feedback and name-calling at school, complicated the earlier educational path. Reetta's story revealed that

school issues were her own responsibility, and there was no support available from home or school. Although she had preferred university studies, she was unable to prepare for entrance exams because all the energy was needed to overcome the problems she had at home at the time. She drifted to more easily available studies instead.

> I was never like you know the best student at school but somehow I had some subjects that I was interested in and others that did not interest me at all. I have always been good at writing and I always liked to write, and already in elementary school my essays were read out loud and so I had this experience that I am good at this. So I think maybe it has somehow influenced that I have started this research thing, but my field I found, well not completely even today, but gradually around lower secondary school when we started to deal with history and social studies (yhteiskuntaoppi), and those kind of things always interested me…and in general upper secondary education I got interested in politics…at the time it was difficult at home and it took me longer to finish general upper secondary and I didn't have time to prepare for any entrance exams, although I wanted to and so I ended up in applied sciences for some programme where you could just walk in…I have had terrible teachers who have called me straightforward stupid. Already at elementary school, and I think already from there I have this, I will show one day that I am smart and that I can. I think, a big part of this is that I want to show myself and also to all who doubted me that I can do this…for school I don't remember having support from home, I don't know if it was my own experience or more generally Finnish this "who cares"-attitude…it was just up to yourself…(Reetta)

These kinds of negative experiences in the school environment, and lack of support from home can easily make one feel worthless, and thus restrict agency. Indeed, Reetta's agency was restricted in relation to her choices after general upper secondary school, and it was not until later that she was able to act according to her own interests. In Reetta's case, paradoxically, the negative feedback also generated agency giving her a kick to show that she can do well and that she is capable. Reetta had also had positive experiences during her early educational path which seemed important, and probably promoted her own sense of ability.

For young people, educational choices are not always easy and uncontroversial. Family's lack of cultural resources for discussing different educational futures and alternative choices does not make choice-making any easier. Like Anne here describes, she was fixated on a certain future plan for most of her earlier educational path, which covered all possible others. When she suddenly decided to abandon the existing plan under the prevailing circumstances, she was lost. Having had a chance

to negotiate also other alternatives might had proven helpful when making choices concerning future paths. Anne more or less drifted to study in the university in a field which she had not thought of thoroughly.

> …well this is rather significant, because I had this, I mean until even after general upper secondary school, I was supposed to become (mentions the profession). And I mean my whole childhood it was my first priority, and all I did was targeted to go study that, and I got in, but then I just decided that I won't become (the profession). It was a big, well the whole life situation influenced, and all, and it was quite a big drop this decision because I didn't have a plan that I won't become (the profession) but I will become this instead. I had nothing, I mean nothing. It was a big thing. And then for some reason which I don't even know myself, I ended up applying for university to study (field)…at school I was also interested in other subjects, such as psychology and filosofy, but this profession had always been present and number one in my narration. And I feel that these other things never kind of became valid options to think about. We never talked about making these choices in the family, it just wasn't part of it in any way. I don't think my parents had resources for that you know, without blaming them at all, but it just wasn't. I think that these interests that were there they just never became valid options. (Anne)

Orienteers' stories revealed that they were all left rather alone to deal with the important educational choices during the early educational paths which led to drifting, and even rather impulsive and sporadic choices. We know that in less educated families the educational choices that young people make are often easily influenced by prevailing circumstances (Käyhkö 2013, 23–24; Nori 2011, 39). In Käyhkö's (2013, 24) research women from working-class background that took a long route to university had been influenced by people close to them in a way that restricted them from advancing. For example, their skills had been undermined which was also seen in Reetta's story concerning some teachers. However, instead of being undermined, orienteers were mainly restricted from making more straightforward choices because they had to take responsibility for important choices by themselves without possibilities to negotiate with people who could have given them useful guidance.

5.3.2 Finding own interests through educational detours

Orienteers' stories revealed that they made choices on their educational path that they wanted to adjust afterwords. However, making a seemingly wrong or an unsatisfying educational choice at the time can turn out to be a necessary detour for

learning about oneself and for finding one's proper interests. During these detours orienteers gained capital in form of new skills and knowledge especially concerning international opportunities which they could take use of later on. A detour can actually motivate and build up confidence to start acting towards a preferred goal, which for orienteers meant applying for university to do their first or second master's degree.

Reetta and Anne had drifted to study after general upper secondary school, and these studies represented something they were not especially happy with. However, during these studies they both had experiences that greatly influenced their future paths. Especially the possibility to go abroad for an exchange period turned out to be very significant concerning their futures. A positive international experience worked as a spark concerning future international activity.

> I remember that during the last year of my master's studies, I was on exchange in the UK. And that was like the first experience for me of living abroad for a while. And for sure that has planted "an abroad seed" in me so to speak…(Anne)

Orienteers told how the time abroad opened their eyes for international interests such as new cultures, people and languages which started to direct their future plans. Reetta describes below how she was unsatisfied with her studies after general upper secondary school, and considered that she had capacity for a better education. The exchange experience worked as a turning point inspiring her to apply for university to study internationally related issues. Time abroad turned out to be significant also on a more personal level. The inspiration for further international activities led Reetta to travel more and finally to meet up with her future partner and to move abroad.

> I started studies and it was not my thing at all. I thought all the time that I could do better and that I am wasting my time here…there was this possibility to go abroad for a trainee period…that (trainee period abroad) was like my first real experience of being abroad…so the first real trip abroad I went on the other side of the world, to a totally different culture and that was like a total turning point and I was like ok, now I know what I want to do. This is the thing. And then after that I left with that other student for another trip…and I tried to do everything very international, and while conducting my final work I studied these issues in open university and then I applied for the university and got in. There were over 200 applicants and only ten were accepted. It was a big deal that I got in there…and then I left with some study mates on a trip again…and met my future husband which was another turning point in my life…and I moved abroad…(Reetta)

In Reetta's description it is visible how getting into university meant a lot, instead of being a self-evident transfer as in sprinters' stories. In general, orienteers described the transfer to university in more detail than sprinters revealing that university studies are not self-evident in less educated families (Käyhkö 2017, 8; Reay 2018; Reay et al. 2009). Even Anne who had entered the university straight after master's studies showed a lot of appreciation towards university studies, however for her, it was more the second master's degree that turned out to be significant.

Anne's story is a good example on how a longer educational path with detours can actually turn out to be necessary for building up enough confidence to proceed towards a doctorate. She told about her university studies in Finland as kind of passing by without her really understanding what was happening. Anne told that without the exchange experience during university studies, she had never come up with the idea of starting international master's studies abroad, which were significant for her academic confidence. Actually, the whole idea of doing a doctorate actually crossed her mind for the first time while on exchange.

> I remember there (exchange period) for the first time thinking of the possibility of doing a doctorate…I felt that I can manage in this environment, to take part in discussions, and all my writings and stuff I got good feedback, so it had this how should I say, it gave a little boost for my academic confidence. It is interesting that I did not have that in Finland…I had no idea how to be in the university, how to act during the first degree…and during the exchange I did some studies together with the students from this international master's programme, so that's how I knew this programme even existed. And this is actually quite significant, because I don't think that when I was about to graduate in Finland, and went to work, so I don't think that I had started to look if these kinds of programmes existed, so knowing about them existing has influenced that actually went…(Anne)

For Anne the exchange worked as a motivator and initial confidence builder, while the international master's studies abroad further contributed to her confidence.

> …I needed more evidence for myself than one master's degree that I can do doctoral studies…and I also wanted to go abroad because of my life situation…I thought that I wanted to change the environment completely…I was inspired by the international environment and I felt that it was easier to breath and to explore new sides of yourself there and the international master's programme how should I say, even today I would say that to go there is one of the best decisions of my life…my own academic self-confidence, during those international master's studies, although it was quite a battle, it all went quite well and I got

> good feedback, constructive feedback as well…there I kind of got confirmation that I like this research process somehow, it is very meaningful. (Anne)

Miia who had moved abroad after basic education also found her study interests during the time abroad. She had started to long back to school to get an education after some years of family life. Despite the educational gap on her path, she had been able to learn a new language while abroad. She wanted to go to university which she estimated was possible because she had managed well at school when she was younger, and she had always been good at languages. However, she thought that skills acquired from abroad would improve her chances for entering the university. If it had not been for her time abroad, it is possible that she had not become interested or confident enough to apply. Miia applied and got into university, although after having completed upper secondary level education which she lacked. One of the strengths of Finnish education system is the possibility to get an education also at later stages in life, and to revise unsatisfying choices that have been made earlier (Antikainen 2006).

> After some time abroad, I wanted back to school…I have always been good at languages, and I had learned another language while abroad and English, I had always had a lot of English speaking friends so I have been good at English…I decided to go to university…I moved back to Finland and went to general upper secondary school. I had decided to go to university and I did well with what I studied and I got into university…(Miia)

For orienteers the educational detours provided opportunities to gradually acquire useful capital that guided towards studying a field of interest as well as encouraged and further contributed to future reflections about wanting more international experiences. A new environment opened up space for their identity to develop. They learned new skills and started to see oneself in a different light which offered a chance to develop as a person. International experiences provided learning experiences that strengthened orienteers' habitus producing agency that contributed to their motivation and confidence to seek opportunities to study internationally related issues in the university, or study abroad already before a doctorate. Having developed personal relationships during international experiences influenced making decisions to move abroad. With reference to Bourdieu, orienteers' experiences reflect gradually developing a habitus directing them to proceed on the international educational path (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995; Vanttaja 2002).

Orienteers reflected back to their childhood when they talked about the international experiences that turned out to be significant in their lives. Orienteers characterised themselves as curious, open and positive towards new experiences and

willing to understand diversity since they were young. Orienteers had not travelled practically at all during childhood with their families. Anne had travelled with friends but others had hardly been abroad. However, they could talk about having had people around them who were open-minded towards internationality and who had influenced their thinking. This significant person could be a parent who travelled a lot or worked abroad like for Anne here below.

> …always since I was little, I have been curious, and I have liked new places, contexts, people a lot. And I have travelled quite a lot with friends since I was young, but we did not travel with the family. But I have liked to go to new places, and kind of this to understand people and new cultures, it is kind of built inside me this understanding of diversity. But I was thinking that, why is it, that my father has worked abroad a lot, but we have never lived there with the family but he has more or less all my youth been working abroad. So of course, this kind of, I don't know if I can say he has been a role model but at least it has in a way showed that it is possible…I don't know if I have been encouraged to go abroad necessarily, but at least it has not been seen as something terrible. (Anne)

Some orienteers had also had contacts with international people through extra-curricular activities or they had had exchange students living for a while with the family. One orienteer told that her parents travelled a lot without taking the children along and although the situation on the one hand irritated her, on the other hand the situation also motivated to look for own international experiences when possible. It seemed that even if orienteers had not had that many mobility experiences as such themselves when they were young, seeing mobile people in everyday life inspired them to look for international experiences themselves. These mobile people in orienteers' everyday life had influenced their interest towards the world, and served as examples that going abroad is possible and a choice one can make. However, only after having had personal international experiences orienteers got confirmation that they would like international issues to play a role in their lives and identities, and started acting according to these interests.

5.3.3 A doctorate abroad – meaningful activity bounded by external and internal constraints

During university studies orienteers experienced the thesis process as an event that inspired them for research. Their stories reminded those of sprinters orienting for an academic career as well as hurdlers, when they told how they enjoyed the thesis process and were motivated by the challenge of the process reflecting intrinsic motivations. Encouragement from supervisor developed confidence, and made

orienteers think about the possibility for continuing with doing a doctorate. However, lacking from orienteers' descriptions were extrinsic motives such as career plans and work-related issues as well as reflections on the importance of university rankings at this point. Lacking were also reflections on why study for a doctoral degree abroad because orienteers had moved abroad for other reasons. Central themes concerning their interest for research were investigating, learning, reading, writing and pondering social questions. For orienteers, doing research seemed to represent enjoyment of the research process. Doing research was described as a meaningful activity for oneself without an instrumental motive.

> …this (doing research) reflects me as a person in general, I have always thought of myself more like a researcher than an academic. I could say so. I like investigating things. I like searching for information, I like learning and these kinds of things…during master's studies I noticed that I like this research process, it is meaningful. I never had or experienced that I am a woman of one interest, I was never like this is what I am really interested in and I have a crazy passion for this one topic or research area. I felt more that I am interested in almost everything which is a bit challenging. (Anne)

> …doing analysis, thinking and organising the material, reading, and I started this because I like doing research and not because I wanted something like, at the time I didn't even realise that at my age it would be possible to create a career in the academic world. (Miia)

The most striking difference to sprinters and hurdlers was that despite orienteers' interest and desire to continue with doing research and a doctorate, they lacked possibilities or favourable circumstances to make those thoughts real straight after master's studies. They talked more about the planning stage of studies and challenges that restricted from applying than the actual application process. Orienteers told about external and internal hindrances that restricted them from proceeding to construct their identity towards their preferred interest through a straightforward route at the time.

External hindrances had to do with economic and family responsibilities. Those orienteers who had a family, described it less self-evident for them to proceed with a doctoral study straight after master's studies, although the interest was present. They told about thinking about the option of doing a doctorate already during their university studies. However, because of family issues these plans could not be carried out automatically without careful planning. Childcare was an issue which had to be included in the planning, and thus complicated proceeding with desired goals at times. At the time orienteers with a family were both living abroad where childcare

was less easily available or arranged than in Finland. There were also economic issues to be considered as Miia tells here. She was obliged to go to work in order to support the family.

> I wanted then (after master's studies) to do more and continue (a doctorate) but there are realities. I mean my poor husband had been working 24/7 for years, so I thought maybe I will have to contribute to this economy as well. Well, I didn't realise how much these big decisions roll around money but when you have a family, you have a family and it has to be taken care of. And, of course you want to. So, then I just went, and worked for many years…and then I had a possibility to delve into it (doctorate) when there was no longer family there and not so many children…(Miia)

In order to proceed with their plans, orienteers with a family had to arrange childcare or even wait until more favourable life circumstances which for Miia meant waiting until her children were old enough. In previous studies (e.g. Maunula 2014) it has been pointed out that doctoral students with a family construct their life course directed by family and doctoral studies. Women in Maunula's research were flexible and put their own goals aside when needed. Once childcare issues were arranged, it was easier to concentrate on own goals. (Maunula 2014.) Although orienteers were not doctoral students yet at this point, it is obvious that family issues are a central part of some students' identity and concern already planning stage of future studies.

Sometimes external hindrances were practical difficulties such as finding a doctorate position, and especially a funded position. Reetta told how she lived in several different countries due to her family's work situation and according to her in some countries international students only had very limited possibilities for a doctoral position. In some countries, studies were also conducted in a language other than English which restricted Reetta from applying.

> …I was finishing my thesis in the little kitchen of our apartment in (city abroad). And I realised quite soon that it would be very difficult for me to find any study place there, any doctoral study position because there (country name) you have to do more or less everything in the country's language. And my language skills were basic at that stage…not at the level that I could had been doing any doctoral level studies…then we moved and I got pregnant…it was also difficult for me to find a study place or work because there (country name) they have a different system, they have to offer the position by law for a native first…it was very difficult and I would had needed to pay as well. They have no funding system for students, especially for foreigners. (Reetta)

Orienteers' stories included descriptions on how they had to postpone their plans due to difficulties with funding issues. Funding issues are playing an important role in the perceived possibilities to actually start conducting a doctorate. In Britain it is possible for foreigners also to apply for funding, however it is not self-evident to receive funding. Funding issues are not solely concerning studying abroad. Also in Finland, competition for funded positions is fierce because of the increasing number of doctoral students and cuts in universities' funding (Hakala 2009; Pappa et al. 2020). Whereas sprinters and hurdlers described multiple opportunities that were available abroad concerning research and a doctorate, for orienteers being abroad was actually partly considered as a restriction.

Internal hindrances for starting doctoral studies were related to a sense of obligation to choose work over studies. This sense of duty was already present in Miia's description above, when she told feeling a need to participate for family economy by her husband's side. However, the obligation to go to work after university studies was also related to issues other than economic, and concerned also other orienteers than those with a family. Previous studies (e.g. Käyhkö 2017, 17; Reay et al. 2009) have shown that often in less educated families work is valued over studying, and choosing studies means acting against expectations. When constructing one's identity without support and relevant identity models, it is easier to hold on to something more familiar than to take a step towards the unknown such as an academic route and a doctorate (see Käyhkö 2013, 23–24). This is well reflected in Anne's story when she told how she wanted to do a doctorate after her master's studies, but was restricted from proceeding with these plans because she had learned at home to value work over studies when available.

> I think I would had even stayed there (exchange destination) at that stage but then I was offered a job in Finland. And because I was just about to graduate and I thought that I am a total idiot if I don't take this job offered to me when I graduate. And it was, I see, also this mode of thinking comes from home basically, I mean it is work, I did not even think that I could say no and that I will stay here and think and that I would somehow start arranging a post graduate study place for myself here. No, that did not, that thought was not included in the "repertoire" in any way so to speak. So, I returned and took that job and there I was for many years…(Anne)

In addition to a sense of obligation, self-esteem issues came up as an internal hindering factor concerning the perceived possibility to proceed with the preferred goal one had. Lack of confidence in own skills could prevent from continuing with further studies at the time. Such reflections were clear in Anne's story when she described feeling uneligible for continuing with a doctorate straight away, although

she did meet the official criteria with her master's degree. Even after several years in working life, when Anne felt a need for a change, and thus circumstances were favourable for further studies in that sense, she lacked confidence to apply for a doctorate straight away.

> It (a doctorate) came to my mind there (exchange destination) that I could maybe, and I don't know, I did not analyse it very consciously. I mean, if I should now but in general that there is this possibility there at some level…but I did not experience it at the time that it is a possibility for me personally…and when I had worked for several years and the job's life line kind of came to an end, and I had these options at the time to do another master's abroad or to apply to do other studies in Finland…I did talk with some friends that actually I could apply directly to doctoral studies because I had one master's, but I kind of, I had this feeling that I don't have any competence for doctoral studies directly at that point. (Anne)

Educational choice-making is not solely about recognising and seizing opportunities, but also about a self-image, identity, that has been gradually constructed along life course (Käyhkö 2013, 25). Individuals reveal their identities in the moments of educational choices because in these situations they are required to reflect their own image of themselves concerning what they are able to do, what they want to do and what kind of opportunities they have for proceeding with their goals (Mäkelä, Kalalahti & Peura 2019). Anne reflected back to her family background concerning her decision to choose work over studies as well as her lack of self-esteem for continuing with a doctorate through a straightforward route. Anne lacked the required cultural capital along her educational path from early on, that would have helped her to strengthen her identity by developing confidence in her skills and possibilities concerning a doctorate. Without existing academic traditions in the family, it took longer to navigate along the path, to gradually construct her identity, and perceive a doctorate as a personally relevant goal. Class was present in her inner-world requiring her to constantly negotiate her capability and to overcome the feelings of insufficiency as part of her identity (Käyhkö 2013, 28; Reay 2018) but she was able to renew her habitus through these new experiences.

Orienteers' stories revealed that not all individuals planning doctoral studies have the required resources or circumstances to proceed with their plans straightforward. Individuals are in different life situations and have different responsibilities which can restrict their agency for constructing a preferred identity, albeit the personal motivation and desired goal. Orienteers needed favourable circumstances in order to proceed with the desire to conduct a doctorate. Orienteers who had a family had to take family issues into consideration when making plans.

Funding arrangements had to be made before they were able to start because they also had a family to support. In case of lack of confidence to proceed with the desired plan to conduct a doctorate, further studies were needed to build up the courage to apply. For these reasons, it took longer for orienteers to actually construct an identity into which they would incorporate taking initiative and applying for a doctoral study.

The popular discourse of today's world concerning free choice and unlimited possibilities for individuals to construct their identities was not reflected through orienteers' stories. Instead, in their descriptions structural and cultural boundaries, such as class and gender were present in educational choice-making (Käyhkö 2013; Reay 2018), restricting the construction of their preferred identity. Karen Evans (2002) has introduced the concept of bounded agency to show how educational choice-making is not solely a question of following individual interests and goals, but is always carried out under certain terms and conditions related to society, the education system and family backgound (Jahnukainen, Kalalahti & Kivirauma 2019, 223–224). However, interpretations and dispositions in relation to education can change through life experiences along life course (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995, 165). Taking a longer route which means finding a suitable life situation and recognising personal interests, and also building up confidence, can be necessary for some students for their habitus to become strong enough, and to allow them to take necessary steps to proceed on the educational path towards constructing their preferred identity.

5.4 Race walkers

Race walkers' educational paths were also long like those of orienteers, and included long periods of work between study periods. Race walkers became interested in doing a doctorate gradually later on in life, and applied while they were already living in the UK. They connected the interest for a doctorate to developing their skills in working life in the UK where they had already gained a lot of working experience. Their earlier school years and family backgrounds differed from each other considerably. Matti came from a non-academic family and started on a vocational path. Sini was from an academic family and followed the more academic route ending up doing a second master's degree later on in life. However, what they had in common, was that they described earlier school experiences in a positive way, and their parents were positive about school. They were also very free to make their own decisions without being pushed in any direction. Race walkers' routes towards doctoral studies can be considered non-traditional like those of orienteers. However, for race walkers the meanders were results of choices that they experienced as rather self-evident at the time, instead of mere alternatives for choices they were restricted to make which was the case with orienteers. Their paths seemed like natural

continuums for persons who have been following their own interests at the time. They seemed to find the agency for pursuing their plans directly after having come up with the idea. They reminded race walkers advancing persistantly with alternating pace and endurance on a long meandering track.

5.4.1 Experiencing opportunities instead of restrictions

Matti's story is a good example of race walkers' typical attitude of not letting earlier choices restrict making new ones. Matti thought it significant to describe his earlier path in order to make sense why his later choices were somewhat exceptional. When looking back and describing his path, Matti revealed that the cultural script he had adopted was such that made him consider his own vocational path as deviant from what was probably expected from someone studying for a doctorate abroad. Albeit in Finland the eligibility for continuing in tertiary level education is achieved from both strands of upper secondary level education, it is common to think that people choose general upper secondary school instead of vocational education and training should they want to follow the academic path (Kalalahti et al. 2019, 72). At the time of making the choice for secondary studies Matti considered it natural to continue elsewhere than in general upper secondary school. General upper secondary school did not appear to be an option at all for him because he had other goals in life for the future for which he imagined he needed practical skills.

> Matti: It's not like I took my master's in Finland, worked and left to study abroad. It's more like, if we go to earlier experiences, and why I am abroad for the first place, although I lived my childhood in…well my parents are not that academic. My grandparent was a bit more educated and just about the only one in the environment to take the matriculation exam…my first education is like I went to vocational education and training…my parents were positive about school, nobody said anything, if I go to vocational education they are happy, to university they are happy…they did not really, it was just always that everything is cool…
>
> Interviewer: Did you think about general upper secondary education at all?
>
> Matti: No, I did not really. It is because I lived a big part of my life on the country side, on a farm. And there it is this practical thing that you must be able to fix things. If a tractor breaks down, you have to have an idea how to fix it. (Matti)

Family background is known to be one of the factors that direct young people on certain educational routes when choosing upper secondary education. Choosing

vocational education and training is more often expected in less educated families, while in families with higher education choosing general upper secondary school is often more probable. (Kalalahti et al. 2019, 72.) Educational choices reflect the values and practices individuals have learned to appreciate and to consider worth pursuing. Matti's cultural environment on a family farm had taught him to appreciate practical skills which naturally directed him to choose vocational education and training providing students with a strong vocational competence (MoEC 2020). Matti's decision to continue on a vocational path, instead of academic, reflects a tendency, habitus, to choose a route that he had gradually learned to appreciate at home (Rinne, Haltia, Nori & Jauhiainen 2008, 515) adopting it as a natural part of his identity. However, education was not in anyway undermined in the family as can be seen in Matti's description. His parents seemed to appreciate any kind of education without setting pressure for a certain direction.

Race walkers' stories also revealed that individual values and preferences can evolve along life course redirecting identity construction. Other people can act as examples, and activate individual agency to choose a direction which is less familiar (Käyhkö 2013, 26). Grandparents, siblings and friends can have an influence on the educational path by serving as encouraging examples (Käyhkö 2013, 26; Vanttaja 2002, 97–98). In Matti's description above, grandparent was important concerning his path by showing that education is an option and not completely out of reach. Later on, Matti got inspired by a close friend to apply for university studies after having completed vocational education and training and after having worked for some years. The friends' example opened up the university as a place that Matti started to consider possible and attractive also for himself. He had worked within a field that was very remotely connected to the field he decided to study. Although, at the time his knowledge concerning the chosen field was scarce, he proceeded with his plan and got in.

> …after vocational education and training I was working within sales for some years, and how I even ended up in the university, well it was that my best friend went to university, and because his family background was more these academic people like doctors and lawyers. So he went to university, and I thought that well I can go to university as well, and I ended up studying the field in (name of the university) based on that I had been working within sales, I thought it's kind of similar. I still had not really an idea what it was but I studied the books and got in. (Matti)

Similar kind of attitude of not letting earlier choices restrict was present, when Sini told about her university study choices. Academic path was familiar to Sini from her home environment since both her parents had a higher education degree. However,

Sini was offered a study place in an English-speaking university programme which she was unfamiliar with and considered it even a little scary. She decided to welcome the challenge, although she had not been studying English that much before. Encouragement from her mother helped to proceed on a less familiar route.

> …the studies were totally in English, and at the time I did not speak English at all. I had studied different languages, like German, Russian, Swedish, and I had short English…so I couldn't really speak English and I thought it was always really embarrassing, I mean everybody knows English, how come you don't know English…I thought that this just won't work…and my mum said that give it a try and if by Christmas you have not passed an exam then you can decide if you want to leave…I thought that was a good deal because I was anxious to go…but I passed all the exams. And I didn't go home, and at that point I didn't remember the deal anymore because I had a good time and all went really well. (Sini)

Sini did not let earlier choices restrict, when she decided to study a totally new field in the university after many years in working life. Her preferences during life course had evolved towards an interest in natural sciences, which she had not studied before. Instead of considering all the possible restrictions on her way, she was determined and seized the opportunity, this time supported by her employer.

> …where I was working at the time, well I did not feel it was that intelligent what I was doing, or challenging. It was fun to help colleagues, I like that, but I had already been there for some time, and then there was this development discussion, and my boss asked me where you see yourself in three or five years or so. And I said that well I see myself here, because I like the workplace but I don't want to do the same anymore. I want to do something else…And when the boss asked me what else…and the boss said that without more scientific background it is difficult to do anything else in this field, if you don't understand these products and what they are used for and where, so for that you should have an education. For that I said that well I guess I will get that then…and so we had a deal that I will find this programme in the university…and so I found it…I had never thought that I was in any way directed towards mathematics and natural sciences earlier…I thought maybe that I have no possibility to do anything related to that because I had not studied them before, that those people already chose earlier to study like mathematics or chemistry. I thought that it is a bit like being a priest, that it has been decided earlier and can not be decided later. But I guess you can. (Sini)

Race walkers' educational paths seemed rather flawless, although long, when they described their earlier paths towards a doctoral study. Race walkers' way to tell their story gave an impression that their long routes were results of preferred and rational choices in the existing context without much negotiations required at the time (Vanttaja 2002). From an identity point of view, their stories could be interpreted as reflections of fearless and courageous individuals who can make decisions that others might feel restricted to do. Sometimes it is also a question of how to tell the story and what elements the individual telling the story wants to point out. In Vanttaja's (2002, 112) research men showed tendency to present life course as a series of rather straightforward and succesful choices. Race walkers, who were not both men, showed equal tendency, however, they did bring out the importance of other people. They had also been able to construct their identity along life course leaning to the values and preferences they had at the time, instead of having to settle for the second-best option. Another significant element they pointed out was, that the naturally born confidence they seemed to have since earlier years, was more a result of experience they had been building up along the way through studies and work especially in international contexts, which is described next.

5.4.2 International studies and work build up confidence

Race walkers named an exchange period and other international experiences during university studies and work as significant events concerning their futures. Race walkers had either no or only a few international experiences before their time in the university. Race walkers considered the international experiences as opportunities for becoming aware of what they wanted from the future, and for building up confidence to reach for the goals. Significant life course experiences often represent an orientation to imagined personal future (Antikainen et al. 1996, 82). Race walkers' descriptions reminded those of orienteers. International spaces offered opportunities for learning new skills and acquiring knowledge concerning further opportunities. Especially international contacts and networks acquired during various international experiences seemed to be important channels to be informed about different kind of opportunities for studying and working abroad, that race walkers had remained unaware of otherwise. In addition, personal relationships were created during these experiences, that strongly contributed to making future choices especially concerning moving abroad.

Sini had already explained above how she became more confident in her English skills through her international studies. Exchange experience and work abroad further contributed to the confidence for entering a completely new field. Longing for new challenges at work showed that Sini had grown confidence in her skills. Matti explained that for him it took longer to build up confidence in order to proceed

on the educational path, because of his non-academic background reminding stories of orienteers.

> My parents did not, we never travelled when I was small. I went abroad for the first time when I was 18, with my own money. There just was not, that family background, where I was there was no money or joy for people to go abroad, for some reason. I can't say they hate foreign countries, but it just was not a part of that life style or way of life or whatever…the time during studies, all the study loans I used for travelling, I financed my studies with work, and the study loan was for travelling to different places. You just wanted to go to different places to see what there is and how people live, what is happening there, just to go and have a look around. That kind of thing, that's how you learn. And then kind of after all these coincidences, the group of friends I had, there were people with a lot of international contacts, and they were studying abroad and so on…and when you have been to all these different places you notice that…some people are not naturally so much more intelligent than others. It's more like, earlier if I didn't know what people talked about then I thought I was stupid, but then I realised that there are many other things they don't know…it's the shared context, you just need to know their background, where they come from, what words they use and what they mean and so on……but having like this vocational education background, the starting point is that stupid people go to vocational education and training, it is just that what comes from the environment, that for a long time you are a bit unsure, although everything has gone well, But because nobody told you all the way from school as a child that you are the wisest kid and there you are and you will be the leader of the world. It's not like here (UK) where they put the kid to school to live in a stone castle from the sixteenth century and they tell the kid that you are part of the elite and wisest of all. It will give you a kind of different, how to say, trust level on your own thinking skills. And kind of knowledge of your place in the society…(Matti)

In Matti's reflections a gradually constructed self-image is present, as it was in some of the orienteers' descriptions (Käyhkö 2013, 25). He had automatically translated his choice of vocational education and training into meaning that he was less intelligent, although the feeling was hidden inside, and not visible in his choice to continue to university, which was seen earlier. Through the experience he gained from travelling to different countries and getting to know a variety of people, he started to understand that he was not less intelligent. It was merely a question of capital provided by vocational education which was not relevant in all contexts or fields in Bourdieuan terms (Bourdieu 1988; Peixoto 2014). For Sini, international study and especially working experiences had led to an understanding that it is

possible also later on in life to gain new skills and re-direct the educational path. In addition to gaining confidence in own potential to proceed on the educational path, international experiences taught race walkers about existing international opportunities.

5.4.3 A doctorate abroad in a reputed university as a successful career change

Race walkers described their motives and goals concerning a doctoral study as rather extrinsic and instrumental. Their first explanations concerned possibilities for career advancement and change. Race walkers were already living in Britain for work and relationship reasons at the time they made the decision to start a doctoral study. Race walkers concentrated on talking about their motives and goals for a doctoral study, instead of describing in detail about the actual application process, or the aspects of moving abroad. They had worked for several years after their master's degree, and for them the turning point that activated to start thinking about a doctorate was a need to develop in working life. The idea of a doctorate started to appeal to race walkers personally, because they wanted to advance on a career ladder. They described being at the point in their career, where they were fed up with what they were doing, and had started to long for a change. A doctorate appeared as an attractive option in order to execute a desired change for a new direction in working life. At this point, only Sini talked about a desire to become a researcher. She did not specify whether she was more interested in working with academic research in the university, or outside the university where she had mostly gained her working experience. Matti was more interested in increasing his employability value outside the university. In race walkers' stories, there was no talk about the bad employment situation being a motivation for applying for a doctorate. On the contrary, in Britain there seems to be work available for graduates and a doctorate is considered a possibility to move forward.

Race walkers had experience from the British working life. They had become aware of how the local employment market and working life operated. They had learned to identify appreciated elements especially in the field they were interested in. The time in working life had taught race walkers that the value of a doctoral degree was widely acknowledged in working life in Britain (Denicolo & Park 2013). A doctorate represented a possibility to advance on a career ladder and to make a career change. Applying for doctoral studies was also a question of ambition for race walkers' identities since the degree itself was appreciated. However, even more than a doctorate, race walkers highlighted the meaning of the university status for working life. They had learned during their career that a degree from certain universities in Britain was considered more valuable than others reflecting how international

education is about culturally and socially constructed knowledge (Findlay et al. 2012, 128). A degree from these reputed universities worked as kind of a business card, serving not only as an explanation of the person's skills, but also as an identity confirmation. A degree from certain universities would help to avoid having to give further explanations concerning oneself.

> …about this doctorate, I kind of got fed up with what I was doing for work, and I thought that I want some kind of career change and to study a bit more…I thought that if I do a doctorate concerning this topic, it is a career change. At the time I was working in Britain and latest there I understood how abroad, especially in Britain, they value, there are so many people from everywhere who have done so many things, and people are not really interested in details but kind of where you have been and what is the brand or generally known about the place is what they value. And I started thinking if I do a doctorate here which schools are the ones that I don't have to explain to anybody where I come from…there were kind of two things, I was fed up enough for my work, no more this, and at the same time because I was in the UK, there was a possibility, there were good schools and things came together, and I ended up studying. (Matti)

> I think on the field of natural sciences, it (a doctorate) is a common thought, maybe in Finland as well, but here maybe. Here the master's does not matter much, more the bachelor's. It means that you have the degree, but here I kind of think that people study for a doctorate. And all those researchers were doctors, so I kind of thought that you can not be a researcher if you are not a doctor…this is a paper, a degree paper that I value as such, because without it you can not do certain things. Kind of like a driver's licence…this university (the name) is a sure thing, you don't have to explain much…as a school it is fine and it is yes yes, and it is more here that it is fine and people know what it is about…(Sini)

In addition to more instrumental career advancement motives for conducting a doctorate, race walkers pointed out having an interest in doing research. Matti told having had a remote attraction towards research already during university studies, while Sini told having had no interest in research during university studies in Finland. Mainly for both race walkers, the research interest started to grow later on in life due to various study and working life experiences when they, as curios people, noticed how they liked learning new things and investigating.

> …the bachelor's thesis (in UK), it was that if your grades were good enough you could choose to do practical work in the lab…I went there and did a lab project and I loved it, I was quite good, and then I thought that maybe this is not just a

> David Attenborough kind of interest but I mean I like this and there is a challenge and this is really interesting and I am not like really bad at this or so…my study field was not (during the first master's degree), at least not in my opinion at the time, research-oriented, surely it is now, but it was not and I had never thought that anybody could do research while I was in Finland. (Sini)

It has already been stated earlier that other people can have a great influence on individual choice-making and identity construction by providing knowledge concerning opportunity structures, and by opening up the horizon for action by bringing up an idea as personally viable. When race walkers were already abroad, friends and partners studying for a doctoral degree as well as colleagues who already had a doctorate brought the idea closer and as viable also for them. Matti's story is a good example of how other people were a channel through which he could gain knowledge concerning what a doctorate really means. In the enviroment where he had lived during childhood, it was impossible to talk about a doctorate, or get information about it. The example of other people worked as a reference point for thinking that these opportunities could be available also for him.

> My wife was studying for a doctorate at the time we met…on the background it is these people who have done a doctorate who normalise it. It is not something strange, it is people who do it, they get into schools, and everything is ok. They make it, and they still seem to be more or less in their senses, and not insane…When I for the first time thought of maybe doing a doctorate, I mean I had no idea what it meant. I mean, you know something superficial, some symbols and stuff and doctors are brought to TV to comment on things. That's like what you know. Because I had nobody in the family who could explain that by the way if you want to do a doctorate, so this is what it means. Then my wife could explain a little bit later…(Matti)

Race walkers' motives and goals concerning a doctoral study reflected their awareness of opportunity structures. In these opportunity stuctures career opportunities were present and especially compelling for those with a doctorate from a reputed university, which were acknowledged to be available in Britain (Lee 2021). These opportunities that are present in the British society became a part of race walkers' horizon for action once they started to long for change in their personal career path. A doctorate from a reputed university represented an opportunity to acquire a commonly desired and appreciated element to their identity that would not only confirm the level of their skills, but also define them as certain kind of people.

6 Doctoral Studies Abroad – Individual Career Identity-Trajectories Under Construction

6.1 Academic career identity-trajectory

A group of doctoral students described a construction of career identity-trajectories that I named academic career identity-trajectories. These students were mainly sprinters and hurdlers who had described having a goal for an academic researcher career from early on, often already before doctoral studies. This was seen in their earlier descriptions of motives and goals for embarking on doctoral studies abroad. The construction of academic career identity-trajectories relied mainly on elements known to contribute to the construction of an academic identity (McAlpine 2012). Doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories described elements of the networking, institutional and intellectual strands in relation to becoming a researcher. Since these students were planning for academic research careers in the future, they were reaching to achieve capitals relevant for success in the academic field. In the following sections, I will present elements that either strengthened or weakened their sense of becoming a researcher during their doctoral studies, and thus influenced the construction of an academic career identity-trajectory.

6.1.1 Networks support research identity and contribute to learning to do academic research work

Networking strand turned out significant in many respects for constructing an academic career identity-trajectory. Doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories reflected networks and contacts in relation to their research identities and learning to do independent academic work. Many of them worked in research groups or projects, and described how they were provided with plenty of opportunities for networking. A research group formed an established research community where support from peers as well as more experienced colleagues was available to doctoral students. Doctoral students who were working as part of such

groups mentioned especially post-docs in several occasions as an important source of emotional support and advice concerning research. Post-docs could advice in academic matters as well as support in the moments of insecurity forming a kind of institutional support network that supplemented supervision.

> Most people are from somewhere else than the UK in our lab and the age range is rather big…we have some lab projects that we do together…and our supervisor has created the lab quite wisely that everyone has their own special field of expertise that they master, and a lot we can ask from post-docs. We have many able people in the lab and you can ask even rather specific questions. (Tarja, sprinter)

> ...there is this networking side, and you get to learn very different circles, and here you have good opportunities for that and cooperate with good universities…my supervisor tries to make choices such as make doctoral students do different things so there would not be direct competition but more co-operation. And then we do a lot of co-operation with post-docs who have somewhat a different role within a same project…the supervisor is quite busy, but I would say there was enough time for students, but as I said in practice you do a lot independently or with one of the post-docs who can help… (Fanni, sprinter)

Multiple occasions to ask for help, discuss own research and receive support when needed represented daily opportunities for learning about cooperation and getting confirmation for doctoral students' research identities. Such opportunities were described not only contributing progress with own research, but creating a sense of belonging to a research community. A supportive atmosphere has been confirmed by previous research as an important element for academic development (e.g. Heinrich 2015). Wisker, Robinson and Shacham (2007) talk about a supportive community of practice that nurtures researchers' identities which is well present in Taru's description of research group co-operation leading to a feeling of collective achievement.

> I get to do basic researcher work there out in the field…and then there is lab work…our research group is rather small…but this is very much a co-operation project…and a big part of the research work which is done is based on co-operation. It is just that nobody works alone, but in these projects, you just have to do good co-operation with other researchers. And if someone gets a good publication, it is never an accomplishment of just one person's work…(Taru, hurdler)

Engagement in co-operation with colleagues within a research group as an everyday practice served also as a space for learning to do academic research work which contributed to research identity. Many of these doctoral students working in research groups were studying in top universities where opportunities for networking with lecturers and supervisors with high international merits were available and considered normal practice. Exposure to such networking and co-operation raised awareness on the importance of the academic community and co-operation for doing research serving future goals of doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories. Work experience with a top research group was also considered providing useful capital in terms of future career.

> …I have this image that it is not that important where you have conducted your dissertation but what counts more is the lab and the supervisor. And the kind of publications you have produced. (Tarja, sprinter)

Doctoral students also referred to conferences as useful opportunities to meet up and network with other researchers with similar interests, and to learn about future possibilities.

> I have been trying to create networks in different conferences. You learn a lot about all kinds of fields where this degree could be useful…(Siiri, sprinter)

> And in conferences and when you write the papers you get to improve the communication skills. And as I have always hated such situations, I have gained more confidence…and also academic networks…(Laura, hurdler)

Work within a project often meant better funding possibilities for attending conferences than self-funded projects or grants.

> …since starting doctor studies I have been travelling a lot. I mean last year I counted more than three months of travelling days outside Britain…a lot of travelling for work…in my funding there is a possibility to attend conferences…and I have also applied and been granted travel grants. (Tarja, sprinter)

Doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories tried to foster their existing academic contacts also in Finland with regard to future career. They told about keeping in contact with research group members from higher education study times, or worried for not having maintained contacts. Although doctoral study time abroad was mainly considered useful for creating richer international academic

networks (Müller, Cowan & Barnard 2018) than had been possible locally in Finland, maintaining national contacts was dependent on students' own agency. Miro explained how Finnish academic contacts would have been useful for starting an academic career in Finland, and how the lack of such capital actually turned out challenging for his career start after doctoral studies.

> It took a while to get into the system so to speak. I don't have these mentors in Finland that could tell how this system works or how to work in this system. There is a lot you are expected to do as a post doc, I mean you should apply this and that grant, and a docent ship. Nobody told me what that means. You just had to dig that out yourself…I feel that, well, I didn't have the relevant networks in the beginning, such that Finns get (during doctoral studies in Finland)…but I guess I have wider international networks than most who have conducted doctoral studies in Finland…and now I have both, Finnish and international contacts. But it was complicated at the time of return. (Miro, sprinter)

Networking is often considered relationships between people, however within identity-trajectory networking includes also textual relationships (McAlpine 2012, 42). In identity-trajectory reading texts is considered inter-textual networks through which historical, epistemological and methodological relationships can be constructed (McAlpine et al. 2014, 962). Indeed, also many doctoral students constructing academic career identity trajectories referred to reading and studying their field, in several occasions. Reading enabled them to situate their own research in the relevant field which was especially visible in situations when doctoral students started on an unfamiliar research area. They had to get acquainted with prevalent practices, discourses and previous research significant on that specific research direction (Maher et al. 2008). A rupture in the inter-textual networks (McAlpine 2012) they possessed from before required filling in the gap. Learning "the way of the new area or field" and finding relevant historical connections in previous literature concerning one's own work was time-consuming and challenging, but important for being able to start with proper research.

> …then the studies started, and in the beginning, there is so much new, for me as the subject itself did not change but in a way it did so there was a lot to learn. I had to study some basics concerning the field. For me, in the beginning, a lot of time went for concentrating and getting used to the field, and I started to think what I want to do for my dissertation, because I had only been given a project title which was not really clear…I could decide myself what I wanted to do, but it took a lot of time to think and see if there is any point in this, and I wanted to

> be sure that this is researchable, and some months were spent on planning. So, it took time before I could start with doing research itself…(Siiri, sprinter)

Inter-textual networking had often started already before doctoral studies and was deepened further during doctoral studies. One sprinter, Miro, had described earlier (p.94–95) having found a connection with his present supervisor's texts and his own thoughts already during master's studies. This connection evolved in an inter-personal academic relationship between him and his supervisor nurturing Miro's research identity which he appreciated, especially because he was not part of a research group.

6.1.2 Student status and teaching responsibilities – academic identity resources or restrictions?

In the beginning of doctoral studies, doctoral students had to get used to the university and its practices concerning doctoral students. The responsibilities and resources connected to conducting doctoral studies within a specific institution represent the institutional strand of identity-trajectory. These responsibilities and resources varied between doctoral students, as did the importance students placed on them in relation to constructing career identity-trajectories.

According to the interviewees, in Britain, doctoral students are generally considered students, and the institutionally defined student status carried various responsibilities and allowed access to resources of different kinds influencing how doctoral students were treated. Students had benefits concerning accommodation which was one of the positive aspects connected to student status. Also, especially those doctoral students who were studying in universities with college systems described many opportunities also for social life for students. Sprinters and hurdlers mainly appreciated social life activities outside office hours, and considered them helpful for social networking and support in the beginning, since they had moved to a new country away from their families and friends.

Doctoral students described the British system mainly as such that they rarely had any teaching or administrative responsibilities or obligatory courses to attend. Some doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories considered that positive. Such responsibilities were interpreted as time-consuming, and the possibility to concentrate solely on research contributed to making progress. Straight from the start, doctoral students were aware of the responsibility they had as doctoral students, namely to complete the doctorate within an institutionally defined time limit of three to four years. Most students described the time limit as very strict and non-adjustable which forced to make progress. In order to be granted a right to continue with their studies, doctoral students had to report their progress regularly.

If the progress was insufficient, there was a risk of having to readjust the dissertation into a master's thesis or even to drop out completely. Against this context, it becomes understandable that some students considered lack of teaching and course work as a manifestation of academic freedom.

> I was a bit surprised how free everything was. I mean I did not feel that pressured most of the time because I felt they had this philosophy in the university, that they let people do research. Time limits are tighter than in Finland….there was very little, well like in Finland doing doctoral studies includes also teaching duties. And we did not have much that. (Miro, sprinter)

> It's really free here. I don't have, I'm not sure how it works elsewhere here, but in Finland you have to do a certain amount of study points for the dissertation, and so I don't have that. I just do my own projects. No obligatory courses, lectures, exams that I should do. I like that, here it is research itself that is highlighted in this system. (Tarja, sprinter)

However, those doctoral students who had taken up institutional teaching and administrative responsibilities perceived them contributing positively to their doctoral study time. These tasks and responsibilities had a social aspect which was appreciated as counterbalancing the loneliness of research work especially, if doctoral student was not working in a research group. Through these responsibilities, it was also possible to earn some extra money. Most importantly, doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories who had teaching and administrative responsibilities talked about them contributing positively to their academic identities. The possibility to take part in common responsibilities represented an opportunity to contribute in common projects and become a recognised and equal member of the community even as a student. These responsibilities increased the feeling of growing independence and confidence in managing one's own project which relieved stress. Siiri and Taru constructed academic career identity-trajectories by taking up institutional responsibilities from the beginning of studies. They were planning for academic careers and considered teaching and other institutional responsibilities as tightly linked with research work. Thus, these responsibilities settled naturally as part of their horizon for action.

> Since the very beginning I knew that I wanted to continue in an academic environment at least up to some degree, which is why I definitely wanted to teach...so I took up some teaching duties alongside the dissertation work. I think in Finland doctoral students have to do some work in the university. Here it is not required…and I wanted to teach and correct essays and reports so I took

> them from the start and now I have done quite a lot of them…some extra earning as well…I have an office with researchers, professors and lecturers, and I have had the possibility to work with them in the same environment…it is an open office and there is a feeling that we are all in the same, I mean although I am a student, I have the same rights to be there and work. (Siiri, sprinter)

> …I don't have any courses or anything. I'm not in a doctoral programme, but I just do my own research and I'm lucky I have so many different things included in this research…two things which take a lot of time on top of my own research is on the one hand coordinating this whole research project which is my responsibility…and then I teach and I have many own students and supervising them takes a lot of time. This work is very all-encompassing. I feel that I am married to this work, but happily married. I feel, many doctoral students are quite stressed, and I think that I am less stressed than people on average. And I think it is partly because I have a strong experience of having my own project…our research group is quite small…and I am more or less responsible for the whole system. And we have bachelor level students, but this pyramid thinking is that I am there, kind of, I have a lot of responsibility for all the practicalities. But I mean, this field is the kind that nobody can do things alone, this is a co-operation project. (Taru, hurdler)

Lack of academic work responsibilities other than own dissertation for those with student status could also be interpreted as a restriction. Some students felt that staff responsibilities were unavailable for them, and considered student status as an institutional signal to concentrate solely on dissertation work. In Laura's story below it is visible that the student status refrained her from feeling that she belonged to the academic community as an equal with those who were representing the staff.

> …we are with a student status so I have no employment contract, no written rules or guidelines of how much holidays I am allowed or required to have. And the general atmosphere is that we are treated as students, and some doctoral students also act like students…so also the staff, maybe not the academic staff but like all the support staff treats us like students…I have a feeling that we are not always trusted and we are treated like children…in Finland my doctoral student friends they go to these expert panels, and act as experts or advisors and have these kinds of different tasks. I feel that here it could never be possible. (Laura, hurdler)

Laura's example shows that growing sense of independence as a researcher, which is among the core aims of doctoral studies, was not supported by the institutionally

defined student status role. In Finland, these students had already taken independent responsibility during their master's studies, and now they felt being treated like children. Her interpretation of the student status as a signal of less trust in one's expertise was in contradiction with the expectation that doctoral studies operate as a platform for growing to become an expert. Having to negotiate between the desired and already partly achieved identity of an "expert in development" with the institutionally assigned student identity restricted strengthening the sense of freedom and identity as an independent researcher representing some level of stagnation instead of an upward curve in one's development.

It is somewhat contradictory that a doctorate is supposed to represent the first step towards a (researcher) career (Henkel 2004; Välimaa et al. 2016) but this development is not visible in daily work for all from the start. Treating doctoral students as employees with rights and responsibilities would signal recognition by the surrounding community of the doctoral students' expertise as well as membership which contribute to their sense of becoming a researcher. Having a feeling that one is a member of the research community is an integral part of becoming a researcher, and the feeling of belonging should be nurtured already from the beginning of doctoral studies. According to Peixoto (2014, 250) getting acquainted with academic codes early on is important for successful navigation through doctoral studies. Through teaching and other academic responsibilities doctoral students would have opportunities to start absorbing these codes as part of their habitus which would be useful cultural capital also in the future on the academic field. Instead of being dependent solely on student's own agency, possibilities to take part in institutional responsibilities could be more openly on offer encouraging doctoral students to seize these opportunities since the beginning. Otherwise, there is a risk that some students miss out from developing a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of academic work including also traditional academic responsibilities such as teaching. As a result, the construction of an academic identity is restricted which could turn out harmful later on for future careers within the university especially for those constructing academic career identity-trajectories.

6.1.3 Funding and supervision (de)constructing academic career identity-trajectories

Not surprisingly, funding played an important role for doctoral students to construct their career identity-trajectories. Knowing that funding is basically guaranteed for the whole doctoral period from the beginning created safety and relieved stress, and thus offered a solid platform for developing a desired identity. All students planning for academic careers had funding arranged for the whole doctoral study period since the start, contributing to developing an academic career identity-trajectory.

Guaranteed funding relieved pressure in relation to time limits for progress and competition between doctoral students.

> …here the funding is guaranteed, if you just get the study place, then you get funding at least for three years…or it was there in the application process that it is a paid position…in order to get more funding you will have to, I think it is every year to make this status report and if you have advanced according to plans then funding is granted but I mean for some they could say that if you have not advanced or worked enough to reach doctoral level then they can say that no more funding is granted and you will have to do a master's degree. I haven't been worried at all, my funding is guaranteed, and I don't have to compete for that…definitely not that kind of stress in the back of your mind that were do I get money for the next project and so on. It (funding) definitely creates that certainty, or this feeling of safety. (Siiri, sprinter)

Funding was also present when they talked about their academic career plans. Funding possibilities in the academic world in Britain were mentioned as more positive and generous than in Finland. These students had an image that Finnish universities maybe had no jobs for them referring to recent financial cuts by the government concerning education and universities.

> …at the time of Sipilä's educational cuts, which year was it again, well anyway that created this deep disbelief in me, and I thought I would find absolutely nothing in Finland. Kind of, in terms of finding an academic career for myself…and in Finland you can not apply post doc funding before you have your doctoral degree…and I mean for me it took over six months before I had a degree after having submitted my dissertation. You would want to start planning your career already before…In Britain people can start applying for post docs even before they have defended, has happened. I know it sounds strange, that it can be like that but then again what's the harm. No terrible consequences. It is a lot better than have all these formal requirements which create gaps up to a year…there (in Britain) there is a lot going on, I mean they have more to offer. Well, competition is fierce naturally. (Miro, sprinter)

Despite experiencing abundant funding opportunities concerning future academic posts in Britain, image of constant competition for that complicated construction of academic career identity-trajectories. Competition for funding and short-term contracts created insecurity around an academic career shadowing its attractivity, and destabilising research identity. When pondering these themes, doctoral students

constructing academic career identity-trajectories expressed doubt if an academic career was what they really wanted.

> …I want to do post doc in a lab somewhere. I think I want to stay in Britain, although I know there are really good labs in Sweden, Australia and Canada of which I am very intrigued. But I think I want to stay here. I like living here a lot. So, in the first place I am interested in a post doc but I have to admit that I have started think about it, as doing research is so terrible with all the funding, I mean because it is so unstable and such that do I get funding or not. Kind of like tossing a coin. In that sense I have started to think also if it could be possible to think of something to do outside the university. (Tarja, sprinter)

Supervision was another institutional resource that turned out significant not solely in the beginning, but throughout the studies. Doctoral students acknowledged pressure to progress, and having a feeling that you could knock on the supervisor's door when you needed help and support was relieving, and promoted progress especially in the beginning. Offering possibilities for meetings and giving feedback, while also allowing independence, signaled supervisors' genuine interest in the student's work and trust in their abilities. Feeling independent, however receiving support when needed, is important for gaining confidence in own abilities and decisions concerning research, and thus allows research identity to grow. The importance of available support combined with a sense of independence was already present concerning networks and institutional responsibilities. Those doctoral students whose supervisors' actions were in line with the presumptions that balancing support and independence contribute to confidence in doing own research work, experienced more favourable academic career identity-trajectories as can be seen in Tarja's account.

> I have been very lucky concerning my supervisor, doing a dissertation is very free for me. I get all the support I need, and if I don't understand something, the supervisor is there to help. We have weekly meetings, but in case I don't need help, they let me do…my supervisor encourages independent thinking and problem solving and I feel that this way I can develop a lot more, and also develop my own research ideas and thoughts and so on…I can talk with my supervisor and say if I feel stressed and supervisor explains and understands and can relieve that stress…the whole idea of a dissertation is to train people to conduct independent research and I feel that it has worked quite well for my part. (Tarja, sprinter)

Receiving help to get acquainted with various research conventions, such as scientific writing in English, contributed to progress and prepared doctoral students for academic research work. Miro's confidence was boosted because of all the guidance and encouragement offered by the supervisor.

> My supervisor had decided to supervise only four doctoral students and I got very personal guidance……my supervisor was really good and gave useful feedback and corrected my English so the supervisor really prepared me compared to many others…I struggled a lot in the beginning with what kind of writing style I am expected to perform but my supervisor exercised that a lot with me, not only grammatically but how to be precise and say exactly what you want to say… encouraging supervisor so everything went well. That created a basic academic confidence for me. (Miro, sprinter)

Taru's account below shows how her understanding of academic practices developed over time supported by her supervision team. She found it distracting at first when her supervisors provided critical feedback concerning her work, and made her justify what she had written. However, after a while she started to understand the reciprocal nature of writing and receiving feedback for producing new research contributions.

> I have three supervisors and I feel they guide and support me lot…here it is normal for supervisors to put a lot of time for supervision. They criticise, suggest, support, not just critique but I mean they are committed to make your research work. When I started, I was paranoid at first that don't they trust me because they ask so many questions all the time but then I realised that they are interested in your research…I have never been able to meet any dead-lines but I think it depends very much on the research group or the supervisor, and my supervisor and I have similar working styles. We are both insane and we always do these completely irrational plans and yes yes we really will do this and we know already at that point that it is in no way possible. We have a motto that if your target is deliriously high, then you will accomplish more than with realistic goals. Our way to work includes also that nothing ever goes according to the plan but something always comes out of it. And it is probably, it would be a very distressing way to work for an organised person but we both just happen to be really chaotic so it fits…(Taru, hurdler)

Significance of regular feedback to build up confidence and trust in own research skills and way of doing academic work is also reflected in Miro's account. Feeling validated as a researcher is important for doctoral students and can be promoted by opportunities to discuss their research (Mantai 2017).

> My supervisor was very efficient…we had these regular meetings and it was a bit surprising that he did not even expect me to present something every time we met but it was a possibility to discuss, and in my opinion it was a good method to create a connection…My supervisor could be, well very brutal, brutally blunt with his comments which caused quite a lot of anxiety at times, but on the other hand he also encouraged and showed that he trusted me…and if I think about this (doctoral study) as an academic thing, it went really well…I have this rather peculiar way of working, so I do not necessarily do many hours, I do not do endlessly, I mean I do work daily I do, but just having seen these people there who work from morning to night…but I finished the dissertation on time and it gave me this trust that I have my own way which seems to work…(Miro, sprinter)

Taru and Miro reached an understanding of the reciprocal nature of reading, writing, receiving feedback and discussing, which nurtured their research identity and allowed to grow as a researcher. Learning to separate own research texts from one's identity as an academic has been shown to enable academics to welcome critique as a channel to advance own thinking and to develop research ideas (McAlpine et al. 2014, 963).

Most doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories had positive supervision experiences and/or support from the research group. However, Laura's story was an example of a negative supervision experience which was not contributing to research confidence. Laura found supervisor's demands as external pressure that exhausted her in an already demanding environment. Instead of detailed and demanding guidance, Laura seemed to be longing for more independence and trust. Laura's reflections give no evidence for growing confidence, but instead an impression of emptiness and insufficiency.

> This (doctoral studies) is quite intensive at times, and I haven't had time to take many holidays…my supervisor likes to "micro supervise" a lot. We have weekly meetings, and surely if you have own ideas, the supervisor listens and encourages to do them, but still the supervisor likes to give very detailed information on what you have to do next…and then my supervisor is rather demanding. At times the days have been something like from eight in the morning until two in the morning. I mean that also depends on the personality, I am quite responsible and committed…I have not really been competing against others or with others but as I said my supervisor is demanding, a hot name in the field, and it's through the supervisor where the big pressure comes from when everything has to be well done and perfect… Well, what I have realised here is that I don't want to stay in the academic world. That was in the beginning, what

> made me start doing research was that, well, if I want an academic career then at least I don't have any formal barriers for doing that, I would have a degree and so on. But I don't know how much it is this supervision experience, that I have been squeezed dry at times, I have given everything there is to give so to speak. And that does not give a very pleasant picture about the academic world. But I mean, I have colleagues who say that academic world is the best working environment, you can do what you want, and I think it depends a lot on the supervision experience. But for me it was that I don't necessarily want this life style for myself…(Laura, hurdler)

Laura's account shows how detrimental consequences a negative supervision experience can have in terms of constructing an academic career identity-trajectory. She had for a long time been open for the idea of an academic career, however, at the end of doctoral studies her plans had changed. The main reason for withdrawing from planning an academic future was her supervision experience, which had not strengthened her research identity. On the contrary, her will to continue within the academic world had been crushed by these experiences, and resulted in Laura to start deconstructing her academic career identity-trajectory, and making new plans. Her habitus reflected how structural influence in form of supervision made her turn away from the academic future plans. Laura had difficulties to accept, that in order to become a researcher, more or less all time available was to be sacrificed to research. Supervision experience is known to be more successful when doctoral student and the supervisor share the conception of what is means to be a researcher, and otherwise it could easily lead to marginalisation (Hall & Burns 2009). Sense of freedom and flexibility are values traditionally connected to academic work, and were present as meaningful and attractive also in experiences of doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories. However, such values seemed also partly to represent an illusion based on stories they heard during their doctoral studies, instead of being present in their own everyday experiences, reflecting university also as an imaginary space (Clegg 2008).

6.1.4 Negotiating productivity and competition as natural

One of the main goals of doctoral studies is to be able to produce research which contributes to the field. Within identity-trajectory these contributions represent the intellectual strand of doctoral work. Doctoral students' task is to contribute by preparing a dissertation, and not surprisingly, doctoral students in this study referred a lot to progress with this work in connection with describing their meaningful doctoral study experiences. Progress with the dissertation and development of

confidence in own contributions happened in interplay with the other strands of doctoral work, the networking and the institutional strand, as discussed earlier.

Publishing was another scientific contribution doctoral students referred to concerning the intellectual strand. While dissertation work was talked about in the beginning as well as throughout studies, talk about publishing started to be more common towards the end of doctoral studies. Publishing was mainly not required officially since most doctoral students in this study were conducting monographs instead of article-based dissertations. However, most doctoral students planning for academic careers recognised the value of a publishing profile on top of a doctoral degree concerning future career. A doctoral degree alone was considered insufficient for an academic career.

> We are not obliged to publish here, but I am not sure if it is possible to do solely a monograph, or I am used to having article-like sections in the dissertation, but I have not published yet. We have one publication now under work, but if I am not able to produce many publications, then I guess I could do research work, academic for a while, to get used to the process how to produce them. I mean I feel there's no pressure to publish, but still I feel that it is recommended and that you should definitely publish for future employment reasons. (Siiri, sprinter)

Doctoral students had learned that in order to make it within the academic world publications were needed. Those who had made it, such as their supervisors, served as examples. Top supervisors were characterised to be in possession of an impressive publication record.

> …my supervisor was an exceptional individual, even with the standards of a top university, because he published tremendously, he worked many times more than many other professors there. (Miro, sprinter)

On top of the number of publications, also the quality of journals mattered. For students planning for academic careers, being able to publish in top journals would have meant formal proof of their talent and skills (Mantai 2017) for continuing constructing academic career identity-trajectories in the demanding environment. However, the students planning for academic careers mostly discussed the lack of publications as their weakness in terms of future career. Although the environment reflected publications as valuable capital worth pursuing in case one was planning for an academic career, it was not self-evident to produce them on top of the dissertation.

> Finally, I'm in a place where I feel that I am not the best. I could be a lot better, in fact, I am not at all a top student here. I am not among the worst either, but kind of average, irritates me a bit. But in my opinion, a very motivating situation because it is very melancholic if whatever you do is just good enough…I would really like to, it would be just so incredibly cool to be able to stay here and continue being a researcher. But that won't be an easy thing, it is possible and even quite likely that I am not good enough for that. We will see, now you just have to try your best and see where that takes you. At the moment I have a feeling that I'm on the edge of my capacity. I am really trying my best, and I could be better but I am not…If I could decide myself, I would get, or my dream would be to get this junior fellow-ship, which is a kind of funding that you can start being an independent researcher after you defend. But it's not like I could say that I have a tremendous amount of these super scientific publications, so maybe I am not good enough for that…(Taru, hurdler)

Doctoral students thinking about an academic future expressed, that in order to reach a desired goal, they had to come to terms with the productive and competitive environment, and act accordingly. Academic career identity-trajectories were constructed through negotiating the competitive and productive environment as a natural part of the academic world as Fanni states below.

> Science, doing research, is meaningful at the moment. Surely you see that a lot, that during doctoral studies people become cynical towards the current stage of the academic world. But let's see, let's try to stay optimistic, this field itself is nice…It (the environment) is more competitive than in Finland…yes, you can notice the difference but then again if you want to continue within the academic world then you will have to learn to deal with it at some point and kind of learn to cooperate in a kind of efficient way or a social way and learn to understand the dynamics. (Fanni, sprinter)

For some, like Taru above, being constantly on the edge of one's capacity, worked as a motivating factor contributing construction of an academic career identity-trajectory. However, such a feeling could also create pressure like Tarja explains below.

> Well, I feel that I have pressure, but I mean in my case it is more that I set this pressure myself. I mean, I had a very successful first and second year with this dissertation, and I feel that my supervisors now think that this will just continue this way, super successfully the whole doctoral study time. So kind of this type of feeling…(Tarja, sprinter)

These doctoral students had been used to managing well, or even being the best during their earlier studies. Now they were in front of a new situation, in a context where more or less everyone was performing extremely well. They were aware that an academic career required reaching for top results, commitment to work and enduring insecurity which directed them to adopt an identity imposed by the competitive and productive environment. Acquisition of valued capital in the field is supposed to lead to better success than resisting or neglecting (Hall & Bruns 2009). Still, they were also aware that there were no guarantees that they would succeed. Construction of an academic career identity-trajectory required willingness to certain risk taking, because it would not automatically lead to an academic career. Those unwilling to constantly strive for perfect results and to apply for funding in their future career risked disrupting their academic career identity-trajectory construction. This became visible in the conclusions when doctoral students were either preparing to give up academic career goals or starting to think about alternatives as Laura and Tarja had expressed before.

6.2 Non-academic career identity-trajectory

A group of doctoral students described a construction of career identity-trajectories that I named non-academic career identity-trajectories. These students were mainly those sprinters who had described having a goal for a career outside the academic world from early on, often already before doctoral studies. This was seen in their earlier descriptions of motives and goals for embarking on doctoral studies abroad.

Doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories reflected their doctoral study time mainly in relation to smooth progress with their dissertation work. They described doing and performing doctoral studies, instead of building up confidence and learning to do academic research work. They highlighted the role of their own agency concerning progress, instead of that of supervision and large support networks. In the following sections, I will present elements that either strengthened or weakened their sense of progress during their doctoral studies, and thus influenced the construction of a non-academic career identity-trajectory.

6.2.1 Limited networking opportunities for constructing a non-academic career identity-trajectory

Non-academic career identity-trajectories were not constructed around large support networks. These students talked about progressing rather independently with their doctoral studies without referring to reliance on support from various networks. Straightforward attitude in terms of advancing that was typical for their overall educational path was present also in their descriptions concerning doctoral studies.

In addition, their stories concerning experiences during doctoral studies revealed an unequal balance between opportunities for academic and non-academic contacts. These accounts revealed that networks contributing to non-academic career identity-trajectories were not equally available during studies as academic networks were through research groups and other encounters. Possibilities for creating contacts outside the academic world within companies were commonly considered as either scarce, or even if available they were considered relevant mainly in Britain. Doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories were of the opinion that the contacts available during doctoral studies would not be very useful when entering working life. These students had earlier described imagining international careers that were not limited to opportunities in Britain.

> I did all my publications by myself. I mean some do co-operation, but I worked alone. My topic differed somewhat from others in the research group, so I did my own publications. I didn't have any co-operation projects…It is possible to create networks during studies, but it is mainly for British working life and does not help very much for outside the university in Finland or for other countries. There are some networking events with companies but those contacts are in Britain and nowhere else. But, of course, the study contacts are a bit everywhere in the world but they will be helpful maybe later on. I never really thought of staying in Britain. (Ossi, sprinter)

These doctoral students had been heading for a non-academic career from early on, and were aware of the scarcity of contacts useful for planning a career outside the academic world. Still, descriptions of active networking outside the university lacked in their stories, with the exception of some sporadic comments at the end of studies about thinking to participate to a career event. This could be interpreted as an indication that they trusted the image they had concerning a doctoral degree from abroad as a gate-opener for their desired career.

Doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories would have benefited from opportunities and awareness of importance for creating more international contacts relevant for outside the academic world during doctoral studies. This became visible in their descriptions concerning career planning towards the end of doctoral studies. First, doctoral students told, that they lacked information concerning employment possibilities outside the university. Second, in order to find a job outside the university, also knowledge about the conventions for job search in different countries was required. For example, what is considered a good job application differs in different countries and cultures. This kind of information was considered unavailable in doctoral studies. Ossi's experience makes visible how a construction of a non-academic career identity-trajectory based solely on the image

of a doctorate leading to an international career could easily result in a crisis of identity, when looking for a job after doctoral studies.

> I applied for a couple of jobs, not very actively but I tried to find something mainly abroad and did not apply in Finland at all. I also applied a couple of post in Britain, in Germany and Switzerland but I came to the conclusion that it is very difficult to find a job abroad. I was not even called in for an interview in Britain, neither in Germany, until I applied for an internship which sounds stupid after a doctorate. But it was the only way to get a job straight after studies…I moved back to Finland and still tried to get a job abroad but was not really getting any interviews…and finally I decided to take this job here (Finland) because it was the most interesting of the options I had…but finding a job after doctoral studies was very difficult. Yes, and I had this image that once I get the doctorate it will be easy but it was not. It was very difficult…I did not want a post doc but I wanted something else and applied for companies. And my idea was to continue working abroad after doctoral studies but eventually the jobs I was able to get were not interesting enough for me to stay…it is more difficult to find a job in a foreign country as a foreigner. It is easier for the locals. In every country, this is not taught anywhere, there is an own job applying culture…and this you learn through the hard way…(Ossi, sprinter)

A doctoral degree from a prestigious university was insufficient for building a career abroad. Instead, the reality turned out more complicated than the image. Ossi realised lacking relevant networks and knowledge about local conventions for job applications which complicated his plans and forced him to settle for alternatives not on the top of his list. As a doctorate holder, Ossi had not planned to work as an intern, which seemed to be the only possibility for starting an international career. Realising this was a knock on his identity, and forced him to start negotiating an identity, which acknowledged a career in Finland as a relevant possibility.

6.2.2 Distancing oneself from valuable academic capitals

> When I arrived and was working the first weeks in the research group these other students told me that did you know that our professor is like top in the world. Well at the time I had no clue…and the local students were asking if I knew what I was getting myself into. But I just thought that well whatever. It started ok anyway or I mean already from the beginning I considered doctoral studies as a job. I had already done my thesis within a company and worked summers and been in working life. And I was also some years older than the other doctoral students…I didn't get much guidance from my supervisor but it didn't bother

> me because I did it quite independently…I did not experience doctoral studies as extremely challenging. I didn't have such pressure that oj I don't have enough publications. I got a couple of publications during doctoral studies but I saw those that started at the same time that did (have pressure)…I thought in the beginning that how will I manage here. And when I saw how much they worked in order to get really good publications. And that their goal was an academic career. But I had already at that stage, during the doctoral studies, because I was doing my dissertation for this company, so for me it was clear that I have no intention of creating any academic career for myself. My goal was to get into the private sector after the doctorate. And for that reason, I did not feel that much pressure for the publications. But for sure it would have been really embarrassing if I had no publications. (Teemu, sprinter)

Teemu's account above shows how doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories described a competitive and demanding doctoral study environment similar to that described by students constructing academic career identity-trajectories. People around worked endlessly and received top results. However, doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories could relate to the demands with less ambition, because responding to them was considered relevant for the pursuit of an academic career, which was not their goal. In Teemu's description, it is clearly visible how his identity construction was not relying on capitals valuable in the academic field such as publishing. Considering doctoral studies as a job to be carried out, instead of a calling that dominates work and personal life, helped to relate to signals from the environment concerning the upcoming academic challenges with a more laid-back attitude. Individuals have the possibility to choose what elements presented as valued in the given context they decide to act upon (Hall & Burns 2009).

Although doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories allowed to distance themselves from an ambitious pursuit of academic capitals, they did not necessarily avoid them. For example, peer-reviewed publications appeared to be meaningful, although not imperative for their identities. Managing to publish strengthened identity by serving as an indication of competence for oneself as well as for others, as can be seen in Teemu's reflections above about the feelings of embarrassment had he not published anything. Publishing operated also as one way to measure progress. Even if publications were not required officially or for employment reasons, these students mentioned that they had published highlighting their straightforward progress.

> After having planned the research design, and when it started to work a bit better and I mean I managed to publish. In Britain your progress is evaluated each year,

> how you have managed with your doctorate. After each year you have to report what you have done. Two professors read it and they hear you and after the hearing they decide if you continue next year or not. And normally if you have a publication the first year it is rather safe that you can continue. Luckily, I managed to get one publication during the first year and I had no problems to continue. I know many, or some at least, who did not pass because they were not able to show progress and they had to drop out. (Ossi, sprinter)

It could also be interpreted that publishing is an indisputable part of the academic culture, and doctoral students need to come to terms with it regardless of what type of career they are planning for themselves in the future.

Doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories talked about supervision. In case support from the supervisor was available, it was an appreciated resource. However, supervision was talked about in terms of progress, instead of growing to become a researcher.

> …the first year they demand you to succeed. And in that sense, it is good I guess, because in Finland dissertations take very long but here, they see that you keep dead-lines…very strict limits how long you can do the degree…luckily my supervisor was approachable, with an office two meters away from mine, and I could always go knock and ask if we could have a meeting at some point…you should progress all the time, so especially the first year you need a lot more supervising than later on. So, I was also quite independent when I did this work. (Ossi, sprinter)

Doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories were not dependent on supervisors, and pointed out their own agency in terms of progress. The job had to be done whether or not good supervision was available. In Teemu's description in the beginning of this chapter, it is visible how the resources doctoral students brought with them to doctoral studies played a role concerning how students positioned themselves in relation to their studies. Previous working experience, and also age contributed to taking independent responsibility for their work and avoiding stress in a competitive environment even if supervision was unavailable. Awareness of the limited amount of time available for doing the dissertation did not create stress for doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories. Instead of gradually reaching to develop a research identity, they performed doctoral studies by concentrating on getting the job done, which was promoted by available supervision and strict time-limits.

Doctoral students constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories did not describe being involved in institutional responsibilities such as teaching or

administrative tasks. They were not constructing their identities around the symbiosis of research and teaching. In their descriptions, it became evident that for them being able to solely concentrate on progress with their research was more meaningful than growing to become a researcher through academic responsibilities.

Funding was a central resource that even doctoral students constructing non-academic identity-trajectories were unable to distance themselves from. Teemu had funding arranged for the whole period, while Ossi had to constantly apply for funding during the studies, which seemed as time-consuming. However, he highlighted his own actions in managing to get funding each year which contributed to progress.

> I was granted a scholarship that covered tuition fees, something like 10-12 000 pounds per year. But on top of that there were all other living expenses such as rent, living in general, I mean food and stuff…then I went there and started to prepare grant applications because I did not have the money…I kind of applied constantly for funding which I then succeeded in getting each year to cover for all the living expenses. I mean I think I sent some 60 applications per year to different foundations…(Ossi, sprinter)

Especially in the beginning of studies there are a lot of things to be arranged in order to get started, and the process is easily slowed down by the need to prepare grant applications.

6.3 Hybrid career identity-trajectory

A group of doctoral students described a construction of career identity-trajectories that I named hybrid career identity-trajectories. These students were race walkers who had no fixed career goal in mind in the beginning of studies, as well as a sprinter who started to prepare for an academic career alongside non-academic career goals during doctoral studies. Doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories were open to different career alternatives concerning the future. This openness allowed concurrent investment in multiple profiles reflecting flexible identities.

6.3.1 Flexible identities – multiple career profiles and versatile capitals

Doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories talked about an academic career and a non-academic career as equally valid options. According to their descriptions, these different directions did not rule each other out, and even a

combination of the two seemed possible. In their stories, consideration and preparation of multiple career profiles for different scenarios for the future were central. Instead of fixated to achieve capitals relevant for one goal, they targeted on creating versatile capitals useful on different fields reflecting flexible identities. This was especially visible concerning the networking strand.

In terms of networking, doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories concentrated on establishing and maintaining multiple connections both inside and outside the university for safeguarding the future. They expressed being agentive by constantly creating new connections in different directions on top of the existing ones. Emma had first thought of a non-academic career after doctoral studies, however, she kept doors open for other alternatives. She expressed the importance for having connections in different directions, instead of solely relying on a world-class doctoral degree.

> …during doctoral studies, I started to think quite a lot about what about the future. I remember that many of my Finnish friends said that you have a degree from such university that you just come with those papers to Finland and everyone wants to hire you. But I did not have that feeling ever, that it would happen just by snapping my fingers…competition is tough in Finland, a lot of doctors and master's degree holders in this field, and I have felt that I should try to keep in contact with old lab mates and thesis supervisor…and here (in Britain) this position I have now is based on connections…I had first this goal to work in a company…but I didn't leave out the option of doing a post doc in Finland…I remember this conference at the start of my fourth year, or might had been third year…I had checked in advance which Finnish professors are attending and I would talk with them and create these networks, like I will get my doctorate after a year or so, would you have a job, grant or something. And I was actually offered a post doc also then…and also here (in Britain) they have these career fairs that I have been attending where they talk about what a good cv looks like and I also talked with career services…and I mean before I had this image that if you go work with a company you get a steady job where you can develop but having looked at these job announcements, a steady job is actually quite rare…(Emma, sprinter)

Sini and Matti had been involved in British working life for a longer period before doctoral studies. They had previous non-academic networks and knowledge on existing employment opportunities outside the academic world, but they also invested in academic connections. Sini describes below how she attended an internship outside the university to create more non-academic contacts, and wrote a research paper in order to create academic networks, both inter-personal and inter-

textual. Such networking acts helped her to link her research with a wider context, which she considered important with regard to her future goals for combining the academic and the non-academic careers.

> …during this doctorate we have to do this training for three months somewhere outside the academic world. And the idea is, I guess, that these people have maybe never worked before, if you have rushed straight after the bachelor's to do a doctorate, so you have not had many chances to work. And maybe they have always thought of becoming a researcher but I mean it does not work that way because opportunities for research and funding are not self-evident. And maybe you realise, that it is not your dream job after all because of the environment or life style. Nothing is guaranteed…so during those three months you can see what else there is available and give it a try and open up to the idea that maybe I won't become a researcher but there are a whole lot of other things I can do. Well, I didn't think I needed that because I know I can choose other things because I have done different things and I know what there is. But anyway, I thought it would be good for me to go into that world because first job after the doctorate on this field could be difficult if I have no other experience than this doctorate…it is a possibility to open a door somewhere and experience this research and so I did that in a global organisation which was just great…about the future, my ideas tend to change. I would like to do research work…I think here they will be experimenting these small post- doc grants, where you would need to have a partner outside the university which I would have…I went on this course, and after that I did not want it to go to waste so I started to write like a model protocol on paper, this will be a publication I thought. I decided to put it in a journal where some of the teachers on that course were editors. I thought that in these journals the peer-reviewers can give good feedback…and I got good feedback which I responded to like 11 pages because it was very useful for me… I am managing this project kind of and I know what I need and I have to figure out how to get it and I feel that I am going to be a researcher. Even if I don't know everything about what I am researching or how to research it I feel that I am growing as a researcher. So that I could have my own project for real…(Sini, race walker)

Similar attempts for constructing multiple profiles and creating connections of different kinds, inter-personal as well as inter-textual, for combining the academic and practice are present in Matti's descriptions on his experiences.

> In this field it is possible to find a job where you can combine the academic and practice, at least in other than the most top universities where staff profiles are

> very publishing oriented…and if you think that in a good university there are good researchers who publish a lot so you can learn from them…we have visiting lectures and they have great networks and we get to interact with people who are top names in their own area. And in our seminars, professors tell us how their career paths have been like…so the school has a network of people who can help you with a lot of background information and contacts that you would not be able to create elsewhere…and I have also kept in touch with people in my university in Finland and co-published with them. Kind of trying to keep in contact, to keep the doors open and see. You never know. And if thinking about returning to Finland, you have to have the connections, if you want to be in the university I mean, to have the connections to that academic community. If you just come as a total outsider, I don't know how that would ever work. If you are not like one of us, in that sense, but maybe it is a little bit easier in the private sector, but anyway if you want to teach, for example, you have to think how to keep the doors open…my topic is not really researched in this field and there was not much previous literature to build upon. So, I had to go rather far back in history in order to link my research to what has been done in order for it to make any sense. And that required a lot of reading this type of research. (Matti, race walker)

In terms of the institutional strand, Emma invested in acquiring teaching experience, although it was not required. She acknowledged teaching experience as necessary capital if she chose to return to Finland, and to compete on the employment market with Finnish doctorate holders. Such goals in mind, she was able to step out from the institutionally attributed identity of a student for developing a versatile identity serving construction of a hybrid career identity-trajectory.

> Here you don't have to teach as a doctoral student if you don't want to. But I remember in Finland there are teaching duties…I just suggested to my supervisor at some point if it was possible to supervise a master's student because at the time I had the idea to come back to Finland after four years and I wanted to show in my cv that I have teaching experience…during my third year I supervised a master's student the whole year and it was a very good experience…(Emma, sprinter)

Funding and supervision were discussed in a similar vein than in stories of students constructing academic career identity-trajectories. Funding was crucial, and supervision an important resource for constructing a research identity. Doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories brought up nothing new concerning them which is why their role is not described further here.

6.3.2 Acting productivity on own terms

Doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories reflected flexible identities also in relation to the intellectual strand. Their main work was to prepare a dissertation, and they expressed pressure and strive for progress combined with a desire to develop a research identity reminding doctoral students constructing academic career identity-trajectories. However, they seemed to be able to balance these requirements to suit their own needs. For example, in Matti's case this meant investing in maintaining a plausible academic profile while working in business life. Matti was about to start working in a company, and acknowledged the risk involved in case he wanted to return to the university. Matti reflected that experience from business life was often depreciated in the academic world, and expressed a need to put effort in maintaining a decent publishing profile as well.

> …some of the professors from this university had started their own company…and suddenly due to some coincidences I had a possibility to work there…and when we talked about it, I said that I would also like to be able to maintain an academic profile…in this job, there is a possibility to do research and publish…because if I then would like to go back from there to the university it would not be harmful but valid experience. Because it could be difficult to go back if I left and did something completely different and irrelevant in terms of my dissertation…if you think about this university for example, what kind of people they hire, it is completely publishing oriented, because it is the rankings that count. And so if you want to be on top in the rankings, then you have to publish in top journals, and that's why you hire people who publish in top journals and do nothing else…so if you want to work in the highest ranked schools, the competition is tough and your publications need to be in order or otherwise don't even bother sending an application. It will go straight to the rubbish bin…in these so-called top universities, there it (publishing) is highlighted. It's like who publishes, where they publish and what is the ranking and who is the best and who is number 50. And if you are between 50 and 200 it is not that important anymore. (Matti, race walker)

Emma's reflections below, in turn, show well how she was committed to her work but not at the expense of her personal life and wellbeing. By choosing to work with a pace that suited her, instead of sacrificing evenings and weekends, she also took a stance towards productivity. Instead of a "publish or perish"- approach which would mean sacrificing all her time and effort in attempts to reach for top academic results, she allowed herself to take some distance from producing and invested in productivity on her own terms. By doing this she was not settling for less, because she was also happy to work outside the university.

> …here people often work weekends as well and longer days, like my roommates worked longer days than I did. Sometimes I felt guilty and doubted if I worked enough, although nobody ever in our group criticised, neither did my supervisor, that I was not doing enough and should do more. Mostly the pressure came from seeing how much others worked. And then you felt that here I am the first one at home again. And during the weekend everybody else is going to work and I thought to stay home or go jogging and sometimes I felt that maybe I should do more…but I knew it from the start that if I start with such pace, then I can't keep it up…but also if the order had come from outside that I have to work on the weekends or longer then I think it would had created more anxiety. I think that surprisingly well I could hold it together and not think too much about doing more all the time. But I mean surely when you see people around you who get great publications and good results you feel a bit, well, why didn't I do this or that…I have also understood that publications don't matter that much outside the university which is why I have not been that worried about them…and also their (career services) message was that companies are not that interested in publication history, it is more the academic world where it matters, in companies it is more important what you have done, what skills you have and so on…(Emma, sprinter)

Sini's reflections below show, on the one hand the importance of publishing for the future and for developing research confidence (Mantai 2017). On the other hand, she managed to resist competition and pressure to produce by acknowledging that to be harmful for her confidence and progress with the dissertation work. She also negotiated a monograph-form dissertation as more valuable to her in terms of developing her research identity than publications through an article-based dissertation.

> It is a bit contradictory that article-based dissertations are not allowed but it is the publications that matter in the future…but the idea of writing a book, that idea in my opinion is better kind of…because the idea of the doctorate is that you can handle a big scientific entity, you can kind of answer a question with this entity…if you start looking yourself what other people have done and if they have published, well there you have a great competition design. Or you have an "I feel useless-design" which is why I work quite a lot from home now. I don't have any time now for that kind of thinking. I just can not be a part of it…this environment sometimes makes you feel that you are not the brightest star. But still I feel this has been a positive experience because I have been able to make choices along the way how to do my research my way…(Sini, race walker)

Previous working experience, and experience gained during doctoral studies turned out to be useful sources for gaining social and cultural capital for constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories. Through previous working experience these students had existing networks inside and outside the university. They had knowledge on how working life operated which in turn helped to be reflexive when interpreting the competitiveness of the academic world. Matti had previous working experience, and was able to negotiate supervisor's demands as stemming from their own pressure for efficiency. Doctoral students represented valuable sources of scholarly capital (Peixoto 2014, 251) for supervisors through citations and co-authorship. Interpreting people's competitive behavior as part of the "game" instead of an attack to their identities as academics helped to relate to pressure and competition.

> Matti: In the academic world the pecking order comes from journals and citations while in the private sector, especially in business, the order is defined by who brings the most money in the house. And in politics, who has the most power. Kind of you have to know what the main driver is that directs people's behavior and motivation.
>
> Interviewer: Does that create pressure?
>
> Matti: Yes. The pressure is enormous, if you think for those who are professors there, they have pressure. It is not easy for them either. They are pressured by their superiors or the university with all the requirements and they have to prove their position in the pecking order. And if you are a top professor in your field then you just assume that doctoral students are with you straight away and tell you something exciting and new that we could write about…and our seminars they are quite brutal. People don't hold back there, I mean if they think your research is bad or something is badly done, they will tell that openly. And I mean that kind of atmosphere creates pressure for people and people then manage one way or another. Some decide to start hating the academic world, some take a year off and talk with a psychologist and some do other things. But some just naturally get a better hang of it and just do it or just don't care…but I mean nobody will come and tell you that this was a piece of cake and it went just as planned…(Matti, race walker)

Emma explained having learned along the way, that the insecurity of employment and short-term contracts are not features framing the academic working life only, but are a reality also in working life outside the academic circles. Understanding this helped to construct a hybrid career identity-trajectory, which accepted changes in one's career as part of working life.

> I had an image before that in companies the positions are permanent and then you can advance on your career but looking at job announcements, very seldom they have permanent positions, more for one year or maternity leave substituting and so on. So actually I have this feeling that it is not that self-evident in a company either to get a safe position…I enjoy being at the university, I like the academic atmosphere, and what I do now is connected to start-up company, so business world oriented but I mean also that if you only get a contract for a year, plus a year, plus a year so it is rather tough…and I have started to think that I will be thirty soon and if I want a family at some point so it would kind of be nice that the job was secure. But I don't know if that is even possible…you just have to accept that necessarily you will not get a permanent job very easily. I think it is a trend in many fields. Getting a permanent job is not self-evident…(Emma, sprinter)

Doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories were flexible in terms of constructing their identities. They were aware of capital needed for reaching their goals, and could engage in attempts to reach them in assertive ways (Hall & Bruns 2009). Their preparation for multiple careers and investment in versatile capitals worked as a strategy to play safe. Should they not succeed in one goal, they would have necessary capital for attempting another. During doctoral studies such thinking reflected reflexivity, enabling them to choose situationally, when to put effort in gaining capitals valued in the academic field and when to resist or step into the margin. However, construction of a hybrid career identity-trajectory was not solely about playing safe. The descriptions of doctoral students constructing hybrid career identity-trajectories concerning central elements of their journey, showed also that, for some students, working in-and-out of the academic world combining research and practice is a valid choice, which is contributed by possession of versatile capitals.

6.4 Non-career identity-trajectory

A group of doctoral students described a construction of career identity-trajectories that I named non-career identity-trajectories. These students were mainly orienteers, who had described themselves as non-career oriented, and having other goals than a career for conducting doctoral studies. Doctoral students constructing non-career identity-trajectories reflected their doctoral study time through acting and balancing contradictory identities. They were developing a research identity which often contradicted with another strong dimension of identity they had such as the identity of a parent. In the following sections, I will present elements that either strengthened

or weakened their sense of developing a research identity during their doctoral studies, and thus influenced the construction of a non-career identity-trajectory.

6.4.1 Balancing contradictory identities

Doctoral students constructing non-career identity trajectories described academic networks and contacts in relation to negotiating and balancing contradictory identities. Doctoral students constructing non-career identity-trajectories represented soft fields, where research groups are less common than in natural sciences. Miia and Reetta described very different opportunities for networking than those working with research groups and projects. They were not part of any research group, and did not include lengthy descriptions of co-operation with different types of colleagues. On the contrary, their descriptions reminded the traditional doctoral student on soft fields working rather isolated supported by periodic supervision sessions (Peixoto 2014, 249).

The opportunities available for creating networks depended not solely on the scientific field, but also on doctoral students' personal life situation. Miia and Reetta were both studying part-time, and had a family, which restricted their networking possibilities. They were not career-oriented, and did not describe a need for a large web of networks for career purposes. However, feeling of belonging to a research community was appreciated. In situations where networking acts were experienced to require doctoral students to prioritise work over dedicating time to family, doctoral students constructing non-career identity-trajectories described contradictory feelings. They had to balance between multiple dimensions of their identities, or the different roles they had (Anisef et al. 2016; Pifer & Baker 2013) that could be in contradiction with each other – identity (or role) of a researcher and that of a devoted parent. Miia tried to keep in touch with people who shared similar research interests. These interactions clearly contributed to her feeling like part of a group of researchers, although at times she felt that such networking meant having to choose over another important group in her life, namely family.

> I have attended twice to these so-called research schools which have been two weeks long…there you got a feeling that this is not a utopia, I can do this…and there I got to get to know researchers in my field also in Finland…and these seminars, well I have only been able to attend rarely because of this family life…but there giving presentations and stuff you felt that this is my tribe, my people, but then again this family stuff is also. (Miia, orienteer)

In Reetta's description, it is visible how her contacts with colleagues were sporadic. Her experience reflects a rather peripheral relation to the research community,

instead of it in any way contributing to her progress or experience as a researcher. Reetta's experience shows that she would have appreciated more communality, however, she negotiated the lack of networking culture in her department to support her choice to work from home and act the parent dimension of her identity.

> I work from home, the university is two hours away, so I can not just drop by because I just can't or I just don't have the time, because I have to take the kids to school and back… I go the university, in the beginning I went once a week to these seminars and research trainings. But nothing really obligatory, some courses I had to do…and sometimes I go there once a week but now I haven't for a long time. I do a lot of field work and others in the department do as well, so people are away a lot, a very loose community. It would be nice if you would see more people when you go there but you don't really bumb into anybody unless you have set up a meeting. So, I don't bother going. It would be nice to have more of a community, but I guess it has worked ok. (Reetta, orienteer)

The unavailability of easily accessible networks puts those working alone in an unequal position compared to those working in established groups. If a networking culture is absent, such an environment can be interpreted as an encouragement to choose working alone. Reetta benefited from a possibility to work at distance because the arrangement saved time for family issues. However, there is a risk that her understanding of the benefits that creating networks can have for research identity remained undeveloped. Such benefits were clearly visible when Anne described her experiences. She was the only doctoral student constructing a non-career identity trajectory who worked with a research group.

> I was lucky that the post docs started with the same project, we all started then, and we became very close especially with one of them. I have to say, well this person has been, I don't know if this argument is too radical but if it was not for this person, I could have just walked out of the whole project. The psychological and academic support has been irreplaceable for me in so many ways. Very important person, especially in the beginning…the other post doc had a wide network and through that I have had a chance to get into this field in Britain…working in the project is valuable experience, discussions, sharing, and I get to enjoy a very generous conference budget…(Anne, orienteer)

Contradictory identities were also negotiated in terms of funding and supervision. Funding was as important for constructing a non-career identity-trajectory as it was for other types of career identity-trajectories. Lack of funding could easily lead to ruptures in research work which was most dramatically seen in Miia's story. Lack of

funding forced her to work in order to be able to support her family meaning that she could only sporadically work on her dissertation, and eventually led to a decision to put studies on hold indefinitely. Miia's description reveals strong presence of the parent identity, which she negotiated to be more preferable than a doctoral student identity when funding was lacking.

> Well, I started full-time but noticed quickly that I have to work as well. Then I started as a part-time student, but realised that it does not work either because you can not do a dissertation like one hour here, another there, you need longer periods. So, I just put my dissertation on hold indefinitely until I can find funding somewhere. And then I will continue. I did have some funding to cover university fees which is quite a lot, but one of my children was studying at the time…and we wanted to support those studies which was one reason for me having to work. For me this was not a base for a long career as it was for them…in a way I am disappointed that I did not finish. I fought a long time with the decision…but I mean it was a choice that I will put my family first. (Miia, orienteer)

Supervisors played an important role in when they either helped these doctoral students to balance their contradictory identities or complicated these efforts. Miia and Reetta who negotiated between a researcher identity and that of a parent expressed balancing family responsibilities with work also when they talked about supervision. Family responsibilities were not in line with the official goals of doctoral studies, which created contradictory feelings, in case they were left out of consideration from the supervisor's part. Miia's supervisor understood family life, which supported her development as a researcher. They shared an appreciation towards an identity as a parent, indicating to Miia, that in order to become a researcher, she was not forced to neglect her parent identity.

> I had a really good supervisor…respected name on the field. We had similar interests…we had a friendship, we talked about our families…for me the supervision experience was very good and I got very good feedback. The supervisor did not care about small details in the text but here it works the way that you read, write theory and literature review and then supervisors read that and we discuss…I have been very independent. And the supervisor liked that, the independency…for someone who needs help with details that type of supervision would not suit but our chemistry between the supervisor and the doctoral student worked well. (Miia, orienteer)

Reetta described her supervisor as the opposite to Miia's, which was not helping her progress in the beginning. Her reflections indicate that the supervisor disregarded her life situation and overlooked the fact that she was working part-time and had a family to take care of. Such conduct dismissed Reetta's parent identity dimension as incompatible for a doctoral student aiming to become a researcher, which created feelings of stress and insufficiency.

> It felt crazy at first to start a dissertation with a small baby at home. It was ok because I worked part-time, but well the start was quite tuff…you felt there is not enough time and my supervisor had no understanding what it means to work part-time, and she was demanding, demanding all the time…when my younger child started day-care it got better. And there is time to do research…my second supervisor, the one who I had first, was not really interested (in supervising) but now I got a new second supervisor who is more hands on and takes part in supervising. It works a lot better, because my first supervisor is so demanding, so this other one kind of balances it. She has own children, well the first supervisor has also a baby now, but it hasn't changed our relationship, well maybe a little now but the first years were crazy. She just didn't understand…(Reetta, orienteer)

Reetta's story also showed change in time, when she told how her situation improved after she got a new second supervisor. This person showed understanding concerning her life situation and broader life tasks beyond doctoral studies making it easier for Reetta to find harmony between her multiple identity dimensions or roles.

Stories of doctoral students constructing non-career identities expressed contradictory identities not only due to family responsibilities. Anne had no family, and her experience seems to reflect a contradiction between her preferred research identity and that imposed by the environment. Anne's understanding of values appreciated in her academic field clashed with her supervisor's actions. She had incorporated into her research identity an appreciation of academic values, such as criticality and questioning, which were downplayed by her supervisor's ways to work that highlighted speed and productivity as more preferable. Anne's experience shows also how effectivity was promoted through institutional responsibilities and resources. Institutionally defined time limits were tight and tied to funding. Anne's experience of being too slow indicated that her supervisor's actions together with signals from the environment (Hall & Burns 2009) made her translate values important to her developing research identity into something negative, which was not contributing to her research identity, but created a sense of insufficiency instead. Anne's experience reflects also that her identity as a non-native English user translated into being slow. Supervisors' attempts to assure Anne, that she was not

the only one unable to meet dead-lines, were not enough to overrule the effect of signals from the environment. Meeting external deadlines instead of reporting when actually having made a contribution (McAlpine et al. 2014) was challenging increasing her sense of constant insufficiency.

> My supervisor, I mean is a nice person and considerate, but we have such different ways to work with research and academically. It's not that my supervisor wouldn't accept my way but this difference has created if not direct conflicts but challenges definitely for me during the whole process. We are so different as persons, she is a straightforward type who gets a lot done and I am a lot slower, and questioning, I don't mean that she is not critical but I am a lot more philosophical to put it bluntly. That creates, how should say it, in the working rhythm and ways of doing, well problems if you can say so. Also, because I started to do research according to what someone else had written in a project application, and surely there is some freedom but then there are certain things where you don't have freedom. So continuous negotiation… Well, the good thing about a project is that inevitably you get publications…I have a feeling that the pressure for progress is quite strong here…we have to report every month about supervision and every half year a larger report and since I do this full time, progress is evident but still I feel that I am slower than average, and also even though I have been studying in English, using a second language slows down the process. I have constantly this feeling that I am too slow, kind of my daily struggle…You think that you have three years of funding and everyone knows it here that it is very few who actually finish in those three years. So, I am constantly saying to my supervisors about the pressure that I do not get it, how should I say it, the pressure, I can not do this in three years, and they try to say that there are many others who can not either. I say that why in heck you create this frame for people that you should manage in this time if it is not even realistic for more than maybe one or two. In my opinion that is just mindless mobbing. (Anne, orienteer)

Anne's story showed a contradiction, not only between an identity imposed by the doctoral study environment and her preferred research identity, but also her personal identity. Throughout the description of her doctoral study journey, she characterised herself as someone philosophic and pondering. She described needing time in social encounters as opposed to being a social butterfly. She was not determined and focused, but trusted more on life taking its turns and organising itself. She described these qualities as opposed to those that, according to her experience, appeared to be valuable in the doctoral study environment.

Doctoral students constructing non-career identity trajectories expressed contradictory identities also at the level of the imaginary. Anne seemed to have an image of a doctoral student as an expert giving interviews and making statements in public which she personally felt incapable of doing. Her "everyday identity" as a doctoral student was incompatible with the image of a doctoral student she had.

> …and I also had difficulties in understanding that I am a person who can actually do a doctorate, although the seeds were there but in the actual situation, I had an unrealistic feeling that how can I be a doctoral student. If I was reading an article in a Finnish newspaper where they had interviewed a doctoral student…such an absurd feeling that if someone would ask me for an interview, I would be like but I don't know anything. I mean when you see what kind of hassle this everyday work can sometimes be…(Anne, orienteer)

6.4.2 Justifying non-career orientation

Doctoral students constructing non-career identity trajectories revealed in their descriptions that they had other goals than a career in mind concerning doctoral studies. They did not need a doctoral degree for career purposes, and they had earlier expressed enjoyment of the research process itself as their main motivation for embarking on doctoral studies. However, despite the non-career orientation, they reflected doctoral studies also in relation to a career. Their doctoral study experiences seemed to require them to take a stance towards a career, or at least to justify their non-career orientation. This was visible when they negotiated an identity of a mature student doing doctoral studies.

> I still don't have such an academic identity that I definitely want to be an academic worker and that I would have a clear picture of wanting definitely to stay in the university world or advance there or so on. But I mean I have never really been a career-centered person but I have noticed here in Britain that most doctoral students, local students at least, I mean I am a wreck or a granny compared to them, because they are like 24-25. And I mean I have working history in Finland before I went abroad, so I am a more mature doctoral student in this environment…so the locals are very young in my opinion, and I mean the whole idea of doctoral studies is more career oriented…and academically I woke up very late…here you have a feeling that in Britain the good side is that there are more jobs available in the university than for example in Finland or other Nordic countries but I mean the competition is totally insane here. If you want like a post-doc or lecturer position…but then when you look at it here, I mean the pace which you are expected to work, you feel like well I have no chance for

> that. However, what is interesting is that when I was co-recruiting new post docs for the project, I had a chance to read the applications and join the interviews, and I have to say that it was an interesting experience that those two that were chosen, well they were very good and all, but you got to see a wide scale of people and I felt that I am ok. If this is the range, I am not completely shit, I might have a chance. I feel that my strength is this international experience that I have and my research design… (Anne, orienteer)

> It's not an impossible idea that I would finish the dissertation in a few years and then start an academic career. Well, I mean it would be short concerning my age, but anyway… I still enjoy research, but then again, this what I do now seems a lot more meaningful. Well, also because I don't really need a doctoral degree for anything…the degree wouldn't bring anything more, unless I would try an academic career…but looking at the workloads, I don't have an urge for such a life…publish or perish. (Miia, orienteer)

Doctoral students constructing non-career identity trajectories were considerably older than peers in average. For them, doctoral studies did not represent a career path debut the same way as for many peers. In the UK, students enter bachelor's studies at an earlier age than students in Finland, resulting in similar differences with regard to entering doctoral studies. In Finland, the median age at entry to doctoral studies is just over 30 years, whereas in the UK, it is just over 25 years. Across the OECD, the median age is 29 on average. (OECD 2019a, 249–250.) In this study, median age of doctoral students to start doctoral studies was 26,5 years, however five of them, including doctoral students constructing non-career identity-trajectories, were over 30 at the time they started. In terms of age, sprinters and hurdlers were closer to the British median. Doctoral students constructing non-career identities had also seen during their studies how the people with academic careers worked around the clock with enormous workloads. There was a risk of burning the candle from both ends, and they were not convinced of wanting the same.

Reetta appealed to her identity as a mother, when she expressed a lack of huge ambitions towards a career. Miia had earlier talked about similar issues when she explained wanting to support her child who was only starting a career as opposed to herself.

> …I don't even know what I would like to do for work, kind of, but still I don't want to say this is just a hobby, because this is hard work, and hopefully at some point I can create some kind of career, but in a way these career dreams I gave away by staying at home with the kids for so long, and I mean we do ok anyway, my husband has a job and I don't have such a drive anymore which I maybe had

> earlier…I have a lot of academics close to me and I have seen these burn outs, especially women, who are university lecturers, and somehow that does not attract me. Feels stupid to say it like that, when this education is directed to that, but if I would think of a dream job so then it would be some kind of research institute outside the university…(Reetta, orienteer)

Doctoral students constructing non-career identity-trajectories justified the non-career orientation on the one hand with their age, by explaining no need for a doctoral degree for building up a career, and on the other hand with the competitive environment, which they found unattractive. They found meaning also in other life areas such as family. Still, their descripions above together with Miia's statement below, reveal that they seemed to have developed a certain level of trust that, should they want to proceed with such plans, they might be able to make it, indicating that their sense of confidence in their own skills and background had evolved along the way.

> When I realised that I can manage with this. You got this, how should I say, trust in your own skills and your own background. (Miia, orienteer)

7 Discussion

In this chapter, I will first present a short summary of the main findings of this study, and proceed with a discussion of the results in relation to previous studies, to the society, and to various policies connected to education and mobility. Before completing the dissertation with suggestions for further research I will ponder the research process and limitations of the study.

7.1 Discussion and conclusions

In this dissertation, I have examined the educational and mobility paths of Finnish doctoral students in Britain, with an aim to understand the meaning of doctoral studies abroad in the wholeness of individual life course. By examining doctoral students' descriptions concerning their doctoral study journeys as identity-trajectories, I have seeked answers to the following research questions:

1. What kinds of identity-trajectories of doctoral students studying abroad are constructed based on doctoral students' descriptions on their doctoral journey before the doctorate abroad?
2. What kinds of career identity-trajectories of doctoral students studying abroad are constructed based on their descriptions on the doctoral journey during the doctorate abroad?
3. How do the constructed identity-trajectories of doctoral students reflect wider meanings of higher education and doctoral education?

The analysis process that was conducted in order to answer the research questions is described in detail in Chapter 4.

The career identity-trajectories of this study can be compared to the four motivation profiles of doctoral students created by Sakurai et al. (2017) that differed in terms of career orientation and interest in research: high career-oriented, high research interest-oriented, low career-oriented and low research interest-oriented. High career-oriented doctoral students remind those in this study constructing academic, non-academic and hybrid career identity-trajectories since they all had strong career aspirations. High research interest-oriented remind mainly those

constructing academic and non-career identity-trajectories because they experessed a passion for research as the driving force in doctoral studies. For those constructing academic career identity-trajectories this passion was connected to career plans, while for those constructing non-career identity-trajectories it was not, reminding those low career-oriented in the study of Sakurai et al. Low research interest-oriented are mostly like those in this study constructing non-academic career identity-trajectories, because they mainly stated doing doctoral studies for career purposes without combining this interest with research ambitions. Overall, according to Sakurai et al. (2017) the interest in research was a more common reason to embark on doctoral studies than career orientation, and the largest percentage of doctoral students belonged to the high research interest-oriented profile. (Sakurai et al. 2017.) In the current study, career perspective revealed central in terms of how the students related to other elements of doctoral studies. One explanation for this could be that international students are more likely to state a career as a motivation factor for doctoral studies than domestic students (Sakurai 2014).

One of the most important contributions of this study that I want to highlight has to do with heterogeneity of students with regard to their experiences, backgrounds, motives, goals and overall paths. In their life stories towards and past doctoral studies abroad, doctoral students described their educational experiences and educational choices throughout life course, transition to doctoral studies, mobility experiences and moving abroad, career aspirations, and the significance of the doctoral study abroad. In these stories the multiple motives and goals and backgrounds leading to a doctoral study abroad become visible. There is not one, but many routes to a doctoral study abroad. These paths are not always straightforward and clear, but meandering, and sometimes a result of seeking and trying out for different options before finding a route that feels one's own.

The results comply with findings of previous research concerning heterogeneity of doctoral students (Bao et al. 2018; Jauhiainen & Nori 2017; Pearson et al. 2011), and their various motives and goals for embarking on doctoral studies (Brailsford 2010; London et al. 2014; Sakurai et al. 2017; Skakni 2018), and for going abroad to conduct the studies (Kõu et al. 2015; Mostafa & Lim 2020; Yang et al. 2018; Zhou 2015). The results of this study are also in line with previous research that has brought up the many ways how doctoral studies are experienced, and the various challenges that doctoral students might face along their study paths (Barrow et al. 2020; Fotovatian & Miller 2014; Gardner & Holley 2011; Pappa et al. 2020; Pifer & Baker 2014; Schmidt & Umans 2014).

With regard to some doctoral students, already the path towards doctoral studies revealed that they are not a homogeneous lot, and that everything is not up to the individual. Structural issues were present in these stories in form of family background, gender, and the structure of education system. Those doctoral students

who described education as appreciated in their childhood families, and described having received support for their school work and educational goals, represented examples of the prevailing influence of family background concerning success on the educational path. Habitus reflecting a positive attitude towards managing well at school, and confidence in own conduct, had shaped already in early childhood and worked as a robust and reliable base to build upon towards further aspirations. (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995; Vanttaja 2002.) In this study, such a habitus was most clearly reflected by sprinters in their stories showing how a school positive attitude is promoted by, albeit not necessarily dependent on, family's educational capital. Appreciation towards education can also be mediated in less educated families. Habitus is also transformative, and has a quality to be changed and reformed through experiences across life course (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995; Vanttaja 2002) as was seen in the stories of hurdlers, orienteers and race walkers. However, if a habitus reflecting confidence can be gradually built upon already from childhood, confronting new situations, that require handling pressure and trusting one's own skills and competences, is probably easier.

The results of this study are in line with previous research indicating that doctoral students differ in terms of age and life circumstances (see Rauvola & Silvennoinen 2017). Especially race walkers' stories indicated that students who have already been in working life, and are a bit older, have gained experience that can be useful during doctoral studies at many levels. They can profit from their experience when learning to understand the academic practices, and reflect these practices against their past experiences. Most importantly their experience seemed to provide them with a shield to be used against sometimes enormous requirements to be efficient and productive and against comparing themselves with others. They were aware of conditions that caused contradictory feelings and understood them as part of the process and managed to be flexible and reflexive in reconstructing identities (Soong et al. 2015). Sometimes life circumstances are such that the only relevant option turns out to be dropping out of studies. One orienteer in this study, Miia, showed in her doctoral journey story how structural constraints, family responsibilities and lack of funding in Miia's case, shaped her journey towards attrition. However, being able to free oneself from the individualisation discourse by negotiating structural issues independent from personal attributes, and by reasoning dropping out as having to do with factors other than personal skills and failure, was helpful and supported by life experience that comes with age.

According to the results of this study, elements constructing doctoral students' identities involve much more than what is needed for an academic career. Doctoral students are required to come to terms with and negotiate a multitude of academic, personal and cultural demands linked to doctoral study environments (Soong et al. 2015). Issues ranging from career options to competition, productivity, and time

pressure are negotiated in relation to their own career and other life goals. Such negotiations of multiple dimensions of identity in relation to conditions shaping and reshaping them were constantly present in doctoral students' stories. It is not irrelevant whether these elements of identity are in harmony with each other, or contradictory and fragmented. (Soong et al. 2015; Ylijoki & Ursin 2013.) According to this current study, doctoral students, even the most talented ones, experience uncertainty, stress, competition, and doubt, if the future will look bright after the doctorate. Similar results have been reported in previous studies (Aarnikoivu et al. 2019; Gardner & Holley 2011; Hakala 2009; Hannukainen & Brunila 2017; Kouhia & Tammi 2014; Passaretta et al. 2019).

Academic career is solely one element among many, even for those individuals, who have chosen to head abroad to conduct doctoral studies in a reputed university. Doctoral studies represent also an opportunity which can open up the path for an international career outside the academic world. With such goals and aspirations in mind the most important aspect of doctoral studies was a possibility to make progress with the dissertation work in order to obtain the degree to be used in international employment markets. For these doctoral students, traditional values related to academic work such as growing independence and research confidence, search for truth and possibility to make an original scientific contribution were less relevant than the rather pragmatic idea of the degree's instrumental value. For them the degree itself represented useful capital in their quest for advancing a non-academic career, and additional capitals brought up as appreciated in the academic field, such as publications and extensive academic networks, were not sought after. According to Hall and Burns (2009) individuals can choose which capitals presented as valued in the given context they decide to act upon. However, according to this study making such a choice included also simultaneous negotiations between different career options. Giving up the strive for publications and efficient progress was considered giving up, or at least risking, hope for an academic future, indicating that the environment reflected a productivity logic as the preferable way for academics to act. Such a logic for pressure to perform, is also a risk to creativity, which hardly increases as a result of pressure and demands. Doctoral students could benefit from possibilities to construct different types of profiles parallel to each other without having to choose between an academic or a non-academic profile option. Appreciation of simultaneously constructing various paths or a combination of paths would allow doctoral students to be open to different options, without fear to be missing out from academic possibilities, if also considering non-academic options.

The reputation or perceived quality of the university came up in several doctoral students' stories. For that reason, I have in some occasions referred to the status of the university despite having abandoned the idea of systematically comparing the experiences of students in world-class and less world-class universities. Some

doctoral students contextualised the descriptions of their paths with status of the university indicating that context matters in terms of selection. Earlier research has shown (Findlay et al. 2012; Partenie 2019; Pizarro Milian & Rizk 2018; Yang et al. 2018) that the reputation or ranking of the university is often referred to by students for rationalising the choice of the university at different levels. As in this current study, also supervisor reputation has been identified as an important factor for choosing the university (Yang et al. 2018).

The theoretical starting point for this study was to examine doctoral studies as part of life course influenced by the wholeness of life. The results of this study strengthen this perspective and comply with previous research stating that doctoral study decisions and experiences are framed with various life course areas developing parallel to one another and influencing each other (Kõu 2015; McAlpine et al. 2014; Maunula 2014). This was clearly visible for example in orienteers' life stories when they negotiated doctoral study experiences in relation to their family life and responsibilities. Their stories reminded those in studies concerning female doctoral students who have brought up balancing doctoral studies with family issues as central in terms of how doctoral studies are experienced (Brown & Watson 2010; Maunula 2014; Schmidt & Umans 2014). The results of this study strengthen the theoretical starting point also with regard to past experiences as influential for the doctoral study path which is visible in the descriptions of different paths towards doctoral studies abroad. This study showed how individuals bring their histories, hopes, dreams and personal responsibilities to doctoral studies which shape their experience and engagement (Pearson et al. 2011). This was illustrated for example in descriptions how academic identity is constructed, not solely during doctoral studies, but seeds for its development have often been planted already before embarking on the doctorate. Positive higher education experiences especially related to preparing a master's thesis were common to many doctoral students in this study as having influenced their interest in research. Similar results have been reported in previous research (Mantai 2017; Maunula 2014; Peura 2008).

What does this study mean in terms of higher education policy? The findings of this study reveal that there are Finns who find a doctorate abroad as a valid and desirable option, and consider a degree from abroad as an asset in advancing their career, reflecting the prevailing athmosphere of internationalisation. Findings also reveal that Finnish higher education system is capable of educating individuals qualified as future doctoral candidates in the world. The educational (academic) capital that the students were able to gain during Finnish higher education studies turned out to extend its value beyond national borders (Peixoto 2014; Bourdieu 2004). These students succeeded in embarking on international studies on the highest level, that is doctoral studies, many also in highly appreciated institutions ranked as world-class, and managed mainly well also during their studies. Results indicate also

that during higher education in Finland, students were provided with opportunities to acquire mobility capital useful for future international studies.

In this respect, I want point out lack of dead-ends, and reliance on equality and lifelong learning (Antikainen 2006) as strengths of Finnish education system. The possiblity to acquire a good education is not abolished, even if a person makes a wrong or a bad choice, which can be a result of various challenges in life at the time, or just of being young, and trying out different options as illustrated in this study. Finnish system balances the "reach" of these decisions in a way, that the track to higher education is kept open and transitions reversible (Tikkanen 2019) allowing detours as natural parts of life and supporting individual trajectories. Had this not been the case, journey of some doctoral students in this study had most probably never reached doctoral studies. If challenges to proceed on early educational paths are denied having to do with structural issues, such as lack of support from home, and instead solely considered having to do with individuals requiring them to make crucial educational choices at ever more early stages, which is a relevant concern in Finland related to student admissions reform in higher education (Haltia, Isopahkala-Bouret & Jauhiainen 2019), it is possible that many potential doctoral students are lost. Some will never reach the level to even start pondering whether to embark on doctoral studies or not, but will give up aspirations to advance on the educational path already early on which would be a loss, not solely for these individuals, but also to scientific communities and societies as a whole. Most visibly the factors influencing educational paths that are out of individual's control were present in orienteers' stories and worked as a good reminder of threats that an overly individualised society presents to individuals. In a light of a wider context, by reminding about the prevalence of structural issues I want to highlight that opting "what and where" in terms of education is a priviledge out of reach for many people in the world for whom choicelessness reflects more the reality than freedom to choose (see Hofmeister 2013).

The current higher education policies concerning doctoral education that have in many countries been developed towards systems that emphasise conformity and unification (Bao et al. 2018; Kivistö et al. 2017) are in many respects serving interests of stake holders other than doctoral students at international, national, and institutional levels. Governments, higher education institutions, and international businesses as providers, funders and users of the end product of doctoral education can be seen as major influencers in prevailing trends in higher education policies across the globe being internationalisation linked to various economic benefits, and in policy rhetorics emphasising excellence and efficiency, top units and research groups, leading edge talent and results. (Pearson et al. 2011.) Current policies are painting a portrait of an ideal doctoral student as young and agile indicating no appreciation towards working experience and life experience in general. As a result,

more mature individuals can potentially be discouraged from embarking on doctoral studies. This would be a great loss for these individuals, and also to institutions in terms of limiting their diversity. Pearson et al. (2011) also warn that there is an existing risk of dealing with doctoral students as objects that need to produce in the name of social benefits. Matti's description shows well how doctoral students are objectified to production machines.

> …for most of us the time limit four years, and unless you break your leg or your head falls off, that's what you get, full stop. One of us got a year extra but didn't nail it and they failed the dissertation, it didn't pass…It (doctoral studies) is like a pressure kettle, on the other hand there are enormous requirements, and on the other hand very little time…it is not an experience of oj, what a wonderful academic freedom I have, I just read a couple of books a day and write a little. (Matti, race walker)

Such a mindset easily overshadows concern of well-being of those producing.

A persistent assumption still widely prevalent is that doctoral studies are pursued in order to prepare for employment (Germain-Alamartine & Moghadam-Saman 2020; Pearson et al. 2011), and therefore it is considered necessary that doctoral students are equipped with a wide array of versatile skills to be used in working life. Indeed, in this study many doctoral students expressed career ambitions and reflected the meaning of their studies in relation to them. Although a doctoral degree in itself was experienced as having value, a study abroad represented additional capital considered useful for advancing one's career. Li et al. (2021) studied Chinese doctoral students abroad through a lense of institutional habitus. They argue that students' decisions to embark on doctoral studies abroad reflect an institutional habitus which presents a study abroad as excellent and the thing to do especially in terms of career. Drawing on this idea, I argue that in this current study for some doctoral students, especially those heading for a career, the meaning of a doctoral study abroad reflected a global habitus mediated by globalisation discourses present in contemporary societies and their higher education policies presenting internationalisation as desired, an indication of success and quality.

In reality, the prevailing neoliberal imaginary promoting a global habitus concerning the endless possibilities and options that individuals have, and the prosperous futures they are expected to be able to build for themselves by making an effort and working hard is materialising in some of these students' doctoral journey stories into feelings of insufficiency and failure. Working nearly day and night seemed insufficient at times, and finding work after having gained a doctoral degree from a reputed university abroad proved more complicated than such an imaginary implied. Negotiations between an academic career and another type of

career were constantly present. Furthermore, for international doctoral students the avenue for an international career, academic or non-academic, is not automatically paved with a red carpet. Instead, there is a threat that they will have to accept work where a doctoral degree is not required, especially if looking for work in a country where dominant language is other than English. More opportunities for creating multiple networks also outside academic circles could be beneficial in terms of future employment especially to international students who often lack such contacts in a foreign country.

The concept of cruel optimism, originally from Lauren Berlant (2011) has been used to reflect how the neoliberal imaginary guides individuals into striving for respectable positions and a good life often serving neoliberal purposes, and into thinking that these can be reached by individual efforts and working hard. Cruel optimism lies in the false impression such an imaginary gives that we all have the same possibilities to achieve what is promised in the imaginary. (Tiainen, Leiviskä & Brunila 2019.) Cruel optimism can be used to describe the promise of education as leading to better social positions, and even more that of doctoral education which used to guarantee a respectable position in the society and a career in the university. Within the current climate of doctoral production this promise has partly been withdrawn since a doctoral degree is presented as the first step on the ladder towards carving an academic research career, instead of its culmination. Although there is an underlying understanding among doctoral students that a doctorate is not a guarantee of anything, they express strong hope for an international degree's power to help them forward, if they just succeed to make the right choices and to gain right type of capital to be attached to the degree. Policies have a power to create strong imaginaries placing responsibility for delivery of what is promised, as well as for carrying the risks included, on the individual.

According to this current study, career perspectives are important for many doctoral students, however, the meaning of doctoral studies abroad in the overall life course of these doctoral students is much more complex, and by no means unequivocal. Instead, doctoral studies are given meanings that are rich in nuances. Doctoral studies continue to signify a personal endeavour to individuals (Maunula 2014). Even doctoral students, who study abroad in world-class universities and represent the top talents desired to strengthen economies across the world, had embarked on doctoral studies for various reasons, also other than those that can be rendered to economic gains, and are connected to employment. Solely being able to embark on doctoral studies gave some of these students meaning as a self-confidence boost, and being able to obtain a doctoral degree had intrinsic value in itself as an indication of persistence, skills, and possibilities to manage in life overall and to follow an inner calling. Meanings attached to being a researcher were also varied (Hall & Burns 2009) as for some it meant working long hours and devoting personal

life to search after knowledge, while for others being a researcher was meaningful activity alongside life's many other significant endeavours and projects such as motherhood (Soong et al. 2015).

I argue that raising awareness on the importance of not only taking into consideration the diversity of students, but cherishing the richness of such a student pool, can benefit various parties involved in doctoral education at institutional and individual levels globally and nationally. Bernstein et al. (2014) have anticipated an increase in demographic diversity in doctoral education in the future appointing to the actuality of the matter. Pearson et al. (2011) argue citing Van Vugth (2007) and Marginson (1998) that competition and pressure for efficiency reflected in contemporary higher education have had consequences that have clearly been threatening diversity at systemic level. Instead of thinking that providing unified programmes and services, and treating all these students according to the same formula is beneficial, which it probably is not (Aarnikoivu 2020), showing appreciation towards difference for example in terms of motivations and goals, age, nationality, life circumstances and paths towards doctoral studies would serve as an indication of diversity as valued. Creativity in coming up with new ideas is better promoted by policies striving for flexibility instead of constructing a bound area with set limits within which to operate (Pearson et al. 2011).

Promoting diversity and acting otherwise encourages to think out of the box and to pursue imaginative, creative and courageous research ideas that can further contribute the world. As this study also has illustrated, the strength that lies in supportive communities that value contributions of all its members needs to be futher recognised and celebrated (Heinrich 2015; Wisker et al. 2007). In this study, research and lab groups were often described as such communities. However, not all students work in research groups or do lab work indicating differences between disciplinary tribes (Becher 1989). Research groups and laboratory periods are more common in natural sciences and technical fields, whereas working alone is still quite common in soft fields. Students who are not automatically part of a research group or another type community of colleagues would most probably benefit from a collegial department culture involving its members. Christensen, Dawson and Nielsen (2021) suggest creating shared goals and possibilities for informal and formal meetings to increase sense of collegiagility and engagement with work which could also balance the competitive academic environment. Although their research was from teaching perspective, similar suggestions could surely improve the doctoral study environment as well. For international students, informal possibilities to meet other doctoral students, local and international, are valuable for creating social networks and for getting support. Appreciation of a diverse student pool increases doctoral education's possibilities also to respond to policy demands to cater for various types of employment markets.

Academics can benefit from having sufficient resources to perform their work (Christensen et al. 2021). Together with a supportive community contributing to engagement with doctoral work and validating students' sense of becoming a researcher (Mantai 2017), the supervisor is an important social resource which this study confirmed in line with a range of previous studies (Hall & Burns 2009; Löfström & Pyhältö 2020; Sakurai et al. 2017; Soong et al. 2015; Wang et Byram 2019). Supervisor is there to support and guide doctoral students with their dissertation work. However, students are different types of personalities, come from different cultural and other backgrounds and life situations that carry along various responsibilities. Doctoral students are also used to different types of work practices. All that influences their work. Supervisor is the person with a central role with regard to how students' differences are taken into consideration during studies. Confidence in own abilities can be fostered by the supervisor's availability and encouragement. Balancing the amount of guidance and independence to best suit the student's needs increases feelings of confidence boosting research identity. This study illustrated how productive and intellectual supervision relationships which recognise and appreciate diversity whether in terms of goals, needs or backgrounds (Cotterall 2015) can lead to a successful doctoral study experience supporting doctoral students in their quest for getting acquainted with academic practices. This study also illustrated that, if such a relationship is missing, the experience can be totally opposite and potentially lead to feelings of stress and plans to abandon the academic world. If the supervisor manages to take into consideration the heterogeneity of students, and perceive doctoral studies as one element of student's broader life, the supervision experience can be more positive and help students progress with studies and avoid feelings of being abandoned which is especially relevant for international students (Soong et al. 2015). Learning to consider and supervise trajectories and identity formation (Cotterall 2015; Green 2005; McAlpine 2012) could help supervisors in guiding a more diverse body of doctoral students (Hall & Burns 2009).

In addition to supervision, the importance of funding for being able to progress with research, and to continue in the academic world in the future, showed how economic capital is necessary for being able to gain other types of capitals within the context of increased competition. As previous studies have also demonstrated (Grote et al. 2021; Nori et al. 2020) development of funding structures of doctoral studies is an issue, that needs to be further addressed, in order for doctoral students to be able to concentrate on doing their work, advance in studies and make more long-term plans. The time used for preparing grant applications is away from actual research, and can restrict progress, not solely in the beginning, but throughout the process. Guaranteed funding for a longer period can save time for everything that needs to be taken care of ranging from practical arrangements for those moving abroad to getting started with the research process.

The analysis of this study connects with the current political frame and development of doctoral education in the context of the knowledge society. The prevailing official discourse constructed around doctoral education is largely based on long-standing academic traditions presenting a doctoral degree as targeting for an academic researcher career. However, as this study has illustrated such traditions should not be considered as taken for granted premises or "truths", because there are other "truths" and motives behind students' doctoral study journeys. If doctoral studies are developed based on one presumed underlying discourse or truth, it is evident that such an approach overlooks the many other discourses and truths, which is is not benefiting the student body as a whole nor the universities. It is also misleading to speak about doctoral studies as leading for a (an academic) career since in the descriptions of students in this study no homogeneous career really exists. Career for these doctoral students meant possibilities to work with various tasks within or outside the university, for some this career included teaching and/or administrative tasks together with research, for others it did not. Moreover, the academic career is no more the same it once used to be, and it can be questioned if it ever represented a homogeneous entity for different academics.

Current research concerning educational policy is largely using structural approaches (Saarinen & Ursin 2012) concentrating around degree structures and the organisation of education and study programmes. However, looking solely at educational structures and systems and patterns of organisation simplifies policies and internationalisation leaving the picture for policies to be built upon restricted and vague. This study has shown that the whole picture of doctoral studies abroad is much richer than can be assumed if stared at from the narrow perspective of structures and organisations. In order for policies to be able to succeed and reach their targets, also the complexity and many faces of international doctoral studies are to be taken into consideration. As in this study, shedding light on the various ways doctoral studies are experienced by those conducting the actual studies, and the diverse paths through which they have embarked on the doctorate abroad, can help to develop policies and eventually doctoral education towards serving the diverse student body as well as other parties involved.

Internationalisation in the context of higher education and doctoral education is frequently, and often rather uncritically, interpreted to signify quality and something excellent to strive after. Policies are painting a scenery against which students can easily start creating an imaginary of the many benefits of being mobile and start considering international experience as a norm and a must, at least, if targeting for an academic career (Puhakka & Rautopuro 2020). However, I want to remind of the importance of the critical eye also concerning internationalisation and doctoral education. First, the presumed possibility to choose to embark on international studies is not equal to all. People in different life circumstances have different

possibilities to proceed with plans for a mobility period. International education turning into a private good (Rizvi 2011) excludes such opportunities from many people in different parts of the world serving as a mechanism for creating and increasing inequalities. Second, international doctoral education includes similar features as previous studies have reported concerning the doctoral process at home (Hannukainen & Brunila 2017). Doctoral education experience for mobile students is as much about insecurities, negative feelings and disappointment as it can be of feelings of achieving and being able to grow, produce and advance on the career path. If the negative side is left unspoken, something very real is being left out. Third, very personal life situations and aspirations were connected to those more academic. Academic intentions are balanced with social, personal and physical desires and constraints, and future visions can change during the dissertation process (McAlpine & Turner 2012). Pictures about promising careers and futures painted in the knowledge society around internationalisation and doctoral education are not becoming real for all students, nor are they sought after by all students. In fact, students talked surprisingly little about internationalisation despite it being the hot topic of current doctoral and science policies. This study illustrated that there are Finns conducting doctoral studies in Britain whose main motivation for being there is other than doctoral studies. Nevertheless, they are Finns conducting doctoral studies elsewhere than Finland widening the conception of a Finnish doctoral student studying for a doctorate abroad. At the moment, there is no system of keeping in contact with these people albeit policies express the skills, competences and networks of people with international experience as vital for the society and its well-being. If the potential of these Finns is to be acknowledged also on the practical level, keeping in contact with them and becoming a part of their networks should not be left as a responsibility for individual students. Lastly, determining the purpose of doctoral studies politically and socially is a form of "status-making" (Robertson 2019) that has effects on individual trajectories. Connecting development and goals of doctoral education and internationalisation with the needs of the knowledge society as tightly as is currently done threatens to overshadow the students' own needs and goals, and change the meaning of education and internationalisation into economic success and profit swiping away the basic values of humanity and civilisation.

7.2 Limitations, recommendations for further research and concluding remarks

This dissertation carries certain limitations that need to be addressed. The relatively small number of interviewees is an issue that has to do with the methodology. It was challenging to find doctoral students to be interviewed for this study since there are

no official records keeping track of them. In addition, only doctoral students who had completed their master's degree in a university in Finland were considered eligible for this study which added an extra challenge for data collection. However, I based my decision on saturation to conduct the analysis using the 14 interviews, meaning that having familiarised myself with them I started to notice certain level of repetition within the stories and themes in them. I doubted that adding more interviews into the analysis would open up totally new perspectives in terms of my research questions (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 62–63). With this dissertation, I have provided a view of doctoral study abroad from the perspective of fourteen interviewed doctoral students conducting a doctorate in Britain connecting that view to reflections of wider social meanings given to doctoral education and international studies. This view is by no means to be interpreted as covering everything there is to be experienced concerning international doctoral studies. The picture I have provided with this dissertation is one among many and covers the experiences of these interviewed doctoral students. Thus, the results of this study are to be interpreted with caution without making far-reaching generalisations. Having said that, I want to point out that making such generalisations was not an aim of this study either. Despite the small number of interviewees, and the fact that they were all studying in Britain can be on the hand considered a limitation, on the other hand the data collected for this study provided a rich account of versatile experiences concerning doctoral studies abroad from a group of students we know very little about. This way even a small dataset can contribute to discussions concerning international education providing a unique perspective. In addition, the use of type descriptions is a form of qualitative generalisation, and the types are to be considered ideal types and not representing any single doctoral student (Eskola & Suoranta 1998; Vanttaja 2002).

My own position as a doctoral student needs to be addressed in terms of limitations. It is possible that my own interpretations and experiences concerning doctoral studies have influenced the way I have related to the interviewees' experiences. I have no possibility to control the fact of sharing the doctoral student position with the interviewees, however, I have had the possibility to consciously and constantly critically reflect my own position and its potential influences on conducting the study. Therefore, I have at every stage of the study done my utmost to remain objective and let the interviewees' voice to be heard in the study. I consider my own position as a doctoral student more as a strength than a limitation, because I had a feeling during the interviews that the interviewees considered it relatively easy and relaxing to talk with someone at least remotely in a similar situation.

In the future, experiences of Finnish doctoral students studying for a doctorate in other countries than the UK could provide additional perspectives on international doctoral study. It would be interesting to see if these views conform with the ones in

this study or if there are certain context bound differences that appear relevant between doctoral students' experiences in different countries. It would also be intriguing to follow up these interviewed students' future journeys from the perspective of the pandemic and how it has affected them. One direction for future research could be to focus on their future journeys now that Brexit has happened. Combining the effects of the pandemic with those of Brexit could be used to further enlighten the issues of current concern for rising nationalism and neo-racism with regard to international education and academic mobility (Lee 2020).

I have been writing this discussion section while the world is facing a global pandemic of COVID-19. The international student flows that have been growing in an unforeseen manner the previous years, faced a stop unforeseen alike as a result of the pandemic closing national borders as well as universities and other educational institutions (Ilieva & Raimo 2020; Pan 2021). The interviews in this study were conducted at the time when no such situation could be anticipated. The pandemic has raised a lot of questions concerning the future of internationalisation of higher education and student mobility around issues that are not new but often treated as taken for granted such as the dominance of business orientation, or less important and swept aside, such as issues concerned with inequality and the environment (e.g. Altbach & de Wit 2020; Goebel, Manion, Millei, Read & Silova 2020). Pan (2020) discusses the recruitment crisis and financial threat of universities due to pandemic illuminating the strong economic reliance of institutions on fee paying international students, and questions the sustainability of neoliberalism as the guiding force of higher education. Development and improvement of remote modes of mobility were accelerated by the pandemic, however, they will hardly completely replace physical cross-border mobility. Instead, increasing forms of hybrid mobility combining technology and digital forms of mobility with the more physical could be increasing in the future. The scenery of international education is changing, however if the change is temporary or more permanent remains to be seen. It is important that the discussions around issues triggered visible by the pandemic continue in order to develop international education, including doctoral education, towards increasing consideration of equality, sustainability and threats posed by rising nationalism.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Example of analysis of theme "school experiences" adapting identity-trajectory to construct type descriptions of typical paths to doctoral studies abroad

Theme	Sprinters	Hurdlers	Orienteers	Race walkers
school experiences	-not reflected as relevant for the journey -described when requested -positive tone in descriptions	-reflected as meaningful for the journey -proceeding step-by-step overcoming barriers	-reflected as meaningful for the journey -obstacles restrict and slow down -ruptures	-reflected as relevant for the journey -positive tone in descriptions -longer path an own choice
agency	unconscious agency: -easiness -self-evidence -smooth -confidence -more or less goal oriented to get a good education -good at school	-challenges -negotiations and active decisions -not self-evident -acting against expectations -very good at school -independent -unconventional choices -no clear goals	bounded agency: -life circumstances guide choices -negative school/family experiences -alone with school choices -did ok at school	-self-evidence of following either academic or non-academic route -no negotiations needed at the time of choice or negotiated with family -not feeling restricted to make choices
personal	-family supports and encourages school work -family considers school important	-little or no support from family -challenges in family -growing up challenges -education not automatically a value in family	-lack of support from family -illness in family -growing up challenges -personal relationships guide choices	-family has positive attitude towards school -family encourages and trusts -family values practical/academic skills
past	-family support and trust reflect positive attitude towards school and future goals, strengthens motivation -success in school and positive feedback drive to set further goals -habitus proper fit with school -confidence	-lack of family support and possibilities to discuss school issues complicate choice-making	-lack of family support and possibilities to discuss school issues complicate choice-making -lack of confidence -earlier choices not closing educational path	-family support and trust reflect positive attitude towards school -earlier choices not closing educational path

Theme	Sprinters	Hurdlers	Orienteers	Race walkers
opportunity structures	-knowledge about educational options and how to reach goals	-academic choices not self-evident -lack of possibilities to discuss options available with family	-lack of possibilities to discuss options restricts the view -earlier choices not closing educational path	-earlier choices not closing educational path -gradually gaining more information through friends, relatives
horizons for action	-general upper secondary school considered the only possible option -higher education a goal latest in general upper secondary -not questioning own possibilities -confidence -habitus proper fit with school	-negotiations between many options after basic education and upper secondary -unfamiliarity of academic route -managing well at school and other people open up the horizons for academic options	-impulsive and sporadic options become valid -feeling lost -waking up later for education -drifting -adjusting unsatisfying choices -higher education not self-evident	-own options evolve gradually -confidence to follow options -higher education not self-evident

Appendix B. Example of analysis of theme "motivations and goals for doctoral studies abroad" adapting identity-trajectory to construct type descriptions of typical paths to doctoral studies abroad

Theme	Sprinters	Hurdlers	Orienteers	Race walkers
motivations and goals for doctoral studies abroad	-distinction in employment market -access to research career -strong career orientation: academic or non-academic career	-access to world class research -strong academic career orientation -enjoy research	-meaningful activity -no career orientation -enjoy research	-succesful career change -need to advance in career -career orientation
agency	*non-academic career*: -plans to work outside the university -international career plans -needs a PhD for work -extrinsic motives to add employability value with a PhD abroad -goals to be distinct -goals to gain social and cultural capital abroad	-goals to do high end academic research -needs a PhD -talent and enjoyment for research pushes forward -building up confidence -longing for challenges -building up mobility capital during higher education	-enjoyment of research motivates -restricted from applying straight after master's: lack of resources and suitable life circumstance	-longing for a career change and advance career -PhD a vehicle to increase employability value
personal	-work experience adds understanding of importance of PhD for employability -international experiences add knowledge concerning attractiveness and possibilities to study and live abroad	-international research experiences motivate and encourage for research and going abroad	-already abroad when applies -personal hindrances to apply: economic issues, family responsibilities, sense of obligation to work after studies, low self-esteem	-already abroad when applies -working experience
past	-university study times motivate to apply for a PhD abroad -unemployment of graduates in the field -degree inflation in Finland	-university study times motivate to apply for a PhD abroad -thesis process and international research experiences motivate	-thesis process motivates for research -family values lead to negotiations between work and study	-gain knowledge about logics of British working life during years working in Britain -understanding career value of PhD

Theme	Sprinters	Hurdlers	Orienteers	Race walkers
opportunity structures	-awareness of study abroad possibilities through university, thesis supervisor, friends, international experiences -importance of university status	- awareness of study abroad possibilities through international experiences during higher education -thesis supervisor -importance of university status	-awareness of possibility to apply for a PhD slowly growing -not a long-term plan -university status not relevant	-knowledge about British working life -understanding career value of PhD -knowledge about university status relevance for career -knowledge about doctoral studies through other people
horizons for action	-existing mobility capital to think about options as personally relevant -a PhD abroad a possibility to construct an individual path -unemployment threat opens up horizons	-realising own talent for research opens up the path for a PhD -thesis supervisor support encourages and builds up confidence	-thesis supervisor encouragement builds up confidence -possible to apply later when life circumstances allow and confidence builds up	-need for a career change opens up idea for a PhD personally

Appendix C. Construction of academic career identity-trajectory as an example of analysis

Networking	**Institutional**	**Intellectual**	**Career**
support research identity	**research identity resources and restrictions**	**negotiating progress and competition as natural**	**academic research career plans and aspirations**
many opportunities, own agency	supervision and teaching contribute to research identity: independence and confidence, relieve stress, understanding academic practices, sense of belonging to community controlling supervision not supporting independence	interplay of other strands	construction of research identity
contribute learning to do independent academic work	not having teaching responsibilities allows to make progress, but restricts learning academic work	publishing in top journals for future academic career, confidence in research skills	strive after capital relevant for academic career
emotional and intellectual support	student status restricts sense of development	strive for excellence	
sense of belonging to research community	funding creates safety and relieves stress		
knowledge on future academic opportunities	insecure funding opportunities for future and competition restrict research identity		

Appendix D. Description of the interviewees' background and their short narratives

Nimi	Sex (m/f)	Field of study	Parent's educational background	Doctoral studies ongoing when interviewed	Age when started doctoral studies
Ossi	m	pure/ applied sciences	both parents higher education	no	under 30 years
Siiri	f	pure/ applied sciences	one parent higher education	yes	under 30 years
Anne	f	social/humanities or related	parents no higher education	yes	over 35 years
Matti	m	social/humanities or related	parents no higher education or general upper-secondary	no	over 35 years
Reetta	f	social/humanities or related	parents no higher education	yes	between 30-35 years
Emma	f	pure/applied sciences	both parents higher education	no	under 30 years
Tarja	f	pure/ applied sciences	parents no higher education	yes	under 30 years
Sini	f	pure/ applied sciences	both parents higher education	yes	between 30-35 years
Teemu	m	pure/ applied sciences	parents no higher education	no	under 30 years
Miia	f	social/humanities or related	parents no higher education	no	over 35 years
Laura	f	pure/ applied sciences	parents no higher education or general upper-secondary	yes	under 30 years
Fanni	f	pure/ applied sciences	both parents higher education	yes	under 30 years
Miro	m	social/humanities or related	both parents higher education	no	under 30 years
Taru	f	pure/ applied sciences	one parent higher education	yes	under 30 years

Ossi (length of interview 1h 14min)

Ossi did well at school especially concerning mathematical subjects which he found easy. He knew from rather early on that he would head for higher education and entered without difficulties the preferred field which was mathematics related. In Ossi's family education was appreciated and he received support from home concerning school. Ossi found it self-evident to proceed on the educational path without negotiation. Ossi was interested in international experiences and spent longer periods abroad with his family when he was young. He also spent an exchange period abroad during higher education which he really appreciated. He was interested in new cultures, languages and getting to know new people. Ossi found internationality as something worth reaching for. He came up with the idea of doctoral studies abroad during higher education studies. He had good future working prospects but wanted something more than a routine working life. Doctoral studies abroad offered an opportunity to make a change in life, to become more international and find something individual. Ossi wanted to conduct doctoral studies in a highly-reputed university because he considered it valuable for future career especially in the non-academic job market where he was heading. The application process was challenging requiring a lot of effort as did the application for funding. Ossi was determined and found the process worth the effort because he considered the reputation of the university and the future degree as assets in the future. During doctoral studies Ossi had challenges in the beginning concerning accommodation. He also missed the independence of higher education studies he was used to in Finland. He faced challenges concerning his research in the beginning but could overcome them by being independent and active combined with availability of supportive supervision. A successful publication process at an early stage of doctoral studies also played an important role for Ossi and his self-confidence. Ossi found the doctoral study environment highly competitive but was not personally bothered by it. Ossi had already completed his doctoral studies and found career building in an international environment a lot more difficult in reality than he had thought at the beginning of studies. He was surprised how the degree from a highly-reputed university was not an automatic door-opener for a non-academic career which he had planned. Ossi ended up for an academic career however he had not abandoned international non-academic career plans from his future scenarios.

Siiri (length of interview 1h 26min)

Siiri managed well at school and considered school important. Her parents appreciated education and encouraged Siiri along the way. She had for a long time planned a certain future career but decided to abandon the ready-made plan. She had no plans after general upper-secondary school and completely missed the first applications. Siiri got in the university of applied sciences but these studies were not what Siiri wanted for the future. However, if it was not for these studies, Siiri had not come up with the idea for studying abroad. During these studies her awareness of study opportunities abroad were widened, and her English skills improved considerably building up her confidence. During studies she met people who could tell about study experiences and opportunities abroad, and started to think about such studies herself. Siiri had not travelled with her family. Siiri pointed out that university studies were her target all along but thoughts about studies abroad came to her mind during applied sciences studies. She headed for bachelor's studies in Britain which strengthened her emerging interest for the country and further studies there. She returned to Finland for master's studies which further strengthened her interest for more international studies, opened up a possibility for networking with international people and brought up the idea for doctoral studies abroad. During master's studies, she got really interested in doing research and realised that she was good at it. Fellow students were planning doctoral studies abroad and conversations with them started to make it sound like an interesting option and a good investment for the future. Most importantly, hearing stories about studying or planning doctoral studies abroad made it sound achievable. Britain was an obvious choice for her because she knew the country and had important people there who could help with getting settled. The beginning of studies was challenging. She managed to get long term funding which was important for being able to concentrate on research work. Siiri had a good supervision experience which helped her advance. She also took up other responsibilities in the university alongside the dissertation. She was planning an academic future and considered teaching as an inseparable part of academic work. Siiri had not yet completed her studies but planned for an academic future. She had learned the many sides of that work, the positive such as freedom and the negative such as competition and pressure to publish and wanted to give it a shot although not for any price.

Anne (length of interview 1h 30min)

Anne managed well at school although she never really considered herself as that good. She did not receive much support from home during school but considered it more due to her parents not knowing how to support instead of not wanting to. However, this she only started to understand later on along her educational path. She had long planned for a certain future which then did not actualise due to various reasons in her life situation. Instead, she more or less drifted to study in the university in the field which she found interesting enough but could not quite explain how she ended up there. University studies for Anne included feelings of otherness and being a stranger as she had no such models from home. Anne took up an exchange period during studies which she considered an eye-opening experience and very inspiring. She had travelled before with her friends but the exchange was the first time she actually lived abroad. This was also the first time she even thought of doctoral studies because she managed well with her studies abroad and heard about such opportunities. However, at that stage she merely thought of it as a possibility for other people than herself. She decided not to continue straight after master's studies for a doctoral degree abroad because for her finding employment and going to work seemed like more sensible and expected. Anne spent several years in working life before she started to long for a change and continued her studies. However, she still did not take up doctoral studies, although it had been completely possible, but entered other studies abroad instead. She enjoyed the studies which she considered one of the best decisions in her life and found her interest in doing research. The beginning of studies was stressful and challenging in a new country and because she felt a lot older than fellow students. A colleague became a significant support. The environment was pressuring and Anne felt a need to be productive and effective which she did not feel comfortable with. She also had difficulties with supervision. For Anne doing research signified more a meaningful process and an opportunity to learn than a career. The doctoral process was challenging but also a boost for her confidence. Anne's path was not determined or goal oriented but it was constructed of small pieces which fit together one after another.

Matti (length of interview 1h 11min)

Matti grew up on a farm and working there was more important than getting a good education. He had hardly any examples of family members that had done the matriculation examination. His family did not travel since they had no reason to as Matti explained. For Matti an obvious choice after comprehensive school was vocational school in order to get practical skills. He did not even think about going to general upper-secondary school. After vocational school he worked for several years, and only later on decided to apply for university. He did not really know what it meant to go to university. He decided to go on exchange during higher education studies which he found very inspiring, and after that he travelled a lot. He described his journey as gradually getting more international. During his travels he also met his future wife, was surrounded by people who had a doctoral degree and moved abroad. Matti worked for a while before he started doctoral studies. He had no idea what it meant before he had met people who could bring him closer to the academic world by sharing their experiences. He had also learnt during British working life that a doctoral degree especially from a reputed university would offer opportunities to climb on the career ladder. Matti was quite goal oriented but he was interested in developing on his field more than actually thinking about an academic career. However, he started to be more and more interested in doing research as he advanced. He talked a lot about publishing, pressure, competition and requirements for effectivity around the academic world especially in terms of highly ranked universities. He did not seem personally bothered by it but just advanced. Matti had already completed his doctoral studies and had been offered a possibility to continue in the university and have an academic career. He had done that for a while but was about to step away and give a chance to a non-academic career. However, he did not want to think that he would completely abandon the academic although he realised the change included a risk. He was thinking about combining business and research. He saw his future more in Britain than in Finland especially for family reasons.

Reetta (length of interview 1h 3min)

Reetta was not the best student at school but liked writing and was good at it. She told about some teachers having treated her less nicely, and that she was not encouraged at home concerning school. She had difficulties affecting her school work when she was young. Reetta drifted to university of applied sciences and was not at all satisfied with these studies. However, during these studies she spent some time abroad which she called a turning point in her life. She realised that international matters interested her and that she wanted to see more of the world. She had not had a chance to travel with her family. This experience led to more mobility experiences and studies at the open university after which she got into university. Becoming a university student was very meaningful and a confidence boosting accomplishment for Reetta. She got first experiences of doing research which she liked a lot. Reetta continued to travel also during university studies and met her future husband on one of these trips. She moved abroad where she started to think about doctoral studies. She found it rather complicated with a family. Finally, Reetta managed to find a doctoral position which was part-time. It was complicating to find funding and get started but after many ups and downs she succeeded. Reetta was not very goal oriented and described the doctoral degree as something to do and hard work but not with a concrete career target in mind. Reetta found it challenging to conduct doctoral studies with a family to be taken care of. There never seemed to be enough time and she also had challenges with the supervisor. However, all these challenges were relieved a little because she was more mature than fellow students and knew how to handle pressure, she got a new supervisor who understood also family life and they found day-care for children. Reetta worked a lot from home which saved time on the one hand but left her out from the academic community on the other hand. Reetta was not career oriented and family life guided her life more than reaching for a career, however, she still wanted to point out that doctoral studies were not a mere hobby for her. She would prefer working outside the university doing research-related work.

Emma (length of interview 1h 18min)

Emma was a good pupil at school and considered general upper-secondary school and university studies as rather self-evident choices. She was supported by her family along the educational path. They also travelled quite a lot when she was young. Emma did not get into her preferred field straight away but started on another field instead. Although she had planned to apply again, she actually decided to continue the other field because she had found it interesting and her motivation had developed along the way. She enjoyed the independence and responsibility of university studies, and considered secondary subjects important for her. She had thought of doctoral studies during master's studies but in Finland instead of abroad. The interest for doctoral studies had to do with a feeling that it was necessary for employment on her field in Finland. She had seen study mates who had not found a job after master's studies. Her thesis supervisor threw the idea of a doctorate abroad in the air. Emma described the decision as drifting more than strategic planning. She thought it would give her some extra time to think what to do in the future and she actually doubted that she would get a position. The application process was stressful as was the start of the studies because of problems with the apartment, everything being new, the language, and so on. It also took time to get used to the working rhythm and find a balance between studies and leisure time. Many people worked extremely long hours and made her feel insecure if she was doing enough. But she considered herself mature enough to know how she wanted to work and realised that she should not compare her way to do with others. Emma's supervisor was demanding but fair. She took up teaching responsibilities which she considered useful for the future. She told about publication pressure which started to get stronger especially towards the end. Emma had already completed her dissertation and found work in the university after the doctorate. She had thought of returning to Finland and working within business world. However, her plans changed since in Britain there were a lot more opportunities than in Finland and she had created useful contacts. She also called herself lucky. She was prepared for the insecurity of working life and was ready to work in the university as well as outside. During her journey she had learned to live more in the moment and not to plan everything ahead as she had done before.

Tarja (length of interview 56min)

Tarja was always good at school and liked it. School was easy and kind of taken care of automatically. Her parents were supportive and trusted she would do sufficiently well. Tarja had a long-term plan to go to study a certain field which meant she needed to go to university. She did not get in on the first try but took some open university studies instead and worked. After having started her university studies she realised how much she enjoyed research work, she was good it and got good feedback. Her future plans changed towards more research-oriented goals. She realised that in order to continue with research work she would need a doctorate. Tarja had not travelled a lot with the family and neither did she travel during university studies. She headed abroad because she felt there were no possibilities for her to continue in Finland on her subject field which was rather specific. Neither were there any positions available in the research groups in her university. She considered other options than Britain but finally she managed to get a position in Britain through the connections she had managed to create during university studies. She described the situation a coincidence, however, her networks played an important role. The beginning of studies was not very challenging, although everything was new. Funding was arranged which was important. Tarja had some difficulties in finding motivation and getting organised. However, Tarja got very good results in the beginning which created pressure to keep up a similar kind of level in a very competitive environment. Tarja had good supervision with a suitable balance between independence and support. Peers and post docs were also supportive. Tarja traveled a lot during her doctoral studies. Her future plans included a post doc in Britain so an academic career was her target. However, she considered the insecurities for finding funding for research as making the future difficult. She was not well aware of what other possibilities there would be for a career outside the university. Tarja thought that the research group, supervisor and publications were what counted in the future.

Sini (length of interview 1h 45min)

Sini managed well at school, chose general upper-secondary school rather automatically and was relatively competitive. She did not work very hard in general upper-secondary school and called herself a bit rebellious. She traveled some with her family but did not choose to go on exchange in general upper-secondary school although it was possible for her. She considered university as a rather obvious choice but the field was not that obvious and she chose it as a challenge. She had not that much interest in research during higher education. She went on exchange from the university which was very inspiring and decided to go abroad to work. After having worked for a while in Britain she started to feel a need for a change. Sini got a bachelor's degree from a new field which would offer possibilities careerwise in her workplace. She had a chance to do some research-related work during these studies and she realised that this would be her passion. She wanted to continue for a master's degree but had to negotiate with herself how wise it would be since she had a job and did not really need another master's. At this time doctoral studies were at back of her mind because she knew that in order to become a researcher a doctorate would most probably be needed. She had actually tried to get a doctoral position already after bachelor's but did not succeed and continued for a master's. Her master's studies were research-oriented which Sini considered important. After these studies she managed to get a doctoral position. Sini experienced a lot of set backs on the way, for example some changes with supervision but she did not give up. Sini took a trainee period outside the university during her studies which she considered as a possibility for creating connections. Although she preferred an academic career she was prepared to work outside the university. Her funding was about to end and she felt pressure to graduate. Sini described her supervisors as very supportive and important people for her doctorate experience. Sini was heading for an academic career but most important for her is that her work is meaningful.

Teemu (length of interview 1h 18min)

Teemu was a good student at school and advanced to general upper secondary school rather automatically. He was supported at home concerning school, especially his father expressed it was important. He applied to university but did not get into his preferred field and entered the second option. He decided to continue with the second option studies also later on because he needed the study points. In the university he learned that doctoral studies were a must or an automatic choice on his field for more or less everyone. Studies oriented people towards thinking about an academic career as the only available option. He considered secondary subjects very important for widening the perspectives about employment possibilities other than an academic career. Teemu described a summer job experience as an eye-opener for the poor employment situation on the field in Finland. Teemu went for an exchange during master's studies which was a positive experience for him. He had not traveled a lot before. He met his future wife during the exchange. After completing his thesis, he applied for a job in a company he knew but did not succeed. He started to think that in Finland everyone on his field continues for a doctorate and felt that there can not be enough jobs for all. He started to think about applying for doctoral studies but abroad instead of Finland which he did not consider an option for himself. His life situation also allowed to think about going abroad. The thought of doctoral studies according to Teemu came from his exchange experience where he met people with doctorates and also through his secondary subjects which were business oriented and had guided him to think that there were other jobs than those within the university where a doctorate could be useful. He did not have any contacts abroad but applied independently. He considered that his working experience within industry was useful for finding the position and funding. Teemu had a supervisor with high academic merits but felt he was not receiving good quality supervision. Teemu did not seem to be bothered but just took care of his responsibilities independently and managed to publish which helped. He experessed a very competitive environment which did not scare him because he was not planning to stay in the university for a career. Teemu had finished his doctorate and had already moved on for research work within industry. He considered the doctorate from a reputed university with a known supervisor having influenced that he found the work he had.

Miia (length of interview 1h 5min)

Miia managed well at school but had to take care of school independently. She did not have to work very hard for school. There were issues in the family which took the parents energy away from the children's school work. Miia did not continue to secondary education after comprehensive school but instead moved abroad and had a family. She had the idea to continue her education at some point in the university. She entered general upper secondary school later on in life. She got in the university and the skills she had acquired while abroad turned out helpful for the field she was interested in. Miia got in the university and studied alongside family responsibilities. She really enjoyed her studies which she did rather efficiently, athough she had to take a brake at some point for family resasons. During the master's thesis she realised that she really enjoyed research work. She was interested in continuing with doing research after graduation but had to go to work in order to support the family. Miia's choices were guided by family and economic issues. Later on in Britain she started to think again about doctoral studies and applied, partly because a friend had started. That example showed Miia that a doctorate is possible even as a more mature student. Miia's family situation also started to allow the idea of doctoral studies because her children had gotten older. Miia told that her main motivation was the enjoyment of doing research and she did not even realise that an academic career could be an option. Miia enjoyed her doctoral studies and even managed to publish. She had good supervision. Despite the good experiences, Miia had to put the doctorate on hold. She had started as a full-time student, changed to part-time status and then put the studies on hold. She had to work on the side because her funding only covered a small share of expenses. She started to feel it was pointles to work so much and try to conduct a dissertation with too little time. She prioritised supporting her family and especially her children with their education which was expensive. The decision to put the doctorate on hold was difficult and emotional. However, Miia found meaning in life also from other life areas such as family and voluntary work. Although Miia was happy with her choices, she had not abandoned the idea of some day re-starting the doctorate and finishing it.

Laura (length of interview 59min)

Laura managed well at school and described herself as a reader more than practical although the practical examples were available in her home environment. Laura was especially gifted in maths and found it easy. Her family did not express much appreciation towards education, and did not consider studying to require hard work. Laura proceeded to university encouraged by a teacher and got in straight away. She chose a practically oriented field where maths was needed but ended up studying the most theoretical subjects. She got very interested in doing research work during studies. She was goal oriented and determined. She traveled a lot during her studies especially in research environments. She also went for an exchange which was not at all common in the field. Laura was not familiar with the traditions and chose her own way. She told how her study mates knew what kind of career path was expected on the field and they found her choices peculiar. For Laura the inspiring abroad experiences led to wanting more such experiences. Laura had not traveled with her family and only now realised how much she enjoyed an international environment. She chose to do her master's thesis in a research group although industry was more common in the field. At that time, she started thinking about a doctorate more actively and started to get questions if she would be interested. Her friend was doing doctoral studies abroad and could tell her how cool stuff they do there which got Laura inspired to give it a go. She applied and considered Finland as a plan B. She considered top university and a supervisor as important aspects. Laura got in and got settled rather easily because she had her earlier abroad experiences. She also managed to get a funded position which mattered a lot. The doctoral experience in the research group was very intensive, a lot of work, almost all time was considered to be spent working with research. Laura found it stressful. Her supervisor was good but so demanding that Laura felt being squeezed in the corner many times, although she also told having learned a lot. She felt pressure to perform well all the time which was tiring. Laura had been planning an academic career throughout her studies but these plans started to change because she felt the environment was not what she had wanted. She did not experience the freedom but the pressure. She thought there were more career possibilities in Britain outside the university than in Finland but her contacts were all academic which worried her. Laura was about to finish her doctorate and had a possibility to continue in the university for a while which would give her some extra time to think what to do.

Fanni (length of interview 55min)

Fanni managed ok at school and received support from her family. Her family appreciated good education. Fanni considered it rather self-evident to go to general upper secondary school and also to university. Fanni did a lot of research work already during master's studies and headed for research-oriented summer jobs. She started to think during the studies which research group she wanted to continue with. It was not really a question of, if she would continue but where, and with which group instead. Fanni thought going abroad for doctoral studies would be a wise move because a mobility period was common and expected in her field after the doctorate anyway. This way she would be one step ahead. She had traveled some with her family but not very much. Fanni's thesis supervisor at the university recommended her the doctoral programme and the supervisor. For Fanni it was important to find something more than she would be able to get in Finland, and this university in Britain would offer just that with its top-quality research and wide networks. Fanni described the doctoral studies as a possibility to find her researcher identity which she still considered as only developing. The studies were also a possibility to have more time to think what she wanted to do research-wise in the future. For Fanni, the more theoretical questions had always been her interest but during her studies she started to widen her perspectives also towards more practical and experimental approaches. The start of the studies was challenging but having earlier research experiences and a friend already in Britain doing doctoral studies helped as did support from all the peers. She had ok supervision but had to be very independent which she thought was fine. She told that post docs were even more important supporters than the busy supervisor. Fanni experienced a very competitive environment, however, she felt it kind of belonged to the academic life and needed to be dealt with. For her it did not seem to present too big of a problem. Fanni headed for an academic career and wanted stay in Britain or abroad anyway for a post doc if possible after the doctorate. She saw more opportunities abroad for research work. Personal relationships had also become to matter more for Fanni along the way and she was thinking about the future choices linked to these relationships.

Miro (length of interview 1h 6min)

Miro started to take school more seriously towards the end of general upper secondary school. Before that he was a bit lazy and more or less drifted. He realised during an exchange in general upper secondary school that with a little effort he could manage really well. He started to overachieve and also continued to university. He did not get into his first choice at the first try but chose plan B and got in the next year. During university studies Miro found his interest in research. He loved doing the bachelor's and master's thesis and got extremely good feedback. The idea to study abroad had been at back of his mind for a longer time but he started doctoral studies in Finland after having worked for a while. He thought research work would suit him better than a nine to five job. He could not find funding in Finland and had to work while conducting the doctorate. This meant that he did not advance much with the dissertation. Miro started to get interested in the works of a specific researcher in Britain and was offered a doctoral study position which did not include funding. Miro could not turn down such an opportunity to study in a reputed university and despite the risks left for studies abroad. He had thought of a loan but managed to get funding. Miro's supervisor had high academic merits and was extremely demanding. Miro told that many fellow students found the supervisor's feedback often too brutal. Miro experienced that his supervisor encouraged and trusted him. Supervisor had time for personal meetings, and they had good discussions which created a connection and suited Miro's way to work. He also appreciated feedback for his academic writing especially his English. Miro managed to complete his doctorate in time, although he did not work around the clock like some fellow students. For Miro an academic career was the target all along. He was a bit disappointed that he did not find a post doc abroad which had been better for his career he thought. Finding a post doc was not easy in Finland either especially because Miro lacked relevant contacts due to his time abroad. Now he had managed to establish a relatively secure position but it had taken time. However, he was satisfied with the situation and had grown an academic self-confidence which he thought reflected positively also in other life areas.

Taru (length of interview 1h 4min)

Taru managed well at school without much effort. She did not receive much support from home concerning school but felt like she did not need it either. General upper secondary school was a self-evident choice for her, however she found growing up and being young rather complicated. She had a hard time deciding what she wanted to do and even thought of not continuing to university. Encouraged by a person close to her she went to university. In the university she continued trying to find out what she really wanted to do. She was interested in so many different subjects, traveled a lot, changed her plans all the time and also needed time to find out what kind of person she wanted to be. Studying was a kind of side track for everything else in life. She got interested in research work while conducting the bachelor's thesis. She was good at it and for the first time started to feel that this was something she wanted to do in the future. Taru got a possibility to do a research period abroad. She also worked as a research assistant. During her research period abroad she found out what she wanted to research in her master's thesis, and after that she knew that she wanted to continue doing research. She got a lot of recommendations to continue with doctoral studies but wanted to map out her options and think carefully who she wanted to work with and what kind of questions she was most interested in. Then she decided to apply for a university abroad. Taru enjoyed her studies and was very satisfied with the feeling of having her own project. She enjoyed the co-operation within the project and feeling of communality. Taru was also very happy with the supervision. Her supervisors showed genuine interest in her research and encouraged, criticised and guided her. Their working style also suited her. Taru felt an academic career would suit her the best and she wanted to continue with a post doc in her university abroad. However, she was used to being one the best ones and for the first time she could not take that for granted anymore. She had a feeling that she might not be good enough and realised it was very possible that she would not get a post. A long publication record was needed and that she did not have. However, she was happy that for the first time in life at least she knew what she wanted to do and that was to do research.

Appendix E. Interview questions.

Background information
Could you tell me about your doctoral study path? How did you end up abroad for doctoral studies and what do you consider meaningful concerning the journey?

Before

- education of parents, doctors in the family
- siblings, other relatives, friends
- family attitude towards education
- travels with family
- Have you lived abroad before? Do you have people close to you that have lived/studies abroad?
- How would you describe your educational path?
- favourite subjects? How did you do at school? Were you especially good at some subjects?
- What kind of student were you/how would you describe yourself as a student?
- What kind of relationship did you have with teachers/other students?
- hobbies
- How/why did you proceed to higher education? Did you get in straight away?
- Why that university/field?
- How would you describe your study time? How did your studies go? What kind of student were you? What was your relationship with other students?
- Did you go on exchange?
- Why did you apply to doctoral studies? When did you get interested in research?
- Can you estimate a time/happening when your thoughts about doctoral studies became clearer?
- Why abroad? Why Britain? What kind of issues influenced your choice? What kind of value do you attach to doctoral study abroad?
- Why that university? What value do you think the university gives you?
- How did you find out about abroad studies? Any person that influenced? Did you get help with the process? Did you know someone studying abroad?
- What are your goals in relation to doctoral studies?
- What is your work history like?

During

- What kind of issues do you estimate have influenced your current situation?
- How would you describe your current situation?
- How are your doctoral studies going? What is it like to study in your university?
- What factors help/restrain your studies?
- Have you had situations that have significantly influenced your advancement in studies?
- What challenges have you had?
- What is the meaning of doctoral studies to you?
- What is the atmosphere like in your university?
- Do you feel you aretreated differently because you are from Finland?
- Are there many Finns/international students in your field/university?
- Have your studies changed you as a person? Has the time abroad changed you?
- Could you tell about your family, do you have children?
- What do you estimate as significant on your path in terms of doctoral studies/your development in life/your identity?

Future

- Do you think you will work abroad in the future?
- Future goals?
- Where do you see your future? What do you think you will do in the future?
- What kind of challenges do see in the future?
- What advantages/restrains do you see the abroad study poses you?
- What do you think about an academic career?

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