Title: **‘*International* s*tudent identities and inclusion in Higher Education in the UK ’.***

Work in progress

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*Background*: In the higher education context, the OECD (1999) suggests that internationalisation is the integration of an international/intercultural dimension into all of the activities of a University, including the teaching, research and service functions. However, in UK Universities internationalisation has focused mainly on increasing the number of international students, rather than promoting opportunities for intercultural dialogue, competence, communication and equality in higher education (Hyland et al. 2008).

In spite of the different perspectives on internationalisation, the majority of research conducted in the field of internationalisation tends to compare the experiences of students from one culture with those of another or to evaluate internationalisation strategies developed by institutions. Such research is valuable but it ignores the complexities of interactions between students and academics and among students (home and international) and the shifting and entangled identities (Archer and Yamashita, 2003) that we all bring to the international classroom (Sarup, 1996; Fox, 2006). A focus on the identity work of international students represented as identification: *‘an ongoing internal process wherein personal meaning and significance are achieved as one locates one’s place in a given social context’* (Atewologun, 2011) and becoming (as opposed to being) can throw light on the challenges that individuals engage in order to construct positive identities and the implications for inclusion in higher education.

*Research explored:* Our study will explore, how multiple student identities (e.g. female, Greek) shape and are shaped by notions and experiences of inclusion/exclusion within the internationalised University of York. The study will address the following questions:

**Research questions**

* What identities do international students’ construct through experiences of teaching, research, assessment, supervision, relationships with home students and relationships with staff in a higher education context?
* What is the role of gender, ethnicity, culture, age and class in shaping experiences and identities in higher education?
* What are international students’ views and experiences of equality, inclusion and diversity in higher education?
* How might international students’ gender and ethnic identities be influenced throughout their experience in UK higher education?

*Theoretical framework:* The study is theoretically informed and embedded in feminist concepts of exclusion, belonging and otherness (de Beauvoir, 1949; Paechter, 1998; Ozbilgin and Woodward, 2004). Othering is a way of defining and securing one’s own positive identity through the stigmatization of an "other." Otherness can be projected to any individual or group to challenge their status, competence, and authority and disqualify them from membership to a learning or professional community.

*Research methods and data analysis:* 20 Semi-structured interviews with a diverse sample of international students drawn from the University of York. International students in this study are defined as those studying full-time and who are not resident ordinarily in the UK. Attention will be given to gender, culture, language and ethnicity and the ways international students are spoken about and conceptualised in Higher Education. Embedded in a post-structuralist and interesectionality framework, our analysis is sensitive to power relations and context. It will aim to make sense of the processes in which international students (and the researcher) engage with higher education experiences, interrogated from multiple perspectives.

*Findings/Conclusions:*  We envisage that the study findings will enhance theorising about diversity and identity work and inform pedagogical and organisational approaches to internationalisation and equality in higher education.