

University of Southern Queensland

Who do I think I am and where do I want to be?
A study of Indian international VET students in
Australia.

A thesis submitted by
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ABSTRACT

There have been many studies of international students studying in Australia recognising them as a special population. Literature has also acknowledged that most international students appear to acculturate and adapt as they eventually acquire the skills needed for their Australian context. This research seeks to understand these changes in self-identity and discursive identity in relation to acculturation experiences and adaptation events. Six Indian international students undertaking a Diploma in Salon Management at a Brisbane vocational education and training (VET) college are involved in this research on identity change during acculturation.

While sojourner discursive practices and identity development form the study's theoretical foundations, international students' crossing political borders and social boundaries also contribute to the research theoretical framework. Issues of student security and wellness during acculturation and adaptation into Australian socio-cultural environments are also investigated.

Using a case study approach and a thematic narrative analysis, this research investigates the stories gathered from one-to-one participant interviews. As the research design recognises each student as an individual case, six participant vignettes, descriptive profiles and case study descriptions are developed from the analysed data sequences. Through use of Riessman's (2008) narrative analysis approach, data are not fractured as in other approaches. By using a theoretically informed and methodologically rigorous approach to analysing participants' words, their voices are able to explain their experiences in the vignettes and case study descriptions. As the researcher, I acknowledge that the participants view themselves as actors within their Australian social and VET contexts and I accept the participants' descriptions as reflections of their chosen selves and their reality.

The findings from this research provide new theoretical insights into sojourners who, while accepting the label of student, act more like migrants. During the second analysis of the participants' stories a new idea of resilience is identified. This shock absorbing resilience representation does not have a physical or psychological downturn accompanied by a gradual return to the pre-adverse level of functioning, as in the seminal Carver's (1998) model. With this depiction of resilience, individuals have the ability to function continuously, thereby showing no significant fluctuations in their performance.

The results from this research open an investigation into an area that has not previously been a specific focus in the Australian context: namely, VET sector international students. Issues of identity, acculturation adjustments and adaptation of Australian VET sector international students are raised and areas where additional research is required are indicated. It is through access to further research-based information, that Federal, State and local policy makers, VET providers, and other stakeholders are better informed when pursuing their goal of quality Australian VET education services that are competitive.

DECLARATION

I certify that the work submitted in this thesis is original, except as acknowledged in the text. The material herein has not been submitted, either in whole or part, for any other award at this or any other university except where acknowledged.

4/ 03 /2015

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Principal Supervisor

Date

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Date

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LIST OF TERMS AND NOTIONS

- Acculturation** When two cultures make physical contact over a long or short period either through migration or tourism, changes occur in individuals and groups from both cultures. Acculturation (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis & Sam, 2011) is the collective term that describes these behavioural and psychological changes that result from the different cultures being in contact. Using a sociological lens, this concept is defined as a two-way reciprocal accommodation process where characteristics are exchanged, accepted, rejected and blended to form new cultural behaviours in response to environmental demands. In this research assimilation and acculturation are seen as different concepts. Assimilation is viewed as a strategy which may be used during the acculturation process.
- Adaptation** When behavioural and psychological acculturation changes occur over a long period and have become stable, adaptation is achieved. Adaptation (Berry & Sam 2014) may be a positive or negative state i.e. well-adapted or poorly adapted. The two facets of adaptation are psychological and socio-cultural. Psychological adaptation considers the individual's psychological and physical wellbeing while socio-cultural adaptation refers to how well and the amount of decision control the acculturating individual has for managing their daily life. In this research I investigate the participants' achievement of psychological and socio-cultural adaptation in terms of their socio-cultural fit and ability to manage their lives within their Australian environments.
- Agency** Agency (Erickson, 2010) in a sociological context refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices. An agent refers to the individual person. In this research individuals are seen as agents that were influenced by socio-cultural groups or formal socio-political structures. In using their agency, individuals make decisions that may or may not agree with the group or the socio-political structure.

Assimilation	The term assimilation (Berry et al., 2011) does not appear to have an agreed meaning. The distinguishing feature relates to a change in culture but the disagreement hinges on who is undergoing the change. It may be both the host society and the individual or the group. Alternatively, it may be that the individual or group is influenced by or has selected to change culturally and have identified with the host society. This research uses the latter meaning where cultural change is an environment influenced or agency decision of an individual or group where they change so as to identify and interact within the host socio-cultural environment. The term assimilation is not considered an appropriate synonym for acculturation as it is viewed as one of the strategic options available in the process of acculturation.
Biculturalism	Biculturalism (Tadmor, Galinsky & Maddux, 2012) is a political or social ideology that describes a community that recognises only two cultural groups living together while both maintain their ethnic and culturally characteristic individuality. In a bicultural environment, people consider life as an <i>us and them</i> socio-cultural situation. In this research the term biculturalism is not considered an appropriate synonym for acculturation as the process of acculturation involves activities that occur in a culturally diverse environment.
Borders	Borders (Marginson et al., 2010) or barriers are considered intangible political terms in this research. The discussion on border crossing relates to the legal requirements for Australian student visas to temporarily migrate from India (their originating nation) to Australia (their host nation).
Boundaries	Boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) are considered more flexible, fluid, and intangible in this research. A social, cultural, educational boundary identifies a group and creates insider or outsider characteristics. In this research the role of socio-cultural boundary crossing by international students is examined.
Connectedness	When individuals develop functional and quality networks, they feel psychologically supported. This feeling of psychological support allows individuals to develop connectedness (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008) where a sense of belonging is built or a feeling that they have found their place in their environment. Connectedness provides individuals with a belief that they have some decision making control. This thesis discusses importance of connectedness for international students.

Cultural capital	Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) ¹ consists of non-financial assets of an individual that promote social mobility and raise an individual's social status within the dominate society. In some cultures, family social status is raised along with the individual's status. In this research, cultural capital relates to the perception by the individual, their family, and their community of increased status and power which can be achieved through education. The individual's <i>habitus</i> is altered due to their experiences and observations.
Diaspora	Diaspora (Hall, 1990) ² is the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from their original homeland.
Discourse	Discourse (Gee, 2014) can be viewed as dialogue (little "d") or an individual's way of being (big "D"). In this research discourse is defined as the distinctive ways an individual thinks, acts, interacts, dresses and uses body language which is considered by followers of Gee to be big D. The role of a D-discourse is to secure a place in a specific socio-cultural group and be seen as a certain type of person, such as student, worker, wife or other functional role.
Discursive identity	Discursive identities (Gee, 2014) are the functional ways of being or discourses. An individual can have a number of discursive identities that meet their needs when they interact with various groups in different environments. These discursive identities allow them to be seen as an insider or outsider of the group.
Ethnic identity	Ethnic identity (Richardson, 2007) is the way individuals and groups culturally define and identify themselves in relation to other groups that are culturally different. In this research the term ethnic identity is not considered an appropriate synonym for acculturation as the process of acculturation involves more activities than identifying with a cultural group.
Ethnocultural societies	The ethnic nature of a society identifies the cultural traits or characteristics of a group. Ethnicity is a label used to describe cultural groups e.g. Chinese, Indian, Australian, Western, Eastern. The larger society may be made of a number of ethnocultural groups. The manner these groups are clustered into the main society structure can vary, such as plural society, unicultural society, multicultural society, or melting pot society (Bochner, 2006).

¹ In contemporary research literature, the writing of P. Bourdieu (1986) in *The forms of capital*, is viewed as seminal work.

² In contemporary research literature, the writing of S. Hall (1996) in *Who needs identity*, is viewed as seminal work.

Global citizens	The term global citizen (Bauman, 2009) ³ describes the positioning of people. While they are recognised as a resident of one country, they can also be a citizen of the world. In this research international students are viewed as global citizens as they are able to travel between nations and change their residency status to meet their study and life needs.
Globalisation	Globalisation (Bauman, 2009) refers to the process where societies and cultures influence one another and become more alike through trade, immigration, and the exchange of information and ideas. In this research the term globalisation is not considered an appropriate synonym for acculturation as globalisation covers several societies and cultures and how they become alike or harmonised. Whereas, acculturation refers to the changes that take place between individuals or groups when two cultures make physical contact.
Habitus	Habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) ⁴ refers to an individual's lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations that evolve over time due to their social group experiences and observations. Recognised as individual agents, a person's habitus changes and develops due to the social identity choices they make. As people are mobile agents, they are able to take on different socio-cultural group characteristics when their environment alters. These changes create a new structured mindset of who they think they are and their perceived identity. In this research an individual's habitus may alter due to their new socio-cultural experiences while achieving an Australian diploma qualification.
Identity	Identity (Norton & Toohey, 2011) can refer to an individual's discursive identity or to their perceived self-identity. In this research identity is viewed as an internal formation that is continually being created, is never complete, and is an internal historical, cultural and social production. Although a person's identity is influenced by their values and beliefs, individuals are able to develop identities to meet their needs for different socio-cultural situations.

³ In contemporary research literature, the writing of Z. Bauman (2009) in *Identity in the globalising world*, is viewed as seminal work.

⁴ In contemporary research literature, the writing of P. Bourdieu (1986) in *The forms of capital*, is viewed as seminal work.

Integration	Integration (Berry, 2006a) is a process where some traits of the individual or original culture of the group are maintained while actively taking on socio-cultural characteristics of the host environment. Integration enables people to effectively take part in networks within the larger society. In this research the term integration is not considered an appropriate synonym for acculturation as it is viewed as one of the strategic options available in the process of acculturation.
International students	International students (Marginson et al., 2010) are individuals who have been accepted under the Australian visa system to undertake formal study in a government recognised college, institute, school or university for a specific period. In this research international students are viewed as individuals whose country of origin is not Australia.
Marginalisation	Marginalisation (Berry, 2010) is viewed as one of the strategic options available in the process of acculturation. When an individual or group are marginalised, they have little interest in interacting and establishing relationships with others in the host community. They also have little interest in or little options available to them to maintain their original cultural traits and identity.
Melting-pot society	Melting-pot society (Berry, 2006a) has a single dominant or mainstream society with various minority groups located on the margin until they are absorbed into the mainstream group. Cultural continuity is denied and only by absorption can they participate in the society. A melting-pot society believes that there should be one nation with one people and one culture.
Multiculturalism	Multiculturalism (Berry, 2006a) is a political ideology that describes how different ethnocultural groups live together while maintaining their ethnic and culturally characteristic individuality. In this research the term multiculturalism is not considered an appropriate synonym for acculturation as the process of acculturation involves activities that occur in a culturally diverse environment.
Multicultural society	Multicultural society (Berry, 2006a) has a number of ethnocultural groups who maintain their cultural identity and participate in the larger society. While all the cultural groups have shared norms, individual ethnic cultural institutions are encouraged to accommodate the specific cultural interests of groups.
Plural society	Plural society (Berry, 2006a) is where a number of different cultural groups reside together within a shared social and political framework.

Resilience	A demonstration of the physical ability to be resilient shows three common attributes: change, adaptability and transformability. In this research the focus is on personal resilience which allows an individual to bounce back after experiencing stress and adversity. Personal resilience (Baker, 2010) is viewed as an internal ability or characteristic that influences the individual's perception of their situation, and therefore their response to circumstances that may be potentially stressful.
Re-socialisation	Re-socialisation (Sam, 2006) is reshaping of previously acquired skills so as to meet the demands of the host society. In this research the term re-socialisation is not considered an appropriate synonym for acculturation as the process of acculturation generally involves more than re-socialisation activities.
Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy (Baker, 2010) in individuals is developed over time and experience. In this research self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully achieve their goals. Characteristics of self-efficacy or self-belief system include self-confidence, self-determination, and self-motivation. Resilience and self-efficacy are viewed as co-operators as when highly developed sense of efficacy is indicated, strong resilience ability may also be observed.
Separation	Separation(Berry, 2010) is viewed as one of the strategic options available in the process of acculturation. When an individual or group are separated, they have a strong desire and place great value on maintaining their original culture. They also have little interest in interacting and establishing relationships with others in the host community.
Socio-cultural	Change is continually occurring in societies and cultures to ensure their survival and meet the needs of their environment. Thus to be included within a particular social or cultural group, individuals have a certain discourse (Gee, 2009). In this research, factors that can affect an individual's choices as to their discourse or identity characteristics are seen as socio-cultural areas.
Socio-cultural fit	When individuals attempt to find their socio-cultural fit, they may make discursive or self-identity changes to themselves or make changes to their environment, or do both. The need to make these changes is founded on their desire to find their place or "fit" where they feel they belong (Baker, 2010). In this research, the act of finding one's socio-cultural fit is recognised as part of the acculturation process.

Sojourner	A sojourner (Bochner, 2006) is an individual who travels overseas with the idea of achieving a particular goal within a specified period. Sojourners may be tourists, international students, expatriate workers, international civil servants, and military personnel. International students have a specific education-related purpose and are generally thought to be a temporary population. Migrants (refugees and immigrants) are not considered sojourners as they tend to have a more permanent focus when making socio-cultural adjustments to their environment. This research identifies international students may come with different aims, objectives and purposes when they are given an international student visa and accept their Australian temporary resident status.
Unicultural society	Unicultural society (Berry, 2006a) has only one culture, one language, one set of identity characteristics, and one religion.

CHAPTER 1: THE RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Contextualising the Research

One constant that anthropological and sociological researchers can rely upon is the fact that they will be working with change. Socio-cultural changes are known to occur when people from different cultures encounter one another and establish relationships (Berry, 2006a, 2010, 2014). Individual identity change then follows as people acculturate into their chosen society (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Vahed, 2007, 2013; Ward, 2013; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang & Noels, & Saumure, 2006) and find their socio-cultural fit.

In this thesis, I investigate the different identity changes and discourses international students develop while studying in the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector. The focus of this research has followed my long term interest in international VET students and my curiosity on their acculturation changes. Since 2002 I have been working with international VET students in Australian and international environments and have observed that they make a variety of personal changes as they identify and come to terms with social and educational situations.

While international students in Australia come from many different nations and financial situations, the students in this research are full-fee paying⁵ students from India who are completing a Diploma⁶ in Salon Management at a Brisbane VET private institute. Recognising India as a main cultural contributor to the Australian VET international student population (Australian Education International, n.d.), this research explores the stories told to me by a small group of Indian international VET students. While international students may come from different nationalities, their opportunities and legal restrictions may vary due to Australian visa stipulations and regulations. Chapter 2 examines a number of significant areas relating to international students in Australia, foregrounding factors specific to this research which are critically investigated through the literature⁷.

⁵ While partially or fully sponsored international students form part of the Australian international education market, full-fee paying students are the major contributors towards international education in Australia. Marketing of Australian education to international students targets all education sectors- Higher education, VET and schools.

⁶ The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) has opened the doors for local and international students to articulate through vocational education to university. Pathway agreements between individual universities, public institutes (TAFE) and private colleges market that on successful completion of a Diploma course, graduates have the opportunity to articulate into a university program and in some instances use their studies to provide entry credits.

⁷ Literature relevant to this research on international students is examined in Chapter 2. Germane information is located under the headings of International Students in Australia; International Student Wellbeing in Australia; International Student Sojourners; Political Borders; Social and Cultural Boundaries; International Student Shocks; International Student Cross-Cultural Adjustment; Creating a Sense of Place; International Student Connectedness, Risk, Resilience and Self-Efficacy in Australia; International Student Adaptation; Identity Development; Acculturation; and Acculturation in Australia.

Conceptualising the Research

The conceptual foundation of this research is cultural studies. Cultural studies, according to Barker (2005), has no boundaries and is used in academic disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, English literature as well as a range of geographic and institutional spaces. “Cultural studies is a discursive formation” (Barker, 2005, p. 6) with its centre on the question of representation as to how the world is represented “to us and by us in meaningful ways” (Barker, 2005, p. 8). These notions of identity and subjectivity became central ideas of cultural studies during the 1990’s. Further discussion on cultural study concepts and identity are elucidated in Chapter 4.

Couched within cultural studies, this research acknowledges individual, group and environmental change as an ongoing process. Using a cultural research frame, my approach locates “ individuals in a social context” (p. 103) where their “values, aspirations and associations are formed” (Keating, 2008, p. 103) and meaning can be given to their choices. When examining the “history people live” (p. 187), a cultural world orientation recognises culture as a production that has been influenced by the “structures... handed down from the past” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. 187). Culture is a “collection of behaviour patterns and beliefs” (Patton, 2002, p. 81) that provide any human group of people with thought, action and interaction standards that evolve over time. Cultural studies takes into account “historical, political, economic, cultural, and everyday discourses” (p. 187) while focusing on questions of “community, identity, agency, and change” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. 187). In this research my aim is to explain the behaviours and “culturally determined” (p. 103) choices and “emotional forms of action” (Keating, 2008, p. 103) of a group of Indian international VET students.

Cradled within cultural studies theory, a realist post-positive constructivism paradigm provides the theoretical interpretative frame to discover more on identity development. Past research (Castells, 2010; Hirst, 2007; Vahed, 2007, 2013) and contemporary theory in psychology, social psychology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies (Hall, 1996; Holland, 2010; Holland & Lave, 2009) accepts that identities are continually being formed, are never complete, and are internal historical, cultural and social productions which take on specific discursive forms and practice. While internalised individual identity (or self-identity) is actively created and re-created over time, a discursive identity or discourse will be constituted out of difference and developed in order to be recognised as a distinct *type* of person. The differences between discursive identity and discourse are discussed later in this chapter as key terms.

Through the development of certain discursive identity behavioural characteristics or distinguishing traits, people are provided inclusion or exclusion into specific socio-cultural groups. Decisions on changes to and formations of different self-identities are made by the individual. These decisions are made through exposure to various academic and social groups, contexts and constraints within different environments, realities and discourses (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2011). As in other inductive human behavioural research, the theoretical framework of this research is not intended to confirm or refute a theory but rather extend and refine existing theory (Merriam & Simpson, 2000) on identity, acculturation adjustments and adaptation.

The Research Questions

The objective of this research project is to investigate and gain an understanding, in order to explain to others, why Indian international students make decisions on identity⁸ changes during their acculturation into Australian VET and community sectors. I will not be exploring a phenomenon, as that would consider a specific lived experience. However, through the use of interview dialogue, I will employ a case study approach to explain the multiple discourses and discursive practices of the international student participants. Specifically, my investigation is on identity and the discursive constructions of Indian international students in the Australian VET sector. To this end, I begin with my research questions:

1. *What identities do Indian international students build as they study in the VET sector within an Australian context?; and*
2. *How did the participants demonstrate resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit?*⁹

An Outline of the Research Project

Unlike Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly who view an ethnographic narrative inquiry as “both phenomena under study and method of study” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 4), I have taken a position where I separate the narrative (object) from the methodology and analysis method. This investigation into narratives uses a case study approach as the methodology and a narrative analysis strategy or method for analysing the personal narrative data. In using a narrative analysis method (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, 2011), I am able to reflect on and interpret the data. Thus themes are illuminated, allowing me to understand how distinct discourses are put to work by the participants as they establish lives within their social worlds.

Personal narratives are considered a type of case-centered research. By shedding light on the “intersection of biography, history, and society” (Riessman, 2002, p. 697), specific life events and experiences that the participants describe in their recapitulated stories, are able to be analysed. It is due to the subjective nature of each participant’s story that thick, rich and unique case studies are able to be built. As it is this subjectivity that provides distinct case study characteristics, two other analytical techniques considered are discounted as they tend to distort story subjectivity. One of the alternative techniques interjects and merges the researcher’s interpretations of the data within each participant’s narrative, while the second analytical approach uses a group comparative orientation and looks at the structural features of the coproduced narratives developed by the participant and the interviewer. Both techniques implant data, reducing participant subjectivity and warping analytical results.

Through the use of vignettes and profile descriptions which support the case study descriptions, an inductive exploration is conducted on the diverse and complex identity discourses and discursive practices of the small group of international VET students. This exploration acknowledges that for this sample of international VET students, as well as individual historical and cultural backgrounds and value systems (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001), they also bring with them their own perceptions

⁸ Two forms of identity will be investigated- discursive identity and self-identity.

⁹ Development of the second research question reflected the unexpected evidence shown in the first data analysis.

and expectations of living and studying in Australia. Individual backgrounds and value systems are considered influential factors during the process of decision making on: (a) the choice of discourses to accept or reject; (b) the different identity groups they wish to be identified with; and (c) the discursive activities that are considered appropriate or inappropriate when interacting with others (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2014). Those decisions will affect their ability to socio-culturally acculturate and be comfortable in their new environment.

By focusing the investigation on specific individual cases, the particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, in press) characteristics of qualitative case study research are utilised. Therefore, I am able to provide snapshot profiles (refer Chapter 6) based on vignettes (refer Appendix G) and detailed descriptions and interpretations (refer Chapter 7) of the complex issues that surround the discursive and self-identity development of this small group of Indian international VET students.

Research data are collected using one-to-one interviews. This approach allows the students to share their stories on their experiences at a particular point within their lives. Personal narratives enable both the voices of the interviewees and the ways they make “meaning of their experiences” (Rabionet, 2009, p. 203) to be captured. Through their stories, I am able to gain an understanding of each individual’s “fluid” (p. 204) identity, “social realities” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 204) and their actions and community relationships.

In Chapters 6 and Chapter 7, I offer descriptive and interpretative accounts where the participants’ stories are accompanied by my analysis of their stories. As I gained insight on the participants’ identity development processes, evidence of a new form of resilience is also demonstrated. This evidence informed the shaping of the shock absorbing resilience diagram presented in Chapter 8.

As noted by Simon Marginson and associates (2010), international students in Australia are “engaged in a challenging project of self-formation” (p. xii) and unfortunately “research on international education rarely foregrounds the voices of the students themselves” (p. xii). The voices of the participants in this research are not gathered as data segments. Rather, sequences of dialogue are clustered which privileges the participants’ voices.

With a dearth of sociological studies in the Australian VET sector, this research partly addresses this gap in knowledge. The focal point of this investigation is identity development, acculturation adjustment and adaptation of international students in the Australian VET context. Other areas of research in the VET sector appear to have targeted VET pedagogy, connectiveness and the purposeful use of Australian qualification pathways by international students (Cao & Tran 2014; Tran, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014); student-migrant socio-political consequences (Robertson, 2008, 2013); and international student advisor roles (Craven, 2009).

Key Terms

Many of the terms used within this exploratory research are employed in academic studies in psychology, social psychology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. As there may be slight variations in the application and meaning of terms used by each discipline, I have provided explicit conceptual meanings of the terms and notions found in this research. These are working definitions which are based from observations and extensive reading. Through understanding these key terms, as applied in this investigation, readers will be better positioned to follow my research journey on identity, acculturation and adaptation of Indian international students within the VET sector in the Australian context. The key terms and notions are discussed alphabetically in the List of Terms and Notions, rather than by text appearance.

An Overview of the Thesis

The thesis is organised in eight chapters. This first chapter has provided my reasons for the focus of the research and contextualised my experiences as a researcher and teacher of international VET students. The following seven chapters explain the foundations of my thesis in terms of research literature, theoretical framework, the processes and the outcomes of this project.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the purpose and relationship of each chapter. The diagram depicts the researcher as the central component (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) as the researcher's background influences each phase of the process. Aspects of the researcher, pertinent to the investigation, are revealed during discussion of the appropriate phase, rather than in isolation.

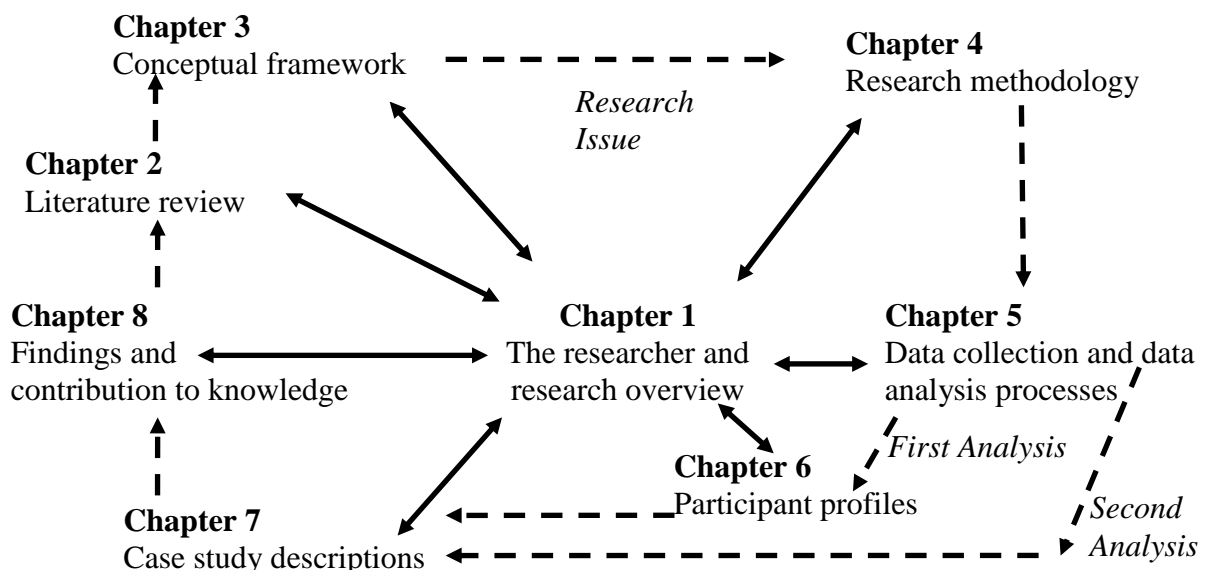


Figure 1.1 Chapters of the thesis and their relationship. Adapted from "The Sage Book of Qualitative Research", edited by N. K Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 2005, p. 23. Copyright 2005 by Sage Publications.

Chapter 2: Literature review.

Chapter 2 provides an extensive review of contemporary research and theoretical literature on the concepts and issues surrounding identity and identity development. While the literature establishes a conceptual foundation, the theoretical framework outlines the philosophies¹⁰ used in analysing data and finding an answer to the two research questions:

1. *What identities do Indian international students build as they study in the VET sector within an Australian context?;* and
2. *How did the participants demonstrate resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit?*

The chapter commences with a discussion on the economic push-pull factors of the international student marketplace. This information is followed by a review of the cultural boundaries and political borders faced by sojourners who many consider to be a “special population” (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 15). A description on the potential impacts from socio-cultural shocks, learning shocks and connectedness follows. As international students find their place and identity in order to fit into their Australian social and academic communities, their sense of connectedness is influential when dealing with cultural and learning shocks. Resilience and self-efficacy in discursive identity development is then examined. The discussion then identifies a different type of sojourner, one who is motivated to seek permanent residency and tends to behave more like a migrant than a temporary citizen.

Within this chapter, light is shed on a number of key points to be considered when examining international students’ identity development during acculturation and adaptation into Australian contexts. Chapter 3 further investigates these points while unpacking my conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 Research conceptual framework.

This chapter reviews the key concepts that emerged from an analysis of the scholarly literature presented in Chapter 2. These foregrounded notions and concepts are considered significant in this research and provide the structural components of my conceptual framework. In unpacking the research conceptual framework, justification for further examination of these concepts and notions in relation to Indian international students within Australian community and VET education environments, is revealed.

Chapter 4: Research methodology.

Chapter 4 focuses on the methodology of this research and presents the theory and philosophy underlining the research design. After an extensive reading of possible methodologies, a cultural studies qualitative research approach is used. A discussion on the theory behind the selection of a case study methodology describes a symbolic interaction approach within a realist post-positive constructivism paradigm. This approach aligns with my conceptual framework, my ontology, epistemology and

¹⁰ The researcher’s ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodological philosophies are explained in Chapter 4 Research Methodology.

axiology position, as well as my VET consultant and trainer background and experience. The nature of this alignment is further explained in Chapter 4.

Research ethics, selection of participants, and identification of an appropriate research site are discussed before moving into an explanation of the Reissman (2008) narrative method for gathering and analysing personal stories. The process stages and tools for data collection and analysis are explained in detail. In clarifying the data collection phase (Phase One), I describe the use of interview protocols, a one-to-one semi-structured interview process and reflective researcher notes. The Reissman (2008) thematic analytical process (Phase Two) uses narrative and grounded theory tools so as to create an auditable process. Data are analysed using a crystallisation¹¹ perspective rather than triangulation¹². This chapter concludes with a discussion on my research approaches that are aimed at providing research rigour and trustworthiness.

Chapter 5: Data collection and data analysis processes.

This chapter explains the implementation of the data collection and analysis processes. The chapter opens with a description on the recruitment process at a Brisbane VET private institute and the identification of suitable research participants. All six full-fee paying Indian international VET students who volunteered as participants are completing a Diploma in Salon Management.

Details on the research data collection and analysis phases are introduced with an explanation on the interweaving of both processes. Prior to the collection of data in Phase One, the interview questions are pilot tested. The data are then collected through one-to-one interviews with all six participants. Following this section is an explanation on the multi-layered thematic analysis processes in Phase Two. There are two stages within the analysis phase. In both analytical stages, the Reissman method is used to inductively derive themes from data sequences. The chapter then describes the narrative thematic processes that use narrative and grounded theory tools in analysing data. While the first analysis facilitates the development of individual participant profiles (refer Chapter 6) based on vignette data (refer Appendix G), the second analysis provides data to build case study descriptions (refer Chapter 7). The chapter closes with a discussion on research quality practices, evidence that demonstrates case study research rigour and mitigation of research threats.

¹¹ A crystallisation approach to analysis views data in multi-layered forms with angles that may converge and point to evidence or move in differing directions.

¹² Data triangulation requires the use multiple sources of data or multiple collection methods. In this research data was collected using one method, interviews, from a single source, international students.

Chapter 6: Participant profiles.

Chapter 6 provides six volunteer Indian international VET students' profile descriptions based on vignette data (refer Appendix G). These snapshot profiles are developed from the first analysis of the one-to-one interview transcripts and my reflective field notes. Through the use of interview dialogue, readers are able to gain insight into the international VET students' worlds by listening to the "told" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54) parts of their stories. Use of interview dialogue allows participants to explain the meaning of their experiences in their own voices. Within their dialogue reflections of their self-identities are revealed as they see themselves as actors (Corbin & Holt, 2010; Glaser, 2002; Riessman, 2015) within their Australian social and academic contexts. Each profile is a reflection of the individual's situated story and contains its own assemblage of characters, setting and plot (Riessman, 2000, April 20). Therefore, each story is subjective.

While the first analysis of the participants' stories provides evidence that builds the vignettes and descriptive profiles, it also demonstrates that there is more to discover in their stories. Their stories seem to relate to a different type of sojourner; one that is focused on gaining residency using VET studies as a bridge. It is this unexpected revelation that causes the evolution of the second research question. Realising the first thematic analysis did not tell the whole story and that there is more to be understood (Merriam, 2009), a second narrative analysis is initiated. This analysis seeks to discover and investigate the participants' identity and acculturation changes within their stories.

Chapter 7: Case study descriptions.

The results from the first and second analyses of the interview transcripts provide thick, rich case study descriptions. These descriptions relate to six Indian international student participants: Gafur, Haroon Madina, Naisha, Sadaf, and Shama (pseudonyms). Evidence of their discursive identity, self-identity development and acculturation adjustments are described. These results create the new conceptual framework presented in Chapter 8.

In developing the case study descriptions, I use the Yin (2013) multiple case study approach. This approach disseminates case study information under each discussion topic on the participants' socio-cultural behavioural adjustments and self-identity development. The factors of efficacy, networks, connectedness, resilience and the environment are discussed in relation to the changes in the participants' discursive identities and self-identities.

Each case study is viewed as a historical snapshot of the participant's life, evidencing their individualism, multiple discourses, discursive practices and psychological and behavioural changes. Through the use of interview dialogue sequences, the participants' own words are analysed to reveal their individual characteristics and highlight the identity changes that occurred during their acculturation and adaptation into the Australian context.

Chapter 8: Findings and contribution to knowledge.

The key findings from the analytical processes are discussed in this chapter. From these findings, a revised conceptual framework and a new design of resilience are developed. This resilience diagram, presents a modernisation of the Carver seminal model of resilience as it reflects ideas on causal linkages. Strong evidence of these linkages is shown by the six focused sojourners who although accepting the label of student, act more like migrants. Also discussed are the contributions to knowledge that are theoretically, methodologically and empirically based, as well as the inherent limitations of the research.

Future research opportunities in sojourner self-identity development, acculturation and adaptation are discussed. This VET sector case study research on international student identity change and development within an Australian context is not an end, but is seen as a beginning in addressing the gap in knowledge. Future studies that further this research will add to the fields of psychology, social psychology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. Knowledge gained from this and future research will increase the marketability and competitiveness of Australian VET services within the world of international education. Federal, State and local policy makers, international student VET providers, VET teachers and other VET stakeholders and interested parties will also be assisted in their quest to ensure quality VET education and effective support services are provided to international students in Australia.

Conclusion

The content of this chapter is linked to the research project on Indian international students' self-identity and identity change as they acculturated and adapted into the Australian community and VET contexts. The discussion introduces the social-cultural contexts that informed the project and justification of the research topic. Without an understanding of context, it is difficult to appreciate the identity development characteristics and influencers. The use of a case study approach, the presentation of data as narratives, and the framing of the study within social constructivism and realist post-positivism theories are then outlined. The preamble concludes with an overview of the remaining thesis chapters.

The principal aim of the next chapter is an extensive review of literature on the concepts and issues relative to research on international student identity development in the Australian VET context. Key concepts in this chapter are student shocks, connectedness, student resilience, and self-efficacy during identity development. The chapter also examines the acculturation strategies and adaptation processes international students use as they find their socio-cultural fit and place within their Australian contexts. Within the discussion on international students, generally considered a temporary resident population, a different type of sojourner is examined. The chapter then introduces my research conceptual framework. This research endeavours to add to sociological concepts on acculturation, adaptation, resilience, efficacy, identity, connectedness, and motivation as they apply to international students. The need for further research focused on the Australian VET sector is also discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the eight chapters in this research. This first chapter presented the foundations that signalled the importance of this investigation on Indian international students in the VET sector. It also discussed the trustworthiness of its findings and how this study contributed to knowledge on sojourner identity.

The function of this chapter has been to provide discussion on the concepts and notions that stemmed from an extensive review of contemporary and seminal literature. Contemporary literature informed the theoretical framework and assisted in providing an answer to the research questions on identities that Indian international students in the VET sector develop due to acculturation.

Three areas built the foundation for identifying the key issues faced by international students when acculturating into Australian VET and community contexts. The design and implementation of this research provided insight into these areas through gaining:

- An appreciation of the theoretical foundations on sojourner discursive practices and their identity acculturation.
- Knowledge of the security and wellness issues faced by international students.
- An acknowledgement that international students cross political borders and socio-cultural boundaries when adapting or developing behaviours so as fit into their Australian contexts.

The discussion in Chapter 2 has considered the push-pull factors within the international student economic marketplace and the contribution that this “special population” (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 15) has made to the Australian economy. Following, was then a description on the cultural boundaries and political borders that were crossed by international students as they ventured into and sustained lives within their Australian contexts. My lens then focused on international students who had dealt with socio-cultural shocks and learning shocks while finding their social fit within their Australian community and academic environments.

The next section, then discussed literature on sojourner identity of international students and others who moved from one country to another. This section also examined discursive identity development and group inclusion as well as the role of human agency during the processes of acculturation and adaptation. The discussion then explained the need for international students to establish feelings of connectedness and the influence of resilience and self-efficacy on identity development, acculturation and adaptation.

International Students in Australia

Australia has shown itself to be “one of the largest and most successful providers of international education in the world” (Australian Education International, 2013, May) with the marketplace for international education into 2009 continuing to be highly competitive and dynamic (Jonasson, 2009). The demand or pull-factor (Wang & Shan, 2006) for international education in Australia had remained strong. Pull mechanisms related to factors operating within the host country that appealed to international students and their families. Push mechanisms (Wang & Shan, 2006) were factors that operated within the source country which encouraged students and their families to decide to pursue an education away from home.

One suggestion that explained the constant demand for Australian international education was the notion that international students “recognise and appreciate the quality of an Australian qualification” (Australian Education International, 2009a, p. 4). Recognition of the value of an Australian qualification to international students and their families, the push-factor, was evidenced in the cultural capital beliefs held by students’ families and international communities. Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986)¹³ was gained through the international student’s work and takes the form of embodied capital when they achieve an Australian qualification. Cultural capital referred to the conversion of resources such as money, time, effort and other costs, which became an integral part of the person or their habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). When international students gain knowledge and were exposed to different social structures and environments, a change could be seen in their habitus.

Although the term habitus has been used since Aristotle, Bourdieu (1986) defines it as a durable and transportable structure that builds from childhood through to adulthood. In summarising Bourdieu’s (1986) beliefs, primary habitus commences with the child’s conscious and unconscious practices that were modelled by the family group. Through schooling, socialisation, and increased positioning or status, an individual develops secondary, tertiary, and further habitus which is both structured (or deliberate) and structuring (develops increased positioning). In merging the person’s past embodiment with their actively acquired socialised resources, a new set of personal dispositions develop. These dispositions were created from blending the pre-existing beliefs and practices with the incorporated socially structured practices and perceptions.

For international students who were exposed to new environments, experiences and different socio-cultural groups, they could be active agents in deciding their new lifestyles, values, and dispositions which alter their habitus. Through mentally absorbing and incorporating new characteristics into their previous habitus, the students’ identities change and evolve creating a new structured mindset of who they were. As international students change and become more Westernised through their education experience, the cultural capital they gain becomes an attribute that drives more students, families and communities to seek an Australian education.

¹³ Bourdieu has been recognised as a significant author in sociological research. Contemporary French analysts of Bourdieu’s work have deconstructed some of his concepts and critiqued them negatively. As these negative evaluations have not been translated from French into English, they have not been widely read.

The provision of education services to international students has continued to be a major component of the Australian economy. In 2007-2008 education was the largest service industry in Australia contributing more than \$AUD14.2 billion (Australian Education International, 2008). Australia has consistently been a strong competitor in the supply of international education. However, in 2008-2009 the demand for Australian qualifications was negatively impacted. Firstly, the global financial crisis (GFC) and the strength of the Australian dollar slowed the growth in international student numbers (Australian Council for Education Research, 2008). Secondly, the announcement of new student visa requirements by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship on the 20th August 2009 (Evans, 2009) affected the international education pull factor. This visa announcement caused approximately 17% of existing student visa applications to be withdrawn (Trounson & Lane, 2009) and further reductions in visa applications were expected.

These push-pull factors that related to the perceived cultural capital (push) and increased study visa requirements (pull) impacted negatively on international student applications for Australian higher education centres, VET colleges, schools and other learning centres. Despite those factors, evidence from Australian government published data showed that the Australian education marketplace remained strong and appeared to be able to withstand the ebbs and flows of economic and legislative factors. The 1998 to 2009 data figures showed an increase in numbers each year with a decrease not commencing until 2010, and continuing to decrease in 2011 as shown in Appendices A and B.

Research by Australian Education International (n.d.) have consistently provided reliable statistical information on the Australian education marketplace. Data in one of their reports evidenced that in 2012 the top five countries that contributed to the Australian international student enrolments were China, India, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, and Vietnam. The statistics indicated that the country of origin for the largest number of students in the VET sector was India while in higher education centres, schools and other learning centres, the largest number of student enrolments originated from China. Other statistical reports from Australian Education International (n.d.) showed that in July of 2012 there were 447,487 enrolments by full-fee paying international students in Australia. Of this number, 223,043 were higher education enrolments with 121, 012 enrolments in VET courses and the remaining 103,432 enrolled in schools, English classes and other courses. It was also reported that these numbers represented a decline of 6.9% of enrolments for the same period in 2011 which was in contrast with the average enrolment growth rate of 6.4% per year since 2002. This decline in enrolments in 2012 further evidenced the impact of the 2009 student visa announcement.

Recognising the importance of international education to the Australian economy, the federal government sponsored Australian Education International (AEI) to conduct market research on the global economic downturn of the international education industry. Their report *Study in Australia 2010* confirmed India and China were the highest contributing nations and that international student enrolments in the VET sector in 2009 exceeded university enrolments by 23% (Australian Education International, 2009c). Other levels within government have also recognised the contribution international students made to the economy and have funded market research projects. One example was the 2008 study project in Sydney where the City

of Sydney investigated many of the reported “issues and challenges in the everyday life of international students” (Turcic, 2008, p. 3). The report identified areas and made recommendations where local government international student support could be improved in and around Sydney.

Another example of a local government study occurred in September 2010 when Study Brisbane conducted an online survey. This survey requested international students to advise their personal opinions and reasons for studying in Brisbane and what suggestions they had for improvements. The purpose of the Brisbane study was to “deeply engage with the city’s international students by understanding their likes, dislikes, interests and behaviours” (Brisbane Marketing, 2010, "Study Brisbane", para. 5). These local, state and federal government studies evidenced not only recognition of the important economic contribution made by international students, but also the actions taken to monitor students’ needs and welfare. The overall aim of these government studies was to continually improve student support services so as to increase Australia’s marketability as a study destination. By focusing on student support services, these studies also acknowledged international students’ behaviours (or discursive practices) and their self-identities were directly influenced by the local support networks they developed and their sense of wellbeing. Despite the government acknowledging this information, there has been no research that suggested any improvement has occurred in student support services. This topic was further developed later in this chapter.

Due to a continued perception by international students and their families that their cultural capital increased with the achievement of an international qualification and that the Australian education system, environment, and study visa opportunities were appealing, Australia continued to remain a strong competitor in the international student marketplace. With an anticipated continuous flow of international students in response to the strategic marketing campaigns of the Australian government and VET colleges, it was expected by education providers and the government that Australia’s position and share of this education market will continue to remain high.

International Student Wellbeing in Australia

Australian local, state and federal government bodies have recognised that they have a duty of care with regard to international student safety and wellness. Acknowledgement of this responsibility has been demonstrated by much research (Australian Education International, 2009b; Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2009; Marginson et al., 2010; Ramia, Marginson & Sawir, 2013; Turcic, 2008), discussion, and government changes to policies and rulings related to student visas, international education and training services providers (Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2009). The 2009 legislated changes (including the government ruling on student visa requirements mentioned earlier) aimed at reducing opportunities for international student exploitation through fraud (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009). This was accomplished by ensuring that students have the financial capacity to live and study in Australia. On this 2009 government visa “crackdown”, The Australian (newspaper) commented that it was an overdue move and would address “the growing numbers of mainly Indian students from poor backgrounds being tempted into the country on false promises of work and permanent residency”

(Trounson & Lane, 2009, para. 2). While the visa announcement was intended to safeguard the welfare of international students, it also increased the international education providers' concern that the flow-on effects from this event would be detrimental to Australia's position in the international education market.

Following the 2009 announcements, the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee handed down a report in November of the same year. This 2009 Senate inquiry was stimulated by a "series of attacks upon Indian students in Melbourne and Sydney" (Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2009, Background, para. 1.6-1.8) which made headlines in the Indian press and called into question Australia's reputation as a safe destination for overseas students. These events initiated delegations from Australia to travel to India to "assure prospective students and their families of the measures in place in Australia to ensure the safety of international students" (Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2009, Background, para. 1.6-1.8). As these were significant political and economic events for both countries, the actions of the delegation were followed and reported on by Australian and Indian press.

The information in the completed Senate Report advised that on investigating the incidents, the Reference Committee discovered that the marketing of education to international students had not maintained a quality focus and international students had experienced frustration with the educational institutions in which they had enrolled. This Senate Inquiry investigation focused on student safety, accommodation, social inclusion, student visa requirements, student support mechanisms, employment, and pathways to permanent residency. Their report proposed 16 recommendations relating to the welfare of international students in Australia (see Appendix C).

The Australian Human Rights Commission argued that international students were entitled to certain human rights including "their right to security of person, non-discrimination, housing, employment discrimination and information" (Jakubowicz & Monani, 2010, p. 14). Unfortunately, these international student rights that Australian government bodies claim to exist were not easily identifiable and appear not to be enforced (Jakubowicz & Monani, 2010). While New Zealand's international student consumer protection regime was contained in their Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Sawir, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Rawlings-Sanael, 2009), as of 2014, the Australian government had not yet established a national code of conduct which ensured a safe environment for international students and a duty of care covering students' lives and property. In 2014 as in 2010, the National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007, which covered international education providers, only required registered providers to offer advice and to supply written material on safety and wellness issues at orientation stage (Marginson et al., 2010; Ramia et al, 2013). As there has continued to be no regulatory standards or monitoring of this requirement, often international students received "little assistance...outside the campus except advice" (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 224). International student pastoral care remained a role performed by a dedicated few educators who often volunteered their time and provided student support services outside of their normal work commitments.

The welfare of international students and the socio-cultural and economic benefits they have provided, continue to be political and social issues. International students with various levels of expertise in English, can come from different world economic backgrounds and may be financially sponsored or non-sponsored. These students might have differences in their social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Still, no matter their backgrounds or from where or how they have arrived, international students needed an environment that supported their endeavours and facilitated opportunities for them to learn in order to be successful.

International Student Sojourners

A number of studies on Australian international students have recognised them as a “special population” (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 15). In research they were often called sojourners (refer Key Terms in Chapter 1) as they have a set purpose and were generally considered a temporary population in Australia (Berry, 2006a). As global citizens they contributed towards Australian local, state and federal economies directly and indirectly through: (a) payment of income tax from part-time employment; (b) paying GST by shopping for food and other items; and (c) paying Council rates with their rent payments (Jakubowicz & Monani, 2010). However, they were excluded from entitlements available to local students such as subsidised transport, free medical care, student loans, and higher degree scholarships (Marginson et al., 2010) as they have only temporary legal status through a student visa.

Evidence of discrimination on “grounds of civil, cultural and social rights” (Jakubowicz & Monani, 2010, p. 15) was addressed by the Council of International Students Australia (formed in July 2010) in the Global Mobility Charter (issued in October 2010). National and international discussions on the restrictions placed on international student rights were held with the major international student recipient countries¹⁴; Britain, Australia, Canada, the USA, Japan, South Africa and South Korea (Jakubowicz & Monani, 2010). In this research, international student rights were not addressed; however, racism, which the members of the Council of International Students Australia considered to be the root cause of the international student rights issue (Jakubowicz & Monani, 2010), was discussed in Chapter 6.

When sojourners travel from their country of origin to another country to study, they have transferred out of their originating nation’s legal framework and were required to accept their host country’s political system. In accepting another country’s student visa conditions, international students have agreed to cross political borders and comply with the requirements of their host country. By accepting a student visa, they stood under the umbrella of their host nation’s legal system and confirmed themselves as temporary citizens of the host nation. As these student sojourners settled into their new environments and became familiar with the host nation’s laws, many of them also discovered social and educational community differences. These differences were not legal or political issues, but social and cultural variances. As non-political or socio-cultural barriers were treated differently due to their unpredictable and unique characteristics, they were considered boundaries. In order to come to terms with these socio-cultural differences, sojourners also found they

¹⁴ While this research is focused on Australia, research in these international student recipient countries has also documented sojourner issues and experiences.

might need to further develop their habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) and cross boundaries. These border and boundary crossings were significant milestones in the early days of a sojourner's life while they established themselves in their new nation and community.

Crossing Borders

Historically, from the 1990s the concept of border crossing¹⁵ was concerned largely with power and politics and social and political theory research (Giroux, 2005). Border crossing was dominated by the politics of difference. Erickson (2001) also agreed that borders were politically orientated, but maintained that they were a "social construct" (p. 40). However, Giroux (2005) argued, that due to globalisation a political structure was recognised within each nation's borders, although, power no longer resided within the nation's politics. Eventually, the concept of border crossing broadened and encompassed areas concerned with "classes, races, sexualities, and religions" (Giroux, 2005, p. 6). As the notion of borders might at times consider political and non-political areas, this research has been seated within the political context of international education border crossing.

In discussing international education border crossing, I followed the thinking of Clyne, Marginson and Woock (2001) who believed that international student border crossing should include staff, student exchange programs and research collaboration activities. However, in this research the discussion on border crossing was limited to the legal requirement of international students to hold a student visa. It was the student visa document that provided permission for sojourners to cross national borders and temporarily migrate from India (their originating nation) to Australia (their host nation).

In 2014, when Indian students wished to apply to study in Australia, a number of international student visa options were available. The education sector, the course the student wished to undertake, and the country that issued the student's passport, would indicate the type of visa application and the approval requirements. When making a visa application, the student needed to be able to evidence a certificate or letter of offer for a place in an Australian registered course. Other general student visa requirements of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship included, that the applicant

- agreed to be a temporary entrant into Australia,
- had been tested and certified as being proficient in English language,
- could evidence they were financially capable of supporting themselves,
- agreed to comply with all other conditions.

Although not a complete list as each application was viewed as an individual case, other general visa conditions also included: (a) class attendance and course progress; (b) a 40 hour fortnight limitation on work; and (c) maintenance of an Overseas

¹⁵ A large body of scholarship exists on the concepts of borders and border crossing. Contemporary studies have explored the influences of globalisation, migratory movements, capitalist transformations, fluid citizenship, sovereignty, reassessment of political concepts plus the epistemological framing of borders. Recent studies by Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013) investigated the proliferation of borders generated by contemporary globalisation and the atmospheric violence that surrounded borderlands and border struggles.

Student Health Cover. As student visa applications was a complex process with many requirements dependent on the individual's application, details on other visa options and requirements were not covered in this discussion.

The ability to gain an international education visa could be viewed as an inter-nation driver as it created the ability for people to be globally mobile. Individuals were able to move from an environment with "familiar rules, conventions, supports and citizenship rights" (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 10) to a lesser known environment where they have no citizen's rights, need to develop support networks, and do not know the rules. When international students or sojourners cross borders and move from one country's jurisdiction into another nation's political framework, life becomes challenging. This shift from the known to the unknown could be psychologically and behaviourally confronting. However, as demonstrated by the Central Queensland University pilot program (Baker & Hawkins, 2006), there was a reduction in the consequences and impacts that might occur when sojourners were pre-prepared for their journey.

Social and Cultural Boundaries

In anthropological and sociological scholarly journals and at some conferences on sojourners, the concepts of borders and boundaries have often been considered twin brothers (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Some of the more visible areas associated with boundary research have included "cognition, social and collective identity, commensuration, census categories, cultural capital, cultural membership, racial and ethnic group positioning, hegemonic masculinity, professional jurisdictions, scientific controversies, group rights, immigration, and contentious politics" (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 167). Contemporary research addresses symbolic as well as social boundaries. However, early literature on boundaries tended to focus on: (a) social or ethnic boundaries and resource monopolisation processes which provided status within a group (Weber, 1978)¹⁶; and (b) social inheritance culture (Erickson, 2001) that related to group membership due to being born within a certain society or community.

While social or institutional boundaries were formed at birth (ethnicity, social class, gender, village), symbolic boundaries were considered to be the beliefs and concepts that were made by social actors to distinguish and categorise "objects, people, practices, time and space" (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 168). Symbolic boundaries were developed by individuals and groups as they classify and stereotype those around them (Richardson, 2007). These symbolic boundaries separate people into groups within groups, where feelings of difference, similarity, and group membership were generated.

When evidence exists of "unequal access to and unequal distribution" (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 168) of material and non-material resources and opportunities, such as "permanent or temporary residency" (Richardson, 2007, Constructing symbolic boundaries, para. 3), social group boundary levels were able to be recognised. Only when these symbolic boundaries have been agreed upon by the actors within the

¹⁶ In contemporary research literature, the writing of M. Weber (1978) in *Economy and Society*, is viewed as seminal work.

groups (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) were group members able to conform to a character type. Also social interaction norms were established which distinguish social inclusion membership levels and identify exclusion boundaries.

Cultural group boundaries categorised social groups and provide scripts of traits or identity-type actions for the in-group actors (Wimmer, 2008). These recognised discursive practices or behaviours indicated the various levels within the group's hierarchy. As people were active agents within their socio-cultural groups, they might seek to acquire status within their group. Hegemony might be apparent in a group when a symbolic boundary was treated as a border (Erickson, 2001). This power differentiation due to the presence or absence of certain group knowledge, established member group positioning with each level having different rights and obligations (Erickson, 2001). This positioning established the core members or *inner-group*. The behaviour of the core members demonstrated or role modelled members' identity-type actions and the groups' behaviour expectations. These behaviours indicated the various levels within the group and the groups' inclusion requirements.

Studies on crossing of cultural, ethnic, or racial boundaries have continued as it is a human trait to cluster and form socio-cultural groups where insiders and outsiders were identified by the psychological and behavioural actions of the members. Wimmer (2008) advised that research studies had provided examples that fitted and contradicted theoretical positions on boundary crossing. These studies had also left unanswered questions on empirically documented data variations which were possibly caused by "human agency" (Erickson, 2001, p. 36). People adaptively selected their practices in order to achieve their goals and actively selected when they would and would not follow group rules and actions. Conflict within groups (Erickson, 2001) was a constant, as structure and power relationships bound or divide members creating new socio-cultural groups. As a group divided and re-formed, members from both groups decided whether to maintain communication with each other.

Socio-cultural groups continually evolved and changed as the actors within the groups made decisions and altered the group's discourse. The resulting new characteristics or identity types developed re-defined the group's socially inclusive norms. These constant changes within a socio-cultural group could be likened to those of a metaphoric amoeba. As an amoeba's membrane or boundary was flexible with no definite shape, it continually changed shape and was able to split and form other cells (or new groups). The amoeba's central nucleus (or group hierarchy) initiated these separation changes which were relayed and followed by its cytoplasm (or group members).

For a number of years international students have been grouped, homogenized, labelled, stereotyped (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Kettle, 2005) and viewed as a separate socio-cultural group that was considered to be of low-status or inferior (Grimshaw, 2007). This *othered* population sat outside of the local student body and the members of the othered group were considered to be problematic, "psychologically unbalanced...culturally maladjusted, naïve, and confused" (Spencer-Rogers & McGovern, 2002, p. 613). However, in this research I have followed the thinking of Clark and Gieve (2006) and Grimshaw (2007), who recognised and acknowledged

international students as individuals who were culturally diverse with no two students or two cultures being identical. Thus, international students should not be considered a deficient or inadequate group. They were individuals, who have a variety of cultural backgrounds with each person possessing a mix of cultural values and other differences, such as language, social ideology, religion, aesthetic tastes, and technical knowledge. As each student was considered unique, their international education experiences were also considered to be subjective.

With both positive and negative situations being part of any life, international students experienced emotional highs and lows as they acculturated into their Australian environments. How the person handled each situation and the extent to which each positive or negative event affected their life, studies, and future, was determined by the individual. Their decisions and reactions reflected their self-belief systems, attitude, and motivation to be successful and achieve their goals as a student and a member of the Australian community.

International Student Shocks

From the perspective of many within the academic and general social communities, it often appeared that most international students eventually “develop the skills needed for the Australian context” (Kettle, 2005, p. 46). However, international students might have faced cultural shock (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Novera, 2004; Wang & Shan, 2006) during their acculturation and adaptation.

When students’ salient points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others’ behaviour (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) no longer existed, they might have suffered from cultural shock. This phenomenon occurred with all sojourners to varying degrees (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). As shock was an “inter-cultural adjustment” (Novera, 2004, p. 477) experienced by individuals, the degree of shock and how it was managed might or might not be within the control of the individual sojourner. Personal values and social and academic relationships could affect the degree of shock experienced.

Cultural shock.

When international students move to Australia to undertake further studies, they needed to deal with a number of issues. Examples of these include accommodation, public transport, safety, social isolation, financial hardship, employment, visa problems, culture shock, mental health, lack of support services (Turcic, 2008), English language skills and lack of formal legal protections (Kell & Vogl, 2010). The process of identifying these issues and finding ways to deal with them, created a form of culture shock (Wang & Shan, 2006). Seminal research by Oberg (1960) defined culture shock as a feeling of anxiety which resulted from the loss of familiar signs and symbols of social interaction. Most research into this phenomenon, according to Hu (2008), had been “with long-term immigrants to another society” (p. 101). When people relocated to another country, they faced challenges (Sam & Berry, 2006). No matter what the length of time or purpose, they found that they were in a different and unfamiliar cultural environment.

During cultural immersion into their new environment, migrants and sojourners found that they had “common adaptation experiences” that resulted in “cultural fatigue” (Hu, 2008, p. 101). This fatigue might have developed into “acculturative stress” (Berry, 2006b, p. 47) or culture shock. While culture shock was generally considered to be an unpleasant and stressful experience, contemporary thinking recognised that not all sojourners experienced the same negative aspects of shock. Some who were sensation-seekers (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) possibly sought out and revelled in the international experience for their enjoyment, while other migrants or sojourners might have viewed it as an opportunity for self-development and personal growth.

Culture shock has been generally considered to be a transitional experience which resulted in the adoption of new values, attitudes and behaviour patterns (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). However, research by Berry (2006b) Berry and Sam (2014) and Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) suggested that the quality and quantity of cultural shock related to the differences between the sojourner’s originating nation’s culture and the host nation’s culture. As no two cultures or situations were the same, the level of culture shock and the reactive strategies employed by international students, would vary according to their perception of the event and the strategies that they employed. Sojourners were able to use active and passive strategies in order to cope with perceived cultural differences (Berry, 2006b; Berry et al., 2011). Their reaction might have been to actively alter the situation or to passively wait, making modifications to themselves.

Culture shock for some Asian students in Australia, according to studies by Hu (2008), and Wang and Shan (2006), “falls into two categories: living in Australia and studying in Australia” (Hu, 2008, p. 101). A few issues that international students dealt with in a home-stay (living in Australia) environment were highlighted by Hu (2008). They were:

- the differences in food, table manners, and lack of noise at meal times;
- pets and the ability to drink un-boiled tap water;
- the importance of privacy;
- the expectation of a response during a conversation;
- the manner used to approach another person so as not to cause pressure or embarrass them.

Areas in an Australian education system that an international learner might have found confronting were considered characteristics of a Western education system. Common Australian education situations which might intensify an international student’s shock included: (a) the way teachers conduct their classes (Hu, 2008; Nield, 2004; Wang & Shan, 2006; Watkins, 2000); (b) the expected ways for students to present their ideas (Hu, 2008); and (c) the manner that relationships were formed between teachers and students (Hu, 2008; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Watkins, 2000). These types of cultural shocks were more often referred to as learning shock (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). As an international student’s aim in relocating to Australia was to gain a qualification, learning shock could greatly impact on their ability to be successful.

Learning shock.

Zhang Sillitoe and Webb (2002) confirmed that a number of studies demonstrated international students faced a range of unique challenges in their first year of study in Australia. It should also be noted that international students in other host countries also faced similar stresses. For many international students, learning shock or study shock might have been a negative experience.

Studies conducted by Storti (2001), Wang and Shan (2006), Watkins (2000) and others suggested that for many Asian international students, past study successes had been through memorisation and replication rather than through critical thinking and independent study. In addition, students dutifully respected and accepted the teacher's academic dialogue without posing many challenging questions. These differences between Australian and Asian academic contexts might have magnified learning shock when international students found that their previous ways of learning no longer assisted them to achieve their academic goals (Storti, 2001; Wang & Shan, 2006). Although learning shock might initially occur, contemporary research by Arkoudis and Tran (2007), Nield (2004), Sinclair (2000), and Watkins (2000) indicated that over time international students adjusted to the requirements in their new education environment and appeared to no longer use their rote learning strategies.

Research on international students in the VET environment (Tran, 2013a) discovered that they experienced a paradigm shift in the learning strategies they were able to use due to study programs being work-focused rather than academic-focused. Subjects based on Australian national competencies were assessed with a heavy bias on practical activities rather than theoretical understandings. No longer were students graded against one another as in a normative system but they were required to demonstrate industry level competencies identified by the Australian National Competency Standards (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2007). Another destabilising factor that has been observed was due to the pedagogical strategies used by VET teachers (Tran, 2013a, 2013b) when delivering competency-based learning and assessment programs to international students. Providing a less formal approach to learning and a lack of didactic teaching, VET teachers foregrounded their industry background and experiences rather than their academic qualifications.

However the period of learning shock could also be exacerbated by an unexpected extra study load, English language problems, financial issues, and anxiety caused by separation from family and friends (Baker & Hawkins, 2006). International student English language issues studied by Masgoret and Ward (2006), Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland and Ramia (2008), Ward and Kennedy (2001), Yang and Noels (2013) and Yang, Noels and Saumure (2006) indicated that the strength of the individual's host language skills had a dramatic impact on their ability to communicate, socially interact and adapt into their Australian social and academic communities.

Research by Song (2006) claimed that some learners might use problems with English as a facade for their low achievement. When, a clash of educational cultures or simply a lack of commitment, a lack of effort, or a lack of motivation, had a

significant effect. Other studies by Gu and Schweisfurth (2006) on successful international students have posited that at times, sojourners were able to surpass local Australian students. Success was due to their determination to learn, their willingness to change and adapt to their learning environment, and their strong motivation and belief in the importance of what they were learning.

Contrary to Hu's (2008) comment that "a person's ability to adapt to a new situation is a reflection of their intelligence" (p. 105), the evidence presented on international student study success that could be attributed to their "motivation, agency and determination to thrive" (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 87) was convincing. Therefore, as international students' motivations and needs varied, they should not be considered a mono-cultural group.

Research by Gu and Schweisfurth (2006), Berry (2006b), Berry et al. (2011) and Masgoret and Ward (2006) plus others, have shown that when individuals feel they were supported, they will persevere and adapt to their environment, as they see the adjustment as a positive step in the growth of their professional and personal identity.

International Student Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Researchers have noted that international students were often disillusioned with the reality of the Australian socio-cultural and educational systems in comparison with their original expectations and imaginings (Jonasson, 2009). For some international students the combination of cultural shock, learning shock and system disillusionment might have extended into an "identity" (Sinclair, 2000, p. 1) crisis. This crisis might have occurred when culturally-based attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and self-reflections, became threatened (Storti, 2001). Some international students might have felt a loss of self and might ask themselves *Who am I and where do I fit in?* (Taylor, 2011). In order to adapt to their environment and find their way out of this psychologically and culturally confused state, students might seek an identity and react using acculturative adjustment strategies and assimilation pathways. It was this link between identity formation, acculturation and assimilation as international students head towards adaptation that conceptually framed this exploratory investigation.

Other studies have shown that, at times, international students might actively employ their "human agency" (Erickson, 2001, p. 36) to adapt their social practices so as to accept and be accepted into Australian communities, and find their cultural fit. It has been noted by observers of cross-cultural adaptation of international students, that situational factors and personal needs often promoted behavioural adjustments and over-rode possible cultural conflicts (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006). Thus it has been suggested that international students were more able to *fit in* with their peers and be more successful in their academic environment (Wang & Shan, 2006), when they made social and personal adjustments to life in their host country.

Recognising the need to understand the experiences of international students, many researchers including Baker and Hawkins (2006), Gu and Schweisfurth (2006), Hu (2008), Marginson, Nyland, Sawir and Forbes-Mewett (2010), Masgoret and Ward (2006), Wang and Shan (2006), Ward (2013), Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001), Ward and Kennedy (2001), Yang and Noels (2013), Yang, Noels, and Saumure

(2006) and others, became interested in the personal journeys of international students and have conducted studies on their adaptation into their host culture. Research in this area has continued as the needs and welfare of international students and the financial benefits provided by the education marketplace have driven and supported research studies.

One comment made from a study conducted by Yang, Noels, and Saumure (2006) highlighted their belief that the physical journey of international students from their country of origin to their host country, often ran together with their cross-cultural adaptation psychological journey. They also noted that most students during their complex psychological journey appeared to have made changes to their “ways of behaving, thinking and feeling” (Yang et al., 2006, p. 488) in order to fit into their environment. A belief postulated by Wang and Shan (2006) on international students’ adjustment in their cultural concepts, beliefs and behaviours, was that adjustments were stimulated by the students’ need to face and deal with the challenges presented by their Australian environments. From observations made by Ward and her colleagues (2001), they proposed that along with their psychological feelings of wellbeing, international students also had undergone socio-cultural (behavioural) changes as they learnt how to interact within the host culture and use culturally appropriate skills in order to fit in.

As a means of assessing and measuring these intercultural competence skills, seminal research conducted by Searle and Ward (1990) developed a Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) that was based on an existing socio-situational questionnaire scale. Although, the SCAS emphasised the behavioural domains, for this qualitative research, it was considered inappropriate as the focal analytical outcomes were more quantitative and too narrow to form a response to the research question. Using this scale on mainly Malaysian and Singaporean students in New Zealand, Searle and Ward (1990) found that international students, who possessed personalities more in line with their host society, appeared to gain culturally appropriate skills more easily. This was due to their increased interaction with host nationals. Searle and Ward’s (1990) study also found that personality was not a definitive predictor of socio-cultural adjustment, but cultural-fit between the individual and the host cultural norms was a more reliable gauge of adaptation success. It was interesting that for many researchers including Masgoret and Ward (2006), Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland and Ramia (2008), Ward and Kennedy (2001), Yang and Noels (2013) and Yang, Noels and Saumure (2006), host language skills remained a key predictor of successful adaptation, as self-confidence in the use of the host language increased intercultural contact within the host society.

Researchers Cross, Harden and Gercek-Swing (2011) and Oguri and Gudykunst (2002) also conducted studies on socio-cultural fit using a self-construals approach. Self-construals related to the belief concepts of self and behaviour which were shaped from an individual’s original or primary culture (Yang et al., 2006). Two types of self-construals have been recognised; independent and interdependent. Independent self-construals were able to be demonstrated by positive and unique attributes. Examples of independent individual traits include: (a) an orientation towards successful independence and achievement; and (b) a tendency to be in control and responsible for self- behaviour and outcomes (Yang et al., 2006). While, interdependent self-construals were evidenced by: (a) interpersonal connectedness;

(b) emotional interdependence; and (c) an orientation towards the collective needs, goals and harmonious functioning of the collective (Yang et al., 2006). An individual's self-construals or self-beliefs would vary a person's ability to make cross-cultural adjustments, find their cultural fit within their environment, and make successful cross-cultural adaptation. Successful cross-cultural adaptation as the long term outcome of acculturation (Sam, 2006), was discussed later in this chapter.

Researchers, Markus and Kitayama (2010), have suggested that socio-culturally shaped independent and interdependent self-construals together with their behaviour patterns, were able to identify international students' personality characteristics or *self-ways* (identity). When Cross Harden and Gercek-Swing (2011) examined the differences in self-construals between American and East Asian graduate students, her findings were limited, according to Yang, Noels and Saumure (2006), as she did not look at self-construal discrepancies. However, Yang and her colleagues (2006) noted that the study findings of Oguri and Gudykunst (2002) confirmed that self-construals and especially independent self-construal, could be used as a predictor tool of socio-cultural adjustment or cultural fit.

According to Yang, Noels and Saumure (2006), the use of socio-culturally shaped self-construals allowed the person to be viewed as a social and cultural product rather than be seen through the lens of traditional Western psychological frameworks. As many educators have recognised, an international students' habitus or identity was built over time from the blending of their primary or family culture with their socio-cultural acculturation adjustments. Thus, educators have often developed pastoral supportive networks to assist international students through their cross-cultural social and academic experiences.

Creating a Sense of Place

The pastoral role of teachers and administrators has played an important part in providing international students with a "third space" (Erickson, 2001, p. 53). In a third space, when cultural differences were treated as boundaries rather than borders, international students were able to explore new relationships. Notions of third space have been investigated by theorists for a number of years and given a variety of philosophical study contexts. Examples of these contexts include: (a) social archaeology and identity formation (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1999)¹⁷; (b) cultural encounter interactions and social identity outcomes (Bhabha, 2004); (c) language teaching (Liddicoat, 2009); and (d) teacher training (English, 2003; Erickson, 2001). Although, context relevance seemed to interfere with the formation of a definitive answer, it appeared Bhabha's (1990)¹⁸ concept on third space was accepted by most researchers.

Bhabha believed that a third space was a non-physical place or space that allowed a hybrid of cultures to be created from the interaction of the individuals, groups and the power owners within those groups. As the groups interacted, a form of cultural

¹⁷ In contemporary research literature, the writing of E. Said (1978) in *Orientalism* and G. C. Spivak (1999) in *A critique of post-colonial reason: Towards a history of vanishing present*, are viewed as seminal works.

¹⁸ In contemporary research literature, the writing of H. K. Bhabha (1990) in *The third space- an interview with Homi Bhabha*, is viewed as seminal work.

mimicry occurred between the individuals who blended the characteristics of the groups. On Fahlander's (2007) interpretation of Bhabha's (2004) writings, the hybrid was a temporary floating culture. The culture consisted of shared elements that created "something new and substantially different" (p. 23) rather than "conglomerates of new and old elements" (Fahlander, 2007, p. 23) with many of the new practices and ways of thinking unable to be traced back to a specific origin.

Bhabha (2004) used a third space of enunciation as a metaphor to explain the ambiguous virtual place that emerged from an interaction of voices at a *meeting of cultures*. During this meeting process, individual social identities and ideologies were questioned and negotiated. However, the seminal work of Bhabha (1990, 2004) has received some criticism. Three areas that appear not sufficiently defined or considered by Bhabha include:

- The openness and ambiguity of this third space concept, as it had led to misconceptions and alternative uses of the term (Fahlander, 2007).
- The formation of gaps in his actual and abstract third space concepts due to his research mainly being conducted on texts and novels (Fahlander, 2007).
- The lack of acknowledgement on socially produced third spaces, and the "necessary management of the physical space, of resources and bodies in the discursive processes" (Fahlander, 2007, p. 31).

Even though Bhabha's concept of third space might not be complete, many researchers and practitioners in an education context believed there were a place and a role to be played by a socially blended third space. A functional third space might be known by many titles, such as, student support services, student information, or student association or guild.

Described by English (2004, 2005) as a practice that many adult educators aspired to, a third space was used when scaffolding social justice issues, crossing cultural and religious boundaries, and in the formation of new third space domains. International students, teachers and researchers have long voiced the need for a third space or "comfort zone" (Sawir et al., 2009, p. 468) where international students could just be themselves. This was a place where international students felt supported while coming to terms with the stresses and frustrations of initial cultural shock and where they were able to enjoy the "professional and personal benefits of intercultural experiences" (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 88). When international students and educators felt and acknowledged that they were in a third space, communication and understanding between the members of both groups were facilitated to mutual benefit.

International students, teachers and administrators were divided into socially categorised groups of people who were given "badges of identity" (Erickson, 2001, p. 52) indicating their group. Within each group, individuals distinguish themselves through diverse but common-based languages, voices, and ways of speaking. As individuals within each group have different life experiences, social relationship ecologies in various social situations were created. These networks were a hybrid of cultural practices (Erickson, 2001) due to the continuous blending and re-blending of cultural and discursive combinations.

From the experience of cultural blending, international students developed a diversity of voices within them, which had a profound and significant effect on their emotions

and identity. Erickson (2001) believed that teachers and other influencers within education environments needed to be reminded that everyone, not just international students, were cultural and multicultural. He provided this advice for teachers and students:

By listening to the discourses around them and also within them and by testing how these discourses feel more like self, more like other, owned or alienated- students and their teachers can valorise many discourses, treating them as inherently of equivalent worth, even though not all the discourses and cultures were treated as equal in power and prestige in the world outside the classroom (Erickson, 2001, p. 53).

Through the use of a pedagogy and andragogy third space, teachers legitimised the hybrid cultural mix of teachers and students (Erickson, 2001) and provided a kind of peace for the voices within the classroom. The significance of developing a sense of “place” (Baker, 2010, p. 24) for international students where they “feel as though they belong” and “feel at home in their new environment” (Baker, 2010, p. 25) cannot be underestimated.

However, as indicated by Tian and Lowe (2009), with all the best of intentions and support provided to international students, often they remained feeling “homogenised, foreignised and otherised” (p. 673) which might stimulate their sense of national pride. By “auto-stereotyping” (Tian & Lowe, 2009, p. 673) themselves they developed a counter measure which they could use to offset any feelings of unequal power within their educational and social environments.

Through the process of ethnic identity labelling (Erickson, 2001), even though they might have lost some cultural traits, international students were able to indicate their group connection. Ethnic identification has been shown to be a cognitive and personal belief that an individual has held of their ethnic roots and their attachment to those roots (Sang & Ward, 2006). Unfortunately, with ethnic identity self-categorisation, a window was not provided into the individual’s attitudes towards his or her heritage culture or to what level of identification they have held with their group. However, according to Liebkind (2006), empirical research has suggested that the strength and nature of the in-group identification was a strong determining factor of the individual’s ability to adapt to their new cultural environment. When international students relocate to Australia, the type of acculturation strategies they have used and how successful they were when dealing with socio-cultural situations, will be defined by the strength of their ethnic identity self-categorisation and ability to adapt and make connections within the new academic and community environments.

International Student Connectedness, Risk, Resilience and Self-Efficacy in Australia

There were many studies relating to cultural diversity, differences and challenges faced by international students in Australian universities (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Marginson et al., 2010; Neri & Ville, 2006; Sawir et al., 2008; Ramia et al., 2013). The strongest thread throughout many of these studies appeared to indicate that social connectedness (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Sawir et al., 2008) was the key to successful academic and social adaptation for international students in the Australian context.

Social connectedness.

When international students arrive and were greeted by family or friends at the airport, a sense of connectedness was established (Baker & Hawkins, 2006). However, if there was no-one to greet them and assist them in fostering a sense of belonging and establishing a support network, then the international student might find that negative feelings were generated. These feelings could include anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy and loneliness (Sawir et al., 2008). Loneliness or a sense of being lost and isolated, according to sociological studies by Green, Lago, Richardson, and Schatten-Jones (2001), Lambert, Stillman, Hicks, Kamble, Baumeister and Fincham (2013, Russell, Cutrona, McRae and Gomez (2012), Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland and Ramia (2008), and van Beljouw, van Excel, de Jong Gierveld, Comijs, Heerings, Stek and van Marwijk (2014), could stem from a lack of an active social network containing quality social relationships. These studies also suggested that the quality of the relationships was considered to be of greater value than having a number (quantity) of friendships and social networks.

When international students have a strong social and academic network, it allowed them to feel supported and more in control while they attempted to psychologically and culturally cope with changes and adapt to their new environment (Sawir et al., 2008). Bochner (2006) who had extensively investigated international students since the 1970s, identified three distinct social networks that students tended to belong to, each of which served a particular psychological function. Their primary network (or mono-cultural network) would be with conationals and had a strong emotional component whose function was to “rehearse, express and reinforce the culture of origin” (Bochner, 2006, p. 189). Secondary in importance was the social link (or multicultural network) with other non-conational international students which functioned as a recreational sharing and support platform of common foreignness experiences (Bochner, 2006). The third network of host nationals (or bi-cultural network) was used for utilitarian functions related to contact with institute academics and administrators, students, government service advisors, and counsellors (Bochner, 2006). As each network had a purpose, international students might not be actively networking with all three groups at the same time. The individual’s circumstances and their ability to fit in and find their place in their new environment would influence the type of network the international student required as well as when and how it would be used to assist them during their sojourn experience.

The function and use of networks was evidenced in this research on Indian international students. During their time in Australia as they attempted to fit in and

find their socio-cultural place, the students appeared to deliberately invite certain people to be involved in their network. Local support networks were established with Australians, Indian relatives in Australia, conationals or other non-conationals at different points along their acculturation journey and in varying circumstances. The role and function of network members and the student's circumstances at the time appeared to indicate the various uses of networks. Three types of networks were identified: (a) active networks (current contacts); (b) dormant networks (contacts retained for future role); or (c) previous networks (function no longer required). Active networks were in regular contact and functioned to meet a current need, such as present teaching staff, work contacts or social activities. Dormant networks related to people who might need to be contacted and brought back into an active state if circumstances changed, such as previous teachers or employers. Previous networks were those no longer needed as circumstances had altered, such as locating accommodation soon after arrival or teachers and students from a previous college.

Over time, most international students developed friendships and extended their social circles as they coped with their sojourn experience. However, some might have had difficulties in developing networks and were not able to achieve a strong sense of connectedness. A few issues which might have affected international students when attempting to establish networks and connectedness (Sawir et al., 2008) included:

- cultural factors where they miss their own culture and languages;
- finding difficulty with mobility and transport;
- having feelings of isolation through institutional othering;
- identifying an absence of intimate (quality) persons within their networks;
- being unable to find their cultural fit and finding financial constraints.

Although, most international students experienced cultural difference (Marginson et al., 2010; Ramia et al., 2013), their adaptation to the Australian education system and culture was assisted when they had an extensive network of contacts including strong relationships with host nationals (Baker & Hawkins, 2006). These host national relationships allowed feelings of being part of the host society to develop (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). Research by Baker (2010), Kashima and Loh (2006), Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, and Ramia (2008), and Vogl and Kell (2010), suggested that international students who had a local support network and community connectedness were shown to be: (a) less at risk; (b) have fewer security issues to face; (c) experience fewer socio-cultural adaptation problems, and (d) enjoy increased feelings of wellbeing. When international students developed feelings of connectedness from having quality support networks, the psychological benefits gained from their connectedness assisted them when they attempted to cope with socio-cultural challenges.

International students at risk.

When international students arrived in Australia to continue their education, they were often without their usual support systems of family, friends, schools and community (Baker & Hawkins, 2006). Due to this lack of support and connectedness while facing a number of socio-cultural challenges, many considered them to be potentially *at risk*. Baker and Hawkins (2006) believed that international students might be at risk of: (a) failing to achieve their academic goals; (b) becoming sexually

exploited; (c) finding themselves homeless; and (d) possibly taking on potentially dangerous behaviours which might develop into unlawful situations. This disenfranchised state frequently forced international students to seek new relationships and support mechanisms by *remooing* (Deaux & Burke, 2010) themselves with new support groups. During this period, international students were vulnerable, as the “affiliations and sense of identity” (Kell & Vogl, 2010, p. 12) each student developed within their educational and social communities had a direct impact on their sojourn experience. Examples of vulnerability and the accompanying negative experience were identified in this research. Chapters 6 and 7 discussed the circumstances in the participants’ stories and how the international students’ dealt with their situation.

For international student sojourners, social connectedness was necessary in both academic and community groups. As life circumstances affected the possibilities and limits of learning (Sawir et al., 2008), a lack of social connectedness had been identified as a major contributor of people becoming at risk (Baker & Hawkins, 2006). In her study on international students, it was noticed by Baker (2010) that while some students battled with what might be considered “horrific circumstances” (p. 22) and achieve success and graduate, others appeared to crumble and fall “despite counselling, support and academic interventions” (p. 22). Those that were unsuccessful did not seem to possess resilience and a “strong sense of self-efficacy” (Baker, 2010, p. 22). Resilience and self-efficacy have been shown to assist international students cope with issues and situations, allowing them to spring back from difficulties (Baker & Hawkins, 2006). The connections international students developed within their host communities assisted them by strengthening their self-efficacy and building resilience (Baker, 2010). In order to overcome negative experiences, international students required the ability to be resilient. In this research, the Indian international students demonstrated that with supportive reinforcement, self-efficacy increased which aided their resilience ability. In Chapters 6 and 7, the link between connectedness, self-efficacy and resilience was further discussed.

International student resilience.

The concept of resilience originated from a seminal paper by Holling (1973). Initially the term was used to understand eco-systems. But as knowledge grew in the disciplines of ecology, biophysics, social, cultural, and institutional dimensions with boundary crossings being evidenced between social and natural sciences, the focus on resilience thinking was turned by a group called the Resilience Alliance (Nelson, 2008). This group sought knowledge on social-ecological systems (Nelson, 2008). As knowledge on individual and community resilience grew, the field diversified and broadened (van Breda, 2011). Social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, educators and many others over the past few decades, have conducted research on resilience.

Although there were now a number of different interpretations, three common attributes appeared central to resilience ability (a) change, (b) adaptability, and (c) transformability (Folke et al., 2010; Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004; Walker & Salt, 2006). Resilient change in a physical sense referred to the ability to revert to the original shape or state after being bent, stretched or injured (Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, 2010). Adaptability was the capacity to

adjust internal processes in response to a changing environment. This internal adjustment allowed development to occur which facilitated continuance along the same path to achieve a goal (Folke et al., 2010). Transformability was the capacity to create a new system or identity when social structures and environments made the existing entity unsustainable (Walker et al., 2004). These three concepts were also identified when describing personal resilience and how some individuals were able to *bounce back* after adversity “no matter what life throws at them” (Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, 2010, para. 1). For this research group of international VET students, their internal mechanisms and in-built abilities appeared to assist them develop resilience. These internal and personal traits provided the individuals with the capacity to change, adapt, and transform when faced with different and at times adverse circumstances.

Recognising Rutter’s (1993) seminal theoretical framework, Ehrensaft and Tousignant (2006) described the essence of the socio-cultural resilience concept as a “phenomenon observed in subjects who develop positively, even though they have endured experiences of stress” (p. 470). These stressful experiences would have negatively affected the general population. The resilient person, explained Ehrensaft and Tousignant (2006), might “show vulnerability, and might even experience crisis and failures, but will ultimately emerge stronger in the long run” (p. 470). A number of metaphorical descriptions exist that explained personal resilience. One example was:

Resilience is the fine art of being able to bungee jump through life. The pitfalls were still there but [it] is as if you have an elasticized rope around your middle that helps you to bounce back from hard times (Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, 2010, cit. 2).

Some theorists’ views on resilience considered it to be an endurance process which incorporated various coping mechanisms that were based on the positive resources found within the individual and from their supporting networks (Ehrensaft & Tousignant, 2006). However, contemporary studies considered resilience to be an individual characteristic or personality trait which influenced the individual’s perceptions, and therefore their responses to stress and adversity (Maginness, 2007). More forward thinking has also linked resilience with motivation (Martin, 2002), thriving (Carver & Scheier, 2014), and psychobiological and social behavioural factors (Skodol, 2010) as well as personality characteristics. These linkages have expanded the thinking on the concept of resilience and how individuals react to adversity and stress.

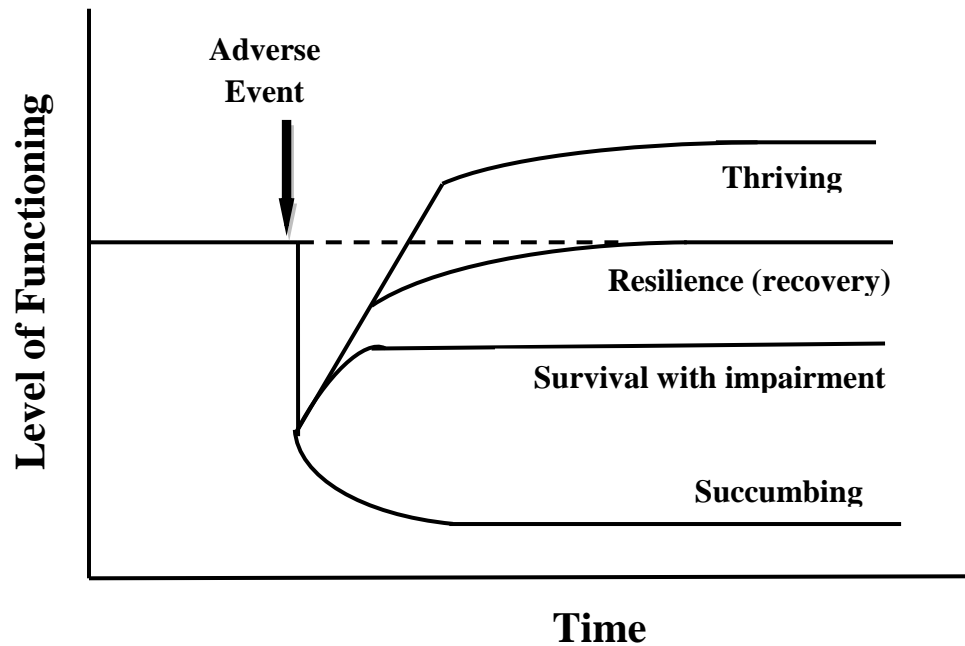


Figure 2.1 Responses to adversity: The domain of possibilities. Schematic model of the four potential responses to a stressful event which could cause a physical or psychological downturn. The lower path was a continuation of the downward slide where the detrimental effect was compounded and the individual eventually succumbs. A second possible outcome was where the person survives the trauma but was impaired and weaker. The third possible outcome was a rapid or gradual return to the pre-adversity level of functioning. The fourth possible outcome was that the person might in some areas surpass the previous level of functioning in that they have developed or enhanced a quality which they see as an improvement. Adapted from "Resilience and Thriving: Issues, Models, and Linkages", by C. S. Carver, *Journal of Social Issues*, 54, p.246. Copyright 1998 by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

Figure 2.1 illustrated the four possible individual responses to adversity and stress developed by Carver's seminal model. It should be noted that with each exposure to an adverse situation, the person's recovery or *bounce-back* time would be reduced as they became more resilient and learnt to recover more effectively from the adversity (Carver & Scheier, 2014; van Breda, 2011). Thus, as an individual's resilience built, a new response developed and their reaction to new stressful situations and events would not necessarily follow the previous response path. In this investigation, resilience was found to be a key concept and further discussion has been presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Skodol (2010) believed that resilience was influenced by genetic as well as environmental factors. However, the individual's functional differences appeared to offer some explanation as to the personality features that contributed to resilience ability (Maginness, 2007). Personality and functional coping processes were considered by Skodol (2010), as two interrelated types of individual differences. He believed personality was a constellation of characteristics or traits that determined a person's perceptions, thoughts, and how they related to themselves, others and the environment, while coping related to the specific processes utilised to deal with stress (Skodol, 2010). Although, personality traits were considered to be relatively stable and consistent over time and across situations, coping strategies were not a characteristic of a particular person, and thus not necessarily consistent across stressful situations, or functional roles (Skodol, 2010). As a person gained experience using coping strategies and successfully reduced or eliminated each stressful situation, their future reactions to stress might or might not have used a similar

coping strategy as their resilience, perspective on situations, and ability to cope, altered.

Other models that reflected the features of personality which functionally contributed to an individual's resilience have also been developed. Five of these models included: (1) ego resilience, that facilitated flexible and resourceful adaptation to life's stressors, modulation of impulses, and adaptation to novel situations (Carlson & Gjerde, 2009); (2) defence mechanisms, which were automatic psychological processes used to protect oneself when anxious or faced with internal or external stressors or dangers (Vaillant, 2012); (3) realistic optimism, that accepted there was a balance between hope and aspirations of a positive experience while acknowledging there were unknowns (Carver & Scheier, 2002); (4) a sense of coherence, which linked with the individual's physical and mental health and their capacity to manage the tension of ever-present stressors through cognitive and emotional coping functions and social support resources (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007); and (5) hardiness, that consisted of control, commitment, and challenge (Maddi, 2006; van Breda, 2011). Hardiness explained Skodol (2010) could be thought of as:

(a) control (a tendency to feel and act as if one is influential rather than helpless in the face of external forces); (b) commitment (a tendency to be involved, and to find purpose and meaning in life's activities and encounters rather than to feel alienation); and (c) challenge (a belief that change is normal in life, and that the anticipation of change is an opportunity for growth rather than a threat to security) (p. 115).

Two of the models mentioned earlier, (1) ego resilience and (5) hardiness, were concepts which were often used to explain "self esteem, self confidence or self-efficacy, self understanding, a positive future orientation, and the ability to manage negative behaviours and emotions" (Skodol, 2010, p. 114). Resilient people possessed these traits as well as an internal locus of control or personal self-control (Maginness, 2007; Skodol, 2010; van Breda, 2011). The internal locus trait instilled within people a belief that they were able to solve any problem that occurred, as they considered that situations to a large extent were influenced by their behaviour and not by fate, bad luck or another's actions. Although, resilient people were goal directed and plan for the future, they were conscious of their strengths and weaknesses while remaining motivated and excited about finding their own identity through self-discovery (Maginness, 2007; Skodol, 2010; Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower, & Gruenewald, 2000). Personal self-control helped resilient people find meaning from being in difficult circumstances. It has "been positively related to enhanced adaptive functioning, better coping in stressful situations, emotional well-being and physical health" (Maginness, 2007, p. 48). Taylor and associates (2000) also advised that positive resilient people were not only able to "manage the ebb and flow of everyday life" (p. 106) but they also built reserve resources which they were able to use when dealing with future stressful situations.

Resilience might provide international students and others with built-in protection qualities (Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, 2010) which allowed them to live and survive difficulties and possibly thrive. However, self-efficacy appeared to be the driving mechanism within their self-belief systems. As evidenced in this research, a strong efficacy belief enabled the Indian international VET students to manage situations, prepare for incidents, and be resilient to failures, so

that they were able to cope with adversity, persevere and maintain focus on successfully achieving their goals (Baker, 2010). Self-efficacy was shown in this investigation to have played an important role in the psychological and behavioural adjustments of the international VET students when dealing with many community and academic socio-cultural changes during acculturation.

International student self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy in individuals, including international students, referred to their ability to help themselves emotionally adjust to changes in their environment. This ability was informed by their belief that they were able to deal with life's challenges without feeling confused and overwhelmed (Baker, 2010). The most influential theory in understanding this set of beliefs that regulate human functioning was Bandura's (1995) social cognitive theory. This theory involved the interaction of cognitive processes, motivational processes, affective processes, and selective processes.

Attempts at experimentally validating the "level, strength, and generativity" (Tsang, Hui, & Law, 2012, Definition of self-efficacy, para. 2) of self-efficacy were conducted using causality-testing research methods. These research projects considered a number of individual differing factors, contexts, and diverse populations. The results suggested that self-efficacy functions as a "multilevel and multifacet" (Tsang et al., 2012, Definition of self-efficacy, para. 2) set of beliefs.

Self-efficacy has been shown to be a self-belief that goals could be achieved. It was not a reflection of a person's competence or ability to complete a task. Other characteristics that were dismissed included personality trait, self-esteem, an intention to achieve a particular goal, motive or a need for control (Maddux, 2002). Rather, it has been defined as a person's belief about their capability to "coordinate skills and abilities" (Maddux, 2002, p. 278) in certain circumstances so as to achieve their desired goals.

An individual's self-efficacy or belief in themselves, belief in the activities they undertake, and their ability to achieve their goals, influenced how they "think, feel, motivate themselves, and act" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Maddux (2002) used the story of the *Little Engine That Could* to illustrate the role that efficacy beliefs played in being successful. When people developed a strong sense of efficacy, they were able to set higher goals, confirm commitment to achieving them, and develop scenarios to guide and support their performance towards achieving them (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy played a "crucial role in psychological adjustment, psychological problems, and physical health, as well as professionally guided and self-guided behavioural change strategies" (Maddux, 2002, p. 277). When international students and others were faced with socio-cultural and environmental change, they were able to draw on their efficacy beliefs. Efficacy assisted them rationalise obstacles and consider change as part of their plan for a successful life journey. Individuals who had a strong sense of efficacy, were also considered to possess resiliency (Maginness, 2007) against setbacks, disappointments, obstacles and failures.

Efficacy was produced from a complex process of self-persuasion that needed to be built from experience and established over time (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007; Tsang et al., 2012). Self-efficacy beliefs were "constantly informed, energized, or

depleted” (Tsang et al., 2012, Theories on self-efficacy, para. 4) through individually interpreted identifiable sources from the person’s former and current experiences. Initially Bandura (1995), considered there were four ways that influenced the development of self-efficacy, but Maddux (2002) added imaginal experiences to Bandura’s list, as a fifth influencer.

The ways individuals developed efficacy were: (a) mastery experiences; (b) vicarious experiences; (c) social persuasion; (d) imaginal experiences; and (e) physiological and emotional states (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007; Tsang et al., 2012). Mastery or performance experiences were the most effective and refer to successes building upon success. Appropriate courses of action when managing changes in circumstances and environments were created and executed through the use of “cognitive, behavioural, and self-regulatory tools” (Bandura, 1995, p. 3). Vicarious experiences were provided by seeing others model perseverant behaviours and actions and succeed in achieving similar goals. The more alike the model was to the individual, the stronger the belief that they too could achieve. Social persuasion was gained by verbal reinforcement that the individual possesses the capabilities and attributes, so they would not fail. Imaginal experiences were gained by imagining the behaviour of ourselves or others in particular hypothetical situations. The visualisation of effective or ineffective behaviour might be related to actual or vicarious experiences or triggered by verbal (social) persuasion. Finally, physiological and emotional states of the individual and how they judge their capabilities, affects efficacy development.

During the stages of efficacy growth and development, an individual’s perceptions and interpretations of their emotional and physical reactions to events and circumstances, could affect their self-efficacy. Maddux (2002) advised that children develop a sense of efficacy from engaging with those around them as they manipulate parents, friends, other authoritarian figures, and situations. He also pointed out that parents could facilitate or hinder the development of efficacy in children and this could also impact on the child’s willingness to explore and develop a sense of agency. Efficacy beliefs and a sense of agency continued to develop during a person’s life or could plateau at any time. The strength of efficacy and agency beliefs would continue to grow while being fed by the five “primary”(Maddux, 2002, p. 280) sources (performing, modelling, verbalising, imagining, and whole-of-body health).

When international students developed a strong sense of efficacy they appeared to cope with difficulties when adapting to their new social environments. They tended to treat the adjustment as a challenge rather than a threat. Individuals who have developed efficacy were confident in their abilities and able to cope with adverse situations. However, people with low efficacy appeared to lack confidence, approach situations with apprehension and fear, and might suffer from anxiety issues (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007). As mentioned earlier, connectedness provided international students with a supportive relationship and this enhanced resilience and personal efficacy. Connectedness often provided models of perseverance and achievement (vicarious experience), verbal supporters to reinforce efficacy beliefs (social persuasion), and a positive uplifting environment that assisted international students (psychologically and emotionally) analyse situations and identify coping actions. The Indian international VET students’ stories examined in Chapters 6 and 7 provided

evidence of differing levels of resilience and self-efficacy. The building of connectedness and strong networks was shown to be significant in the development of resilience and efficacy. Reinforcement from networks produced sustained efficacy which was able to support and reinforce resilience so that little or no fluctuation occurred when faced with challenges during acculturation.

A person's efficacy beliefs would regulate their cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection process behaviour (Maddux, 2002; Tsang et al., 2012). These functional processes worked together but the portions of each generally varied in relation to the need and the situation. Efficacy cognitive processes could include setting challenging goals, visualisation of success, and focused analytical thinking. Motivation was also cognitively generated and might be demonstrated by the difficulty of the goals set, the amount of effort given to achievement, the length of perseverance against adversity, and the amount of resilience to failure. Those who were less motivated appeared to distrust their capabilities and tended to show less effort, perseverance and surrendered within a shorter period. Anxiety control and the ability to cope with situations with little or reduced stress, demonstrated a strong efficacy affective-behaviour process (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007). The person's ability to cope with anxiety and stress and avoid depression was assisted when they had connectedness and developed strong interpersonal relationships (Maginness, 2007). As previously discussed, these supportive networks provided efficacious coping resources and modelled persevering behaviours.

Bandura (1995) characterised people who had a strong sense of efficacy with these words:

(They) set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of difficulties. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or to deficient knowledge and skills that are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress, and lowers vulnerability to depression (p. 11).

While Tsang, Hui, and Law (2012) recognised the validity of efficacy research that had been based on causality, they believed that future research should also consider other belief system variables including outcome expectations and environmental factors. A person's environment was seen as an indicator of their efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1995) as it could influence their selection of the types of atmospheres and situations to become involved in. People tended to avoid activities and environments that they considered above their coping abilities; however, those who accepted the challenges believed that they were able to manage and succeed (Bandura, 1995). As much of the research on efficacy had been conducted in Western environments, some theorists considered the cultural trait of self-efficacy as a characteristic of individualistic societies. However, Bandura (1995) advised this notion was ill-founded, as self-efficacy had been shown in comparative studies to be valued by both individualistic and collective socio-cultural groups. Personal efficacy was vital for "successful adaptation and change" (Bandura, 1995, p. 34) regardless of the cultural society, as individual pursuits or group pursuits both required individual effort.

When international students moved into an Australian context, they were confronted by and needed to deal with socio-cultural change. If they had developed strong personal efficacy, a defined sense of agency, and the ability to be resilient when faced with adverse circumstances, their capacity to adapt, thrive, and achieve their goals was greatly enhanced. The ability of the Indian international VET students in this investigation to cope with adversity, acculturate and thrive was explained in Chapters 6 and 7. Through an analysis on their stories, evidence of self-efficacy development, use of agency and resilience reassured the international VET students that they would be able to achieve their goals and successfully adapt.

International Student Adaptation

When international students and others relocated into a different environment, they experienced cross-cultural stress. So as to locate themselves in their environment, various socio-cultural change strategies including agency were used over a period of time. Adaptation was achieved when the changes that people had made in finding their socio-cultural fit, became stable and they were ready to “settle down” (p. 52) and try to have a “satisfactory existence” (Berry, 2006b, p. 52). As people adapted to their environment, acculturative strategies were used in making their psychological and behavioural identity changes. Socio-cultural acculturation was the process undertaken towards achieving adaptation.

Adaptation referred to the identity or end result achieved by an individual after psychologically and behaviourally rearranging their lives. For international students and others, cross-cultural adaptation was considered to be the outcome from psychological, cultural, social, and whole-of-body health adjustments (Berry, 2006b, Berry et al., 2011). As adaptation involved identity building and change that typically was on-going, stages of adaptation could be viewed as milestones on a continuum. At one end was a negative or poor adaptation position where if the person had resisted change and does not make sufficient cross-cultural environment adjustments, they might have found that their life was unpleasant, uncomfortable, and they might have physical or mental health issues. At the other end of the continuum was a positive or successful adaptation position where cross-cultural psychological and behavioural changes had occurred, allowing the person to effectively integrate into their environment where they were able to thrive as they found themselves to be happy and content with life.

The acculturating process for cross-cultural adaptation was recognised as both socio-cultural and psychological (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang et al., 2006). While the socio-cultural process affected the ability to fit in (Ward, 2013), the psychological adjustment impacted on the “performance and functioning” (Novera, 2004, p. 476) of the international student, with any problems or negative experiences potentially developing into “cultural shocks” (Novera, 2004, p. 476). The cascade-type relationship between socio-cultural and psychological processes was confirmed in an extensive 2006 study on immigrant youth conducted by Berry, Phinney, Sam and Vedder. This study found that better socio-cultural adaptation strongly and positively influenced psychological adaptation, and not the reverse (Berry, 2006b). As socio-cultural adaptation referred to how successful an individual was in managing their daily life in a new cultural context (Berry, 2006b), the individual’s

successes and failures while interacting with others impacted on their ability to psychologically adapt.

As noted previously, socio-cultural adaptation or the ability to fit in, was greatly assisted when international students possessed a strong host-nation social support network and interacted within the host cultural context (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang et al., 2006). Searle and Ward (1990) first proposed the hypothesis of cultural fit as they believed socio-cultural interactions using the formula “person x situation”, (Kosic, 2006, p. 123) was a better predictor of adaptation than either the individual’s personality or their language skills. Research by Novera (2004) and Wang and Shan (2006) also suggested that international students who made socio-cultural adjustments to life in their host country, tended to enhance their self-confidence and status, as they considered their chances of success were increased.

Along with the need for host language proficiency and strong communication competence, Masgoret and Ward (2006) advised that a skills acquisition learning curve pattern of cross-cultural adaptation related to the period of residence in the new socio-cultural environment. Acknowledging the Ward and Kennedy (1996) study in New Zealand, Masgoret and Ward (2006) found “sociocultural adaptation increased steadily over the first four to six months, and then tended to level off nearing the end of the first year” (p. 70). This learning pattern was also recognised in research by Kettle (2005), who when observing international students, found that over time, they developed the skills they needed to successfully adapt into the Australian context.

Masgoret and Ward (2006) advised that traits needed by international students in order to negotiate and fit in or adapt to their new socio-cultural environments included a milieu of knowledge and skills on the “ecologies, norms, values and world-views” (p. 60) of the host nationals. They also needed proficiency in host language, confidence and personality factors such as being open, agreeable, motivated, flexible and having cultural empathy, emotional stability and resilience. These skills, knowledge and attitudes recognised as factors which assisted international students and other sojourners in successful socio-cultural adaptation, were illustrated in the ABC model of cultural contact and change originally developed by Ward, Bochner and Furnham in 2001. Their model was expanded in 2006 and incorporated a development dimension that was re-labelled the ABCs of acculturation (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). This new ABC model (refer Figure 2.2) aligned theoretical approaches to the socio-cultural and psychological approaches of resilience (coping with stress), identity development, and the social skills needed to fit in with the host socio-cultural environment.

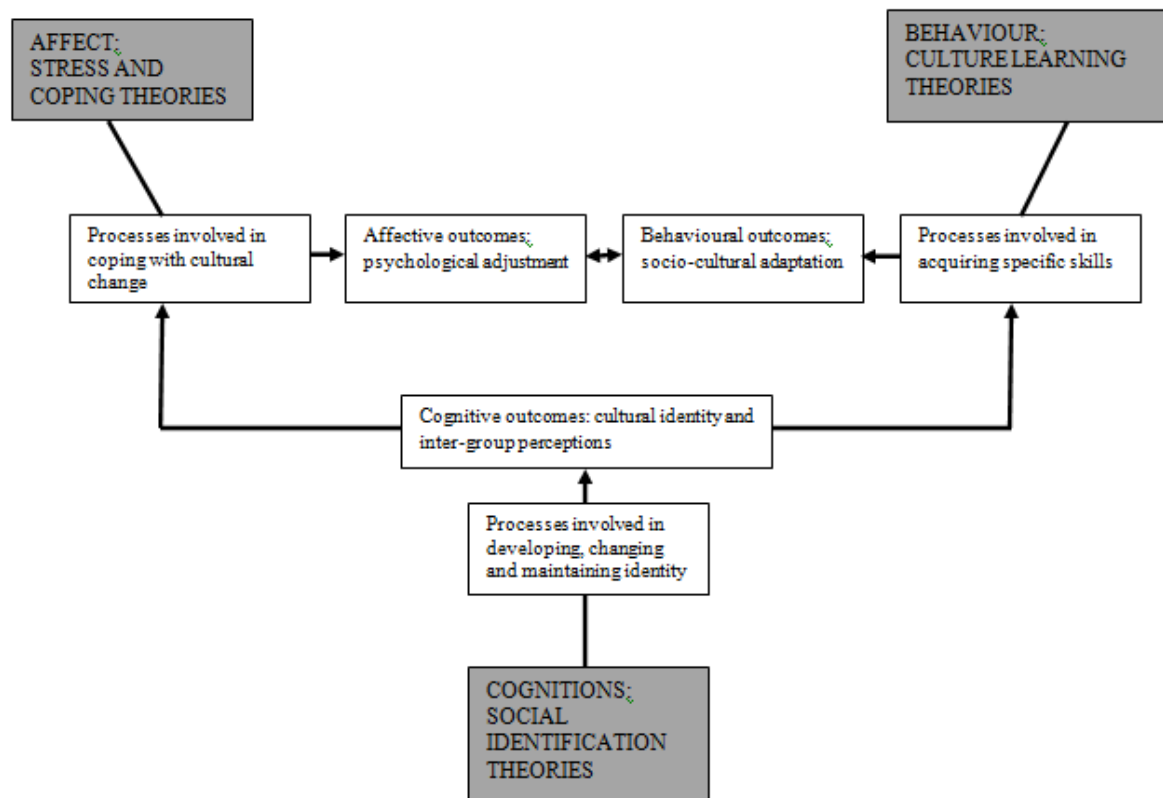


Figure 2.2. The ABC model of culture contact. Schematic drawing on the three major theoretical approaches to a study on intercultural contact and change. Termed the ABCs of Acculturation, [i] the stress and coping framework, (ii) the culture learning approach and (iii) the social identification perspective were taken to highlight the respective importance of Affect, Behaviour and Cognition in the acculturation process. Adapted from "Culture Learning Approach to Acculturation", by A. Masgoret and C. Ward, 2006, *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, p.59. Copyright 2006 by Cambridge University Press.

Research on sojourner adaptation (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Berry, 2006b; Berry et al., 2011; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Kettle, 2004, 2005; Oguri & Gudykunst, 2002; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang et al., 2006) had also identified that international students might have used their powers of agency to improve or not improve their adaptation and fit within their environment. Adaptation does not imply that individuals or groups change to become more like their environment. Rather, evidence has shown that international students might resist personal change and attempt to change their environments, or move away from their environments altogether (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Berry, 2006b). International students experienced "complex and different processes of adaptation" (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007, p. 158). In attempting to make sense of their Australian contexts, students might have engaged in a "multiplicity of discourses" and produced "new and sometimes contradictory ways of making sense" (Kettle, 2005, p. 46) of themselves and their social and academic worlds. The strength of the international student's networks and their feelings of connectedness assisted them during these processes of attempting to adapt, as they felt more in control of their environment and were able to make decisions on the adjustment strategies and discursive identity traits they wished to accept.

The success of an international student's cross-cultural adaptation hinged on their ability to make decisions and exercise control over situations so as to find their cultural fit. For an individual or group, their capacity to exercise control while adapting to a new environment had two main target areas; the environment and the

self. These two areas were identified in the seminal work of Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) who saw control as a two-process model rather than the theoretically accepted single-sided model which focused on the environment. While accepting that achieving control over the environment was a primary control process, control over the self was considered to be of equal importance even though it might be known as a secondary control process (Berry, 2006b; Berry & Sam, 2014; Weisz, 2014). When international students exercised their primary control processes, they were exerting control over their environment in order to change the world so that it fits the self's needs (Weisz, 2014). When they changed themselves so as to fit in with the world and to flow with the current (situation) (Weisz, 2014), they were exercising their secondary control. According to Rothbaum et al. (1982), "the key difference between primary and secondary control is that in the former case the goal is to change the environment whereas in the latter case the goal is to fit in with the environment" (p. 11). To Morling and Evered (2006), it appeared that many researchers for over twenty years were consistently misunderstanding and misusing the primary and secondary control concepts. So following an extensive review of literature on secondary control, Morling and Evered (2006) redefined and clarified the original concept to re-emphasise that the goal of secondary control was the adjustment of the self to the environment, as well as an acceptance of the outcomes and circumstances. With each situation, the student would have chosen the target (environment or self) and what would be changed and by how much, in order to assist and facilitate their adaptation and ability to fit in.

An analysis of the factors that affected positive adaptation outcomes appeared to demonstrate that there was a consistent pattern. Berry (2006b) advised that strong psychological adaptation could be anticipated when there were "personality variables, life-change events and social support" (p. 53). High level socio-cultural adaptation could be expected with the gaining of cultural knowledge, together with interactive contact and positive inter-group attitudes. Berry (2006b), Berry and Sam (2014) and Novera (2004) confirmed that when an acculturating individual had attained a minimal cultural distance between the host environment and themselves, then through the use of effective acculturation strategies including identity development, they would achieve successful socio-cultural and psychological adaptation.

Identity Development

Theories on identity and identity development have been found in psychology, social psychology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies (Holland, 2010; Holland & Lave, 2009). Within these study fields it has been generally accepted, that when identities were formed they were internal historical, cultural and social productions which have taken on specific discursive forms and practice (Hall, 1990, 1996). Thus, so as to meet an individual's needs for a particular time, place, and situation, an identity might be improvised (Holland 2010) from the cultural resources at hand. That identity mantle might be used by the individual so that entry into a group was gained, enabling them to participate in certain group activities.

In today's globalised world the identities that have been sought and developed were generally viewed as temporary; as by the act of free choice there was no commitment of retention, and individuals were able to easily move between social identity groups

(Bauman, 2009). Research has noted that for many, the ability to define themselves was important, and this had been accomplished through alignment with others who shared common attributes (Deaux & Burke, 2010). People could be agents in the production of their own and others' social identities, no matter how institutionalised and ritualised they might consider themselves to be or appear to others (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2014). While individuals generally have a multiplicity of identities which defined their specific selves, the differences between these internalised identities might also have provided some form of stress and confusion (Castells, 2010). For many individuals, the activity of "putting together, dismantling and re-arranging self-identity" (Bauman, 2009, p. 10) was often completed under stress and insecurity as the actions and effects were uncertain.

Diasporic identities which have generally been associated with the traumas of separation and dislocation, could also be viewed as long-term community formations by transnationals who construct identities as they travel, settle down and establish themselves in their new socio-economic, socio-cultural and education communities (Doherty & Singh, 2005). At times international students might have used auto-ethnography as a strategy to project a diasporic student identity representation, especially if others have given them that label (Doherty & Singh, 2005). With identity being constituted out of difference (Grossberg, 2010), the self-identity of an international student continued to be actively created and re-created over time. A number of identities might be developed due to the decisions that were made after exposure to different environments, realities and discourses, which reflected various positioning levels, contexts and constraints in their academic and social worlds (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Although self-identity and discursive identities might be formed and re-formed at the same time, from the individual's perspective they were rarely the same, although they might share similar behavioural traits.

The terms discourse, discursive identity and identity have been at times misused, confused or considered interchangeable. As these were important concepts in this research, they have been explained as key terms in Chapter 1. Discursive identities or roles related to positioning rather than an essence (Hall, 1990). While individual identity could be likened to the liquid in a bottle, discursive identity was the shape and colour of the bottle (Hall, 1990). Discursive identities or roles were the functional ways of being (e.g. worker, mother, smoker, and neighbour) that have been structured by institutions and society (Castells, 2010). A discursive identity or discourse¹⁹ would be developed in order to be recognised as a distinct *type* of person, which enabled inclusion or exclusion into a specific socio-cultural group. The discourse would define the distinctive ways an individual should be "thinking, being, acting, interacting, believing, knowing, feeling, valuing, dressing" as well as how they used body language and "various symbols, images, objects, artefacts, tools, technologies, times, places, and spaces" (Gee, 2004, p. 46). At times different identity types might be developed and these identities might be built due to the power relationships within the socio-cultural group (Castells, 2010). An example of coerced identity formation through socio-cultural power was described in Vahed's (2007) study on the Indian community in Brisbane. In his study, individuals and groups in the Indian community were sectioned, positioned, and ethnically identified

¹⁹ Gee (2004) identified the discursive identity form of discourse as big "D" with little "d" representing oral discourse or conversation.

because of the power relationships within the main Indian community. If Indian migrants and Indian international students wished to participate in the Indian community and take part in religious and cultural events, their discursive identities were influenced during their acculturating adjustment and adaptation into the Brisbane environment.

How international students viewed and recognised their own identity depended on their dialogical relations with others as identity was negotiated through dialogue within ourselves and with others and not developed in isolation (Taylor, 2011). Within each of us, a framework existed that guided our thinking on who we were and what were our values and beliefs. An international student's frame identified things they considered to be "good, or valuable", or what they thought "ought to be done", or what they would "endorse or oppose", as well as identifying their "horizon" (p. 27) within which they might consider making a stand (Taylor, 2011). When an international student's frame fractured, they might have found themselves *at sea*, facing an identity crisis (Taylor, 2011). This form of psychological shock would be a very stressful period for international students while they made decisions on which identity characteristics to be retained, taken on, rejected, or lost, during the time they adapted and found their place in the community.

A person's conscious conception of themselves would be developed from their perception that they were actors within their social and cultural environments (Holland, 2010). When communicating, this idea would be reinforced as an individual's message not only claimed their relative positioning but also conveyed their relationship with the message receiver (Holland, 2010). Through the process of reflective consciousness or self-orientation, individuals would realise who they were (self), what they were (identity), and what type of personal characteristics they possessed (personality) (Kosic, 2006). Without this capacity to self-reflect, international students and others would not appreciate alternative perspectives, have used self-control, accomplished goals, or "experience pride, self-esteem, anxiety, and locus of control" (Kosic, 2006, p. 115). As knowledge of self was highly evaluative and motivational, favourable views of self would create a "valuable resource for coping with stresses and setbacks, whereas negative views of the self were linked to maladjustment, depression, and other problems" (Kosic, 2006, p. 115). An international student's efficacy and ability to be resilient would be influenced by their capacity to self-motivate, overcome crisis, achieve their goals, establish networks, develop their self-identity, and find their place in their social and educational communities. Using stories told by Indian international students in the VET sector, this investigation sought to understand the participants' consciously developed identities, self-perceptions, efficacy development and resilience abilities during their acculturation into the Australian communities.

For some international students crossing boundaries, identity development and adaptation would be an important phase or *right of passage* during their education journey. When international students wish to fit in to their Australian VET and social environments, Ward and Kennedy (2001) advised that they might need to acquire, negotiate and interact with others using skills that were culturally appropriate. Thus, international students might have found in discovering their cultural-fit that they might need to develop cross-cultural adaptation coping frameworks in order to deal with the psychological and socio-cultural aspects of their transnational journey

(Yang et al., 2006). As Australia was viewed as a culturally plural society that had a number of ethnocultural groups, community groups, and social groups, it was feasible to believe that acculturating international students would have found an ethnic identity which aligned with their self-image. When international students built identities and joined with groups which best suited their self-identification, a sense of belonging was also developed (Liebkind, 2006). However, it has been shown that due to power relationships within socio-cultural groups whether ethnic or community based, identity development for international students might not always agree with their self-image.

While research in cultural fit, acculturation and adaptation appeared to consider it salient that host countries possessed a culture, albeit it plural, multicultural, or melting-pot, a survey in 2003 of the Indian population in Brisbane, identified that many Indian migrants were nostalgic for Indian culture as they believed Australia was *cultureless* (Vahed, 2007). Thus, it appeared that as well as developing new identities for their environment and in an attempt to retain some of their original culture, many Indians in Brisbane and other Australian cities built temples, churches and mosques, in order to continue with their traditional celebrations, rituals and festivals (Vahed, 2007). Vahed's (2007) research also discovered that many younger Indian migrants were thriving in the Australian environment as it provided them with the security and economic prosperity they needed as well as the Indian culture they desired. From his interview findings, he posited that while bonds with friends and relatives in India remained strong, some Indian migrants were seen to develop separate ethnic identities as part of their celebration of being Australian (Vahed, 2007). As one survey interviewee stated, "If you show your ability and fit into the society, then you will have no problems" (Vahed, 2007, p. 48). The research also highlighted that many Indian community leaders spoke highly of the Australian government's commitment towards a multicultural society and that they believed Indians should show respect in being an Australian and acknowledge the benefits that an Australian society provided.

Baas (2006) found in his 2005 study on Indian international students in Melbourne, that there were three main groups who sought Australian permanent residency: (1) those who initially did not want permanent residency, but as time passed found it was desired; (2) those whose goal was always to gain some form of residency, so as to gain a work permit; and (3) those whose focus and only goal was to gain permanent residency. He argued that the majority of Indian international students who came to Australia were actually migrants, whose "concerns, motivations, hopes and ideas about the future" (Baas, 2006, p. 13) focused on migration and as such their worries, responsibilities, behaviours, and identities developed, reflected that perception of self and their future.

In the context of this research on Indian international students in Australian VET, the choices and decisions that the students made in order to acculturate, adapt and fit in, were a reflection of their reason for desiring an Australian qualification and their eventual goal. The opportunity for Australian permanent residency (PR) on completion of a two year study program that met the General Skilled Migration visa requirements has provided an immigration window for many Indian students. This ability to gain residency has created an international student market that was no longer about education but actually about migration. Thus, the identity and

adaptation decisions made by the participants in this research and their socio-cultural and psychological changes were a reflection of the individual's goal and self-perception. While they might have accepted the label of a student, they behaved more like migrants.

Acculturation

The word acculturation was recognised as first being used in the 1880 Powell study of Indian languages where he suggested that acculturation related to the psychological changes that were encouraged by cross-cultural mimicking (Sam, 2006). From the field of anthropology, W. J. McGee in 1898 considered acculturation to be a "process of exchange and mutual improvement by which societies advanced from slavery, to barbarism, to civilization, and to enlightenment" (Sam, 2006, p. 13). The sociological perspective of acculturation was initiated by S. E. Simons in 1901 when she regarded acculturation as a two-way reciprocal accommodating process (Sam, 2006). Acculturation psychology was originally introduced as a group-level phenomenon by the seminal work of G. Stanley Hall in 1904 (Sam, 2006). Over 50 years passed before psychologists recognised it as an individual phenomenon and engaged fully in furthering the field. While psychological acculturation referred to the changes that took place within an individual, it also referred to the individual's change experiences as their ethnic group went through some form of change (Sam, 2006). Berry and Sam (2014) identified that there were differences in the acculturation changes experienced by an individual and by a group. Sam (2006) explained these differences with:

At the group level, the changes might be in either the social structure of the group, the economic base or the group's political organisation. At the individual level, the kinds of changes taking place might be in identity, values, attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, the rate at which changes take place within the individual (i.e. attitudes, behaviour, etc.) may differ (p. 14).

Discussions on acculturation could be traced back to the ancient philosophers with an upsurge in research interest coming from anthropology and sociology and more recently from psychology (Sam & Berry, 2006). In 2004 acculturation was defined by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as "the progressive adoption of elements of a foreign culture (ideas, words, values, norms, behaviour, institutions) by persons, groups or classes of a given culture" (Sam, 2006, p. 11). However, as Sam (2006) pointed out, the IOM definition was flawed as it does not consider rejection of, or resistance to, cultural elements as possible options in the acculturation process. Contemporary studies have viewed acculturation as a collective term that described the changes in individuals and groups resulting from different cultures being in contact (Berry, 2006a, 2010; Berry & Sam, 2014; Berry et al, 2011; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Sam, 2006; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010; Tadmor et al., 2009). Due to an increase in observations of worldwide migration and the desire to better understand culture and human behaviour (Sam & Berry, 2006), the interest and focus of acculturation research had been on immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who were considered more permanent settlers (Schwartz et al., 2010). However, there was a growing interest in sojourners (Bochner, 2006) and specifically the acculturation of international students (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Vahed, 2007, 2013; Ward, 2013; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang et al., 2006). As highlighted by Sam and Berry (2006), "One

consequence of international education is the experience of acculturation, for both the student and the receiving institutions” (p. 3). While international students made adjustments in an attempt to adapt to their new environment, the receiving institutions and communities also made adjustments to accommodate the students’ ethnocultural differences and assist them during the stages of their acculturation.

The acculturation strategy international students and other sojourners selected when adjusting and adapting to a new environment would reflect their dominant or non-dominant ethnocultural group positioning and the cultural-acceptance attitude of the host society (plural cultures, unicultural, multicultural, or melting pot) (Berry, 2006a; Berry & Sam, 2014; Bochner, 2006; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Many social and environmental conditions or constraints would affect the acculturation strategy available to individuals or groups due to their dominate or non-dominate status, cultural differences, and power relationship to each other (Padilla & Perez, 2003). The social and environmental conditions or constraints sojourners including international students faced, might or might not have allowed them to use their powers of agency to resist personal change or move away from their environment. Being conscious of their cultural positioning in the host society and having an awareness of the cultural distance between their new socio-cultural environment and their own cultural background, assisted them in identifying their acculturation strategy options when they were faced with adversity and the stresses from cultural shocks.

However, it was generally only when international students and other sojourners relocated and found that they needed to adjust to another culture, that they examined their own culture and discovered the differences (Storti, 2001). Culture shock and an identity crisis were common events that occurred when people moved between cultures (Storti, 2001). In order to deal with these socio-cultural stresses, interact with others, find their identity, and their cultural fit, individuals generally made psychological and behavioural changes so as to adjust to their new environment (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Hu, 2008; Marginson et al., 2010; Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Ramia et al., 2013; Wang & Shan, 2006; Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Hu, 2008; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang et al., 2006). As individual reactions to stressful and adverse situations were never the same as another’s and that each person would have their own reasons and goals for relocating, the processes of adjustment would be subjective and the acculturation strategies used to adjust and adapt, would vary.

Studies on voluntary and involuntary migration have provided new terms, such as globalisation, “biculturalism, multiculturalism, integration, re-socialisation, and ethnic identity” (Sam, 2006, p. 12). These terms, at times, had been used as alternative concepts or as an interchangeable term with acculturation. The meaning of these terms could not synonymously replace acculturation as they only covered certain community situations or facets of the different processes, strategies, and results that were shown when an individual or group acculturated. Another terminology misunderstanding was between the terms assimilation and acculturation with the two terms at times being used synonymously; while at other times viewed as sub-sets of each other (Sam, 2006). The word assimilation was used by Simons in her 1901 *Social Assimilation* paper. However, her definition of “the process of adjustment or accommodation which occurs between the members of two different

racess” (Sam, 2006, p. 13) was more in line with the meaning of acculturation. The two fields which appear to have a term preference were anthropology and sociology, with anthropologists preferring acculturation, and sociologists preferring assimilation (Sam, 2006). Although, this research was sociologically based, along with Berry (2010), Padilla and Perez (2003), Sam (2006) and Tadmor, Tetlock, and Peng (2009), I viewed assimilation as a strategy which might be used during an individual’s acculturation process.

Acculturation changes were often considered purely cultural. However, Berry (2010) has indicated that acculturation changes could include physical, biological, political, economical, social, and cultural, or be a combination at the group level. Within each acculturation change a number of variable circumstances existed that could be within the control of a group or individual or outside of their control. These acculturation variables could be grouped as conditions, orientations and outcomes (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006). Acculturation conditions or the “background setting” (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006, p. 142) involved the groups and individuals characteristics and defined the limits and demands of the acculturation process. Acculturation outcomes referred to the degree of success in achieving “psychological wellbeing and sociological competence” (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006, p. 143), with acculturation orientations reflecting the individual or groups’ decisions on cultural orientations. Cultural choices were made on the level of original culture to be maintained and to what extent they wished to participate, accept and assimilate into their host culture. For an acculturating group, variable conditions could relate to the characteristics of the host and originating society, the group’s structure and the type of intergroup relationships (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006). Acculturation variable conditions for an individual could refer to changes that have happened over time, changes in their society positioning, or changes in their “personality characteristics and abilities” (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006, p. 143), or changes in the individual’s situation or social environment. The results of acculturation for individuals or groups were never the same as each process occurs in a specific cultural context, at a specific time, and in a specific place. For the Indian international VET students in this research group, each participant demonstrated subjective decision making on which acculturation strategies and identity characteristics to accept. Their decisions described in their stories reflected their positive and negative experiences, their goals, their academic and community relationships and the strength of their efficacy and resilience.

While a pre-requisite for cultural change or acculturation was the contact between two cultural groups, the point where personal psychological acculturation changed some values, attitudes and identities, was often difficult to identify or even confirm the change was due to acculturation (Sam, 2006). Ontogenetic development might be confused with psychological acculturation (Sam, 2006) as people normally develop over time and make psychological changes during their life.

Research by Bochner (2000) and the seminal work of Oberg (1960) had shown that acculturating cultural adjustment for international students during the sojourn experience generally followed one of two main patterns: the U-curve of adjustment or the linear learning curve of adjustment. The U-curve of adjustment commenced with optimism and elation, however, these feelings were soon replaced by anxiety and stress (Bochner, 2006). Then as the student gradually began to cope, they

attempted to rebuild their sense of security, confidence and wellbeing (Bochner, 2006). In contrast the linear learning curve of adjustment commenced with the student in a state of cultural shock and they gradually worked along the scale to a higher level of emotional adjustment (Bochner, 2006). While studies have observed both forms of adjustment, the difference appears to relate to the distance between the culture of the sojourner and the culture of the host society, with an increase in cultural distance intensifying the difficulties during the adjustment process (Bochner, 2006). Thus, it was postulated that students who had a closer cultural distance would experience less initial acculturation stress and be more inclined to follow a U-curve adjustment pattern (Bochner, 2006). These adjustment curves further evidenced the impact of cultural distance and host society cultural acceptance on the type of sojourner experience and strategies available when adapting to new socio-cultural environments. In this research both U-curve and linear adjustment processes were evidenced as the Indian international VET students showed varying levels of acculturation stress, successful use of coping strategies and ability to access and utilise supportive networks.

As the process of acculturation leading to adaptation was time based, international students and other types of sojourners could use a variety of strategies to adapt or use their agency to resist. According to Berry (2006a), strategies for acculturation consisted of two main components found in day-to-day preferences and practices: attitudes and behaviours. However, the actual matching of these preferences and desires (attitudes) rarely corresponded with those performed (behaviours).

In Kruusvall, Vetik and Berry's (2009) acculturating strategy model, there were four groups of strategies: (a) assimilation; (b) separation; (c) integration; and (d) marginalisation. Each acculturating strategy was indicated along a central vertical axis of the matrix and related to the individual's orientations towards other groups (including ethnocultural and host socio-cultural groups). The individual's orientations towards their original or own cultural group were indicated along the horizontal axis. The use of each of these four strategies was based on personal decisions that related to their individual and group orientations of moving towards other ethnocultural groups and the larger society, or towards maintaining their own heritage cultural group and identity. The assimilation strategy was used by individuals "who do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures" (p. 199), while the separation strategy was used when the individual desired the opposite to assimilation (Berry, 2010). The integration strategy was selected when the individual wished to maintain their original culture while pursuing daily interactions with other groups. Integration was where they maintained a degree of cultural integrity and ethnicity while also participating in the larger society (Berry, 2010). Marginalisation was the reverse of integration as the individual wished not to maintain their heritage culture (possibly due to an enforced cultural loss) or establish relationships with others (possibly due to exclusion or discrimination issues) (Berry, 2010). Figure 2.3 illustrated the four acculturation strategy options from the perspective of an individual in a non-dominant ethnocultural group.

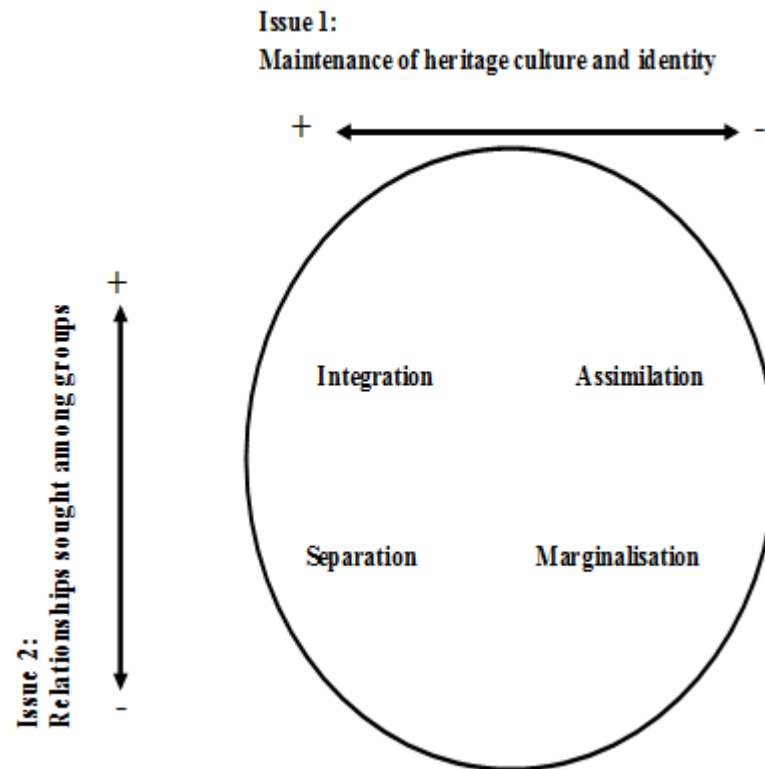


Figure 2.3. Strategies of non-dominant ethnocultural groups. Schematic drawing on the strategies in non-dominant ethnocultural groups. Assimilation strategy was used when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures. Separation was the alternative strategy to assimilation and was used by individuals who place a value on holding on to their original culture and wish to avoid interaction with others. Integration strategy was used when individuals have an interest in both maintaining their original culture and wish to interact with other groups. Marginalisation strategy was shown when individuals have little interest or possibility of cultural maintenance and little interest in establishing relationships with others. Adapted from "Mobility and acculturation", by J.W. Berry, 2010, *The Psychology of global mobility*, p.199. Copyright 2010 by Springer Science.

While the Kruusvall, Vetik and Berry's (2009) model was frequently referred to in acculturation literature and called the Berry model, Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik (2010) found the four groups within the matrix limiting. They maintained that it tended to force a high or low positioning when classifying individuals on their "receiving-culture acquisition and on (their) heritage-culture retention" (Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 239). Schwartz and colleagues (2010) also criticised the one-size-fits all approach of the Berry model. They believed that different research populations would show various levels along the scales and that all four groups might not be equally represented or even represented at all. Schwartz and colleagues (2010) further considered that the arbitrary form of classifying groups made comparison studies difficult. They also viewed the category of marginalisation as representative of a very small population. They considered it unlikely that individuals would develop a "cultural sense of self without drawing on either the heritage or receiving cultural context" (Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 239), unless they rejected or felt rejected by both their heritage and receiving cultures.

Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) research eventually found strong representations for three of the four categories; integration, separation, and assimilation, plus two additional variants, and a small group resembling marginalisation. Thus, Schwartz and colleagues (2010) recommended another variation on the Berry model. This one provided a greater understanding and explanation on acculturation as it considered the many cultural, ethnic, and circumstantial variations among migrants and others.

As individual and environmental factors remained strong considerations in acculturation, alternative models emerged which focused more on socio-cultural acculturation. Believing acculturation was generational and more complicated than two cultural groups being in contact, Padilla and Perez (2003) designed an acculturation model. Their model focused on social and environmental conditions or constraints which they believed were not considered in Berry's model. The model rested on four pillars: (a) social cognition; (b) cultural competence; (c) social identity; and (d) social stigma. In the Padilla and Perez (2003) model, social stigma was the central focus as they believed ethnic loyalty and cultural discrimination by the host society and their own cultural group were the pivotal motivators for individuals when selecting strategies to acculturate into their environment. The premise in designing their model was that acculturation was not a "strictly unidimensional process of cultural change" (p. 38) but rather a multiple outcome process that was "forced by intergroup contact" (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 38). In their model, cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty were seen as salient "supra-constructs" (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 38). The importance and impact of culture and ethnicity in locating cultural fit during the socio-cultural process of acculturation was discussed previously.

Although this research does not cover the process of acculturation over generations, the beliefs of Padilla and Perez (2003) were considered interesting. They espoused that individuals of subsequent generations had implicit, although varying knowledge, of both their heritage culture and their host culture. This cultural awareness included language, significant historical events, music, standards of behaviour and values when interacting with others, of both their heritage and the host culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). When individuals were more aware of their heritage culture than their host culture, Padilla and Perez (2003) believed that evidenced they were less acculturated. Alternatively, more acculturated individuals demonstrated that they had a good understanding of their host culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). While cultural awareness related to the individual's knowledge, ethnic loyalty (Padilla & Perez, 2003) depended on how they auto-stereotyped their own ethnicity and their friend's ethnicity.

Studies over a four generation span showed that while ethnic loyalty remained high, heritage cultural awareness declined (Padilla & Perez, 2003). This evidenced that through progressive generations, some facets of heritage culture were forgotten while still retaining their ethnic label. Perceived discrimination either by the host society or within the ethnocultural group, established evidence of a strong tendency for individuals to retain heritage culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). It was due to this discrimination factor that Padilla and Perez (2003) believed social stigmas affected the acculturation and adaptation of immigrants and others. Due to an individual's socio-cultural power, they might have found that they were constrained when selecting their preferred acculturation strategy. The implications of dealing with social stigmas and the effects of othering or socio-cultural grouping within society boundaries while attempting to develop connectedness with the host society, were focused discussions earlier in this chapter.

There have been a number of models developed that sought to examine and understand the process of acculturation. Some were based on the Berry model such as the Acculturation Complexity Model (ACM) developed by Tadmor, Tetlock, and

Peng (2009), while others similar to the Padilla and Perez (2003) model have focused on individual and environmental cultural factors. Additional models have also looked at specific behavioural and psychological outcomes of acculturation. Acculturation models will continue to emerge as research perspectives on this phenomenon with different participant groups reach alternative conclusions to be considered.

In Australia, the socio-cultural adjustments necessary for acculturation and adaptation have continued to be monitored by government and education providers. Australian society has been recognised as a multicultural environment where individuals and ethnic groups were recognised, supported, and encouraged to retain their sense of cultural identity. Within Australia as in other multicultural communities, cultural diversity was acknowledged as an asset of the community and the country.

Acculturation in Australia

Australian acculturation research which began in the early 1950s, was sparked by a large influx of immigrants (Sang & Ward, 2006). These studies viewed acculturation from four perspectives: (a) Taft's multifaceted socialisation-resocialisation perspective in 1977 and 1985; (b) Richardson's dynamic sequential model in 1974; (c) Berry's and associates acculturative stress model in 1977 and 1987; and (d) Bochner's and associates functional model of friendship networks and cultural mediation in 1977, 1982 and 1986 (Sang & Ward, 2006). A number of studies since 1987 have employed both Berry's framework (a two-dimensional view relating to a person's preferred ethnic culture and their desire to participate in the larger society) and Bochner's and associates functional model (three distinct social networks and how they were used) (Sang & Ward, 2006). While acculturation frameworks and models continue to be developed, further investigations on sojourner acculturation in Australia remain warranted.

As a culturally plural society Australia has supported a number of diverse cultural and ethnic groups living within its social boundaries and political borders. A culturally plural society could be viewed as one where there were a number of dissimilar cultural or ethnic groups who "reside together within a shared social and political framework" (Berry, 2006a, p. 27). While in the past *unicultural* societies existed, with "one culture, one language, one religion, and one single (set of) identity characteristics" (p. 27), it has now been accepted that many cultural groups could exist in any given society and the people within these groups were all trying to co-exist and live co-operatively as a plural society (Berry, 2006a). The two main features of plural societies related to the "continuity (or not) of diverse cultural communities; and the participation (or not) of these communities in the daily life of the plural society" (Berry, 2006a, p. 27). In many Australian communities, a number of well established ethnocultural groups have supported and assisted citizens during their socio-cultural adjustment phases of acculturation.

The number and variety of ethnocultural groups that currently exist in Australia were established from years of voluntary movement by immigrants, as well descendants from indentured workers. While many socio-cultural groups considered themselves as members of Australian society, international students have accepted their position as a temporary resident or sojourner. With this mind-set, international students might

evidence hesitancy in establishing local relationships or identifying with their host society. This reluctance would dramatically affect their selection of acculturation strategies.

While most literature on international student acculturation tended to focus on interaction with conational and host national contacts (Berry & Sam, 2014), Kashima's and Loh's (2006) Australian research on acculturation and social networks sought to understand the acculturation of newcomers to a new society and the influence of the international social ties they developed. Their findings suggested that acculturation was strongly influenced by the student's social ties and their need for cognitive closure (NCC). NCC recognised the individual's need to find a clear and firm solution for a situation or issue which was uncertain, confused or ambiguous (Kashima & Loh, 2006). Their research concluded that a low socio-cultural and psychological adjustment to the host country was shown by students who were high on the NCC scale, compared with low NCC students who showed positive socio-cultural and psychological adjustment (Kashima & Loh, 2006). The high NCC students had developed strong ties with other international students and tended to identify more strongly with their heritage culture as well as with their Australian university (Kashima & Loh, 2006). International students who had strong local and international ties appeared to identify with the university, no matter the level of NCC (Kashima & Loh, 2006). Thus they proposed that when international students developed their new identities, social connections with other international students influenced the identity development process. They also recognised that those students with high NCC showed an improvement in their socio-cultural and psychological adjustment if they developed strong national connections (Kashima & Loh, 2006). This research by Kashima's and Loh's (2006) recognised the influence of social and environmental conditions or constraints on acculturation. Their study added to the findings of the Padilla and Perez (2003) research on individual and environmental cultural factors and reinforced the validity of their acculturation model. These significant insights by Kashima's and Loh's (2006) and Padilla and Perez (2003) into self or environmentally imposed acculturation constraints, informed and assisted me in developing an understanding of the acculturation events described by the VET sector Indian international student participants.

In another study conducted by Vahed (2007) on primary and secondary Indian migrants in Brisbane, it was found that most participants were voluntary immigrants who had left their home due to political turmoil or in search of better economic prospects. While primary Indian migrants originated from India, secondary Indian migrants, who culturally identified themselves as Indian, had originated from Fiji, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Africa. During acculturation, few of his research participants experienced feelings of diaspora while they adjusted into the Australian community. However, he noted that while many Indians lived in mostly "white middle-class suburbs" (p. 49) and their education and occupation profiles were equal to their "white peers" (Vahed, 2007, p. 49), their ethnic identity and experiences were shaped by their ethnic Indian label that was either self-identified or imposed. It appeared to Vahed (2007) that although the participants were happy to continue living in Australia, they were "segmented by ethnicity, culture, caste, class, religion, region of origin, and migration histories" (p. 49). This in-group sectioning positioned them and ethically identified them as different social sub-groups within their own ethnic cultural community. While this study by Vahed (2007) evidenced that

connections of religion, music, language, and ethno-culture were often maintained in multicultural environments such as Australia, it also demonstrated that there were a number of ethnocultural groups, identities, and positioning levels within some cultural sub-groups that affect an individual's ability to access and use acculturating adjustment strategies. As socio-cultural behaviours continually develop during an acculturation process, new socio-cultural identities form. These identities would reflect the cultural behaviours desired in order to fit in, be accepted, and develop social and community networks with local groups. Further investigations on identity formation influenced by socio-cultural change continue, as this research area holds the interest of a number of scientific fields.

Conclusion

This chapter indicated a number of key points in the consideration of Indian international students' wellbeing and the formation of identities as a consequence of the acculturation and adaptation process into Australian academic and socio-cultural communities. The first of these points identified international students, especially in the VET sector, as strong economic contributors to the Australian economy and as such their activities and success factors were politically monitored by governments at all levels. It was also argued that international students might be considered sojourners when viewed as temporary residents as they have the intention of returning to their original culture and country. Alternatively, they could be considered migrants when their motivation was permanent residency and a visa requirement was to complete Australian VET studies. Thus, the political borders and cultural boundaries that were manipulated and crossed by international students would be dependent upon their motivation and the purpose of their Australian journey.

While personal motivating factors might have provided the impetus to commence studies in Australia, other factors could be impeding the international students' opportunities for success. A common area faced by many international students was the need to deal with cultural and learning shocks as they discovered the differences in the education and socio-cultural environments in Australia as compared to their previous cultural ways and beliefs. This disillusionment was another key area which could impact on an international students' ability to be successful in their new environment. Even though international students identified cultural differences, they also appeared to have found coping strategies to deal with the issues and challenges which confronted them. The ability to be resilient and bounce back from stressful situations was another trait of successful international students. Development of this personal strength required a sense of connectedness within the community which provided the student with a feeling of belonging or place. Resilience together with personal efficacy or a strong self-worth belief had also been shown to assist with international student wellbeing. Resilience was shown to reduce the impact from risks taken and issues related with academic learning, social learning, stress, cultural identity, mental illness, conflict, security and other possible safety and wellness threats. Connectedness, resilience and self-efficacy were important ingredients for international students' wellness and success.

Finally adaptation, acculturation and discursive identity development were the keystone areas which impacted on the socio-cultural and psychological fit of

international students in the Australian environment. As a culturally plural society, Australia has supported a variety of different cultural and ethnic communities. Living within its social boundaries and political borders, these communities were encouraged and a number of socio-cultural groups developed. In order for international students to be able to adapt and be successful, they might have needed to seek out a new cultural identity framework. This identity framework could have assisted them when locating coping strategies to deal with any psychological and social situations. However, agreement between their developed self-identity and discursive identities might vary due to power and positioning influences within socio-cultural groups.

Many of the key concepts and notions described in Chapter 2 informed the development of my conceptual framework which was unpacked in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In Chapter 2, I established the discussion on sojourners and in particular international students in Australia. The literature presented discussed a number of theories and studies focused on the concepts of acculturation, adaptation, resilience, efficacy, identity, and connectedness. These concepts developed a multi-facet view on the lives, motivations, cultural and academic issues, and perspectives of international students during acculturation into their socio-cultural and community environments. However, to date no research has appeared to have tested these concepts and notions when applied to international students in the Australian VET sector. This dearth of sociological studies in the VET sector has been identified as a gap in knowledge which will be partly addressed by this research.

The focus of this sociological investigation was on the self-identity development of Indian international students' during acculturation and adaptation as they studied in the VET sector and formed socio-cultural relationships in the Australian context. The two questions that guided this research were:

1. *What identities do Indian international students build as they study in the VET sector within an Australian context?;* and
2. *How did the participants demonstrate resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit?*

Research Conceptual Framework

As explained by Merriam and Simpson (2000) after identifying the area to be studied, a conceptual framework needed to be developed. As this was discovery research, I built the conceptual framework after an extensive and critical reading of contemporary and seminal literature on international students in a variety of contexts. I also reflected on my own 12 years of observation and interaction with international students.

This research was shaped by the subjective nature of international student decision making and the influences of self, others and their new socio-cultural environments. My curiosity was stimulated and I desired to know more about this identity decision making process of international students in the VET sector. Through extensive literature reading, I was informed on key concepts which assisted me in developing my conceptual framework and first research question. As a framework, my design was based on the principle that knowledge was an ever expanding spiral. As soon as one piece of knowledge was located, a trail or pathway towards another knowledge source would be provided. As this was discovery research about people and change, I viewed my conceptual framework not as a hypothesis to be confirmed but a knowledge beginning.

The research conceptual framework design also reflected my need to know and explain to others why Indian international students made decisions on identity changes as a consequence of acculturation. Acculturation in the Australian VET and community sectors included facing political borders and socio-cultural boundaries. Even though Australia was perceived as being culturally supportive of international

students through a positive socio-cultural ideology, government compliance requirements and community endeavours toward social inclusiveness, there remained political borders and socio-cultural boundaries that were encountered by not only Indian but most international students (Marginson et al., 2010). In crossing these borders and boundaries, international students faced a number of situations that appeared to induce them to examine their values, behaviours, expectations and future aspirations. These situations encouraged identity changes to be made. Through my lens, it appeared that as students negotiated a path into their new socio-cultural environments and observed others, they pondered and reflected on their existing psychological and behavioural belief systems and identities. My research questions were informed through an examination of the many decisions that were made by international students on identity change and socio-cultural acculturation.

A number of researchers appeared to have the belief that the identity changes international students made were a result of acculturation (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Vahed, 2013; Ward, 2013; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang et al., 2006). Acculturation (examined in Chapter 2) was the term used to explain the many and varied identity changes that occurred in individuals and groups when there was physical contact between different cultures (Berry & Sam, 2014). With Australia being a culturally plural society, Indian international students were exposed to a number of different environments, realities and identity discourses. These situations and circumstances provided international students with a smorgasbord of attitudes, values and characteristics. Over time international students creatively developed identities which met the requirements of their self-image and the ethnic identity that they wished to portray (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Liebkind, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Although the reasoning on the different discourses selected was not examined, I was able to discover the participants' views on their present psychological and behavioural identity characteristics together with the influencers that persuaded them to consider identity change. As this research was interested in the identity development process of Indian international students, identity-types, titles or categories similar to those used in personality-type tests were not formed.

After the research focus was identified, my conceptual framework was built. This framework shown as Figure 3.1 assisted me in developing my first research question and locating appropriate methods for data gathering and research analysis. My second research question arose from discoveries made in the first analysis.

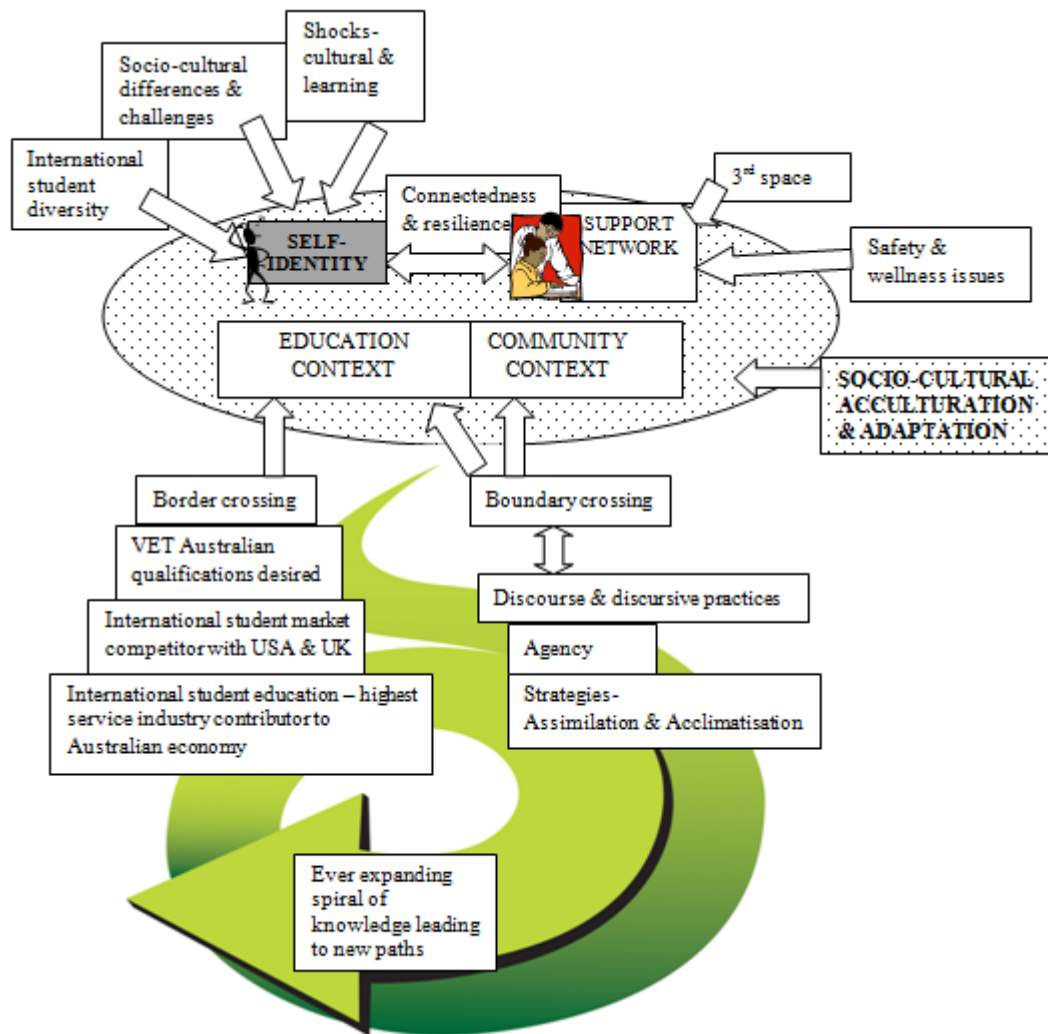


Figure 3.1. Research conceptual framework. Schematic drawing of the research concepts that investigated the psychological and behavioural self-identity and discursive practice changes of Indian international students in the Australian VET sector. The gray Self-identity box indicated the sociological gap to be researched. The research lens would examine their acculturation and adaptation through the use of acculturation strategies (Boundary crossing); their formation of socio-cultural relationships (Support networks and Third space); how they dealt with academic learning and social learning issues (Shocks); what stress, conflict, security and mental illness situations had arisen (Safety and Wellness), how they saw their identity, personality and resilience (Student diversity); and if they had student visa issues (Border crossing). The spiral pathway at the base of the drawing indicated that as a component of knowledge was found, it also signposted a pathway towards further knowledge.

Unpacking the conceptual framework.

Positioned in the centre of this framework were the linked and inter-related concepts on Indian international student’s support networks and the student’s identity. The importance of this support network for providing students with a feeling of connectedness was described by Baker and Hawkins (2006) and Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland and Ramia (2008). Social connectedness acted as a resource that students could use in building resilience. In the process of building resilience, positive resources were used. These were sourced from within the individual and from their supporting networks (Ehrensaff & Tousignant, 2006). Resilience enabled them to maintain a positive outlook even though they experienced stressful situations. The strength of the individual’s self-efficacy or self-belief also influenced

their ability to be resilient. The stronger their self-belief that they were able to manage difficulties and even manipulate their circumstances, the more resilient they would be to adverse situations. For international students it was their individual efficacy belief system and resilience that assisted them cope with acculturating stress or shocks, maintain their health and safety, and establish support networks. These features of sojourn identity development which were evidenced in the international students' narratives, were discussed in Chapter 2.

Providing a third space within their support networks impacted students' ability to develop social connectedness and resilience. A third space might be developed by supportive others in the education or community contexts where the international students were able to feel that any perceived cultural differences were treated as surmountable socio-cultural boundaries and not borders. When a third space or comfort zone (Sawir et al., 2009) was developed, international students' enjoyment of the intercultural experience was increased as they felt supported and were better able to cope with cultural shocks and other adverse situations (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006). This supportive third space (Baker, 2010; Erickson, 2001) scaffolded and assisted students develop a sense of place as well as a feeling of belonging and being at home.

Other areas that impacted students' feelings of being supported related to issues of safety and wellness. Extensive examinations by Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008), Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, and Forbes-Mewett (2010), Neri and Ville (2006), and Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, and Ramia (2008) on international student safety and wellness have exposed a number of situations and challenges, with many of these studies highlighting the direct relationship between student success and social connectedness (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Sawir et al., 2008). Often relationships formed in quality supportive networks reinforced an international student's efficacy beliefs. Due to this encouragement and support, international students increased their belief in their ability to be successful, which while finding their socio-cultural fit, increased their psychological wellness and ability to be resilient to adverse situations.

As identity development was a continual process, never completed (Hall, 1990, 1996), other identified issues that might have influenced and impacted on the identity development of an international student were their individual value and belief systems as well as their experiences of cultural and educational shock, and socio-cultural differences and challenges. Each student, viewed as an individual, was able to create and re-create identities over time due to their exposure to positive and negative circumstances and situations (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2011). How the international students dealt with these situations and handled the socio-cultural confines and environmental factors that surrounded the event, would influence the development of their discursive and self-identities and the effectiveness of their acculturating strategies and adaptation.

Other identified influences on international student's decision making was the boundaries and borders that they faced within their education and community contexts. While borders generally related to differences in political arenas such as Australian international student visa requirements, boundaries were socio-culturally based and might be experienced in both education and community contexts.

Decisions made by international students as they met and possibly crossed cultural boundaries, influenced their choices on the type of discourse and discursive practices to accept or refuse. Other decisions that could be made by international students included whether to acculturate and adapt into their new socio-cultural environments and when and where they should use assimilation and acclimatisation strategies or use their agency or individual self-will.

Possibly in response to “worldwide migration” and the “importance of understanding the link between culture and human behaviour” (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 1), studies on acculturation have increased. This research has contributed to knowledge on the acculturation of Indian international students in an Australian VET context.

Conclusion

This chapter unpacked my research conceptual framework, highlighting significant concepts and notions. The design of my conceptual map was drawn from an extensive literature analysis using a lens provided by my many years in VET, together with my ontology, epistemology and axiology beliefs. Identified within the framework were relationships and processes involved in identity development, acculturation and adaptation of international students in the Australian context. Through reflection on my conceptual framework, I was able to develop my research questions and identify appropriate methods for data gathering and research analysis.

The discussion in Chapter 4 focused on the appropriateness of a qualitative research process and a case study methodology. These research platforms allowed the students’ stories to be honoured and the study’s conceptual framework to be supported. The discussion also reviewed my epistemological, ontological and axiological beliefs and frameworks, demonstrating the applicability of a realist post-positive constructivism paradigm and a symbolic interactionism lens. Next the chapter discussed the ethics of the researcher, selection of participants and the appropriateness of the research site. Then the methodology pathways and decisions for gathering and analysing data so as to respond to the research questions were explained. The most appropriate option for the collection and analysis of personal narrative data, I argued, was the Reissman narrative approach. The details of this data collection and analysis approach were given explaining that in Phase One, one-to-one interviews to collect narratives had been used, while Phase Two had two analysis stages using thematic analysis processes. In closing the chapter, the discussion looked at investigation approaches that were needed in order to demonstrate research rigour and trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter strongly linked with Chapter 1. In Chapter 1, an overview of the research problem was presented, together with an outline of the researcher's interest in, and motivation for, this investigation. Also described was the research purpose, context and scope of the study. Of particular relevance to the discussion was the account of my developing philosophy of international student identity change due to acculturation. This perspective was recognised to have implications for the design of data collection and analysis.

The literature review presented in Chapter 2, explored knowledge and understandings on the importance of connectedness and self-efficacy with international students when they made decisions on their acculturation and adaptation. Other areas discussed evidenced the Australian economic market for international students and described the different physical and emotional shocks international students faced. While attempting to locate their "place" (Baker, 2010, p. 24) within their new Australian environments, literature on the role of acculturation strategies, resilience and efficacy used by international students, was also reviewed. This literature assisted me to clarify the research area as well as identify potential limitations of, or deficits in, empirical knowledge about the concepts of interest in this exploratory study. The review positioned the research within the field of international student education and specifically identified the gap of knowledge within the VET sector.

The aim of this research was to partly address this sociological knowledge gap. By drawing on the body of literature on sojourner identity, concepts were able to be tested through an examination on the self-identity development of Indian international VET students. Although research in the Australian VET sector had increased, articulation of emerging identities of VET international students were deficient. Further examination was required on acculturation, adaptation, resilience, efficacy, identity, connectedness, and motivation of Australian VET international students.

In Chapter 4 I have discussed the theoretical framework and selection of research methodology. The selection process involved a comprehensive review of my conceptual framework, a reflective acknowledgement on my ontology, epistemology and axiology together with a critical examination of my VET background. Extensive reading on possible methodologies that could assist my enquiry into the research question was also undertaken. Through a realist post-positivist constructivism paradigm lens, I explained the theory behind the selected methodology. I also described the Reissman approach for gathering and analysing personal narratives. In Phase One, I used one-to-one interviews to collect narratives, while in Phase Two, I used thematic analysis processes. Approaches to demonstrate research rigour were also explained.

Qualitative Approach

After extensive reading on qualitative approaches, I found when selecting a research design an understanding of the philosophical foundations underlying the type of research (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, in press) was required. Although considered an artificial dichotomy, Merriam (2009) identified some basic differences and general characteristics when comparing qualitative research with a “positivist-quantitative approach” (p. 8). Table 4.1 replicated this aid.

Table 4.1
Characteristics of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

<i>Point of Comparison</i>	<i>Qualitative Research</i>	<i>Quantitative Research</i>
Focus of research	Quality (nature, essence)	Quantity (how much, how many)
Philosophical roots	Phenomenology, symbolic interactionism	Positivism, logical empiricism
Associated phrases	Fieldwork, ethnographic, naturalistic, grounded, constructivist	Experimental, empirical, statistical
Goal of investigation	Understanding, description, discovery, meaning, hypothesis generating	Prediction, control, description, confirmation, hypothesis testing
Design characteristics	Flexible, evolving, emergent	Predetermined, structured
Sample	Small, non-random, purposeful, theoretical	Large, random, representative
Data collection	Researcher as primary instrument, interviews, observations, documents	Inanimate instruments (scales, tests, surveys, questionnaires, computers)
Mode of analysis	Inductive (by researcher)	Deductive (by statistical methods)
Findings	Comprehensive, holistic, expansive, richly descriptive	Precise, numerical

Note. This table should be viewed as an aid for understanding the basic differences between qualitative and quantitative research. The points within the table should not be considered as rules which govern each type of research. Adapted from “*Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*” by S. B. Merriam, 2009, p. 16. Copyright 2009 by Jossey-Bass.

Using Merriam's table, I identified the theoretical reasons for using a qualitative approach. The deciding factors were:

- Data quality rather than data quantity was sought from naturalistic (field based) sources.
- The research's philosophical roots were planted firmly in constructivism, specifically constructivist symbolic interactionism.
- The research goal was to discover rather than predict and hypothesise.
- Flexibility in the research design was required as data was gathered and analysed from a small criterion-based (Indian international VET student) sample.
- An inductive analysis of narratives promotes participants' voices.

As well as the above points, I also believed there were other compelling arguments for using a qualitative approach in preference to a quantitative or mixed method (Clandinin, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, in press; Patton, 2014). Firstly, the nature of the research topic suggested a qualitative interpretative approach as the focus was on Indian international VET students' lived experiences. These experiences would be subjective and involve cultural and discursive practices. Secondly, a qualitative method allowed the multiple realities, voices and perspectives of the students to be presented in a way which reflected the dialogic (or conversation) process of the research. Thirdly, a qualitative process recognised the role that negotiated communication played when collecting data using interviews. Finally, a qualitative approach allowed me to appreciate the students' world through their eyes. As an *outsider* (Miller & Glassner, 2004) I was able to empathise, but I could never *walk in their shoes*. Although a researcher may be positioned as an insider or outsider or both during the research process (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008), I preferred to remain as an outsider. This position provided me with the critical distance necessary to gather data as well as recognise the participants' realities through a rigorous analysis.

Although no theory, paradigm or methodology was distinctive of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), I proposed this to be one of the main advantages of qualitative methods. By providing this freedom, I was not constrained by a structured approach. This flexibility in process allowed me to match the most appropriate method to the research question. In social research such as this, qualitative researchers according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) were bricoleurs. A bricoleur or "tinker" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 317) was able to use multiple methods to analyse the relationship between individuals and their contexts. Using a bricoleur lens and taking into consideration the type of research to be undertaken, my personality, attributes and skills, as well as the participants to be studied (Merriam & Tisdell, in press), I was able to select a suitable qualitative paradigm, method and research technique.

Believing myself to be a sociologist-educator, my research lens focused on the cultural aspects of social change in relation to individual international VET students. I used my conceptual framework as a guide during my data gathering and analysis as it provided insight into areas that other researchers considered influential in socio-cultural identity change. My theoretical research perspective on the social, cultural and environmental influences on identity development of international VET students would add to existing research on Indian students and migrants as well as identify an

education environment worthy of further investigation. Being socio-cultural research focused on identity, this investigation logically and theoretically fell under a cultural studies frame.

Cultural Studies Theory

In the field of cultural studies, disciplinary boundaries continually shift and re-shape as researchers have sought to understand deeply rooted historical phenomenon which were generally coloured by politics, culture and biography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). While cultural study explanations of individual and group behaviour were essentially social in nature, culture identified and explained social and political institutions and individual and group behavioural differences (Barker, 2005; Keating, 2008). Culture and cultural standards were a collection of individual and group behaviour patterns and beliefs (Patton, 2014) that evolved within any group of people who interacted together for a period of time.

Barker (2005) advised that within the boundaries of cultural studies are the key concepts of discourse, discursively formed identities, and identity. These notions (discourse, discursive identity and identity) “that constitute the discursive formation of cultural studies” (p. 11) are identified in the List of Terms and Notions and explained in Chapter 2. Through the use of a cultural approach, an individual’s rational and emotional choices of values, aspirations and associations were given meaning (Keating, 2008). Being an ethnographic inquiry, this research would further inform cultural studies theory as the data were based on information from Indian international student participants on their lived experiences and the identities they developed while living and studying in an Australian VET context. Through the use of an inductive research approach on human behaviour (Merriam & Simpson, 2000), my intention was to extend and refine existing theory rather than confirm or refute a theory.

When gathering information in a cultural studies project, researchers moved back and forth in time and context, “from the particular and the situational to the general and historical” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. 188). This cultural studies practice was evidenced in this research through dialogue engagement with individual participants. During this dialogue the participants and I were taken back and forth in place and time within their different stories. This personal historical continuum facilitated identification of the international student’s lived reality and their position in time and space. As I reflected on and analysed the information, I was able to appreciate how individual students’ experiences were a reflection of and were impacted by their social discourses and cultural positioning.

The main paradigm groups within a cultural study framework were: (a) positivism; (b) post-positivism; (c) constructivism; and (d) critical theory. Clustered underneath the critical theory group were a triangular framework of post-structuralism, post-modernism, and a blend of the two (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Sitting under the triangular frame are Marxism, feminism, and ethnic models such as post-colonial and queer theory paradigms. When selecting a paradigm within the cultural studies theoretical framework, I considered not only the purpose of the study but also my belief systems (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I was conscious that my belief systems would influence my orientation and perspective or lens on this

research topic. In examining my researcher beliefs and perspectives that influenced the analysis of the data, I reflected on knowledge gained through literature and personal experience which developed my epistemological lens. My beliefs on the subjective nature of reality gave me an ontological lens that considered each individual's reality to be constructed and re-constructed according to the relative situation. Further discussion on my ontology and epistemology was provided later in this chapter in *Philosophical Lenses of the Researcher*. After a period of reflection on myself as the researcher and contemporary literature, I found my perspective fell within the paradigms of both post-positivism and constructivism.

Realist Post-Positive Constructivism Paradigm

Not all social scientists hold the same views on paradigm approaches. I have positioned myself as a post-positivist as these beliefs aligned with my realist stance. A realist post-positive position supported my epistemological beliefs that the meaning of words could change and that when dealing with the social world “proving causality with certainty” (Patton, 2002, p. 92) was problematic. However, having a realist philosophy which sat within a post-positive paradigm, I recognised knowledge was “relative rather than absolute” (Patton, 2002, p. 92). I might also be considered an antifoundationalist (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) due to my belief that truth can not be universally known. In this research I did not “treat words as if they were deeply and essentially *meaningful* [author emphasis]” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 968) or the experiences they attempted to represent were a complete and accurate record of the event. A realist post-positive view does not focus on the meaning of what was said (or written) (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) but rather what social message was being communicated.

According to della Porta and Keating (2008) some researchers appeared to believe that social science could be defined in specific terms and that there was only one approach. In della Porta and Keating's (2008) opinion, those scientists who did not believe a common definition was possible appeared to view social science as a “pre-paradigmatic” (p. 20) which was still searching for a “set of unifying principles and standards” (della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 20). Then a third group della Porta and Keating (2008) identified appeared to believe that social science paradigms were “post-paradigmatic” (p. 20) and felt that the “set of scientific assumptions tied to a particular concept of modernity” (p. 20) had been surpassed by post-modernism. A fourth group that della Porta and Keating (2008) recognised considered that there were “non-paradigmatic” (p. 20) approaches. This final group, which I aligned with, felt there could never be a single hegemonic approach and set of standards, as the social world could be understood in multiple ways (della Porta & Keating, 2008) with each specific research purpose potentially being valid.

In taking on the role of analyst, I acknowledged that my interpretative framework or epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises, developed my researcher's paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) explained that a researcher's paradigm was “bound within a net” (p. 22). As the researcher my set of beliefs and feelings about the “world and how it should be understood and studied”(p. 22), guided my actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) in the analysis of the international VET students' narratives. By interrogating my conceptual framework and reflecting on my researcher lenses (Merriam & Simpson, 2000) or the way I viewed the world,

(further discussed in Philosophical Lenses of the Researcher), I was also able to identify this research project's theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework accepted was a realist post-positive constructivism paradigm cradled within cultural studies theory. This paradigm was underpinned by a symbolic interactionism approach to constructivism. While a constructivism perspective allowed me to reflect on life, I paid close attention to empirical realities that acknowledged the relationship between social conditions and subjective experience (Charmaz, 2005, 2008). Use of a realist post-positive approach conveyed my need to find out "what is really going on" (Patton, 2002, p. 93) and be able to develop case studies that reflected plausible findings. These case studies were presented in Chapter 7.

In identifying a suitable theoretical framework, a number of paradigm approaches and their inherent ontology and epistemology foundations were considered and rejected in favour of realist post-positive constructivism. Other paradigms considered and discarded were Marxist, post-modern, feminist and post-colonial. These paradigms did not match with my world view or the research focus of listening to Indian international VET students' voices and accepting their stories as remembrances of their experiences. While Marxism, post-modern, feminism, and post-colonial paradigms had similar race, class and gender real world differences that were materialistic-realistic ontologies, subjectivist epistemologies, with naturalistic inquiry method orientations, their variances to realist post-positive constructivism and unsuitability for this research was able to be identified.

Critical-Marxist, feminist, and post-colonial paradigms reflected a historical realism ontology where theoretical arguments were evaluated in terms of their emancipatory implications (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These paradigms were dominated by issues of exploitation, privilege and oppressed peoples where the real world made a material difference in terms of race, class and gender. The other alternative, post-modern, viewed the world in a constant state of flux where truth or true meaning could never be identified; "it can only be constructed" (Patton, 2002, p. 100). Thus, it was aligned with constructionism and not constructivism.

The selected paradigm, realist post-positive constructivism, moved away from ontological relativism towards ontological realism. Here multiple realities existed that were socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, which were often culturally and individually shared, and were dependent for their form and content on the individual persons (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) or groups who created the constructions. The constructivism paradigm aligned with my epistemological, ontological, and methodological beliefs. It recognised that mental constructions of individuals and groups were never fixed, but could be altered as individual and group realities changed and constructions became more informed through advocacy and activism (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Changes in an individual's environment and positioning within their socio-cultural group would influence and alter their reality constructions, belief constructions, and ways of thinking about self.

My belief as a realist post-positive constructivist is that multiple truths were formed by individuals and groups using their backgrounds, experiences and knowledge of their social and political worlds. My selection of a realist post-positive

constructivism paradigm followed the argument put forward by Denzin, Lincoln and Guba, that after hearing the participants' voices, I could produce understandings of their social worlds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As self-proclaimed social constructivists, Guba and Lincoln (2005) expressed their philosophical beliefs by stating that "meaning-making activities" (p. 197) were of "central interest to social constructionist/ constructivists, simply because it was the meaning-making/sense-making/attributional activities that shaped action (or inaction)" (p. 197). From the perspective of other researchers, constructivist researchers could be seen as originators as they connected "action to praxis" (p. 184) and built on "antifoundational arguments while encouraging experimental and multivoiced texts" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. 184). Even the words constructivists use demonstrated their belief that there were multiple realities. Rather than research validity, reliability and objectivity, the words "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 24) were used to strengthen, legitimise and build trust in their research.

Often sociology researchers confused constructionism with constructivism, as their characteristic variances might be difficult to distinguish (Patton, 2014). The separating factor between the two terms was their focus on meaning-making (Patton, 2014). While constructivism recognised that individuals were actively meaning-making, constructionism acknowledged that meaning-making was generated and transmitted by the collective social group (Patton, 2014). The term social constructionism, which highlighted and emphasised the impact of society and culture in shaping the way individuals saw and felt things, indicated the constructionists' view and their understanding of the world (Patton, 2014). In addition, constructionists who followed a dualist or pluralist approach acknowledged that there were often differences between actual situations and the "perceptions, interpretations, or reactions" (p. 102) of people who were involved in or know of those events (Patton, 2014). Recognising that there was no one reality or "truth" (p. 96), social constructionists looked at knowledge about reality that had been constructed, "contextually embedded" and "interpersonally forged" (Patton, 2002, p. 96) by the socio-cultural group. While social constructionism emphasised how our cultural backgrounds shaped the way we viewed the world and our beliefs and values, constructivism acknowledged the unique experience and individual perspectives held by each of us (Patton, 2014). Constructivism saw the individual as being able to have an influence on their life experiences and self-beliefs.

As this research focused on individual change rather than group or cultural change of Indian international VET students while they faced situations and made decisions on identity, acculturation and adaptation, the most appropriate paradigm was realist post-positive constructivism. This paradigm recognised that when collecting the individual stories from the international VET students and I heard their voices explain their individually constructed realities and multiple truths, a window into their socio-cultural worlds would be opened to me.

Symbolic interactionism approach to constructivism.

While Denzin and Lincoln (2011) viewed constructivism as one of the four major paradigms in qualitative research, they also advised that theoretical positions became complicated at the lower “concrete specific interpretative” (p. 22) community perspective level. They referred to the writing of Plummer (2005) who saw theories and research moving into a “postmodern, late modern, globalising, risk liquid society” (p. 358) where the zombie theory categories of the past were the “living dead” (p. 358) and researchers sought new tools for theory and research. In his search to label his paradigm perspective, Plummer (2005) stated that while using language that was allied with “symbolic interactionism, pragmatism, democratic thinking, storytelling, moral progress, redistribution, justice, and good citizenship” (p. 359), he called this research perspective “critical humanism” (p. 359). Critical humanism, Plummer (2005) advised was focused on the human experience and the political and social role of inquiry on the daily lived experience. Along with symbolic interactionism, some alternative names given to this perspective on “human subjectivity, experience and creativity” (Plummer, 2005, p. 361), are ethnography, qualitative inquiry, reflexivity, cultural anthropology, and life story.

Patton (2014) also acknowledged that symbolic interactionism was a perspective of constructivism. According to Patton (2014) when considering symbolic interactionism as a framework for a constructivist approach, reference should be made to the criteria developed in the seminal work of George Mead (1934) and Herbert Blumer (1969). In using symbolic interactionism (Patton, 2014), a researcher sought to understand:

1. A person’s actions and reactions which related to their perceived meaning of the objects or situations.
2. The meaning that developed from social interaction with the group.
3. The meanings that were agreed to, modified or refuted by individuals as they interpretatively processed and dealt with situations and circumstances.

While Denzin, Lincoln and Patton viewed symbolic interactionism as a subset perspective of constructivism, Penney (n.d.) believed that there were a number of alternative perspectives and subsets of constructivism which included symbolic interactionism,. These social perspectives could be seen as a continuum. The continuum ranged from the most social in nature to the least social with socio-cultural constructivism as the most social, and symbolic interaction as the least social (Penney, n.d.). Each position on this continuum was a reflection of the social processes for gaining and sharing knowledge by individuals and groups.

Although from Penney’s (n.d.) viewpoint, the three perspectives, symbolic interactionism, socio-cultural constructivism and social constructionism were seen as subsets on a constructivism continuum, her descriptions of the two perspectives (socio-cultural constructivism and social constructionism), were similar to the social constructionism paradigm previously discussed. Thus, I believed Penney’s continuum was a subset of perspectives derived from a social constructionism/constructivism paradigm rather than three alternative standpoints under a social constructivism paradigm.

On Penney's (n.d.) continuum, she described socio-cultural constructivism as being at the most social end and considered it to have two parts. One set of beliefs stemmed from the United States where knowledge was thought of as a "social construction and a property of organised collectives" (Penney, n.d., p. para. 7) or groups. Penney's (n.d.) other belief related to how knowledge could be gained and shared by the social group through past social history, higher cognitive capabilities through social interaction, and the use of psychological processes, signs and tools used within the group. Symbolic interactionism was located at the least social end of the continuum and recognised that knowledge could be either gained by the group or by individuals independent of the group (Penney, n.d.). Whereas, in the middle position between the most social (socio-cultural constructivism) and the least social (symbolic interactionism), lay social constructionism.

Social constructionism recognised that common knowledge and language was held within a discourse community and that the individuals within the group spoke the same language as they interacted with artefacts and events within that discourse community (Penney, n.d.). Looking at the individual in a discourse community, Gee (2005) spoke of the use of symbols and words within a discourse group. He stated that members of each discourse community or group would identify themselves as members through their use of common language and symbolic behaviours (Gee, 2005). It was through use of these specific discursive identity behaviours that an individual labelled themselves and signalled to others that they were a member of a certain socio-cultural group.

Taking into consideration the seminal work of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) as well as Plummer (2005) and Penney (n.d.), a realist post-positive constructivism paradigm underpinned by a symbolic interactionism approach was selected for this research as I believed this was a socio-psychological inquiry focused on individual knowledge and identity discourses. This perspective recognised individuals were able to gain knowledge separate from the group, while also gaining group knowledge. This group knowledge ensured retention of their group membership and maintenance of their symbolic group behaviour. Using a symbolic interactionism approach to constructivism, the symbols and shared meanings held by the Indian international student participants together with those items believed to be of high importance were able to be identified and highlighted (Patton, 2014). This approach also facilitated discovery of the changes participants found necessary and the changes that they were able to resist.

In identifying a realist post-positive constructivism paradigm with a symbolic interactionism perspective, I was able to build my research theoretical frame. This research framework reflected my philosophical focus on activities in the social world and my belief systems which formed from my own experiences and knowledge.

Philosophical Lenses of the Researcher

The philosophical lens of a researcher would be based on their ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological belief systems (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). These systems interconnected to form their world view and researcher's perspective. Thus, my selection of realist post-positive constructivism with a symbolic interactionism outlook as my research paradigm was informed through a

reflection on my world view and the lens provided by my ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological convictions (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As well as identify the research paradigm, my belief systems also informed me on the information that should fall within this research and the information to disregard as it was outside the limits of this research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). My ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological world lens also guided me in the selection of a research framework (Merriam, 2009). This framework provided details on a suitable research design, sampling procedures, data collection strategies and instruments, data analysis techniques, and how the findings should be interpreted.

My ontological lens.

Using knowledge which was tempered by my own lived experience within my social systems (Voelker, 2010), my ontological stance related to my personal beliefs on the “nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. 183). In order to understand my ontology for this research, I posed these questions: What cognitively constructed situations affect the research participants?; and What situations can I find out about?

As a realist who believed truth was relative as well as locally and specifically constructed by individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), I investigated Indian international VET students’ constructions through their stories. While recognising that individual constructions were socially, locally and experientially based, I acknowledged that their tales might alter as modifications or changes might occur in their constructions of reality or position perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Shemmings & Ellingsen, 2012; Warren, 2002). Constructions of reality and perspective were able to continually alter during dialogue as both the respondent and the interviewer have the ability to change their perspective while they created meaning (Shemmings & Ellingsen, 2012; Warren, 2002). The interviewer might move from the discursive perspective of sociologist to friend while the respondent may move from a former child, then to an adult, and then to a student (Shemmings & Ellingsen, 2012; Warren, 2002). Although situational, these changes in perspective shaped the flow of the dialogue and the story versions (Shemmings & Ellingsen, 2012; Warren, 2002). During the conversation rhetoric, it was the message the storyteller wished to pass to the listener that became more important than the facts of the situation.

My epistemological perspective.

Epistemology refers to how we know what we know and the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what was known (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Epistemology related to knowledge. As my epistemological perspective was dependent on and directly linked to my ontological perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), findings from the research were created as the investigation proceeded and I interacted with the participants.

The question I posed to pin-point my epistemological perspective was: What do I know and what do I think I know about the research area? To answer this question I reflected on my readings and field experience and considered the four areas of

knowledge: intuitive, authoritative, logical and empirical. Table 4.2 represented my epistemological knowledge before commencing the data collection phase of this research and interacting with the participants.

Table 4.2
Epistemological knowledge

Intuitive knowledge	International students appeared to change as they met and dealt with challenges while studying, working and living in a Western environment. International students in Australia might take on temporary or permanent discursive (identity) changes in order to accept and be accepted as a member of the VET sector and the community sector.
Authoritative knowledge	International students faced and adjusted to address personal and physical issues in order to fit-in with their academic and community societies (Marginson, 2010). International students should be recognised as beings with civil rights and legislated protection (Sawir et al., 2009). The issues of acclimatisation and adaptation of international students was complex and concerned use of strategies associated with assimilation and acclimatisation. Use of agency, to take a resistance position towards their new environment was another strategic option (Sam & Berry, 2006b).
Logical knowledge	It appeared that most international students eventually made reasonable social and cultural adaptations (Wang & Shan, 2006) and developed skills to live and study in Australia (Kettle, 2005). International student decisions appeared to be strongly affected by the individual’s self efficacy, resilience and study purpose (Baker, 2010; Sawir et al., 2008; Skodol, 2010). If some students were able to adapt, why not all?
Empirical knowledge	The stories on recalled events and outcomes told by international students on their situations, challenges, discursive identity changes and where they employed their human agency while studying in the VET sector as well as working and living in Australia would increase knowledge on the personal experiences and socio-cultural worlds of international students in Australia.

Note. Each box of text to the right of the heading explained the four areas of the researcher’s knowledge: intuitive, authoritative, logical and empirical prior to data collection. The descriptions reflected the researcher’s understandings gleaned from literature readings and field experience prior to this research.

My axiological values.

Axiology referred to the ethical values of the researcher which influenced their perceptions, decisions and actions. In order for a researcher to manage their axiology or the reason why they did certain things, they first needed to identify and understand their own value system. Denzin and Lincoln (2005b) proposed that researchers reflected on their internal valuing system and considered actions that demonstrated they were a “moral person” (p. 183). A moral person could be viewed as a subjective statement but I believe Denzin and Lincoln meant an ethical person.

To understand my value position in this research I posed the following question to reflect on: What are my values and how do they affect my perceptions, decisions and actions? My response confirmed that my actions and practices evidenced a strong respectful and moral standard throughout the research process. The standard I maintained while undertaking research tasks acknowledged and followed these principles:

1. International VET students were recognised as culturally and socially heterogeneous individuals with their individualism being salient in my research.
2. The rights of the volunteer international VET student participants were protected throughout the research. Verbal reminders during information sessions and interviews demonstrated and reinforced this protection.
3. Interview participants were constantly reminded that at any time they might rescind their consent to participate in the research without losing face or status in their current learning program or with any future institute.

Case Study Methodology.

As this research was a narrative inquiry which could be considered a type of “case-centered research” (p. 697), a case study methodology was appropriate. Case studies enable the “intersection of biography, history, and society” (Riessman, 2002, p. 697) to be illuminated. While Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (Clandinin & Connelly, 2013) viewed narrative inquiry as both phenomena and method, I selected a case study methodology to be used and the strategy or method to analyse data to be a narrative process. In this narrative inquiry, the way of thinking and studying about experience, first and foremost, was as a story.

In using a case study methodological approach, each international student was recognised as an individual with their own background, ideologies and ways of perceiving and dealing with situations and circumstances. Along with evidencing each student’s individuality, a case study approach also acknowledged that when international VET students arrived in Australia, they came with their own expectations and perceptions of how they would live and study. As well as their luggage, they also brought with them their individually formed historical and cultural backgrounds and value systems (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). These personal characteristics influenced their decisions on future behaviours and discourse choices. The types of discourses that they accepted or rejected would reflect the different identities that they wished to take on and be identified with. Their discursive activities would demonstrate actions that they considered were appropriate or inappropriate when interacting with others (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2014). These

multiple discourses and discursive practices evidenced in the interview transcripts were able to be developed into thick rich case study descriptions that presented a *snapshot* picture of the international VET students' reflections. Taking the position of case researcher as biographer (Stake, 1995), the case study descriptions represented a slice of the participants' history.

When using a case study methodology, researchers needed to decide whether a single case study or a collective (multiple) case study design was the most appropriate. Some fields such as anthropology (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Stake, 2005b) and political science (Lijphart, 2013) considered that the single or multiple designs were different methodologies with their own rationale for their use. I tended to agree with Yin (2013) that they were case study options within the same methodological framework. With this view I selected the multiple case study design as it facilitated a replication rather than a sampling approach. The multiple case study replication approach was illustrated in Figure 4.1.

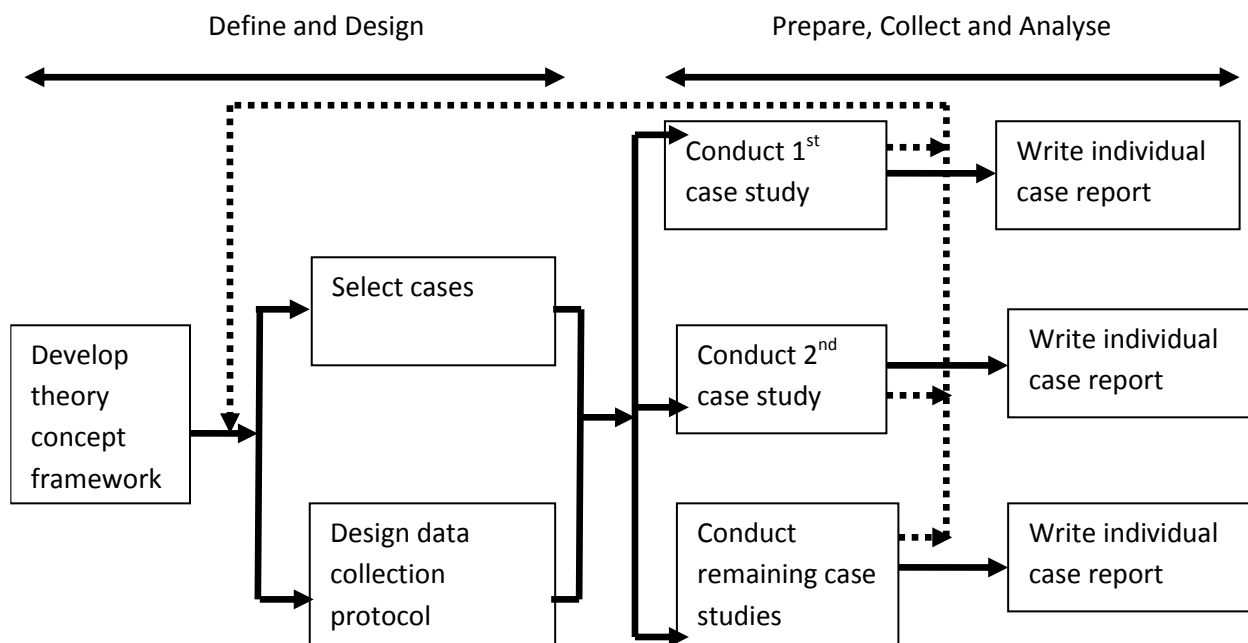


Figure 4.1. Multiple case study methodology. Schematic drawing of a case study methodology using replication processing. After identifying the research theoretical concept framework, individual cases were recognized and the data collection protocols developed. With each case study, data were collected, analysed and a narrative case report developed. As a cross-case analysis step was not undertaken, this section of the original drawing was removed. Adapted from "Case Study Research Design and Methods", by R. K. Yin, 2009, p. 57. Copyright 2009 by Sage Publications.

When gathering information by replication, if a significant discovery was made in the first interview, I was then able to explore the second, third and subsequent interviews to validate the finding by replication (Yin, 2009). My position when considering replication of a finding within the participants' transcripts was that duplication of the exact same conditions was not required. If I discovered that one or more of the original conditions were not related to the theme, then the condition was deemed unimportant (Yin, 2009). However, when replication of findings in multiple case studies did occur, the findings were considered to be more robust (Yin, 2009). As this research was based on individual interviews, it would be impossible for conditions to be exactly the same for each participant, but a number of conditions (interview questions and location) were able to be replicated.

Replicated case study findings could either be literal replication (similar results) or theoretical replication (contrasting results), with as few as six to ten case studies being sufficient to support or refute an initial set of research propositions (Yin, 2009). The requirement for fewer participant cases suits this research as I believed a smaller participant group would supply sufficiently rich findings as well as ensure the international VET students' narratives were not homogenized or othered. Yin (2013) also recommended that an important step in using replication procedures was the development of a rich, theoretical framework. This framework should identify the conditions and circumstances where a particular phenomenon was likely to be found (literal replication) as well as the conditions and circumstances where it was not likely to be found (theoretical replication).

In this research, the theoretical framework of this investigation was designed from the first case study's characteristic patterns of data sequences which initiated a list of data themes. This thematic framework was used when generalising new cases (Yin, 2013), as literal and theoretical replication of data themes. Identification of theme replication came through a comparison of the initial data themes with subsequent cases and any newly identified themes added to the list of themes.

Consideration was given to other research methodologies before recognising the multiple case study approach as the most appropriate. Phenomenology, grounded theory and critical discourse analysis (CDA) were considered as possible methodologies but their processes or focus did not align with my ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs and world view. Research using a phenomenological approach would consider the lived experience during a specific event, while grounded theory would be appropriate for developing a theory on the empirical world (Patton, 2014) and CDA views discourses in linguistic terms. These perspectives would not provide a holistic mirror to reflect the actor's view, but rather a sieved dialogical dust to be re-constituted and analysed using the beliefs of the researcher. A multiple case study methodology provided a better fit with my ontological, epistemological, axiological beliefs and position as a researcher as it provided a clear lens to examine the data and discover the multiple discourses and discursive practices of the international student participants. While data in Chapter 6 indicated the participants' identity discourses and social practices, the multiple case study descriptions in Chapter 7 illuminated more discoveries.

Researcher Experience and Ethics

Practiced scientists have advised that a successful researcher required tolerance of ambiguity, sensitivity and intuitiveness, adaptiveness and flexibility (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Yin, 2013). They also needed to be a good communicator, a good listener, have a good understanding of the issue studied, avoid bias, and develop rapport with their participants (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, in press; Yin, 2013). Even though I considered myself a novice researcher with some Australian government mixed method research experience gained in 2008 and 2011, I was confident that I possessed these characteristics.

Researcher background.

Since 2002 I have been interacting with international VET students in Australian and international environments. During this time I observed international VET students identifying, dealing, and coming to terms with personal and educational challenges. From these observations I noticed that some international VET students made personal and academic changes while others seemed to have great difficulty adjusting to Western community and education contexts.

Researcher ethical considerations.

Abiding by researcher ethics principles, full disclosure of any situation that might be viewed as a possible conflict of interest was required. Thus, in following these principles, I wished to advise that I was known to the Director of the research site through previous business dealings. I do believe that it was due to this trust relationship that we had established previously, that I was afforded research permission by the Director. However, as I had at no time any contact with the institute's students, our prior relationship did not present a research dilemma or conflict.

Throughout the research process, I exhibited exceedingly visible behaviours which demonstrated the high priority of the participants' physical, social and psychological welfare. This behaviour strengthened the research ethics within this project.

Following traditional ethical practices, all volunteer participants engaged in an *informed consent* information process (Walker, 2007), with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity together with details on the project relating to any risks, benefits and limitations. An informed consent process ensured that potential volunteer participants understood the purpose and details of the research as well as be aware of their right to choose whether to participate or decline. Participants were empowered through an informed consent process (Walker, 2007) as oral and written information about the research process was provided along with details as to how participant rights were recognised and protected. By empowering participants and continually sharing information through reciprocal and dynamic interaction, I built ethical trust between myself (the researcher) and the participants.

Research participant risks and benefits.

Research risks.

During face-to-face interviews there was the potential risk that one or more of the participants may not wish to discuss a situation or a personal feeling. If at any time I became aware a participant was showing signs of discomfort, uneasiness or stress, then the interview immediately ceased and advice was sought from the institute's counsellor.

Pseudonyms to ensure participant and institute anonymity were used during the data gathering, analysing and reporting stages; thus reducing the risk of possible

identification. As all participants were of Indian background²⁰, during the interviews I demonstrated respect and sensitivity in the language I used and my mannerisms and expectations as the researcher.

Research benefits.

International students often liked to talk about their Australian adventures and the situations they encountered. Through sharing their stories with me, the participants were aware that their contributions would assist future international VET students. The conversation style interview also provided them with an opportunity to practise their English skills.

Debriefing of participants.

Debriefing during the research was by email as this provided a stable communication mechanism to answer questions about the research process and to discuss its findings. The process of data transcript sharing as a debriefing mechanism was considered an effective way to maintain the accuracy of the story data as well as ensure the participants' meaning was reflected in the transcripts. Contact difficulties only arose if the participants' last known email address was not current in the training institute's records. Findings from the research as well as copies of any published papers produced as part of this research project were presented at a one-to-one meeting with the Director of the training institute and any participant who was able to be contacted.

Storage of data.

During the research.

All soft copy files, hard copy data, analysis records and diary notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home office. An external computer hard drive maintained all current and archived soft copy data files. No participant names were stored on or with the digital audio recorded data or the hard and soft copies of interview transcripts. Digital records of interviews were destroyed on finalisation of the data analysis and reporting processes.

After completion of the research.

In accordance with research practice all hard and soft copy data were destroyed after the usual requisite period of 5 years.

The Research Site

When identifying an appropriate research site, the location held some importance. The research site environment would have an effect on the research outcomes as it impacted on the quality, quantity and availability of information rich participants. However, as this research used a multiple case study replication process, the need to ensure that the selected training institute was an example of colleges offering Australian VET qualifications to Indian international students, reduced in

²⁰ The six participants originated from different areas in India. This criterion-based sample provided participant diversity in languages, dialects, cultures and religions as well as personal ethical and economic backgrounds.

importance. In this research, it was more important that the attending students, who met the case study selection criteria, were considered information rich.

The site selected for this research was an example of a small to mid-size private college in Brisbane. This college, along with many other Australian colleges in 2009, were considered by newspapers and the Australian government to be at risk of closure due to the financial issues that stemmed from the implementation of the student visa measures in January 2010 (Evans, 2009; Trounson & Lane, 2009). In 2010 the selected institute had experienced financial difficulties due to Indian international student course withdrawals and the reduced number of student visas.

The research site had less than 80 on-campus students and a high percentage of those were Indian international students. In 2013 the institute had passed the nationally required government audit and gained approval for registration under the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) to provide training for international students. Approval for this research was received from the Director of the institute after providing assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

As mentioned, a previous business relationship existed between the researcher and the institute Director. It was only through this relationship that research permission was gained for this investigation. Other researchers have attempted to conduct studies in the VET sector, but were disillusioned and needed to alter their research focus. The main cause of their frustration had been their inability to gain permission and access to a public or private VET institute. This difficulty was the primary reason for the lack of studies in the Australian VET sector.

The Participants

The participants in this research were full-fee paying Indian international students who were studying at a private Australian VET institution. They were holders of an Australian study visa, and used English as their second language. For Australian student visa purposes each participant was required to evidence an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of a minimum of 5.5.

Confucian Heritage Cultural (CHC) countries and India were the two main contributing cultures to the international student population in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Indian international VET students were selected rather than CHC learners as Indian students had been the main target of negative media for many years. Eventually, the issue was addressed in India and Australia by the Australian government (Marginson, 2010). However, discrimination, racism and fear of difference remained causes of socio-cultural unrest in Australia.

While Patton (2014) considered purposeful sampling logical and powerful when selecting information rich participants, I preferred to use the term criterion-based selection. This term identified the importance and described the requirement that participants selected matched the list of attributes or criteria essential to the research (Merriam, 2009). Selecting participants using a criteria list was preferable to other purposeful sampling strategies such as typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, snowball, chain, network and theoretical. Although these sampling

methods might have identified information rich participants, there was a lower probability that they would meet the theoretical replication design requirements of this multiple case study project (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2014; Yin, 2013). With theoretical sampling, the total sample of case study units or participants was not selected ahead of time. They would have been sought when further data were required to meet the research design requirements to generate theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)²¹; which was not the aim of this research. Purposeful sampling might seek study units that were either average, unique, show maximum variation of characteristics, were easily accessed, or were referred from other participants (Merriam, 2009). However, these sampling alternatives would not ensure that the case study participants selected matched the specific design requirements of this research.

The selected participants that met the list of criteria were information rich and supported the purpose of the research. Identifying these criterion-based Indian interview participants was more important than gathering vast quantities of data from a larger number of international VET students at a variety of research sites. The number of participants selected from the identified training institute was small so as to respect participant and institute resource constraints. Six Indian international VET students who met the selection criteria were identified as the research subgroup.

Data Collection Method

Both Gee (2004) and Keating (2008) advised researchers to remain focused on the objectives and purpose of the research when gathering data. I took heed of their guidance as it referred to the *frame problem* (Gee, 2004) which was a dilemma that many researchers faced. Keating (2008) described this situation by saying that although socio-cultural research topics were often broad and had “contested boundaries” (p. 113), it was important that the research question identified the most appropriate unit for analysis.

Thus, when considering the case study collection method, I reflected on the research questions and the purpose of the research before selecting techniques I considered were reliable, trustworthy and would gather the appropriate participant reflections for analysis. I selected an ethnographic narrative method using one-to-one interviews and reflective researcher field notes on interview observations. I believed this method was the most appropriate as it would open a window into the participants’ worlds and supply the rich detailed information necessary to investigate the research questions. After reviewing naturalistic, ethnographic, and phenomenological case study data collection methods (Stake, 2005a), I found that while naturalistic methods required data to be gathered in the field, a phenomenological method needed to focus on particular phenomena. With the focus of this research in mind, I considered an extensive data gathering activity involving a number of field observations and discussions (naturalistic) or gathering information on a specific phenomenon were both ineffective and inefficient methods to respond to the research questions.

Yin (2009) advised, in case study research that addressed a broad range of “historical and behavioural issues” (p. 115), as many sources of information as possible should

²¹ In contemporary research literature, the writing of B. G. Glaser and A. Strauss (1967) in *The discovery of grounded theory*, is viewed as seminal work.

be gathered. However, as this research was based on snapshots of experiences at certain points within participants' lives, many of the mechanisms Yin (2009) identified for establishing "converging lines of inquiry" (Yin, 2009, p. 115) were considered not worthwhile. Even though Yin (2009) and Patton (2014) advised that by establishing converging lines of inquiry, case study findings were more convincing, the additional evidence would only provide a research burden (Yin, 2013) rather than an information benefit. Possible sources of additional evidence considered but rejected were extended direct observation, institute and student records and documents, and physical artefacts.

Narrative method.

The narrative method was a well-used and theoretically accepted ethnographic form of inquiry for studying the lives and culture of individuals and communities (Duque, 2009). As ethnography literally means "writing about people" (Hustler, 2005, p. 16), I used a narrative inquiry methodological frame to gain a glimpse into the worlds that made sense to the participants (Ryan, 2008). A narrative approach recognised each international student as an individual with their own background, ideologies and ways of perceiving and dealing with situations and circumstances. Using a narrative inquiry perspective I could better appreciate their stories (Ryan, 2008) on the human cultural and social life circumstances they had experienced. As the research questions referred to the lived experiences of Indian international VET students, a narrative inquiry approach provided an inductive rather than deductive method to inquire into their lives.

Using a narrative inquiry approach, a reflective view was provided on the events and actions of the actors and others within each unique story together with insight into the actor's reality (Chase, 2011). In a narrative situation, when a storyteller referred to their past experiences, they were also creating another experience for the researcher. The data gathered from these conversation narratives, illuminated each Indian international student's journey (Hue, 2008) as they encountered and engaged in cross-cultural experiences and sought ways to relate to the Australian community.

This research investigated how Indian international VET students discursively saw themselves as they found their place and identity in the Australian social and VET educational contexts. From one-to-one interviews with the participants, stories were gathered which exposed their lived experiences and revealed who they believed they were (discursive identity) and how they saw themselves (their self-identity). The students' stories also indicated their place through the social and academic communities that they aligned themselves with and their insider or outsider positioning.

For international students, finding their place was important as it provided them with a sense of "hope and connectedness to feel as if they belong" (Baker & Hawkins, 2006, p. 25). Contemporary views on identity no longer considered it to be a "given" or "natural" (Riessman, 2008, p. 7) product but something constructed by each of us to display who we were and how we wished to be known. In post-positive research, identity had been accepted as something performed for others that could be "assembled, disassembled, accepted and contested" (Riessman, 2008, p. 7). Within narrative studies on identity, individual human agency was honoured, particularities

and contexts were foregrounded, and the “imagination of the storytellers” (p. 13) was able to be interrogated to provide “many voices and subjectivities” (Riessman, 2008, p. 13) for analysis.

Through the interview process, personal narratives unveiled the Indian international VET students’ socially situated lived experiences and their “institutional, organisational, (and) discursive” (Chase, 2005, p. 658) self-identity constructions. Highlighted through a review on the *hows* and *whats* of the participants’ storytelling (Chase, 2005), were the resources and symbols that were used when constructing their recognisable self-identities. By accentuating the narrator’s voice and treating their narratives as active creations where facts were less important, the researcher’s lens on the participants’ description of “self, reality and experience” (Chase, 2005, p. 657) gained a greater depth and strength of image.

Narrative interviews.

Research narratives have taken a number of forms ranging from a brief response bounded to one question or general statement, to extensive narratives built over the course of a number of interviews (Riessman, 2015). Rather than generating brief answers or general statements, the goal in narrative interviewing was to gather detailed accounts (Riessman, 2015). Following Riessman (2008), I developed a participative conversation with each Indian international student rather than using the “mainstream social science” (p. 23) approach of questions and answers. Their stories had structure and through active and careful listening during the interview, I was able to make sense of their experiences and identify the important areas emphasised by the narrator.

Narratives from interviews provided an opportunity to explore the influences felt by participants and how they in turn influenced others in their social, cultural, historical and political contexts (Allen & Hardin, 2001). My aim during the interview process was to capture both the voices of the interviewees and the ways they made “meaning of their experiences” (Rabionet, 2009, p. 203). Through the participants’ stories I gained a greater understanding of each individual and their actions (Nagle, 2001). As noted by Tinker and Armstrong (2008), researchers “oscillate” between being an insider and outsider as they swing “within and between interviews” (p. 54). By using an interview technique, I was granted a pathway or bridge allowing me to move closer toward an insider position from my outsider positioning.

Although narrative interviewing required me to follow each participant along their various tracks of thought (Riessman, 2015), I was not prepared to relinquish full control of the conversation. I used semi-structured participant interviews, as a completely un-structured interview could run the risk of failing to elicit data that were related to the research question (Rabionet, 2009). Use of open-ended questions throughout the interview encouraged participants to be in control of the conversation. I believed it was appropriate for the interviews to be conducted in English as the international VET students were attending an English-only institute and use of a single language (English) would minimise data transcription errors.

By allowing participants to select the time and place for interviews, a more relaxed atmosphere was created where conversations could flow more easily and feelings of

comfort, control and confidence were encouraged. This atmosphere was intended to facilitate and encourage participants to express their true thoughts, feelings and beliefs (Riessman, 2008; Wiersma, 2000). In order to reduce any participant-perceived researcher/interviewer hegemony, I developed protocols (refer Appendix D) which included the interview questions, the research procedures and the general rules to be followed when conducting the interviews.

Protocols guided the researcher and were aimed at enhancing the reliability of case study research (Yin, 2013). A case study protocol document, according to Yin (2009, 2013), was essential for multiple case study research and needed to contain: (a) the interview questions; (b) an overview of the case study project; (c) details on the field procedures to access and ethically protect the data sources; and (d) a case study report production guide.

For this research, the development of a formal protocol document was not considered necessary as I was the only researcher. The protocol processes and principles that I followed related to research procedures, ethical practices, and the general case study rules, which were described in this chapter. A guide on the production of the research report was also considered not necessary as the reporting format reflected the 2013 American Psychological Association (APA) standard, as required for doctoral research.

The interview questions assisted the participants to recall and map their journey (Dilley, 2000). The list of interview questions was shown in Appendix D. These questions guided the respondents along a path where they could verbally identify landmarks and signpost places that they thought were important for me to understand. Although the interviews were semi-structured which allowed conversation control to be shared between myself (as researcher) and the participants, I selected questions that would structure the flow of conversation. Thus, the conversation was encouraged towards comprehensive evidence (Dilley, 2000) which could be used when responding to the research questions.

The one-to-one interviews provided me with empathetic insight into the interviewee's world including their behaviours, feelings, events and interpretations of their social and academic worlds (Merriam, 2009). The word *personality* was used rather than self-identity in the interviews as I believed participants may not have understood the conceptual meaning of the word *self-identity*. This practice followed the Ward and Kennedy (2013) approach where personality and identity were able to be viewed synonymously when the context related to the gaining of culturally appropriate skills which allowed people to fit into their environment.

During the interview, I used probing questions and actions (silence, a sound, a word or a sentence) to garner further details on the participant's comments (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were digitally recorded (with participant approval) and transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. Even though most people enjoyed sharing their stories, I was aware that at any time a participant may evidence feelings of discomfort. Although all the interviews progressed as continuous conversations, if the interviewee demonstrated any signs of distress I was prepared to terminate the interview and seek assistance from student support personnel. My intention was to gain individual feedback from participants on the correctness and intended meaning

of their conversation transcripts. In addition to my field note reflections, participant confirmations were intended to augment the accuracy of the data (Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Yin, 2013). Being able to demonstrate data accuracy and reliability was an important step in building research rigour.

Data Analysis Method

In the research analysis phase, the participants' dialogue, not their words, were analysed. The analysis processes did not interpret the actual words used by the participants; rather an understanding of their story was sought through an inductive analytical approach. There were two stages of data analysis in this research; the first stage created vignettes (refer Appendix G) and snap-shot profile descriptions (refer Chapter 6) while the second stage created case study descriptions (refer Chapter 7). Both analysis stages used the same processes to thematically analyse the participants' narratives. Details on the implementation of both analysis processes were presented in Chapter 5.

Thematic analysis of narratives.

Earlier I discussed the narrative inquiry methodological frame that allowed me to gain a glimpse into the worlds that made sense to the participants. Of the four narrative analytical approaches, structural, thematic, dialogic/performance or visual, I preferred the thematic process as it allowed common themes to be recognised (Riessman, 2008). While thematic narrative analysis interrogated the *what* of the participants' stories rather than the *how*, a structural narrative analysis focused on how the participant told the story (Riessman, 2008). With dialogic/performance analysis the dialogue that was interactively produced and performed among the speakers (the participant and myself) would be examined, while in visual analysis the images produced by participants (Riessman, 2008) would become a data source along with their words.

When selecting the thematic analytical process as the appropriate strategy, I considered the alternative techniques but found they would not support the focus of this research or identify suitable evidence to address the research questions. In using a narrative thematic approach, I was able to identify common thematic elements within their stories. These themes built into evidential findings that provided an answer for each of the research questions.

Although, thematic narrative analysis was often confused with grounded theory, the difference lay in the story being held intact (Riessman, 2015). Narrative thematic analysis reflected the individual theme or point of the story rather than reviewing the component themes across other stories (Riessman, 2008). There were similarities with grounded theory, but there were also differences. Riessman (2008) identified four significant variations. Firstly, the emphasis with grounded theory has been on the analysis process. Each successive analytical and data collection phase of the research informed the other phase with a focus on developing theoretical categories, rather than on the results of inquiry (Charmaz, 2008). Thus the researcher's prior knowledge and understandings of concepts informed the analysis process, rather than the data themselves. Strategies of grounded theory have encouraged researchers to go beyond pure induction, make assumptions to be checked and "engage in deductive

reasoning” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 156) rather than inductive processes. While a narrative inquiry viewed prior concepts in the background, allowing the researcher to focus on searching the data for “novel theoretical insights” (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). Secondly, many grounded theory analysts divided data into segments, gave them concise names and proposed an analytical device that developed abstract ideas and interpreted the segments (Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysts endeavoured to preserve long sequences of data so as to retain the detail in its content. Thirdly, narrative analysts rejected generic explanations which were sought by grounded theorists. Narratives were considered subjective and individualistic and could not be generalised (Riessman, 2008). Finally, the grounded theorist’s objective was often to “generate inductively a set of stable concepts that can be used to theorise across cases” (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). Whereas, the narrative analyst viewed each narrative as a case study of an individual or a group. The most fundamental difference between grounded theorists and narrative theorists according to Riessman (2008), was the presence or absence of case-centered commitment.

Using an approach that analysed the themes of the narrative data, I respected the views of the participants rather than deconstructing and interpreting them. While narrative and grounded theory analysis both used themes, a narrative approach does not *fracture* data, had a case-focus and differed from grounded theory on interviewing and data construction perspectives (Riessman, 2008). However, Riessman (2008) argued that themed or “category-centered models” (p. 13) could be combined in narrative analysis. While narratives viewed the how and why of the story, themed analysis provided a different way of knowing the narrator’s story i.e. what was the narrator trying to accomplish in “developing the story that way” (Riessman, 2008, p. 13), what was the narrator’s purpose in telling the story, and how does the story affect the audience.

Through the use of a narrative analytical lens, I treated participant interviews as a “distinct form of discourse” (p. 656) where the uniqueness of the participants’ actions and experiences were highlighted (Chase, 2005). In accentuating participant actions, I foregrounded the different roles or identities taken on by participants (Riessman, 2002, 2008, 2015) and the socio-cultural devices they employed. These different roles and social traits were recognised as discourse types (Fairclough, 2010) or discursive practices. The functional role of discourses and discursive identities were discussed in Chapter 2.

While Rogers (2004) considered analysing data a process to “describe, interpret and explain” (p. 7) the connecting activities of the participants, Strauss and Corbin (1998)²² viewed the process as an interaction between the researcher and the data itself. They considered it to be a balancing act between science and art. This science-art balance was also recognised by Riessman (2008) who recommended researchers document their sources. Through this documentation process I was able to take readers with me along the trail of evidence while I critically evaluated each piece of data and eventually constructed an interpretative account of my findings (refer Chapter 8). In using a diarised audit trail I was able to reveal both my critical

²² In contemporary research literature, the writing of A. Strauss and J. Corbin (1998) in *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, is viewed as seminal work.

evaluation of the “unorganised raw data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13) and my creative approach in accumulating evidence from the collected stories to construct case study descriptions. My field diary which documented my processes and interpretative work provided persuasive arguments on the theoretical linkages within each of the case study descriptions.

Crystallisation approach.

A crystallisation approach to analysis is used rather than triangulation. Viewing the data as a crystallised form acknowledged the multiple layers and angles which converged at points (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) within the socio-cultural worlds of the research participants. In post-positive research, narratives were not viewed as two-dimensional objects. They were considered multidimensional crystalline formations which could grow, change and alter but would never be amorphous (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Accepted as a type of crystal formation, narratives “reflect externalities and refract within themselves” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963). This crystallisation allowed me to create different data patterns and follow different data directions.

Analysed personal narratives.

A number of strategies or approaches for presenting analysed personal narratives were considered. One approach was to merge the participants’ story with the researcher’s interpretation and build portraits. This would have made the original narrative parts of the story difficult to identify (Riessman, 2002) which made this technique inappropriate. Another approach was to focus on the structural features of the discourse where the participant and interviewer coproduced dialogue. With a comparative orientation, the researcher then contrasted the participants’ life stories (Riessman, 2002). This approach to personal narratives was also discounted as this study was interested in story meaning with no intention to analyse the structural parts of the words used in communicating their story.

The approach that was used in this research presented “brief, topically specific stories organised around characters, setting and a plot” (Riessman, 2002, p. 697). This process recapitulated specific events that the narrator witnessed or experienced. While Chapter 5 explained the interwoven processes of data collection and thematic analysis, the participants’ stories were presented as vignettes in Appendix G and discussed in Chapter 6. By demonstrating data accuracy and reliability in the collection and analytical processes, research rigour was increased.

Research Rigour

Rigour refers to the practices, knowledge and awareness of the researcher that evidenced to other researchers a certain standard had been used in the research data collection and analysis processes. Rigour provided a level of confidence in the quality, applicability and thoroughness of the research. Research rigour in this investigation was able to be demonstrated through the building of trustworthiness in the research questions, the collection and analysis processes (refer Chapter 5), and the conclusions that were drawn in response to the research questions (refer Chapters 6 and 7).

Research trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness or research rigour involved evidencing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the research (Patton, 2014). So as to strengthen the evidence on credibility and dependability of the data collection process, my research methods were guided by Denzin, Guba, Lincoln, Roberts and Priest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005c; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006). Confirmation to others of the credibility and dependability in the data and data collection process was provided through practices of reflection and identification on: (a) areas of possible bias and their positive or negative effects on the research findings; (b) my use of bracketing tactics; (c) my propensity to write field notes; (d) my records management of transcripts; and (e) my avoidance of any acts that might be considered careless by fellow researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005c; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Roberts et al., 2006). Data trustworthiness was further communicated (Merriam, 2009; Roberts et al., 2006) through: (a) the stories told by the participants; (b) my knowledge and experience in the field; (c) my analytical interpretations providing believable vignettes and participant profiles that included story sequences; and (d) the thick, rich case study descriptions that made sense to readers.

Trustworthiness in the research collection and analytical processes was built through my extensive field diary notes. These notes recorded full details on my processes, thoughts, and reflections and also evidenced my systematic, quality controlled, and auditable approach when investigating the research questions. Evidence on the dependability and confirmability of my research practices and processes (Roberts et al., 2006) was through an accredited auditor colleague who conducted a desk audit to verify my research demonstrated systematic, valid and traceable procedures.

As the participants selected in this research were a criterion-based sample of Indian international VET students, substantiation of data transferability to other individuals in similar situations and contexts, must rely on readers. Only conclusions made by readers would identify if the findings were able to be transferred.

Threats to research rigour.

Technical accuracy in data collection was maintained through: (a) audio-recording of participant interviews; (b) taking extensive and detailed notes on the non-verbal aspects of each interview; (c) paraphrasing dialogue; and (d) noting pre or post interview comments made by participants. (Roberts et al., 2006). Through a process of filtering potential participant expressions of interest, it might appear to some that I was restricting my data collection. However, as the sample criteria were broad with no other criteria considered, the risk of too narrow a sample was avoided by allowing as many applicants as possible to be interviewed. Any pre-existing judgements during the data collection and analysis stages were controlled through bracketing (Roberts et al., 2006). Bracketing isolated any pre-conceived beliefs I had about the research area and deflected any influences that may affect my data collection and analysis process (Walker, 2007). In the development of vignettes and case studies, *cherry picking* of interview quotes was avoided (Roberts et al., 2006) through selecting story sequences that reflected the range and tone of each participant's story rather than the most vivid examples.

Conclusion

Through the chapter discussion, I made my presence known and established my position and reasoning for using a case study methodology underpinned by a narrative analysis method. This analytical process was employed to inductively derive data themes so as to discover the Indian international VET students' multiple realities and individual perspectives. I also explained how the my ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological world lens (Merriam & Simpson, 2000) guided the research processes. Ultimately, I provided a description of my world view as a realist post-positive constructivist with a symbolic interactionism approach.

The section that followed explained my researcher background and ethics, identification of an appropriate research site and selection of research participants. Following this discussion I described and justified my approaches in research design, sampling procedures, data collection strategies and instruments, and data analysis techniques. The chapter concluded by describing the approaches used to provide research rigour and trustworthiness.

Chapter 4 has taken up the challenge of how these methods and techniques for the collection and analysis of the Indian international VET students' stories could be operationalised in terms of empirical research. What kinds of data themes would have been inductively derived using narrative analysis? What multiple realities and individual perspectives would have been inductively derived and discovered from the data themes of the Indian international VET students' stories? In supporting the Merriam's and Simpson's (2000) philosophical view in which reality was "constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds" (p. 97), I recognised that some qualitative researchers might not have agreed with my position. However, through my world lens, individuals continued creating their realities, which provided them with subjective, multiple and changing lived experiences.

CHAPTER 5: DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCESSES

Introduction

Chapter 2 described the issues and contexts from which the research questions emerged. There I demonstrated the significance of the international market place and identified experiences that might have impacted on and altered the discourse (identity) and discursive practices of international VET students. Chapter 3 introduced my research conceptual framework which assisted me in developing my research questions and identifying appropriate data gathering and research analysis methods.

In Chapter 4, I discussed my qualitative case study methodology which supported the cultural study theoretical focus of this research. This chapter explained the appropriateness of using a realist post-positive constructivism paradigm with a symbolic interactionist perspective. I then discussed my ontology, epistemology and axiology as influencers when selecting this paradigm. The following section described the case study methodology and the establishment of research reliability protocols. These protocols gave structure to the research processes which used a Reissman (2008) approach for collecting and thematically analysing narrative data. The ethical considerations of the research process, the strategy that was used to identify criterion-based participants and the process employed in selecting an appropriate research site, set the background for the discussion on research rigour and trustworthiness in the research processes and practices.

Chapter 5 has provided a description on the implementation of the research processes that collected and analysed the Indian international student interview data. Details have been given on the selection of criterion-based participants and the one-to-one interview process for collecting the data. Following the details on the data collection process, descriptions on the roles of the two analysis stages have been supplied. The first analysis facilitated the development of individual vignettes and profile descriptions on the students' discourses (identity) and discursive practices. The second analysis process provided data to build case study descriptions that revealed the international VET students' acculturation into their Australian social and academic contexts. While Chapter 5 described the actions for gathering and analysing data to form participant vignettes, Chapter 6 provided profile commentary on the vignettes (refer Appendix G) and Chapter 7 presented case study descriptions on the participants' acculturation. Finally, this chapter has discussed research quality practices and indicators that evidenced case study research rigour.

Participant Recruitment Process

As I intended to use a group discussion approach to meet potential participants (refer Chapter 4), I contacted the Training Manager of the institute who advised me of appropriate dates and times when I could speak with the institute's international student body. Ethical obligations and requirements for this type of research were observed prior to contacting participants (refer Appendix E). At each student body meeting, my aim was to provide an information session and orientation where students were encouraged to ask questions and discuss the data gathering process. The information provided at each of these research orientation sessions commenced

the informed consent process which continued and was reinforced throughout the data collection phase. Verbal reminders on the consent process, their rights and my researcher obligations were provided to students at the beginning of each interview.

Participant identification.

The Training Manager approved and emailed me the dates when I was permitted to address the institute's international student body. The email advised that I could meet with the students on the 18th, 19th and 20th April 2011. As I reflected on these dates, I did consider three days a possible limitation for gathering information through an interview activity but did not see it as a barrier. I planned at each of the information sessions to ask the volunteer research participants to complete an expression of interest (EOI). These research EOIs were to be gathered and filtered to identify the most appropriate and potentially information-rich candidates who met the selection criteria. There were two participant inclusion criteria: (1) no previous exposure to Western education, and (2) currently not living with family. I believed the participants who met these criteria would provide data rich case findings to respond to the first research question:

1. *What identities do Indian international students build as they study in the VET sector within an Australian context?*

The objective of the participant inclusion criteria was to identify volunteers who had no previous Western education experience and were without local support networks. These participants during their search for local connectedness were more likely to face cultural and learning shocks. As indicated in Chapter 2, development of a sense of connectedness was an important process for international students as it provided a local support system which assisted them when dealing with acculturation shocks. I also believed that in their personal stories on finding their cultural fit during their Australian acculturation and adaptation, I would be able to discover the what, the how and the why they made changes to their discourse and discursive practices. Through their stories, I considered I would gain insight into their self-identity development together with an indication of any personality changes.

Arriving at the institute on the 18th April I found that on each of the three research days, there was only one class group. Propitiously they were all international VET students. The Training Manager introduced me to the class teacher who advised me that I was able to speak with the group just before lunch and that I could meet with potential research participants during the students' lunch break. At this point, I believed I would be able to use the students' lunch-time to gather EOIs and ensure I had sufficient and appropriate case study participants. During the lunch-time meeting I also intended to gather signed research consent forms from the participants.

At the information sessions, students were advised that the anticipated interview timeframe was approximately one hour. The scheduling of their individual interviews was to be negotiated with each participant and if required permission sought and gained from the teacher and the Training Manager of the institute. The most suitable times available were to be discussed with each research participant to ensure that their activity schedules were not impinged. During the information session, each student who indicated they were considering being a participant was given a research participant information sheet and consent form.

After providing the research information to the first international student group, I invited those students who were interested in being volunteers to speak with me during their lunch-break. The two students who sought me out at the beginning of their lunch-break were anxious to tell me their stories and wished the interviews to be conducted that day during their lunch-break. This pattern of immediacy continued on the following two days when I asked for volunteer participants. Over the three days, six Indian international VET students volunteered; two on the first day, one on the second day, and three on the third day. No EOIs or filtering process was used as all six participants were interviewed. Through their intonation and body language, each interviewee appeared to be excited by the thought that someone wished to listen to their story on the events and people that had affected their lives since arriving in Australia to study.

Participant descriptions.

When speaking with the six volunteer participants I was informed that they originated from more than one area in India. I was also advised that they did not know one another before enrolling in the Diploma in Salon Management. As the college was a private VET institute in Brisbane, the international learners were full-fee paying students who held a study visa and did not use English as their main language. While I observed the students at the institute during the three days of interviews, it became evident that their preferred non-class student-to-student communication was in a language that I could not understand. Their dialogue was however, frequently peppered with English words. Although English was not their first language, I was aware that in order to meet Australian study visa requirements, their English level needed to be tested and confirmed at 5.5 or above according to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The students were due to complete their diploma course in two to three weeks after the interviews. The gender of the six case study participants was two males and four females.

On analysis of the six research volunteer participants' stories, all six students met the education exposure inclusion criteria. Their stories indicated that they had no previous studying experience outside of India. Three of the participants met the other inclusion criteria as they were not living with their family. The other three female participants were living with their husbands (or boyfriend). They appeared to have varying levels of support from their spouses as two of the ladies complained about their lack of spousal support.

Potential participant research rigour threats.

Due to the participants' desire to commence their storytelling immediately, an interview process resource issue was identified. As I was the only person conducting the research interviews, while one student was being interviewed, another eager participant was patiently awaiting their turn in another room. As the timeframe for each interview was approximately one hour, this caused the second participant to be late for their afternoon training session. To some, the shortness of the research gathering timeframe may appear to be a research rigour threat. However, as the volunteer participants chose to continue with their storytelling rather than return to class, I feel confident that the stories they shared with me were sufficiently rich in detail. These stories provided a snapshot of the participants' life events,

circumstances, and self-beliefs as well as identifying many of the main elements which affected their decision making on acculturation, identity and adaptation.

Another issue to be discussed was the possibility of increased research participation. A number of potential student volunteers who might have wished to participate were unable to speak with me and advise me of their interest in contributing to the research, as access to students after their lunch break was not permitted. Another dynamic to this participation issue is the possibility that students who were experiencing adverse situations due to acculturation adjustment and socio-cultural adaptation issues, might have been reluctant to participate in the research. As acculturation and adaptation issues impacted on an individual's self-confidence and self-belief, these students might have felt less confident and wished not to share their stories with me. Greater access might have increased the number and diversity of participants, but the sample size of six participants provided sufficient data rich case studies to respond to the research questions, as shown in Chapter 6. The smaller sample size also averted the possibility of being overwhelmed with unrelated or extraneous data which would have created an information management threat.

As this was a qualitative study, the quantity of data was considered secondary to the quality of data. Plus, the smaller sample size agreed with the research multiple case study approach where six participants were not only considered sufficient but also permitted an analysis replication approach (Yin, 2013). Data replication (refer Chapter 4) allowed me to explore the second, third and subsequent interviews, to validate a significant finding that I made in the first interview (Yin, 2013). Although the replication process to confirm a finding does not require a duplication of the exact same conditions to exist, two constant conditions during the data gathering were: (1) use of the protocol question bank; and (2) the interview location. Multiple case study findings (Yin, 2009) developed through a replication process were generally considered more robust.

Data Collection and Analysis Processes Intertwined

My data collection and analysis processes were intertwined as I desired to be actively exploring, gathering and analysing data simultaneously. From the first meeting and reflective diary note, I commenced and continued data analysis. As confirmed by Merriam (2009) a rich and meaningful analysis of data could be difficult if all the data were gathered before analysis began, as there would always be another interview to conduct or another document to read. During the data collection and analysis process my reflective diary kept track of my thoughts, musings, speculations and hunches (Merriam & Tisdell, in press). To investigate the research questions, vignettes, participant profiles and rich case study descriptions were developed using a two phase process for data gathering and analysis; Phase One was the data collection phase with Phase Two being the data analysis phase.

Data collection process.

This was the focused exploration phase of the process where I identified what was salient for each participant. In order to gather this information, I developed an interview process which was guided by the question posed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), "Tell me what you think I ought to know about you" (p. 235). In order to ensure I maintained appropriate and moral practices while gathering data that were relevant and focused on the research question, I established interview protocols. These protocols, evidenced in Appendix D and discussed in Chapter 4, covered the bank of interview questions, the research procedures, researcher ethical practices, and general case study rules.

So as to develop interview-type conversations with the volunteers, I used a participant-controlled interview strategy. This strategy provided a lens which allowed me to discover the *who*, the *what*, the *why*, and the *how* of each international student participant. From the participants' stories on their lived experiences, I was able to discover the action sequences which influenced their decision making (or why) on the "institutional, organisational, [and] discursive" (Chase, 2005, p. 658) self-identity (or who) constructions they developed. The resources and symbols (Chase, 2011) (or what) they used (and how they used them) when constructing their recognisable self-identities, were also able to be identified within their stories.

In Chapter 4 I discussed the bank of interview questions and how they assisted me in gathering the relevant research data. By using a semi-structured interview approach, I was able to randomly select questions from the bank. The interview questions acted as conversation stimuli and when necessary operated as a mechanism to guide the discussion on to a research relevant area. As the central theme of the interview was to ensure a conversation flow where the participant was encouraged to tell their story, the order and form of the questions was considered unimportant. With the interview process aimed at producing narrative accounts on topics relevant to the research, some questions from the bank were not asked, while others were altered to ensure conversation continuity. The objective of a conversation-style interview was to encourage development of personal narratives where events and experiences were made more meaningful to both the listener (myself) and the speaker (the participant) (Riessman, 2008). When story-tellers created personal narratives, an interactive activity developed (Chase, 2011) as they engaged with interviewers in the creation of their autobiographical stories.

Interview questions.

The protocol interview questions (refer Appendix D) assisted me gather information to respond to the research questions. From the participants' interviews, story data were collected on:

- Who decided they would study in Australia?
- What academic and social differences had they found?
- What did they believe others saw as their identity characteristics?
- How did they view their own identity characteristics?
- What (if any) changes had they made in their identity since being in Australia?
- What difficulties had they encountered and how did they handle them?
- Who did they consider were their friends and their support systems?

The bank of interview questions were grouped under the headings of: Background, Social differences, Studying differences, Social profile, Personal profile, Experiences and Social support. These headings related to my research framework (refer Chapter 3).

There were four background interview questions. The responses to these questions established the participants' perceived role in the decision making process to study in Australia. All participants were asked these questions at the beginning of their interview to establish a conversational relationship between story-teller and researcher where narrative and meaning could be jointly constructed (Riessman, 2008). The meaning made by the story-teller reflected the one that they wished me, as the listener and researcher, to take away from the conversation.

With the eight social difference interview questions, I was able to investigate a number of areas. I explored the participants' expectations and discoveries after arriving in Australia, their social lives, what social activities they participated in and the nationalities of their friends. All participants were asked these questions but the order of the questions was dictated by the flow of the conversation and the topics that were discussed.

The five interview questions on studying differences were designed to elicit information related to learning shock. Learning shock was salient in this type of research but the level of shock and the significance of the experience was an interesting facet of each participant's life in Australia. At times the wording and question order varied from that shown in the question bank as individual participant conversations prompted different questions. Although the question structure and wording varied, by retaining the subject matter of the questions, the conversation topics cascaded logically through the participants' stories.

The three interview questions under social profile were intended to allow participants to reflect and reveal their discursive identities which they believed were portrayed to their friends and peers. All participants were asked these questions so as to discover how they saw their identities and how they considered their discursive practices would *fit in* within their current Australian social and academic environments.

The six personal profile interview questions were designed to explore participants' self-identity as well as encourage them to disclose any behavioural or psychological changes that they believed had occurred. These questions were modified so that they were diffused through the conversation, not highlighting the topics, but rather allowing participants to reflect and consider who they were at the time of the interview (self-identity), who they were previously, whether their behaviour and personality had changed, and whether they would change back if they returned to India.

The five interview questions relating to experiences and the participants' social support systems were designed to identify the behavioural and psychological impacts of their Australian experiences, the support mechanisms that were available to them as well as how they were used. In Chapter 2 I discussed literature indicating that when sojourners adjusted to new environments, they faced and dealt with psychological and behavioural issues (Ward & Kennedy, 2013; Yang & Noels, 2013;

Yang et al., 2006). The literature also evidenced the importance of connectedness and their support systems during their acculturation adjustment (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Bochner, 2006). Chapter 2 also highlighted that when a situation was recalled, sometimes parts of the actual event may be dimmed, clouded or diffused. For example, if fear or an uncomfortable situation was experienced, participants might recall the time as being managed discomfort. In conversation, when reflecting on an event, the actual happenings might have altered as historical imaginings could be converted. This was viewed as an individual's efficacy reaction. If the storyteller believed that they were able to deal with life's challenges without feeling confused and overwhelmed (Baker, 2010) when recalling their version of the events, the meaning that they created was the one that they wanted the listener to take from the story (Riessman, 2008). All the participants were asked these questions but they were tailored so as to blend into an appropriate place within each conversation.

Data analysis process.

There were two phases in the data analysis process. The first analytical process of the data built vignettes on each participant (refer Appendix G). These vignettes provided insight into the participants' lives and their identity development enabling snapshot profiles to be developed. Chapter 6 described the profile evidence derived from the first analysis. The second analytical process constructed case study descriptions on the participants (refer Chapter 7). My aim in these analysis processes was to discover the different roles or identities taken on by the participants and the strategies used during their acculturation into their Australian environments.

Vignettes.

In case study research, vignettes have been widely used to complement and enhance other data or generate data not tapped during interviews and observations (Wilks, 2004). The aim of a vignette was to support the meaning that was evidenced in the analysed data (Wilks, 2004). In a narrative investigation, vignettes were frequently used as they carried within them an interpretation by the researcher of the person, experience, or situation (Wilks, 2004). When constructing the vignettes, I used direct quotes from the participants' stories to create portraits which represented their character and experiences (Wilks, 2004). These vignettes then provided for others, the opportunity to live my lived experience (Wilks, 2004) of listening to the participants' stories and understanding their worlds.

The participants' "content of speech" (Riessman, 2008, p. 58) was the main focus of this investigation, with the context and conditions at the time it was produced of lesser significance. I viewed language as a "resource rather than a topic of inquiry" (Riessman, 2008, p. 59). By using interview quotes in the vignettes, I gave the participants a voice to explain in their own words their perspective and meaning of their experiences. The vignettes were then less about my understanding and observations as an outsider, and more about their experiences and their world from an insider's perspective. Snapshot profiles on the participants' experiences and activities were able to be conveyed to others through the use of vignettes.

Although data collection and analysis processes were described in Chapter 4, the following sections explained the actual activities that were performed within each phase of the interwoven processes.

Phase One of the Research: Conducting Participant Interviews

The research interviews were conducted as one-to-one conversations where the rules of every-day conversations applied; turn-taking, story relevance, topic introduction and close, and past-current time transitional talk (Riessman, 2008). Using the bank of possible interview questions, participants were encouraged to talk about specific events and situations rather than be asked to identify exact periods in time or provide a chronology of events. Development of descriptive timelines was not considered relevant to this research as personal socio-cultural events and their significance to the individual were subjective moments that were often difficult to track back to a specific time. Stories from interviews were viewed as dynamic conversations because how people recalled their past related to the way they made sense of their experiences (Riessman, 2008). In conversations people generally focused on the details of how and why these events were important to them, rather than recalling their chronological order.

Research interview pilot.

The interview question pilot was conducted with an international student who had returned to her country of origin. The pilot participant was a South Pacific Islander who graduated with an Australian diploma from a Brisbane institute, other than the research site. She was not informed of the location where the research interviews were being conducted. Although her nationality was not the same as the research participants, this was considered irrelevant as the interview questions were not directly linked to any specific international student originating country. As the role of the pilot interview phase was to identify any potential misinterpretations with the research interview questions, I consciously used the word *personality* rather than *self-identity* in the pilot interview questions. This Ward and Kennedy (2013) approach was discussed in Chapter 4.

During the interview pilot I needed to provide more detail on two questions to improve the participant's understanding. When additional information was supplied, her story detail increased. Using this interview pilot feedback, I made minor adjustments on two questions so as to aid research interviewee understanding. (Refer Appendix D for the post-pilot bank of questions). A copy of these interview questions was supplied to the institute's Training Manager prior to the first interview being conducted.

Participant interviews.

As I had no prior knowledge of the participants and their experiences, I was aware that there might be some topics that could stimulate a traumatic memory. I was cognisant of this potential situation and took great care in the phrasing of questions while I observed participant interactions and reactions. If I commenced discussing a topic where the participant's words appeared not to come easily or they demonstrated a sudden feeling of uneasiness, the interview would have been terminated. During the six interviews, the participants showed no signs of difficulty or distress. With all participants, the conversations flowed well and it appeared that no topic was too traumatic to speak of.

I was also aware of the need to allow each participant's thought processes to progress to fruition and avoid interrupting the story-teller. However, I did find it difficult at times to identify points where it was a talk turn-change point as opposed to a point where the participant was mentally converting language before speaking in English. Even though the conversations were digitally recorded (with participant consent), I paraphrased certain parts during their storytelling to ensure my understanding of the events and the relevance of the situations they mentioned. As well as these during-conversation confirmations, I was further assisted in maintaining information accuracy by making during conversation diary notes (Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Yin, 2013). I also made extensive notes immediately following each conversation.

Participant stories.

The interviews were an informal discussion to identify participant contexts, some socio-cultural information as well as encourage the participants to tell their stories. As gathering each interviewee's story was the primary objective, responses to questions and which questions were asked and in what order, was considered secondary and flexible. Throughout the interview process, so as to garner further details on the participants' comments, I interjected with probing questions and actions (e.g. silence, a sound, a word or a sentence) (Merriam, 1998). Through probing statements, such as *Wow! What happened after that?*, I was able to provide more of a conversation tone to the interview process as well as gain more detail on a particular discussion point.

At the time I conducted the interviews, I intended to provide interview transcripts to each of the participating story-tellers to maintain information accuracy as well as ensure compliance with the "Principle of No Surprise" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 358). However, this step was not achieved due to unforeseen timing issues. The unpredicted situations included (1) the participants had completed their course by the time the interview transcripts were available for distribution; and (2) the institute's email records had not been updated. Both circumstances made participant contact problematic. Nevertheless, the stories gathered through the one-to-one interviews and my diary notes were data rich and on analysis provided findings that enabled me to respond to the research questions. The completeness of the students' stories was evidenced by one participant's closing comment as she left to return to class, "So that's my story" (Student N1).

Transcription of Participant Stories

The electronic files of the digitally recorded participant interviews were transferred to my laptop with a second copy placed on a memory stick. As soon as possible after the interviews, the second copy of the research audio files was supplied to a commercial transcription service to convert into text. Participant and institute confidentiality was maintained during the transcription process as no identifying details on the institute and only the first name of each participant were recorded. The identification of a transcription service provider was on a colleague's recommendation. I was advised that the company supplied high quality and confidential court reporting transcripts as well as other services.

The electronic interview transcripts were returned one month after collecting the participants' stories. The transcribed electronic files showed a number of blank areas on the transcript pages as the person tasked with transcribing and developing the interview transcripts into Microsoft Word documents was not involved in the interview conversations and had no contact with the participants. The interview transcription service explained that the blank areas were to indicate places where there was some difficulty in hearing the spoken words. There were two possible reasons which may have caused this difficulty: (1) background noise from other conversations and hairdressing dryers; and (2) word clarity due to broken English speech.

As I took part in the interview conversations and I was able to refer to my diary notes on the topics discussed and abridged participant responses to the interview questions, I was able to reconstruct the majority of the blank areas. The reconstruction process entailed listening to the recorded interviews, a review of each transcript, and then a review of my diary notes to locate the areas matching the missing sections. This process to reconstruct individual transcript records, was undertaken a number of times with each transcript. The reconstruction process provided interview records that were 98% complete. In a few places on three of the transcripts, there were minor areas which remained blank as noise from the institute's hairdressing salon in the next room recorded louder than the conversation speakers. These missing areas were deemed inconsequential as the meaning of the stories communicated by the participants was not affected. The final step in the production of the information rich story transcripts was to remove the participants' names and any other person's name from the electronic files and replace them with pseudonyms and codes. This process ensured participants and other named parties were no longer identifiable. Table 5.1 lists the participant pseudonyms and codes.

Table 5.1
Participant pseudonyms and codes

Pseudonyms	Code
Sadaf	S1
Naisha	N1
Madina	M1
Shama	S2
Haroon	H1
Gafur	G1

Note. Privacy and confidentiality protection of the research volunteer participants was through the allocation of another name and a reference code. Throughout the research processes and in the findings, participant identification was by either their pseudonym or their code.

Potential transcript rigour threat.

Verification of transcripts was limited by: (a) the restriction of access to participants; (b) the time taken to transcribe and re-construct the interview transcripts; and (c) the non-availability of participants. However, the likelihood of inaccuracies was reduced in three ways: (1) the story-tellers spoke clearly in English; (2) the conversations were digitally recorded; and (3) diary notes made during the conversations verified the transcriptions.

Phase Two of the Research: Analysing Narrative Data

My narrative analytical method was based on analytical approaches undertaken by qualitative researchers: Merriam(2009), Riessman (2008) and Yin (2013). Each step in the analysis process formed an integral part in the discovery of the identities built by the participants. As a pragmatic and methodical researcher, the thematic approach to narrative analysis adopted, though slow, provided the detailed procedure required to identify dialogue subtleties (Riessman, 2000). In using a narrative thematic analysis method, a window was created which allowed the development and re-shaping of the personal identities of the story-tellers (Riessman, 2000) to be identified. Within their event-based stories in different contexts, the participants verbally exposed their multiple identities.

Throughout the data collection process in Phase One, I was conscious of the need to maintain the integrity of each case. While grounded theorists sought generic explanations and divided each story into segments to be analysed, interpreted and generalised, narrative analysts retained long sequences of data. These sequences preserved content detail as well as recognised that each narrative was a series of story sequences that kept the story intact for interpretative purposes (Riessman, 2008). The processes of identifying and binding data sequences for analysis was an interpretive decision that was shaped and influenced by the research (Riessman, 2008). As this research used a multiple case study methodology, a narrative analytical process was more appropriate than other methods which were not focused on finding the intent and meaning of the data. Methods such as phenomenology, grounded theory and critical discourse analysis (CDA) were not considered to be successful in retaining the integrity of the data while seeking meaning. These methods divide data into small unrelated segments or sections that are re-constituted and analysed using the researcher's interpretations.

For data analysis and data management, I preferred the analytical flexibility of a pen and paper approach and rejected a computer-based analytical approach, such as NVivo. In making this decision I considered the cost, benefits and effectiveness of using analytical software to investigate the data on six interviewees. The reduction of my confidence in use of a computer analytical approach was due to the possibility of data distortion and the prospect that I might be distanced away from the data (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). This would limit the authenticity of my interpretations and creative processes. As case study analysis was highly intuitive, a researcher would not always be able to explain how they detected data connections or exactly where a finding insight had been discovered (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, I considered it was more appropriate that I relied on my researcher instinct. Fossey, Harvey, McDermott and Davidson (2002) argued for this approach and advised that

“computer software cannot replace the conceptual processes required of the researcher” (p. 729). They also confirmed that use of computers could limit the authenticity of the interpretative and creative processes that were required when analysing data.

Narrative thematic process.

Analysis of the data was an ongoing process. After the participants’ interview transcripts were produced from the raw data transcripts and researcher field notes, I reviewed, reflected upon, re-read, and divided the data rich areas into organised, bounded and pegged-out sequences. These were seen as primary areas for analysis due to their theoretical interest and relationship to the research question (Riessman, 2000). As well as being areas to analyse, these sequences were evidential data that could be included in the vignettes, profile descriptions and case studies to convey concepts that were relevant to the research question.

Once the data sequences were identified and bounded, they were considered data units. These data units were classified into broad thematic patterns of characteristics. Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal work advised that developing categories before commencing research was presumptuous, I was able to identify some characteristic “lower level” (p. 36) themes from the information found in the literature. The “higher level” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 36) themes I discovered during the processes of data coding and analysis.

As mentioned earlier, grounded theory tools that identified themes were a recognised adjunct in narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). The grounded theory practices of “open coding”, “axial coding” and “selective coding” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 49) provided me with a reliable and organised audit trail. This traceable pathway demonstrated my trustworthy practices when analysing narrative sequences. These three tools (open, axial and selective coding) created interactive and reflective analytical processes which provided a systematic and holistic approach when I was classifying and coding themes, and identifying data sequence linkages. Through the holistic approach of narrative analysis, I was able to recognise the actor’s views. It was the intent of the speaker that I sought and this was gained by reflecting on the meaning of the data sequence rather than considering their actual words. If during interaction with the data I located an insightful characteristic, I was able to follow up and gather more data which confirmed, complimented or refuted the characteristic. On a second or third reading of each participant’s transcript I frequently found data that confirmed thematic characteristics.

A list of codes and themes was created, continually updated, and maintained as a record of the data analysis process. Propositional statements for theme inclusion were developed from the analysed data. These statements were broad in design so as not to create a reductionist view (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005) where specific types of data were identified as primary social or cultural characteristics. Rather, the characteristic situation, action or reaction data were viewed holistically matching the meaning of the theme inclusion statement and not the actual words (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005), as word-matching would collapse the data sequence into unrecognisable pieces.

As well as highlighting to me data themes and properties, open coding confirmed, developed, merged or linked these themes and properties. While I was open coding data, I was also seeking connections of themes and sub-themes through axial coding. This axial coding “weaving” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 50) process assisted me identify discursive characteristic (identity type) connections. The final step in the process was selective coding where core characteristics of the participants were selected and coded. These core characteristics provided the research umbrella under which all other related themes and sub-themes were placed. I was not concerned about the wording of thematic titles, as I considered it more important that other researchers and critics followed my analytical logic on the choice of the discursive (identity) thematic name (Corbin & Holt, 2010). While open coding, axial coding and selective coding were the overarching techniques, a constant comparative procedure underpinned the analytical process. Appendix F illustrated the data gathering and analysis processes.

Eventually theoretical saturation of themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) occurred and the number of membership themes and properties reduced. Saturation was achieved when no new themes were developed from the data analysis. This delimiting process reduced the “universe of data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 112) so that I could concentrate on more relevant data and avoid the frame problem (Gee, 2004). As data theme relationships formed, an integrated theoretical framework of the Indian international student’s self-perceived discursive identities was developed. Descriptive vignettes (refer Appendix G) and snapshot profile descriptions (refer Chapter 6) on each of the participant’s discourses and discursive practices were developed from the first analysis. Data from a second analysis together with the vignettes and profile descriptions were used in developing the case study descriptions (refer Chapter 7). These descriptions identified and recognised the participants’ multiple realities, their truths as well as their subjective perspectives (Corbin & Holt, 2010; Glaser, 2002; Riessman, 2015). The findings of this research were based on the data results found in the case study descriptions.

Vignettes and Profile Descriptions

When interviews were used in research, identification of the beginning and ending of sequences to bind for analysis, was known to be a complex interpretative task (Riessman, 2000). In the first analytical process which developed the vignettes, the starting and finishing points of the data sequences were indicated by the participants. In order to locate their verbal sequence beginning and ending signifiers which identified the story plots on their experiences, I needed to infiltrate the story transcripts. By permeating the interview transcripts, I was able to distinguish and separate the story from the thematic analysis of the data sequences (Riessman, 2000). This distinction allowed individual story plots to be analysed while retaining the point of the story.

Vignette narrative theme identification and coding.

To find the participants' verbal signifiers which pegged out and marked the thematic sequences in their stories, I staggered the review of the six transcripts by dividing them into three groups of two. By reviewing the transcripts one at a time within a comparative pair, I was able to mark the data sequences identified by the participant's dialogue signals. Next, I matched the data sequences to the interview question concepts and commenced identifying and marking themed sequences within each transcript. Using an open coding approach, I identified, named and listed the data themes and sub-themes together with their characteristic properties. Once the second transcript of the comparative pair was reviewed and similar or new themes were identified, the chart of themes, sub-themes and their characteristic properties was updated. Then a reflective analytical process using axial coding commenced.

In using axial coding, I was able to identify framework linkages and connections between the various themes and sub-theme sequences and their property characteristics. A constant comparative method of analysis was used at this juncture rather than wait for all the transcripts to be thematically sequenced and named. My reasoning was that at this stage a constant comparative method could interactively inform me in a controlled and manageable manner of common themes, subthemes and conceptual linkages (Merriam, 2009). During axial coding, I noticed thematic similarities and differences between the two transcripts and made diary notes on this observation.

The process to identify bounded sequences and use open and axial coding of the themed data continued with the next two transcripts with a constant comparative analysis performed between the four transcripts. The final two transcripts were processed in the same manner as the first four with a constant comparative analysis performed between all six transcripts. This interlinking process performed by axial coding assisted me in the identification of core discursive characteristic (identity type) themes and led me to the final step of selective coding. Here I identified, selected and coded core discursive (identity type) characteristics of the participants. These core characteristics provided the research canopy under which all related themes and sub-themes from the analysis were placed. Table 5.2 has listed the themes and characteristic properties related to the interview question concepts.

Table 5.2
First narrative analysis themes and properties

Interview questions	Data Themes	Characteristic properties
Background	Time in Australia	*>6 months-socio-cultural skills acquired and able to fit in
	Without usual support system	*Lives alone –strong need to build connectedness from new support systems *Lives with husband/boyfriend -less need for connectedness
	Decision maker	*Following goals *Follower in decision to study in Australia
Social differences	Expectations before arriving	*Realistic advice researched *Acceptable differences
	Discoveries after arriving	*Socio-cultural issues *Work issues
	Current social contacts and activities	*Type of social activities *Frequency of activities *Access to social groups
	Friends nationality	*Australian % *Indian % *Other nationalities %
Studying differences	Learning shock	*Study difficulty *English language difficulty *Teacher support
Social profile	Discourse and discursive practices	*Current identity characteristics and behaviour believed by friends and peers *Previous identity characteristics and behaviour believed by friends and peers
Personal profile	Self-identity	*Current identity characteristics, self-belief and behaviour *Previous identity characteristics, self-belief and behaviour *Current identity fits into Australian contexts
	Behavioural and psychological changes	*Psychological changes made since arrived *Behavioural changes made since arrived *No changes made since arrived *Any reversal of changes if returned to India
Experiences and social support systems	Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences	*Accommodation problems *Work and money problems *Discrimination problems *Racial violence *Loneliness *Lack of trust
	Support mechanisms available and used	*Indian family and friends *Australian friends

Note. The bank of interview questions (refer Appendix D) were listed under headings of Background, Social differences, Studying differences, Social profile, Personal profile, Experiences and Social support systems. The data themes and the characteristic properties that were found in the participants' transcripts were mapped to the interview questions.

Narrative thematic patterns.

The steps and techniques I used to elicit meaning and discover patterns from the data were:

1. Noting patterns in language (common meaning phraseology not linguistics) and shared experiences. This technique involved identification of obvious patterns in participant responses to questions or reflective comments that were made when telling their stories. Group acceptance of language meaning and how the words were commonly used within the group was more important than the speaker using the correct word.
2. Splitting or combining themes which were conflicting or deviating from other relational themes. The development of themes was ongoing until sequence sources were exhausted.
3. Noting relationships between themes. These relationships may have been a cause or an effect that developed into a characteristic, or a notable experience or situation in the participants' stories.
4. Building a logical chain of evidence which scaffolded the development of informed knowledge on the data.

By consolidating, reducing and interpreting (Merriam & Tisdell, in press) participants' dialogue during the initial thematic analysis process, I was able to seek meaning from the data. Through reflection on the coded data sequences, themed characteristics, identified linkages, and relationships that were considered relevant to the research questions, meaning appeared from the data. From each participant's data theme pool, individual vignettes and profile descriptions were created which supported the meaning evidenced in the analysed data (Wilks, 2004). Each vignette and profile description painted a snap-shot portrait of the participant and their experiences. These vignettes and profile descriptions were drawn upon during the development of the individual case study descriptions.

Building vignettes and profile descriptions.

Through a reflection on the first narrative analysis of each transcript and the logical comparisons made on each transcript, I gained insight into the participants' worlds through the "told" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54) parts of their stories. From their interview dialogue and my field observations, I developed six vignettes and profile descriptions which provided individual snapshot profiles (Wilks, 2004). Each vignette portrait and accompanying profile description were a reflection of the Indian international student's *preferred* self rather than their *essential* self (Riessman, 2000) as participants described their self-identities as if they were actors within their social worlds.

In constructing the vignettes and profile descriptions I used direct quotes from the participant's stories to build their characters, explain their experiences and create believable portraits (Wilks, 2004). By hearing the participants' voices through their stories, readers have been given an opportunity to understand the students' individual "perceptions, beliefs and meanings about specific situations" (Barter & Renold, 1999, p. 4). Using the vignette dialogue as a heuristic device, readers were also able to gain an understanding of the students' worlds.

Along with enhancing the data themes identified in the first analysis, these vignettes also provided evidence of new and unexpected characteristic patterns. In order to investigate these thematic patterns, a secondary analysis was performed and a second research question was developed. This second analysis focused on the identity characteristics and the acculturation strategies and changes that were evidenced in the participants' stories. While the first analysis developed the content that built the Indian international VET students' vignettes (refer Appendix G) and provided insight to develop their profile descriptions (refer Chapter 6), the second thematic analysis created thick, rich case study descriptions (refer Chapter 7) that reflected their acculturation.

Case Study Descriptions

As the focus of the second analysis was to further investigate indications of new and yet to be discovered themes, I decided to re-read and reflect on the six transcripts rather than expand on the first analysis list of themes. By re-reading the transcripts and reflecting on the data, I accepted the participants' socio-cultural discourses as their reality at the time of the storytelling. When sharing with a listener their individual descriptions on selected, organised, connected and evaluated events, meaning was given to their stories (Riessman, 2008). At another time and in another place, the discourses and identities played and disclosed by the storytellers might be altered.

Therefore triangulation of data (using multiple sources of data or multiple collection methods) would have been difficult. The participants' narratives were their stories at that moment, in that place and were told using the identity guise they wished to portray to me. Their stories were on the events they wished to share with me, together with their feelings and meanings on those situations.

Viewing case study narratives as multidimensional forms like people, rather than two-dimensional objects, they demonstrated their ability to grow, change and alter (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). For these reasons I preferred to view the participants' socio-cultural discourses as a crystalline form (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Riessman, 2008) with many facets and multiple layers reflecting their individualism and agency. Development of socio-cultural discourses was discussed extensively in Chapter 4 identifying that at any point in time, individuals were able to take on a number of different discursive identities and these identities signified the person's various group alliances.

Although indicated in the first analysis on the story transcripts, it was through the second thematic analysis that I unveiled characteristic evidence of the participants' identities (discourse and discursive practices) and sculpted case study descriptions that reflected their self-persona. While the participants identified their sequence beginnings and endings for the first analysis, in the second analysis, I identified and bounded the transcript sequences. This analysis sought areas in the transcripts which illustrated their discourse type characteristics along with any positive or negative factors. I also wished to locate factors that might have influenced their choices when forming their identities.

Case study narrative theme identification and coding.

Reflecting on my first analysis, I recognised my original conceptual framework needed to incorporate these newly discovered concepts. My aim was to illustrate and represent this group of students' acculturation processes indicated in their interview transcripts. It was through this immersion of acculturation data that a second question was identified.

2. How did the participants demonstrate resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit?

In order to find a response to this second question, I retained a reflective lens, bracketed my previous thematic insights and re-read the transcripts. My objective was to create a thematic coding scheme that described the identity characteristics or traits developed by the participants, highlighting any influencing factors and identity changes the participants advised had occurred during their identity formations. The coding scheme in Table 5.3 (a) described the themes and subthemes derived from the second analysis of the transcripts.

Table 5.3

Comparison of thematic analysis lists

(a) Second narrative analysis themes, subthemes and subtheme codes- Based on identity development

Discourse Data Theme	Code	Subtheme
Individual	I-1	Motivation
	I-2	Confidence
	I-3	Determination
Environment-Support Systems	S1-A	Australian support
	S1-B	Indian support
	S1-C	Teachers support
Environment- Study success	S2-A	Improved English
	S2-B	Enjoyed studying and felt supported
Independence-Acceptance	D-1	Accepted in plural society
Independence-Work	D-2	Appropriate/Good work
Coping mechanisms: Discrimination Accommodation Social networks Depression Differences	C-1	Discrimination and criminal target (Racism)
	C-2	Difficulties with accommodation
	C-3	Social network access
	C-4	Depression and loneliness
	C-5	Social and environmental differences
Acculturation-Socio-cultural	A-1	Personal changes
Acculturation-Psychological	A-2	Personality
Adaptation	P-1	Adapting
Identity	P-2	Self-identity

(b) First narrative analysis themes – Based on interview questions

Interview questions	Data Themes
Background	Time in Australia
	Without usual support system
	Decision maker
Social differences	Expectations before arriving
	Discoveries after arriving
	Current social contacts and activities
	Friends nationality
Studying differences	Learning shock
Social profile	Discourse and discursive practices
Personal profile	Self-identity
	Behavioural and psychological changes
Experiences and social support systems	Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences
	Support mechanisms available and used

Note. Table (a) represented the identity data themes and subthemes discovered in the second analysis. The identity characteristic subthemes in Table (a) were allocated codes. Table (b) represented the data themes identified in the first analysis which matched the interview questions.

Following in the shadow of the first analytical process, each conversation transcript print out was reviewed and reflected upon individually. Sequences of dialogue that indicated identity traits, influencers or identity changes were marked and bounded, with diary notations made on these important data sequences. Some of these interview data sequences were also referred to the first analysis diary notes as they related to conversation topics that appeared to be important to the participants. Many of these evidence sequences were used in Chapter 7 to illustrate specific and significant characteristics within each case study.

Notes in my reflective diary assisted me confirm, expand and reinforce the data themes shown in Table 5.3 (a). These reflections also provided a method for developing theme inclusion and exclusion characteristic identifiers. In locating interview sequence data, identifying data linkages, and selecting and coding the thematic evidence on the participants' discursive characteristics, influences and identity changes, I again used open, axial and selective coding processes so as to evidence of auditable, reliable and trustworthy analytical practices.

In the second analysis, as in the first analysis, theme saturation eventually occurred where no further discursive characteristic themes within the six transcripts were identified. I then conducted a reflective review of all the evidence in order to identify any data theme inconsistencies and confirm theme appropriateness and data completeness. This second thematic analysis of the transcripts created a list of theme and subtheme characteristics which reflected both individual and repeated discourses and discursive practices within the participants' stories. In Table 5.3 the first thematic analysis list (b), based on the interview questions, has been compared with the second thematic analysis list (a) which used a different lens to draw out discursive characteristics, influencing factors and identity changes.

The next step was to re-visit the identified and bounded sequences within each of the transcripts and appropriately code the data areas using the data theme chart. The title of the codes reflected the meaning of the data sequence. The criteria for theme inclusion and exclusion were confirmed through the process of constantly comparing participants' transcripts, while coding the data.

Once the themed sequences had been coded, the data were gathered and collated in two ways: (1) as a characteristic component of a case study; and (2) as evidence of an identity characteristic. Across the six case studies, common theme elements began to emerge. Relationships or links within each case study data were noted as the linked data provided a structural frame which allowed me to conceptualise the self-perceived discursive identities of each participant. As more than one characteristic was often evidenced in some sequences, sequence pieces of the bounded sequence were sometimes used as evidence in Chapters 6 and 7. In some instances due to the multiple meanings found within a sequence, the words contained in the sequence were used to evidence more than one theme due to the linkages that were shown to exist between characteristic themes.

While most of the findings were expected as they followed previous research findings and reinforced my original conceptual framework, other findings provided new insights into the characteristic identities of Indian international VET students in an Australian context. These new notions altered my thinking and conceptual

framework. Chapter 8 presented the new conceptual model and explained my data findings. Reflecting on this new framework, I shifted my frame of reference from constructivist to interpretivist and recognised evidence in the participants' stories. This evidence built the theoretical representation on acculturation resilience shown in Chapter 8.

Acculturation data patterns.

Although I did not consider the participants' stories presented a phenomenon, as that would have indicated a specific event or circumstance, the transcripts showed sufficient evidence to infer connections between their sequenced interview *talk* and the unspoken intent of their stories. As Merriam (2009) had observed the key indication was when the researcher knows that the thematic category scheme does not tell the whole story and that there was more to be understood. Some of the attitudinal and behavioural themes evidenced in this research had previously been identified and described by Berry (2006a) as acculturation strategies. According to Berry (2006a) discursive change in relation to behavioural shifts and stress coping phenomena was a function that people performed during the acculturation process. Additionally, those who were goal orientated showed both psychological and socio-cultural adaptation as their long term outcome. This level of analysis took me from observable, sequenced and thematic coded data to a higher level where each case study was able to be seen as a whole (Merriam, 2009) rather than parts that were connected and similar to parts in the other five case studies.

Identity data patterns

The objectives of the second thematic analysis were to explore and discover the participants' identities and the characteristics as they acculturated and adapted to their Australian socio-cultural contexts. Evidence of participant acculturation was shown through the participants' stories. Their stories revealed individual identity change as they progressively adopted socio-cultural elements (ideas, words, values, norms, and behaviour) of their community and academic environments in order to adapt and fit in (Berry, 2006a). The discoveries from this second analysis, which were explained in detail in Chapter 7, provided greater insight into the participant's identities.

Building case study descriptions.

Case studies created from data should be formed into stories with a beginning, middle and end (Yin, 2013). The first and second analyses of the transcript data provided a guide when developing each case study. While Chapter 6 discussed the outcomes from the first analysis, Chapter 7 presented individual case studies that were drawn from the second analysis, the vignette data and the participants' descriptions in Chapter 6.

In building the participants' case studies, their individuality was recognised as they each had different backgrounds, ideologies, perceptions, and ways of dealing with situations. Decisions that they made on accepting or rejecting discourses and discursive practices were influenced by their historical and cultural backgrounds, and value systems (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). These value and belief systems in

relation to what they considered to be appropriate and inappropriate behaviour when interacting with others, were reflected in the different socio-cultural identities they adopted (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2014). Taking the position of a case study biographer (Stake, 2005b), I presented in the vignettes and Chapter 6 a snapshot picture on segments of the participants' histories.

The six thick, rich case study descriptions were designed using a multiple case study approach rather than a single case study approach. A multiple approach was more appropriate as it allowed replication to occur rather than sampling (Yin, 2013). Through a replication process I was able to explore other transcript data to validate discovery of a significant finding (Yin, 2013). It was through this data finding replication that I confirmed a second data analysis was needed in order to develop the case studies. Data from the participants' stories informed each case study as it revealed: (a) who they believed they were before they arrived in Australia; (b) what situations had occurred and how they handled them during their (averaged) eighteen months of living and studying in Australia; (c) how they believed they had changed; and (d) who they thought they had become. The case study descriptions presented in Chapter 7 demonstrated the participants' efficacy strength, personality and determination to achieve their goals.

When readers developed their own perceptions and understandings on these case studies, participant similarities and individualities would be identified (Stake, 2005b). However, as with most case study research, it should be remembered that the findings of these personal narratives should not be generalised across the population (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011; Stark & Torrance, 2005) of all Indian international VET students studying in Australia. The narrators in this research told their own stories which as well as being context dependent (Lincoln & Guba, 2005) were situated stories with specific characters, a setting and a plot (Riessman, 2000). However, the dialogue from this group of research participants have provided insight into the various socio-cultural groups, group memberships and discursive practices of Indian international VET students in Australia.

Ensuring Quality Practices

As indicated by Riessman (2008) and Yin (2013), good narrative research should be of the highest quality and be able to persuade readers through the genuineness of the data demonstrating that the interpretations were plausible, reasonable and convincing. The following discussed my quality practices and provided substantiated assurances of my methodological and interpretive rigour.

Methodological rigour.

In this study methodological rigour was gained through the alignment of the inquiry process with the outcomes from the data. Alignment evidence stemmed from the following four main methodological considerations: (1) my philosophical foundations (epistemology, ontology, and axiology); (2) the philosophical bases of the context under study (realist post-positive constructivism paradigm with a symbolic interactionist lens); (3) the intended outcomes of the study (extending existing theory); and (4) the narrative techniques and procedures used to collect and interpret the information.

This study focused on the stories of lived experience and the self-perceived identities of Indian international VET students as they negotiated situations to find their place and develop discourses suitable for their Australian contexts. Participant discourse (identity) and discursive practices had arisen through a constructive process of behavioural and psychological changes. These changes were made by individuals so as to make sense of situations and develop meaning from their experiences. Participants identified these changes as ones that they believed were required or ones where they used their agency to resist change. The participants' decision to accept or reject change was influenced by their need and ability to fit into their environment.

This experience-based heuristic knowledge about the participants linked to constructivist/ interpretivist epistemologies which emphasized individual and collaborative interpretations of experience when constructing knowledge. By using a symbolic interaction lens, I recognised that the participants' knowledge was either gained by the group or gained by themselves as individuals independent of the group. The linking of my research realist post-positive constructivist epistemology and my ontological perspective of truth being relative was demonstrated through acceptance of each participant's story as their reality which they constructed and shared.

In using a narrative inquiry framework I was better able to appreciate the participants' cultural and social life experiences as I was given a glimpse into the worlds that made sense to them (Ryan, 2008). This narrative analytical technique facilitated an interpretative approach that illuminated and scaffolded my understanding. Methodological rigour was established through a case study methodology supported by a thematic method using narrative theory tools (sequences not segments) and grounded theory tools (open, axial, selective coding) for gathering and analysing data. This research method and techniques were particularly appropriate for my realist post-positive constructivism paradigm that aligned with my ontological and epistemological philosophies. A detailed explanation on my methodological beliefs was provided in Chapter 4.

Through the narrative method, I was supplied with reliable and trustworthy processes to collect and analyse data from one-to-one interviews and my reflective field notes. The constructive dialogue-based narrative process that provided a response to each of my research questions was informed by: (a) detailed transcripts; (b) attention to the meaning of the language; (c) acknowledgement of the story production time and place; and (d) reflectivity to identify, explicate, and interpret participants' stories to form case study descriptions.

Interpretive rigour.

In this narrative research, data collection and analysis were simultaneous activities. The narrative methods I employed demonstrated that: (a) data were collected ethically and truthfully; (b) evidence was uncovered, evaluated and interpreted honestly; and (c) pathways for readers and future researchers were provided enabling them to follow the theoretical considerations that guided the research methodology. A thematic narrative analytical approach was taken as although it was considered slower than other processes, its recognised strength was in being a detailed procedure that required attention to dialogue subtleties (Riessman, 2000). Through using a

thematic analysis process, a holistic case-focused approach was retained (Riessman, 2008) as data were not fractured. This case-focused approach demonstrated respect for the participants' views.

A crystallisation approach to analysis was used as it acknowledged the multiple layers, angles and converging points (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) of the participants' socio-cultural worlds. Two thematic analysis processes were used to analyse and interpret the research data. The first thematic analysis provided vignettes (refer Appendix G) and participant profile descriptions (refer Chapter 6), while the second thematic analysis developed participant case study descriptions (refer Chapter 7).

The aim of the vignettes was to support the meaning evidenced in the analysed data (Wilks, 2004). These vignettes complemented and enhanced the case studies by generating data not previously identified (Barter & Renold, 1999). The use of data sequences in the profile descriptions gave participants a voice to explain in their own words their perspective and meaning on the experiences evidenced in their vignettes. During the thematic analysis, as themes or points of an individual's story were illuminated, questions developed from their stories. Questions such as: (a) What was the participant trying to accomplish by telling me the story that way?; (b) What was the participant's purpose in telling me the story?; and (c) How does the story affect me (the audience)? (Riessman, 2008). By responding to these questions, context was provided for the participants' vignettes, profile descriptions and case studies.

In this inductive research I sought to evidence authenticity rather than reality since reality could never be proven due to its subjectivity. Reality would be open to individual interpretation due to it being a multiple set of thoughts which were generally accessible only to the people who made them (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). However, I have evidenced authenticity through: (a) consideration of the participants' multiple points of view and perspectives; (b) my ability to find meaning in their stories so that I could understand and interpret the information; and (c) maintenance of a process that continually reviewed and reflected on participants' transcripts.

I took the position of an outsider in this research as while I was able to empathise with the interview participants, I recognised that I could never *walk in their shoes*. This outsider positioning enhanced interpretive rigour as I was able to maintain a "critical distance from the data" (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008, p. 53) which enabled me to recognise each participant's reality through a rigorous analytical process.

The reflective researcher diary notes I made during data collection and analysis developed an audit trail which also added to the interpretive rigour. The validation of my analytical process was through a desk audit conducted by a researcher colleague who was an accredited auditor. This audit confirmed that my research process evidenced systematic, valid and traceable procedures and my interpretative findings were plausible, reasonable and convincing.

Case Study Research Rigour

It would be expected that researchers communicated the rigour of their research processes and the trustworthiness of their research findings by demonstrating valid and reliable knowledge that was developed in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009; Roberts et al., 2006). However, evidence of research validity and reliability through use of the usual “fixed criteria” (Riessman, 2008, p. 184), was not an appropriate approach when evaluating narrative projects.

While internal validity searched for linkages to reality from the findings, external validity sought generalisability of the research findings or the ability to apply the findings of the study to other people and situations (Merriam, 2009; Roberts et al., 2006). In case study research, internal validity must be assessed in terms of something other than reality (Merriam & Tisdell, in press) as the story teller’s reality could include a story produced to convince the listener. These multiple voices of truth would be acknowledged when stories were gathered. Similarly, evidence of external validity or generalisability cannot be demonstrated as would be possible with studies that have used experimental designs (Merriam, 2009). As generalisability was more of a concern for readers or users of case study findings than researchers, it would be they who have to draw conclusions on the extent to which the research findings were able to be generalised to other situations (Merriam, 2009). Only readers and users could determine how close their situations matched the research situation and the transferability extent of the thick, rich case study descriptions to their particular circumstance.

Case study reliability referred to the extent to which research findings were able to be replicated (Merriam & Tisdell, in press). As human behaviour would never be static, achieving reliability in the traditional sense was not only fanciful but impossible (Merriam & Tisdell, in press). Thus, rather than reliability which insisted the same results be evidenced, reader and user evaluations should be based on data consistency and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Merriam, 2009). The requirements for data consistency and dependability were that given the same data, the findings would be realistic, sound and have made sense.

Rigour in terms of validity and reliability were also considered not appropriate for case study research (Patton, 2014). Trustworthiness, which considers “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 24) would be used to demonstrate research rigour.

Demonstrating research trustworthiness.

In narrative research, trustworthiness was evidenced when readers have been persuaded of the logical interpretations on the ethically collected data. A requirement in evidencing trustworthiness was the gathered stories demonstrated that they were not invented, that a methodological path guided by ethical considerations and theory was followed (Riessman, 2008), and that believable thick, rich case study findings were provided.

Credibility of the data and data collection process was evidenced through my recognition and conscious attempt to control possible bias situations in participant

identification, data collection and data analysis. In attempting to bracket any prejudicial or preconceived thinking during data gathering or data analysis, I put aside literary information on the historical formation and shaping of discourses (identities), discursive practices (group identities) and the changes that could occur through conversations and accepted social practices within socio-cultural group frameworks (Bishop, 2005; Fairclough, 2010; Gee, 2004; Merriam, 2009; Riessman, 2008). In conducting my second thematic analysis process I also bracketed possible biased insights by having put aside knowledge from my first analytical process, as I needed to be informed by the data during analysis rather than allow assumptions to cloud my view. Though bracketing was not fully achievable, I made a conscious effort to be as open as possible so I could inductively discover the story meaning that the data revealed.

Further evidence of methodological process credibility was shown through my constant reflective note taking and my commitment to diarise all steps within the data collection and analysis processes. My field diary extended its research records management role of storing notations made on the six participants' stories. Records were also retained on data analysis and my musings and reflections during the data gathering and analytical processes. By recording my thoughts and actions in a reflective diary, I was able to identify and avoid situations and conditions that might have been considered unethical or research practices which could be viewed as irresponsible.

Dependability and confirmability was evidenced through a desk audit conducted by a qualified auditor. The outcomes from the audit process confirmed my findings were logical interpretations of the ethically collected story data. The audit also confirmed that my research processes and practices were systematic, valid and traceable.

Transferability of findings with case study research would be difficult. I believed this characteristic of trustworthiness was better left with the reader. It would be through their understanding of the situation, context, students' personalities, individual objectives and goals that they would be able to decide on transferability to other contexts and cases. However, case study research does involve generalisation to theoretical propositions which might be to some degree transferrable. Due to its long history in anthropology and sociology, theoretical propositions such as "making conceptual inferences about a social process (the construction of an identity group from close observation of one community)" (Riessman, 2008, p. 13) were accepted as valid generalisations.

Mitigating research rigour threats.

Many of the threats to this research have been discussed previously. For example, the short time frame that was made available to access the international students of the VET college for gathering data. Also, the interview immediacy that was demanded by participants. These risks were mitigated by the participants' willingness to share their stories with no sign of discomfort or impingement displayed because of the place (college lunch room) or the time frame (lunch break).

Unfortunately verification of transcripts did not eventuate and this threat was recognised. This potential threat was mitigated by an intensive process of checking

and re-checking the digital recordings against the transcripts to ensure the transcripts were a true reflection of the discussions held between myself and the participants.

Cherry picking of interview quotes used in vignettes, profile descriptions and case studies could be perceived as a threat. However, as each participant's response and comment was used as their voice to explain the story meaning, there was no comment or statement that was more appropriate than another.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the blueprint for data collection and analysis. Specifically, I explained the approaches, processes and techniques used in collecting and analysing the Indian international VET students' stories. Descriptions were provided on the identification of suitable research participants, the information and orientation sessions at a Brisbane institute and the six students who volunteered to participate. Through participant immediacy requests and demonstrated enthusiasm in sharing their stories, data were gathered from all six participants through one-to-one semi-structured interviews.

Careful attention was given to the data analysis strategy. A narrative thematic analysis process that used narrative and grounded theory tools analysed data twice. Both analysis processes used the Reissman method to inductively derive themes from the data sequences. The first analysis matched the interview questions and built vignettes (refer Appendix G) and participant profiles (refer Chapter 6). The second analysis developed six case study descriptions (refer Chapter 7). This chapter concluded with a discussion on research quality practices and case study rigour explaining that the facets of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability), had been demonstrated.

Chapter 6 presented the profile descriptions on the six volunteer Indian international VET students. These snapshot profiles on the international VET students' experiences and journeys were inductively derived from vignette data (refer Appendix G). Interview dialogue was used throughout the six profile descriptions to illustrate the participants' reflections on their identity and discourse practices as they found their socio-cultural fit within their Australian social and academic contexts.

CHAPTER 6: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Introduction

The previous chapter explained the actual collection and analysis of the Indian international VET students' stories. I explained that from the one-to-one participant interviews and my field diary notes, I inductively derived data themes using a case study methodology underpinned by a narrative analytical method. These themes reflected the participants' multiple realities and their individual perspectives.

Chapter 5 also explained the process to reconstruct the participants' interview transcripts and identify bounded data sequences. These bounded sequences formed data units which were coded and analysed twice using on a Riessman (2008) thematic approach. While the first analysis produced the vignettes (refer Appendix G) which were drawn on to develop the participant profiles discussed later in this chapter, the second analysis guided the development of the case study descriptions presented in Chapter 7.

The previous chapter also discussed research rigour techniques stating that trustworthiness of data using "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 24) was more appropriate for personal interviews. Establishment of research trustworthiness was shown by demonstrating that the gathered stories were not invented and the methodological path described in Chapter 4 was followed. Further confirmation of trustworthiness was conveyed in Chapter 8 through the believable narrative on my findings.

In this chapter I addressed the first research question:

1. *What identities do Indian international students build as they study in the VET sector within an Australian context?*

In responding to this question, I drew on the vignette data (refer Appendix G). The interview dialogue created believable snapshot profiles (Barter & Renold, 1999) of the six participants' discourses (identities) and their discursive practices. The vignettes allowed readers to gain insight into the international VET students' worlds through the "told" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54) parts of their stories. Thus, readers would be able to live my lived experience (Wilks, 2004) of listening to the stories told by Gafur, Haroon, Madina, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama.

By using interview quotes through the vignettes and profile descriptions, I have given each participant a voice to explain in their own words the meaning of their experiences. Reflections of their preferred self-identities rather than their essential selves (Corbin & Holt, 2010; Glaser, 2002; Riessman, 2000) were revealed as they viewed themselves as actors within their Australian social and academic contexts.

The vignettes were not presented as verbatim dialogue from the participants' interviews as the conversations were participant-led and often branched into topics not related or relevant to this research. General conversation dialogue that occurred during the interviews was not disclosed in the vignettes. Selected quotes from their stories were re-ordered and presented so as to accurately capture the international student responses to each of the interview questions relevant to the research question.

As some of the vignette dialogue quotes held multiple meanings (due to the intent of the speaker rather than the words that were used), some evidentiary data sequences or parts of a sequence were used to indicate more than one of characteristic theme in Chapters 6 and 7.

As a way to interpret the vignette data, I used commentary as another form of analysis. My interpretations were informed by the interviews and literature on international students, identity and changes due to acculturation and adaptation (refer Chapter 2). In order for readers to gain the most from each commentary, I would strongly encourage a review of each vignette prior to reading the related analysis located in this chapter.

Collecting Vignette Data

To collect the data that built the vignettes, I used open-ended questions related to my research conceptual framework. The questions were grouped under the headings of: Background, Social differences, Studying differences, Social profile, Personal profile, Experiences and Social support. Story data were gathered on:

- Who decided they would study in Australia?
- What academic and social differences were found?
- What were their beliefs on how others saw their identity characteristics?
- How did they view their own identity characteristics?
- What (if any) changes had they made in their identity since being in Australia?
- What difficulties had they encountered and how did they handle them?
- What nationalities were their friends and their support systems?

Participants were encouraged to talk about specific events and situations rather than develop descriptive timelines. Actual timelines were not considered relevant as the focus of the interviews was on the socio-cultural events in the lives of the participants.

Interview Data Lens

A narrative analytical lens treated participant interviews as a “distinct form of discourse” (Chase, 2005, p. 656) where the uniqueness of the participants’ actions and experiences were highlighted rather than their common properties. In highlighting participant actions as well as their voices, I foregrounded the participants’ identity discourses and discursive practices that were adopted in order to be included or excluded from socio-cultural groups. In Chapter 2 it was identified that discourses and discursive practices related to the different roles (Gee, 2004) or identities that participants have taken on as well as the socio-cultural devices they employed within their groups (Riessman, 2002, 2008). Further, changes might have been imposed by self or by others (Bishop, 2005; Fairclough, 2010; Gee, 2004; Merriam, 2009; Riessman, 2008, 2015) due to socio-cultural situations, hegemony, and perceived group norms and conventions.

Analysing Vignette Data

As discussed in Chapter 4, both narrative and grounded theory tools were used in the thematic analysis of the transcripts. Once transcript data sequences were identified and bounded, they were analysed using grounded theory tools. Using open, axial and selective coding tools supported by a constant comparative method, I was able to identify data themes (Corbin & Holt, 2010). These interactive and reflective analytical practices allowed me to consider the meaning rather than the words used by participants. It also provided a systematic and holistic approach to classify and code themes, and identify data sequence linkages. A list of data themes, sub-themes and their characteristic properties were developed and explained in Table 5.2.

These coded data sequences, themed characteristics, identified linkages, and relationships considered to be relevant to the research question, developed a data theme pool on each participant. Reflecting on each participant's data, I was able to discover and share in the meaning of their stories. The six vignettes were sculptured from these discovered meanings. Each vignette provided a snapshot profile of an Indian international student and their journey as they found their socio-cultural identity within their Australian community and VET contexts.

Participant Vignettes

Each vignette in Appendix G presented the participant's story as conversation excerpts without lexical analysis, inflection analysis or interpretation of what was unsaid in the conversations. My voice acted only as the glue that bound their story together so as to crystallize the themes within each story. The transcript sequences presented in the vignettes reflected the participants' responses to the interview questions. These questions mapped to my conceptual framework (refer Figure 3.1). The results derived from the vignettes also initiated a second analysis as other unanticipated characteristic patterns were evidenced. These new insights were presented in the thick, rich case studies discussed in Chapter 7. As some data sequences contained multiple meanings, these sequences or sequence sections were used as evidence of more than one characteristic theme.

In order to assist readers understand the students' stories and gain an appreciation of the topics significant to them and from their perspective, a few demographic details on each participant have been provided.

Story teller data.

While each student was considered an individual, there were some similarities and differences in their demographics. All six Indian international students were completing a Diploma in Salon Management with a private registered training organisation (RTO) in Brisbane. Although information on actual ages and dates of birth were not gathered, demonstrating respect of their privacy, the students interviewed appeared to have been over 22 years and less than 30 years, were well dressed in professional but casual western-style attire, and wore low heeled walking shoes. The two male participants, Gafur and Haroon (pseudonyms), were tall, of slim build and their body language gave the message that they were very relaxed and comfortable speaking with me. Gafur wore a turban and full beard for religious

reasons. The four female participants, Madina, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama (pseudonyms), were of average height, slim build and actively observed the people and situations around them. Their body language showed that they were happy and comfortable speaking with me.

Aspects on each participant were presented in Table 6.1. These features have been interpreted as influences in their decision making. The table has also indicated each participants' pseudonym and code identifier. Throughout this and other chapters, I referred to the participants by their pseudonym with their code identifier indicating reproduced interview dialogue.

Table 6.1

Demographic Information on International Student Participants

Pseudonym	Time in Australia	Status	Relocation Decision	Gender	Working 20hrs	Housing	Family in Australia	Code
Gafur	1.5yrs	Single	Own	Male	Supermarket work	Share	Sydney	G1
Haroon	1.5yrs	Single	Own	Male	Security work	Share	No	H1
Madina	1.5yrs	Married	Own	Female	Not working	Sole occupant	Brisbane	M1
Naisha	2.5yrs	Married	Own	Female	Restaurant work	Share	No	N1
Sadaf	2 yrs	Married	Husband	Female	Salon work	Sole occupant	No	S1
Shama	2yrs	Living with boyfriend	Own	Female	Mobile phone sales work	Sole occupant	Moving to Melbourne	S2

Note. Pseudonyms and codes of research volunteer participants with demographic details. Any reference to a participant in the research used their pseudonym or their code.

Gafur's Story (G1)

Gafur preferred to stand and refused my offer to sit in a chair near mine when I made a sign indicating the chair. From time to time during the interview he shuffled his feet in a small pacing motion. He looked directly at me while he spoke, did not hesitate in his responses to the interview questions and easily expanded his story when he had more details to share. Gafur's story was presented in Appendix G.

Commentary.

Gafur appeared not to have suffered any unpleasant or stressful cultural or learning shock experiences as he might have viewed situations during his Australian immersion as an opportunity for self-development and personal growth (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). His acceptance of financial responsibility and his desire to maintain his independence were indicators of his positive self-construals. Positive self-construals (refer Chapter 2) were considered predicting factors of successful socio-cultural adjustment or cultural fit (Yang et al., 2006). Gafur's recognition of

the support provided by his teacher appeared to indicate that she developed a third-space or comfort zone for her students. This third space which reduced cross-cultural and religious boundaries, allowed international students to be themselves and feel supported (Sawir et al., 2009). As Gafur actively sought friendships and social interaction through work and cricket, the social networks he created allowed him to develop a sense of connectedness (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Sawir et al., 2008). This connectedness would have assisted him to feel more in control while he adapted to his Australian environments. However, as Gafur indicated, because of his turban, he had faced community othering and religious misunderstanding which might have caused him a problem when attempting to make friends.

After six months in Australia, Gafur realised that he needed to form a different discursive identity in order to gain employment. Formation of Gafur's new discursive identity entailed him accepting discursive practices so he could be seen as an employable person; one who was a member of the Australian international student workforce group. For Gafur and other international students, changes in their discursive identity could be a result of positive and negative experiences. However, through their support mechanisms, the impact from a negative experience could be reduced or softened. With encouragement from their support network, international students would be able to be more resilient which meant that the student could bounce back after dealing with adversity. Having the ability to be resilient allowed international students to be less stressed over time which permitted them to make decisions more easily on the types of behavioural and psychological identity adaptation changes they wished to acquire.

As Gafur indicated that he was focused on migration, his "concerns, motivations, hopes and ideas about the future" (Baas, 2006, p. 13) would be reflected in the internalised identity he developed. Due to Gafur's self-efficacy or belief in himself and his local and Indian support systems that assisted him strengthen his resilience, find his socio-cultural fit, and develop feelings of connectedness, Gafur found he was able to adapt into his Australian social and academic environments. Gafur's story showed he was determined to succeed and hoped to gain his Australian residency. His commitment and focus to reach his goal was also seen by others who shared in his journey.

Haroon's Story (H1)

Haroon refused the offer to sit in a chair, preferring to stand and lean on the wall facing me. During the interview the only movement he made was to straighten up for a while and then lean again on the wall. During the conversation, these position change movements were repeated. He looked directly at me when he spoke. At times he thought before responding to the interview questions and easily expanded his story when he had more details to share. Haroon's story was presented in Appendix G.

Commentary.

Haroon appeared to have experienced some cultural and learning shock. However, with the assistance and support from his social and academic networks, he seemed to have developed a sense of connectedness which allowed him to find his place and

socio-cultural fit. Haroon's experience appeared to be an example of the linear learning curve of adjustment (Bochner, 2006) as he commenced his journey with some cultural shock "troubles" (Student H1) but gradually moved to a higher level of emotional (psychological) adjustment where his self-confidence was restored. Haroon's transition from culture shock to social and cultural adaptation (Wang & Shan, 2006) reinforced the belief held by many in the Australian community that eventually most international students "develop the skills needed" (Kettle, 2005, p. 46) for the Australian context.

Haroon advised that people supported and assisted him to cope with his "problems" (Student H1). This support could have positively influenced his self-confidence and also affected the way he responded to stress. Over time as Haroon's supporters reinforced his self-belief, he could have developed a reduced response to stress which would have increased his resilience against adversity (Maginness, 2007). A strong positive self-belief has been described as a valuable resource when "coping with stresses and setbacks" (Kosic, 2006, p. 115). Through Haroon's increased feelings of connectedness, his resilience strengthened which also reaffirmed his self-efficacy. Individuals who have developed increased efficacy were found to be more confident in their abilities which enabled them to cope with adverse situations. However, people with low efficacy appeared to lack confidence, approached situations with apprehension and fear, and might suffer from anxiety issues (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007). Haroon had not only survived and been resilient but he had also adapted, thrived (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006) and increased his self-confidence and self-efficacy.

As indicated by Haroon, lack of English skills could be a socialisation and adaption deterrent for international students in Australia (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). However, the third space created by his teachers appeared to have supported him while he overcame his English problems and other difficulties related to living and studying in Australia (English, 2004; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006). Although he considered he did not have many serious difficulties, Haroon had faced a situation of criminal targeting. Racism, safety and targeted crime have remained issues for international students and continued to be investigated by the Australian government. In 2009, the seriousness of these attacks upon Indian students in Melbourne and Sydney initiated a Senate inquiry (Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2009). The conclusions from this inquiry attributed to the development of the 2009 international student visa changes.

Haroon appeared to have developed a number of discourses (security guard, student needing support, innocent person) during his acculturation, which were situation dependent (Holland, 2010). As situations and experiences altered the discursive identity types a person needed to develop could be actively created and re-created over time. With exposure to different environments, realities and discourses, decisions individual's made on their identities might be altered (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2011). It was interesting that Haroon saw his social profile or discursive identities as someone that could help a new teacher and help others in a social setting but he also needed support from the group as he was *innocent*. This comment by Haroon supported the view that when identities were formed, they were influenced by the power relationships within the socio-cultural group (Castells, 2010). With Haroon's internalised self-identity, which would have been negotiated

through dialogue with himself and with others (Taylor, 2011), his self-belief efficacy was evidenced as he described himself as a “good personality” (Student H1) who was friendly, confident and someone that people would like to get to know.

Acknowledging that he “knows lots of peoples” (Student H1) and had developed a strong local support network, Haroon was considered to have socio-culturally adjusted well and had successfully adapted into his new environment (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Novera, 2004; Wang & Shan, 2006; Yang & Noels, 2013; Yang et al., 2006). Haroon also stated that he was not going to seek Australian residency but wished to continue experiencing different cultures, meeting people from different backgrounds, and learning from his own and other’s experiences. He indicated he intended to move from course to course, and country to country, forming friendships. In listening to Haroon’s story, I considered that he would continue searching to find his identity and socio-cultural fit.

Madina’s Story (M1)

Madina sat in a chair opposite me and smiled. Her hands fidgeted a little as she made herself comfortable. While she told me her story she looked directly at me most of the time and looked down into her lap from time to time during the conversation. She did not hesitate when replying to the interview questions and seemed to easily expand her story when she wished to add more detail. Madina’s story was presented in Appendix G.

Commentary.

Madina showed that before arriving in Australia, she had some expectations and images of what life and studying in Australia would be like. She appeared to have had some community culture shock but was not disappointed with her studies. When comparing her Diploma course with her previous studies in India, Madina said it was easier and she felt supported by her teachers. This supported feeling evidenced that her teachers aspired to develop a third space domain where Madina was able to find a comfort zone (English, 2005) while she dealt with her socio-cultural stresses during the acculturation process.

Madina’s focus was to successfully complete her Diploma and she was prepared to forgo earning money so that she could concentrate on achieving her goal. This evidenced that Madina’s developed sense of self-belief influenced the choices and decisions she made on her future. Madina’s sense of efficacy had encouraged her to focus on her studies. She was able to set high goals for herself (Bandura, 1995) and in deciding not to be distracted by work obligations, confirmed her commitment to achieving her objectives.

Not long after arriving in Australia, Madina and her husband had a bad accommodation experience so she and her husband decided not to mix socially or make local friends. This decision not to establish a local network of friends dramatically reduced their ability to develop a sense of belonging or connectedness. With a lack of connectedness, negative feelings such as anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy and loneliness could be generated (Sawir et al., 2008). According to sociological studies (Sawir et al., 2008), feelings of loneliness or a sense of being lost

and isolated might have stemmed from the lack of an active social network containing quality social relationships.

Even though Madina was not alone as her husband was living with her, she could still be considered a potentially *at risk* international student due to her lack of a local social network. Research by Baker (2010), Kashima and Loh (2006), Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, and Ramia (2008), and Vogl and Kell (2010), suggested that when international students had a local support network and community connectedness, they were shown to be: (a) less at risk; (b) have fewer security issues to face; (c) experience fewer socio-cultural adaptation problems, and (d) enjoy increased feelings of wellbeing. Without a quality local network (Baker & Hawkins, 2006), not only was Madina's ability to feel connected reduced but also were her ability to be resilient against adverse circumstances and her ability to successfully acculturate and adapt.

Although it appeared that Madina might not have established a good sense of connectedness, Madina's situational factors and personal needs could have overridden possible cultural conflicts (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006) and promoted some cross-cultural behavioural adjustments to her discursive identities. Madina believed that her peers saw her student discourse as a nice student (not naughty) but one that was scared and lacked confidence. She said that her peers would say that she was "not good person" (Student M1). This indicated that Madina believed she had a low social position within her study peer group. While identity positioning would be due to the power relationships within the socio-academic group (Castells, 2010), Madina's self-beliefs and internalised identity would have been different to her discursive identities or roles as a student.

Madina advised that over time her self-esteem and self-confidence grew. Her belief in herself also altered. These changes provided a positive influence to increase and re-affirm her self-efficacy. Her sense of self-efficacy would have been produced from a complex process of self-persuasion that was built from experience and established over time (Bandura, 1995). An individual's self-efficacy or belief in themselves, belief in the activities that they undertook, and their ability to achieve their goals, would be influenced by how they "think, feel, motivate themselves, and act" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Due to Madina's growth in self-efficacy, she declared that she intended to be a hairdressing manager and that she did not intend to return to India.

Giving herself the identity of a salon manager evidenced Madina's development of a sense of belonging as she was aligning herself with a different socio-cultural group which better suited her self-identification (Liebkind, 2006). Madina's perception of herself and her future indicated she did not see herself as a sojourner and this was reflected in her behaviours and identity development (Baas, 2006). Madina was comfortable with her self-identity and if she needed to return to India, she did not think she would revert. When a person had a favourable self-image it would be highly evaluative and motivational (Bandura, 1995), creating a valuable resource for coping with stresses and setbacks.

Madina's story showed that she had made identity changes and was adapting to her environment. Her goals were to concentrate on completing her Diploma studies and

gain an IELTS numerical score which enabled her to apply for temporary residency. However, Madina did state that she would not trust people and admitted that she was avoiding making connections with others in her community. This absence of local networks and social connectedness not only placed her at risk but also impacted on her self-efficacy beliefs.

Naisha's Story (N1)

Naisha picked up a chair that was against the opposite wall, smiled at me and placed the chair directly in front of me. She then moved her chair closer to mine. She sat straight in the chair facing me and then leant slightly towards me as if she wished to make sure I clearly heard what she was about to tell me. When she was telling me her story she looked directly at me. From time to time she moved forward towards me and then backwards in her chair, only losing eye contact when someone crossed through the room to go into the salon in the next room. She often took time to think before responding to the interview questions but there was very little delay before she continued her story. She easily expanded her story when she wanted to add more detail. Naisha's story was presented in Appendix G.

Commentary.

Although Naisha dreamed of New Zealand as a study destination, she was focused on making successful adaptation into the Australian community and gaining residency. She acknowledged there were some cultural and learning differences between India and Australia, but she did not appear to have suffered any cultural shock. Naisha identified some learning shocks with English but she took steps to overcome her difficulties. She saw her Diploma learning as a positive step towards employment and believed her Indian studies were a "waste of time" (Student N1). She also found she enjoyed her VET studies as many teachers in India used punishment rather than support. This reaffirmed previous researchers' comments (Hu, 2008; Nield, 2004; Wang & Shan, 2006; Watkins, 2000) that international students might find a number of differences between Eastern and Western education systems, especially in academic discussions with teachers and the way teachers conducted their classes.

Naisha showed strong self-efficacy and resilience and found ways to deal with issues that related to using English, inter-cultural discrimination in the workplace, and student abuse in the workplace. Naisha's belief in herself and in her ability to achieve her goals motivated and influenced her actions. With her English issues, Naisha initially had "doubt of my skills" (Student N1), then using self-talk she gave herself a "hard time" (Student N1) and thought of ways to improve her English skills (talking to people, news, TV). In treating her situation as a challenge rather than a threat (Maddux, 2002; Tsang et al., 2012), Naisha evidenced strong self-efficacy beliefs. Her belief that she was able to deal with life's challenges without feeling confused and overwhelmed (Baker, 2010) demonstrated her efficacy strength.

Naisha's story on her experiences in the workplace where Australian owners appointed "Indian managers to talk to us" (Student N1) as they "don't want to come in front of us" (Student N1), evidenced coercive and abusive industrial relationships between staff and owners. As well as other areas of abuse, employment issues were

an area investigated by the federal government in the 2009 Senate Report (Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2009). However, as Naisha had strong efficacy beliefs, she was prepared to engage in salary negotiations with her supervisor. People with strong self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995) were able to calculate their ability to be successful, only taking on activities which they believed they would be able to manage, tending to avoid situations and environments that were outside of their coping abilities.

Naisha also discussed her disappointment with Indian workers as they “always do discrimination with each other” (Student N1) and they don’t “live in reality” (Student N1). Naisha’s comments identified an Indian sub-culture issue that was “Indian mentality” (Student N1) and also that some Indian workers appeared to consider themselves as sojourners (temporary citizens) as “they don’t want to change themselves” (Student N1). However, Naisha recognised that in order fit into her Australian VET and social environments, she needed to change. She openly discussed her epiphany stating “Like from two years I’m in Australia now (and) most of the things in my life I have changed. (When) we are all here for the last two or three years... we have to change our person” (Student N1). Research by Vahed (2007) with the Indian community in Australia identified that identity and adaptation decisions that were made by Indian international students and the socio-cultural and psychological changes that they made, were a reflection of their goals and self-perceptions. From Vahed’s (2007) findings, although some international students accepted the label of a student, they tended to behave more like migrants.

During the early stages of Naisha’s acculturation, she was depressed and at risk. Her loneliness and lack of a supportive local network took her to a psychological place where she considered committing suicide. International students have been shown to be very vulnerable until they developed “affiliations and (a) sense of identity” (Kell & Vogl, 2010, p. 12). Although Naisha was selective when befriending people, she became very close to a lady from Vietnam who was also an Australian citizen. Through this relationship Naisha was provided with an example of successful self-efficacy development. It was a vicarious experience for Naisha, as the lady acted as a model of the perseverant behaviour required (Bandura, 1995) and had successfully achieved goals similar to those of Naisha. Vicarious experience was one of the five ways that promoted efficacy development (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007; Tsang et al., 2012). Naisha also developed a close relationship with an older man, who she called grandfather. This man and his family provided another link in Naisha’s local support system. Although admitting that she had few friends, it appeared that the relationships Naisha formed provided her with feelings of being supported and could be viewed as quality networks. Due to her strong relationships with these host nationals, Naisha would have felt more in control (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Sawir et al., 2008) while making psychological and cultural adaptations into the Australian context.

As Naisha’s confidence and self-efficacy built, so too did her resilience. Naisha appeared to be at a place in her internalised identity development where she had little regard for the opinions of others. She appeared confident she would find her fit in her Australian socio-cultural environment and was focused on achieving her goal of Australian residency. Research has suggested that international students who made socio-cultural adjustments to life in their host country, tended to enhance their self-

confidence and status (Novera, 2004; Wang & Shan, 2006), as they considered their chances of success were increased.

Naisha was very confident and vocal on her experiences and as she stated “I speak up everything in front of everyone. Some people like it, some don’t.” (Student N1). She was very disturbed and vocal on the changes to the Australian immigration requirements and talked about the financial difficulties that she and other international students faced. These difficulties related to the implementation of the 2009 Australian government policy (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009) which was aimed at reducing opportunities for exploitation of international students through fraud by ensuring that students had the capacity to live and study in Australia. Throughout the interview, Naisha demonstrated a strong conviction and focus on achieving her goals of residency in Australia and successfully becoming a part of the Australian working community.

Sadaf’s Story (S1)

Sadaf sat in the chair opposite me, looked at me and smiled shyly. As she sat, she pushed her feet backwards under her chair, and put her hands in her lap. She looked at her hands from time to time while she told me her story. She thought before replying with many of the interview questions and easily provided more detail when she wanted to expand her story. Sadaf’s story was presented in Appendix G.

Commentary.

Although Sadaf recognised there were socio-cultural differences between Australia and India, she only commented on the cultural roles of men and women and the political corruption problems in India. I noted that though Sadaf and her husband maintained their traditional Indian male and female roles, they appeared to be very supportive of one another. From information on the traditional Indian husband/wife roles given by Naisha and Sadaf, they described Indian relationships as one of a superior/inferior. Sadaf said that “[my husband] has come for a comfortable life, but I think with their life, [husbands have] no change because there [India] the same and here [Australia] the same” (Student S1). Naisha also commented on her relationship stating, “My duty to make everything. He [my husband] doesn’t have any responsibilities.” (Student N1). Thus the supportiveness between Sadaf and her husband appeared to demonstrate an ethnic relationship change which might have developed during their Australian adaptation. Sadaf realised there were differences in community cultural practices and said that “in India culture, a Muslim lady you can’t do many things ...but here [Australia], like men and women will have equal” (Student S1).

Both Naisha and Sadaf indicated that because of Indian male cultural roles, female students might face relationship issues due to their husband’s expectations. Their need to discuss this topic could be highlighting gender as an influencing factor in the selection of acculturation strategies. Acculturation strategies consisted of two main components: attitudes and behaviours (Berry, 2006a), with the actual match of the person’s preferences and desires (attitudes) with what they actually performed (behaviours), rarely matching. Thus the acculturation strategies able to be accessed

and used by Indian males and females might be different due to the social positioning factors within Indian traditional roles.

Since being in Australia, Sadaf's supportive networks appeared to have reaffirmed, enhanced and strengthened her self-efficacy during her acculturation and adaptation. Sadaf identified that she had three types of social networks: (a) Indian (primary-conationals); (b) Afghans (secondary- other non-conationals); and (c) Australian (host nationals). Quality networks such as these assisted international students psychologically and behaviourally in their adaptation to the Australian education system, language and culture (Bochner, 2006). As Sadaf's local network was mainly with the Indian community, this conational primary network (or mono-cultural network) would act as a strong emotional support (Bochner, 2006). For Sadaf and her husband, this group would function to reinforce their Indian culture.

As Sadaf had a mix of Indian, Afghani and Australian friends, she was exposed to different environments, realities and discourses which would have affected decisions she made on her discursive identities (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Although, these ethnically identified groups would have been influential in the formation of her self-identity, Sadaf appeared aware of her different roles or discursive identities: student, hairdresser, migrant, Indian wife, and friend. As previously mentioned, discursive identities could be improvised and made to meet the individual's requirements for their specific socio-cultural situation.

Due to a strong supportive network and a developed sense of connectedness, Sadaf's resilience and personal efficacy would have been enhanced. However, researchers have noted that resilience often appeared to be influenced by genetic as well as environmental factors (Skodol, 2010). At times individual functional differences appeared to offer some explanation as to the personality features that contributed to the individual's resilience ability (Maginness, 2007). According to Sadaf, she was confident and decisive in India and she remained the same. This self-confidence and self-belief demonstrated a strong self-efficacy. Self-efficacy appeared to be the driving mechanism within Sadaf's self-belief systems and this enabled her to manage situations, prepare for incidents, and be resilient to failures while she maintained focus on successfully achieving her goals (Baker, 2010). Sadaf's self-efficacy and commitment to achieving her goals was evidenced by her taking steps towards their attainment, "I am testing this Saturday [for IELTS]" (Student S1). Her efficacy was also indicated by her not wishing to discuss alternative plans should her residency application be unsuccessful. As Sadaf said: "I was a bit shocked with that (question), because I am dreaming to live here" (Student S1).

Sadaf demonstrated her resilience as she easily coped with an uncomfortable event in the train. Her resilience showed that she remained positive even though at the time she might have felt vulnerable (Ehrensaft & Tousignant, 2006). However, Sadaf emerged stronger and continued on her path towards her goals. Sadaf's strong self-efficacy demonstrated that she was able to deal with life's challenges without feeling perplexed and overpowered.

Sadaf, as did Naisha, recognised that their studies were more practical compared with their previous theoretical focused Indian studies. Both ladies also acknowledged their studies enabled them to use the Australian government immigration pathway

that was designed to fill Australian skill shortage areas. Sadaf openly talked about her goal of gaining residency in Australia. Her intention was to meet the General Skilled Migration visa requirements and apply for Australian permanent residency (PR) on completion of the two year Diploma program. Sadaf was very confident that she would achieve her goal of Australian residency as her VET studies provided her with the opportunity to gain employment and evolve from student to Indian migrant.

Shama's Story (S2)

Shama walked towards the chair, her body language showed that she was a strong and focused person. She sat in the chair opposite me, made herself comfortable and crossed her legs. She held her arms crossed in front of her then unfolded both her arms and legs and shuffled the chair sideways slightly. She then sat straight in the chair. She looked directly at me but from time to time she looked around the room to watch and listen for other students who walked through the interview room to go into or out of the salon in the next room. She quickly responded to the interview questions and interjected more detail into the conversation when she thought of additional information. Shama's story was presented in Appendix G.

Commentary.

Shama's comments on her sojourn experience showed that her decision to come to Australia to study was underpinned by her goal to gain residency and assist her father establish businesses in Melbourne and Brisbane. While Shama accepted the label of a student, her behaviour was more like that of a migrant. Her worries, responsibilities, behaviours, and the identities she developed (Baas, 2006), were more reflective of her future and self-perceived role as a migrant. Shama looked forward to the family moving to Australia and said "it will be like no India, all Australia" (Student S2).

International student accommodation issues remained an area investigated by all levels of Australian government. While Sadaf mentioned the issue, Shama had experienced problems with share accommodation as did Madina and Naisha. Shama also spoke about the Indian cultural expectations of husband/wife and boyfriend/girlfriend, reaffirming the cultural positioning information provided by Naisha and Sadaf. Shama recalled that she was informed by an Indian in her share accommodation "Your husband is the lord, your boyfriend is the lord" (Student S2). Shama did not agree with this traditional view and told me that she believed the Indian male "used to discriminate me" (Student S2). Her experiences convinced her to "never be in contact with Indians, especially the Punjabi Indians, [be]cause they will actually ruin your life" (Student S2). Her statement about Punjabi Indians reinforced the Indian sub-culture discrimination issue I discussed in Naisha's profile.

Shama's only cultural shock experience, other than the attitudes of Indians (especially Punjabi Indians) in Australia, appeared to relate to the differences in dress codes between India and Australia. Shama found that she had to learn to dress in more Western wear and asked her Chinese friend to help her. She told me "I have to change my personality and I started wearing these clothes. It was really difficult for me because I had never worn such things back in India" (Student S2). Shama also did not appear to have experienced any learning shock. She advised me that she enjoyed her learning and there was "nothing that I don't like" (Student S2). She also

expressed her frustrations with the Indian system and said “[If] I want to study the same thing [Diploma in Salon Management] in India, it will take me three or four years to complete that [diploma] and so these studies are faster, much, much faster up here” (Student S2). Shama also commented on the third space created by the teachers. This third space allowed students to be themselves and feel supported so that they were able to enjoy the “professional and personal benefits” (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 88) of their intercultural experience. In Shama’s words, “like they (the teachers) are really friendly, they don’t treat us like we are their students, we are just like we are friends, like there’s no differences between anyone” (Student S2).

Shama reinforced Gafur’s statement on the traditional family roles in India and confirmed that the student’s role was to focus on achievement while the parents financially supported them. However, Shama like Gafur, was determined to earn money and financially sustain her life in Australia. Shama’s efficacy was strong and was reinforced by her family’s belief in her capability. As Shama found her socio-cultural fit and her independence, her efficacy appeared to develop further. Shama’s acquisition of a positive judgement on her own capabilities could have developed from her family and especially her father’s supportive behaviour. People who were encouraged and received self-esteem reinforcement during their life would be seen to have developed efficacy through social persuasion. Social persuasion was one of the five ways that efficacy in individuals could be built (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007; Tsang et al., 2012). The support and encouragement Shama received from her father appeared as if it would continue into the future. Shama advised me that her father intended “to have his own business ... up in Australia. He is gonna open it in Brisbane [be]cause I’m in Brisbane. I’m gonna just take care of it” (Student S2).

Shama appeared to have no difficulty in making friends and building a local supportive network. The importance of this connectedness in finding her socio-cultural fit, building resilience and adapting to her new community and VET environments had been discussed in previous profiles. In establishing a strong quality network, Shama developed a feeling of connectedness which would have positively affected her motivation and increased her resilience. Shama’s social network appeared to be mainly other non-conationals. She did not mention a mono-cultural (Indian) network and stated that her bi-cultural (Australian) network was very small. Each of these three supportive networks had a particular psychological function for international students as they attempted to psychologically and culturally cope with changes and adapt to their new environment (Bochner, 2006). Initially Shama sought Indian networks to assist her assimilate and adapt. Then she acknowledged her father’s advice to “not to make Indian friends, [but] try to make [friends with] some other people... Yeah, because it will be very good for you [to make Australian friends]” (Student S2). Shama then began increasing her Australian network. Both Shama and her father recognised different networks could provide benefits and that an Australian network was important when acculturating into the Australian environment. However, Shama admitted that because she was very busy with work, she only had two or three Australian friends and she interacted with them through Facebook.

Due to Shama’s strong support network, her resilience to adversity increased. When faced with racial abuse aimed at her and her friends and an attempted robbery where

a knife was brandished, she remained calm, even though she was frightened. Shama did not see racial abuse as a personal attack but used self-talk to motivate herself to make a change. Shama's internal mechanisms and built-in abilities allowed her to change, adapt, and transform when she faced situations. In Shama's words "somebody have abused me as, fucking Indian go back, and all that stuff, and then I really realised, well if I want to stay here, I want to do something in life up here, I have to change" (Student S2).

Shama's self-efficacy strength and resilience was also evidenced in her experiences. Resilience could be considered an individual characteristic or personality trait which influenced the individual's perceptions, and therefore their responses to stress and adverse situations (Maginness, 2007). These characteristics were demonstrated when Shama spoke with the people who tried to rob her and convinced them that she had no cash. The events on the robbery began when Shama got off a train. She was then confronted by five boys. Shama said "one of the guy, he came over and he was like, *Do you have some money?* and I was like, *I don't have anything, I don't keep cash on me*, so he just showed me the knife" (Student S2). Shama had sufficient self-confidence and resilience to say to them, "*Seriously, I don't have any [money]. I showed him my wallet. See, I don't have anything*" (Student S2). Shama's self-efficacy and resilience provided her with the ability to manage and cope with these adverse situations while still remaining motivated and focused on successfully achieving her goals.

As Shama was aware her family was moving to Melbourne and her father was setting up businesses in Australia, her discursive identity of migrant rather than international student was reinforced. During the production of her discursive identities, Shama would have been influenced by a number of socio-cultural, psychological and behavioural factors which guided her thinking as to who she was and who she needed to be. Shama's values and beliefs would have assisted her to identify behaviours that she considered acceptable and unacceptable when interacting with others.

In Shama's story, her discursive identities included migrant, student, friend, girlfriend, and a business person. However, as people have free choice which means they were able to easily move between social identity groups (Bauman, 2009), Shama's identities could be viewed as temporary mantles because there was no commitment for her to retain them. Shama showed her ability to blend back into acceptable Indian socio-cultural discourses when in June of 2010 she returned to India and found she needed to alter her dress so that her clothes did not embarrass her or her family. She recalled the situation, "I bought the stuff which was fully covered and then I wore that up there" (Student S2). This situation in India and Shama's perceptions of student discourses and social group members' discourses evidenced that her discursive identities altered to suit the different socio-cultural environments.

Resilient people like Shama would be goal directed planners who were motivated and excited about finding their internalised identity through self-discovery (Skodol, 2010). When Shama evaluated her previous actions, she acknowledged that her behaviour had changed. Self-reflection could be highly motivational and as Shama had a favourable view of self, she was provided with valuable resources for "coping

with stresses and setbacks” (Kosic, 2006, p. 115). Through self-reflection Shama recognised some previous identity characteristics and how her identity had changed. This process of reflective consciousness or self-orientation allowed individuals to realise who they were (self-identity), what they were (discursive identity), and what type of personal characteristics they possessed (personality) (Kosic, 2006). During acculturation individuals might change their identity, values, attitudes and behaviour (Sam, 2006); thus, the point where Shama’s personal psychological acculturation change in values, attitudes and identity occurred, was difficult to identify.

Although Shama displayed a strong independent character and she had support from her father, friends, boyfriend and family, during the conversation she did not mention if her confidence levels were increased or if she felt confident. However, Shama was very focused on achieving her goal of residency by following the rules to become an Australian citizen and set up a business with the support of her father. Research by Vahad (2007) had found that at times separate ethnic identities were developed by Indian migrants as they celebrated being Australian. As Shama was aware that she and her family intended to migrate to Australia, any future identities that she developed would reflect an Australian socio-cultural influence.

Data Reflection

The vignettes and profile commentary revealed the results from the first data analysis. This analysis was based on the interview open-ended question prompts which gathered data under the headings of Background, Social differences, Studying differences, Social profile, Personal profile, Experiences and Social support. These topics aligned with my research conceptual framework on self and identity development. The participants were not asked exactly the same questions as the purpose of the question bank was to stimulate participant conversations on areas that were relevant to the research. The interview conversations were in English so as to avoid translation misinterpretations. Being English-based, I was also able to present participants’ actual dialogue in the form of vignettes (refer Appendix G) and sequences of dialogue within snap-shot profile descriptions (refer Chapter 6) and case study descriptions (refer Chapter 7).

Each vignette and profile description related to an international student who had been living and studying in Brisbane for more than eighteen months. Taking into account the findings from the 1996 Ward and Kennedy study in New Zealand (Masgoret & Ward, 2006) that “sociocultural adaptation increases steadily over the first four to six months, and then tends to level off nearing the end of the first year” (p. 70), I believed the participants’ stories were a recalled reflection of their earlier experiences and decisions. It was through these individual experiences and decisions that their discursive and internalised identities were shaped to become those that I observed at the time of the interviews. This evidence of internalised and discursive identity change provided the data that enabled me to respond to the first research question.

While each vignette and profile description needed to be viewed individually and should not be compared, there was evidence of some common themes as well as gender and other individual differences. The participants’ reasons for studying in Australia and the personality traits that they described and I observed, demonstrated

that certain psychological and behavioural adjustments were made due to their acculturation and adaptation. In this research, personality traits (Ward & Kennedy, 2013) were seen as being synonymous with discursive identity characteristics.

First data analysis results.

From the first analysis, generalised and characteristic patterns or themes were found that related to my conceptually framed interview questions. These results confirmed the components of my conceptual framework as well as indicate other areas to be considered and included. These new and unexpected insights identified the need for a second inductive analysis, causing the conceptual framework of this thesis to be revisited and revised (refer Figure 8.1).

Figure 5.2 linked the conceptual themes and their characteristics to the interview questions under the headings of Background, Social differences, Studying differences, Social profile, Personal profile, Experiences and Social support. Using those headings to section the thematic results within each vignette, I was able to provide a synaptic view of the discovered results in each participant's profile description. Through reflective explanation, descriptions on the results from the first research analysis were described under each interview conceptual theme heading.

Background interview questions.

These questions gave evidence of the participants' ability to make their own decisions and how prepared they were for their sojourn experience. Five of the six participants were the decision makers and while all six participants thought about the differences between Australia and India before their journey, only Haroon thought he might have difficulties.

Social differences interview questions.

The participants did not appear to be dramatically and adversely affected by culture shock from the socio-cultural differences between Australia and India; although, Gafur, Haroon and Naisha did initially experience English difficulties. While four of the participants established strong relationships within the Australian and Indian communities, Madina and Shama preferred to concentrate on their studies. Madina appeared to remain a student who could be considered at risk. The other five participants evidenced quality supportive networks which assisted them develop a sense of connectedness and find their socio-cultural fit.

Studying differences interview questions.

While all six participants agreed that they felt supported by their VET teachers indicating a third space or comfort zone had been created, Gafur and Haroon stated that early in their Diploma in Salon Management course, they had found some learning difficulties with theory and practical. From comments on their learning journey, all six participants appeared to have had a positive experience which evidenced low or no learning shock. This ability to accept change while maintaining focus on achieving their goals indicated their ability to acculturate into their academic environments.

Social profile interview questions.

As the development of identities reflected the individual's needs and socio-cultural situations, the different discursive identities produced by the participants varied. While Madina considered her student discourse might have some negative traits ("not good person" Student M1), the other participants viewed their student discourses positively. If in a circumstance where the participants were joining a social group, five of the six participants considered the group to be a community support group and were willing to assist those in need. Naisha did not develop a social group identity as she stated she had no social group experience. Even though Madina viewed her student persona negatively, the participants demonstrated strong self-belief and appeared to consider their social acculturation successful.

Personal profile interview questions.

The questions to discover the participants' personal profiles brought forth their individual identities and personalities. The word "confident" was used by four participants to describe their personality characteristics, while two participants also stated that they were independent and good. While Sadaf believed she had not changed, the other participants believed they had made positive identity changes since being in Australia. The extent of the identity changes ranged from *most things* to individual personality characteristics and behavioural (including dress) changes. The participants were not requested to self-analyse the differences between their previous identities and how they saw themselves at the time of the interview, but they were asked to identify the circumstance or time when they decided to make a change to their identity. Of the five participants who recognised they had made an identity change, two of the participants described an epiphany period where driven by the need for money, they decided an identity change was required. The other three participants described stages of personal growth and the gaining of knowledge as change turning point prompts. As for changing back to their previous identities if they returned to India, five participants stated, no, which included Sadaf who believed she had not changed since being in Australia. Shama was not asked about returning to India as her family were migrating to Melbourne and she would be joining them.

These results coincided with research conducted by Masgoret and Ward (2006) which identified that when international students successfully adapt to new socio-cultural environments, alterations occurred in their cognitive, social and personal characteristics. The ease with which each participant made changes to their identity related to their level of understanding on the "ecologies, norms, values and world-views" (Masgoret & Ward, 2006, p. 60) of the host nationals, plus their English (host language) proficiency and confidence. Further, the participants demonstrated traits of being open, agreeable, motivated, and flexible as well as various levels of emotional stability and resilience. These characteristics were also indicated in the Masgoret and Ward (2006) study as requirements for successful acculturation and adaptation by international students.

Experiences and social support interview questions.

This group of questions addressed the positive and negative situations the participants experienced.

- What support systems were used (if any) in order to handle those situations?
- What impact (if any) these experiences had on their behaviour and psychological identity?
- If they left their current community networks, did they intend to remain in contact with the friends that they had made in Australia?

Participants' positive experiences, although individualistic, were explained in terms of their community support systems and where they were used to assist them during financially and psychologically difficult periods. The participants provided examples of positive experiences which were couched within their stories on negative experiences. An example situation was in Gafur's story, when he had not worked for his first three months in Australia. His friend in Australia helped him and "paid my room rent and everything" (Student G1). Another example was Naisha's experience when she commented on the abuse Indians received in the workplace, making her reluctant to form friendships. Eventually, she developed a local support system with an Australian she fondly called her grandfather.

The two main types of negative experiences that participants spoke about were: accommodation issues and security issues. Their stories on bad experiences included share accommodation and criminal actions in public places. More personal difficulties included loneliness and lack of trust in Indian and Australian people. Other than Madina, the participants demonstrated that they had established quality support systems which were often a mix of family and Australian friends. As for maintaining contact with friends that they had made in Australia, four of the participants showed firm and lasting friendships which they intended to maintain even if they returned to India. However, Naisha and Shama were adamant that they had no intention of returning to India.

Profile concepts.

Through reflection, I found that the participants, other than Haroon, were a different type of sojourner; one that was focused on gaining residency using VET studies as the bridge. In the first data analysis, a number of concepts, discussed in Chapter 2, were evidenced in the vignette data. There were also indications in the first analysis of other concepts hidden within the data.

These previously unforeseen themes created a second question. In order to respond to this question another thematic analysis was required which would inductively draw out these concepts from the data. This second analysis, as discussed in Chapter 5, was to discover these new conceptual themes and develop thick, rich case studies which would provide a response to the second research question:

Conclusion

Through the process of sifting and thematically analysing the bounded sequences of each participant's story on their lived experiences, a number of data patterns were revealed and presented in the form of vignettes (see Appendix G). Each vignette

related to an individual who was telling their own story which was a situated story with characters, a setting and a plot (Riessman, 2000, April 20). Through clustering of their voices as they described the establishment of their identity characteristics, readers were able to hear the voices of the participants explaining their worlds. These vignettes provided snapshots of the participant's lives which were developed into individual profile descriptions.

With each of these six participants, their experiences influenced their decision making as they developed "institutional, organisational, [and] discursive" (p. 658) self-identity constructions (Chase, 2005). Therefore the profile results on the participants' discourses and discursive characteristics discussed in Chapter 6, should not be generalised across the population (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011; Stark & Torrance, 2005) of all Indian international VET students studying in Australia.

In Chapter 7 a second look was taken at the identity characteristics and acculturation changes evidenced in the participants' stories. By viewing the vignettes and profile descriptions as content, I was able to reflect upon their stories when developing the six thick, rich case study descriptions. Within these case study descriptions on the changes in participants' discursive identities and internalised identities, issues that were influential in their acculturation adjustments were identified and discussed. It was through these discussions that I was able to form a response to my second question.

CHAPTER 7: CASE STUDY DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction

Chapter 6 provided snapshot profile descriptions on six Indian international VET students. The chapter explored and discussed the discoveries that were made from the participants' vignettes. These vignettes and profile descriptions were built from the first analysis of the collected data. A semi-structured interview process was used with the questions reflecting my research conceptual framework (refer Figure 3.1). The vignettes and profiles encapsulated narrative evidence (Wilks, 2004) as well as highlight themes and key points that reinforced and challenged my understandings from the literature.

While Chapter 6 provided results from the first analysis, this chapter focused on the thematic evidence discovered in the second analysis. Based on the epiphany that there was more to be understood (Merriam, 2009) and that the first thematic analysis did not tell the whole story, I shifted from constructivist to interpretivist and conducted a second analysis. In this chapter I addressed the second research question:

2. How did the participants demonstrate resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit?

Drawing on my research methodology in Chapter 4, I used the Reissman thematic method as my data analysis strategy. This strategy, described in Chapter 5, combined narrative and grounded theory tools to inductively derive themes from the data. Using the interview transcripts and vignettes as data, the evidence of socio-cultural behavioural and psychological changes was investigated. Through bracketing of the literature in Chapter 2, I was able to deflect and reduce influences on the analysis process, enabling me to reflect on the themes of acculturation, adaptation and identity that were evidenced in the narratives. Other key points were also explored as they provided new understandings on discourse development and discursive identity change during acculturation and adaptation. These notions discussed later in this chapter informed the development of a new conceptual framework (refer Figure 8.1), presented in Chapter 8.

Second Analysis of the Narratives

In this second analysis, the socio-cultural discourses described by the participants were accepted as their reality at that time and at that place where the interviews were conducted. Subjective and context dependent reality was taken into consideration as each participant's perspective and their positioning beliefs during the interview might have affected the flow of conversation and their story versions (Shemmings & Ellingsen, 2012; Warren, 2002). When recalling life events, it was recognised that participants could forget or embellish details (Briggs, 2002; Cook, 2012) and these historical imaginings might have become their reality.

Emulating the first thematic analysis process, narrative and grounded theory (open, axial, and selective coding) tools were again used. By following the techniques advocated by Reissman (2008) (refer Chapter 5) and linking the strengths of both of these tools into a single cooperative method, I established and retained an auditable

evidence trail. This process added to the rigour of the research methodology. Some researchers might not have chosen a thematic method approach as it could be considered slower than other approaches due to its increased attention to dialogue subtleties. However, the strength of this method was in its ability to organise and methodically assist in an inductive approach while locating and deriving data meaning from bounded data sequences. Through increasing research rigour, reader's confidence in the quality, applicability and thoroughness of the research process would be enhanced. This thematic method enabled me to: (a) document the process and interpretative work performed; (b) provide persuasive arguments on theoretical linkages; and (c) evidence the standards used in the research analytical processes. By using a method that increased research rigour, opportunities for analytical practices that might be considered untrustworthy by others, were reduced.

In the second analysis process, while open coding highlighted sequences that evidenced identity practices and discursive changes in the interview transcripts to be bounded, axial practices identified linkages within the data sequences. The evidentiary data were then coded using selective coding practices. When developing the coding schema (refer Table 5.3a), a pre-determined chart of themes and subthemes was not used as I wanted the data to inform me on the identity and acculturation adjustment characteristic themes and subthemes. The coding scheme for the second analysis was built from re-reading the interview transcripts and reflecting on the illuminated themes and their characteristics. A descriptive title that reflected the characteristics of the category was then identified.

In Chapter 5, I described the second analytical process where each participant's transcript was reviewed and reflected upon individually. Within each transcript, dialogue sequences or meaningful parts of a sequence were identified and bounded. Due to the multiple meanings found within some sequences, dialogue quotes were dissected into distinct evidence pieces or repeated if they evidenced more than one thematic characteristic. Diary notes were made that confirmed, expanded and reinforced the data themes. These diary notes also provided a means to create characteristic identifiers for theme inclusion and exclusion. For example, key words such as confidence and indications of emotional self-confidence were considered theme identifiers of self-efficacy. Transcript data that indicated participant growth in self-efficacy included these excerpts:

Gafur: [Yes, I have changed and] I like my personality now (Student G1).

Haroon: [Now] I'm very confident about myself so that's why things are fine now (Student H1).

Madina: Now I have more confidence --- [than] I had when I came in Australia (Student M1).

Naisha: [Since] being in Australia ...I am very confident (Student N1).

Sadaf: Yep, I'm still confident --- [and] I like to take a risk (Student S1).

Shama: I just love Australia just because I've really [emotionally] grown up here (Student S2).

I identified sequences that were appropriate to include within a theme or subtheme through an interpretative approach that constantly compared participant's transcripts against the theme or subtheme characteristics. Eventually common identity type characteristic elements such as confidence, independence and resilience emerged

across the six case studies with relationship linkages within each participant's data. These identified characteristics allowed me to view the self-perceived identities and adjustments undertaken by each international student as they psychologically and socio-culturally acculturated and adapted to their Australian and VET contexts. These data themes (refer Table 5.3a) were discussed in this chapter as case study description commentary.

This research was not intended to be a longitudinal ethnographic study. Therefore the socio-cultural and behavioural changes that occurred with the participants were not observed and documented. These changes would have demonstrated their movement from objective and perceived acculturation conditions (personal characteristics, Australian and Indian socio-cultural characteristics and inter-group relations) to acculturation orientations. It was here that the participants would have made acculturating orientation decisions on what parts of Australian culture to adopt and which parts of Indian culture to maintain. In the recalled experiences of five of the participants, changes in their discourse and discursive practices were evidenced.

Participant discursive identity changes.

In this research I allowed the context of the question to indicate to the participant whether the discussion was on how they behaved when interacting with others (discursive identity) or how they felt about themselves (their self-identity).

Gafur.

Gafur believed his behaviour had changed. He found that when he changed his personal presentation, people treated him differently. Gafur acknowledged that some people appeared to think that his clothes indicated his personality. Gafur advised that in India "I look good but I don't care about my personality" (Student G1). However, as he believed that "here peoples think if you look good it means we are ... we have good qualities ---So that's why I want to change my way and I want to turn my presentation [around]" (Student G1). He also commented that he thought it was a good change for him as "people here they always care about their clothes like these kind of things and its really good for me" (Student G1).

Haroon.

Haroon wished to be "same as like Aussie people speaking English" (Student H1). He believed his identity change occurred when "It were the moment I got good English" (Student H1). He acknowledged that when he spoke with his family on the telephone, they also commented that he had changed and told him that he has "got routines" (Student H1).

Madina.

Madina believed she had a more "introverted" (Student M1) personality and that when she arrived in Australia she was "really scared [and] my husband helped me to do everything like go to the immigration officer and blah, blah, blah and if someone asked me any question I did not answer because I was scared" (Student M1). However, she admitted that she still does not "like to talk too much with other people" (Student M1). Madina also noticed that in Australia "womens can wear anything, whatever they want" (Student M1). As well as being able to wear whatever she wanted, Madina found her diet also needed to change as "people in India are

mostly vegetarians they don't eat meat but in Australia it's hard to get vegetable food" (Student M1).

Naisha.

Naisha believed her behaviour had changed as she used to be a "silent type of girl. I never talked too much --- things go around in my mind but I never speak of them and like I always keep shut my mouth" (Student N1). But since living in Australia, she was able to speak with others on things "which I think, which is not right, I always speak in front, this is not right thing" (Student N1). Naisha also commented on why she and the other students changed their ideas on the clothes they wore in Australia. She stated that she and the other students were "not used to have shorts or anything" (Student N1) and that the students were "used to traditional dress" (Student N1). That she believed "when we (the students) talk to someone I think it's not feel comfortable with us" (Student N1). They (the students) "feel like they are very backward--- [and they] dress up in like like my mum or my grandma" (Student N1).

Sadaf.

Sadaf was the only participant who said that she had not changed since being in Australia: "No, I'm the same --- I'm still confident" (Student S1).

Shama.

Shama declared that she used to be "really angry and angry about India--- and totally dependent on my father" (Student S2). But now she is "independent [and that living in Australia]--- actually made me realise how life goes on and importance of money" (Student S2). Shama explained how she came to the decision that she needed to make changes in her behaviour. She stated: "When I see people [here]--- working hard to get money, it actually made me realise, [I] have to get on the right track now and it has to be step by step --- your father is back in India" (Student S2). Shama realised that "whatever you have to do, you have to do it by yourself. There is really changing my behaviour" (Student S2). Shama also believed her clothes indicated her personality and decided to change her style of clothing. In India "I used to wear full type of clothes --- [that my father] used to bring for me" (Student S2). She explained: "I never used to look good, never think about it until the time I was in Australia" (Student S2). Then she realised "if I want to stay here, [if] I want to do something in life up here, [then] I have to change my personality and I started wearing these clothes" (Student S2). When Shama discovered her independence she also knew she needed to learn how to shop. Shama said "I have never gone for shopping alone, it was first time" (Student S2).

Comment.

The above case study descriptions evidenced that five of the participants believed they had made changes to their discursive identities and used their agency in adjusting their behaviour and ways of communicating with others. These changes occurred due to their acculturating conditional adjustments as they discovered who they were, who they wanted to be and how they needed to act and react in order to live and manage their lives and achieve their goals in the Australian socio-cultural environment.

As discussed in Chapter 2, over time an individual developed a number of identities which they were able to display to others (discursive identities) and could reflect

upon when considering their self-identity. How international students viewed and recognised their own identity depended entirely on their dialogical relations with others. Identity would not be developed in isolation but established through negotiated dialogue within ourselves and with others (Taylor, 2011). Hall (1990) made a distinction between discursive identities or roles and internalised individual identity stating that discourse or a discursive identity related to social positioning while internalised identity could be likened to an individual's essence. Hall (1990) metaphorically considered that discursive identity was the shape and colour of a bottle, while self-identity could be likened to the liquid inside the bottle.

Participant self-identity changes.

The participants' stories provided evidence of their psychological acculturation changes. While Sadaf stated that she was always confident, she also recognised that her attitude had changed. The other five participants openly declared that they were aware their personality had changed during their stay in Australia. As mentioned earlier, the word personality was used instead of identity during the interviews, allowing the participants to decide whether the discussion was on their (internalised) self-identity or their behaviour when they interacted with others (discursive identity).

Gafur.

When I asked Gafur if he believed his personality had changed since being in Australia, he stated "Yes, now I'm act good now" (Student G1). Gafur appeared to be content with his internalised identity advising that "I like my personality now" (Student G1) and that if he returned to India, he would not revert as "I'm used to [who I am]" (Student G1). Although Gafur had not stated that his self-confidence improved, he appeared confident in his ability to live and work in Australia. He stated that "if nothing go bad I can get my PR and I want to live here and now I have good qualification and according to Australian standard" (Student G1). He also advised me that "I know how to live in Australia--- how to manage in Australia life so I'm very comfortable" (Student G1). This comment by Gafur on his ability to "manage in Australia" (Student G1) evidenced that he had successfully socio-culturally adjusted. This would have positively influenced his psychological acculturation and adaptation.

Haroon.

Haroon stated that he believed his self-confidence improved "the moment I got good English" (Student H1). His confidence and self-belief grew when he got to "know lots of peoples up here" (Student H1). This sense of connectedness gave him a feeling that "I haven't feel alone --- [and] now I know all about the area so I haven't got any trouble up here so it's much better than when I came here" (Student H1). As Haroon was able to continue studying in Australia or move to England with his family or return to India, he was not sure of his future or which country he would be living in. However, due to his internalised identity acculturation adjustment in Australia, his self-confidence increased and he believed "now if I'm going to UK so I never feel any difficulty or any problem there because er now I ... I am really fine with this [Western] culture" (Student H1). Haroon's story also evidenced that he had successfully adjusted socio-culturally and psychologically and that he had a positive psychological perspective. This was shown with his comment that he had "chase all

troubles all the problems because I'm the thing is like I'm very confident about myself so that's why things are fine now" (Student H1).

Madina.

Reflecting on her time in Australia Madina recognised her self-confidence improved and that she was less frightened and unsure of herself. She stated that "after a couple of months I thought no its better now and I can do everything by myself--- now I have more confidence, um rather than which I was which I had when I came in Australia" (Student M1). Her self-belief in her ability also increased as she was aware "there is no [need to be frightened of] any scared thing --- there is not any factor of it [as no one] can stop you to do it" (Student M1). As Madina was happy with her internalised identity, she advised that if she returned to India she believed she would not change, "I don't think so" (Student M1). However, Madina and her family appeared not to expect her to return to India even though her brother had recently died. She said that "maybe I will go home because um my brother died just 5 months before and my parents don't have any children maybe because of that reason but I don't think so" (Student M1). Madina explained that as she was married, "they [the family] defer the decision to my husband" (Student M1). This comment by Madina indicated that within her internalised identity, she had retained some characteristics of her Indian culture where she accepted that certain family decisions would be made by her husband. Madina's positive psychological adjustment had been influenced by her successful socio-cultural acculturation adjustment. Believing that "everything has been improved" (Student M1), Madina appeared to be happy and was managing her life in the new cultural context.

Naisha.

Naisha admitted that since "being in Australia ...I am very confident... sometimes I say myself I can go anywhere I can be and never lose" (Student N1). Naisha confirmed that while living in Australia she had "learn lot of things and the main thing is [that] my [way] now is that I am very confident, very confident" (Student N1). Naisha's self-confidence had provided her a platform where she felt that she could speak out and distinguish herself from other Indian migrants. She believed that she had made positive acculturation changes and voiced her disapproval of other Indian workers who "don't want to change themselves here" (Student N1) even though "we are all here for the last two or three years" (Student N1). She advised that she was "disappoint, very disappointing" (Student N1) that others did not "change our person" (Student N1). Naisha confirmed that "most of the things in my life I have changed" (Student N1) and that her self-confidence had given her a voice where she was able to "speak up everything in front of everyone, some people like it, some don't" (Student N1). Due to her conditional acculturation adjustment, Naisha's internalised identity had altered from being a reserved and quiet person to someone who believed in herself and her abilities. Her internalised identity strengthened and she was able to tell others "I don't agree with that and even on workplace sometime with my supervisor and sometime with my friends" (Student N1). Naisha also demonstrated the impact of her successful socio-cultural adjustments on her psychological acculturation when she said "now everything is alright for me. I am very happy and don't want to go back" (Student N1). Naisha's confidence in her ability to manage and be vocal when interacting with others evidenced her positive psychological change.

Sadaf.

Sadaf advised that when she and her classmates first arrived in Australia, although they were all new to the Australian environment, her classmates asked her for help. She believed that their confidence in her was because she did not have “any shyness in me, like if I have any problems, I just ask people” (Student S1). Sadaf believed she was self-confident before she arrived in Australia and remained so; “Yep, I’m still confident” (Student S1). Her internalised identity also provided her with self-belief in her ability to “take new risk--- I like to take a risk” (Student S1). However, if Sadaf returned to India she believed that she “can do anything like by myself. Like I can open my own salon. So I can’t lose my confidence with that thing [of returning to India]” (Student S1). Sadaf appeared happy in Australia and was “dreaming to live here” (Student S1) as she believed that she “can do anything here” (Student S1) and that she considered she was enjoying the “best part of my life now” (Student S1). These comments by Sadaf evidenced she was successfully managing her life and that her socio-cultural adjustments had positively influenced her psychological acculturation.

Shama.

Unlike the other participants, Shama was accompanied by her father when she arrived in Australia. He stayed with her “for like four or five days --- to see that I’m fine or not... everything will be good with me or not” (Student S2). Then her father went to Melbourne on business before returning to India. This support from her father would have assisted Shama in establishing herself, enabling her to feel more confident in her Australian environment. Due to the experience of living in Australia, Shama believed that she had emotionally matured. Her comment was, “It’s like I just love Australia just because I’ve really grown up here” (Student S2). As her self-confidence grew, so too did her self-belief that unlike her previous experiences in India where she felt that family and “neighbours interfere [in] everybody’s life a lot” (Student S2), she now “realised from living in Australia, that if anybody’s saying something to you, don’t care about that [be]cause it’s your life” (Student S2).

Shama recognised that within herself she had grown more confident and found her independence. She demonstrated pride when she told me that she “got a job and got really independent now” (Student S2). She also considered that her work assisted her in being more confident when interacting with others. Shama advised that her work “really made me learn that if you want to talk to someone, talk very politely, don’t get scared at all. You can make friends easily by talking to them in a very nice manner” (Student S2). She also appeared to be able to emotionally distance herself from others and their comments as she was able to “don’t care about people, they are watching me all day or saying something to you--- let them say whatever they want to say to you, do whatever you feel like” (Student S2).

Shama’s choices of cultural orientation during her acculturation adjustment also impacted on her internalised identity as she was deliberately aligning herself more with the Australian culture. As Shama’s father intended for the family to migrate to Australia with Shama remaining in Brisbane while five family members moved “to Melbourne soon” (Student S2), Shama appeared to consider it important to actively adjust and adapt to the Australian environment. She was excited to announce that soon she hopes that her life will be “like no India, all Australia” (Student S2). Shama’s successful socio-cultural and psychological acculturation was underpinned

by her desire to “follow all the regulations to get...to follow PR and citizenship in Australia” (Student S2). She was also aware that her father “has applied for business visa up in Australia” (Student S2) and that he would “have his own business” (Student S2) with one salon to be in Brisbane “cause I’m in Brisbane--- [and] I’m gonna just take care of it” (Student S2). Shama’s knowledge of her family and business future in Australia would have been a positive influence on her psychological and socio-cultural acculturation adjustments.

Comment.

The above indicated all the participants recognised that their self-identity characteristics had altered in some way since being in Australia. However, as the participants’ ontogenetic development of their values, attitudes and identity may have also occurred during this time, it was difficult to confirm if these psychological identity changes were due to acculturation. This issue of being able to identify the alteration period and if the participants’ internalised identity changes were due to acculturation or normal psychological change, was pointed out by Sam (2006) and discussed in Chapter 2.

Research conducted by Novera (2004) and Wang and Shan (2006) on international student’s increased self-confidence during acculturation was also recognised in Chapter 2. This research suggested that international students, who successfully made socio-cultural adjustments to life in their host country, tended to increase their self-confidence as they believed their chances of successfully achieving their goals were also increased. Each of the participants acknowledged that their self-confidence and self-belief had increased since being in Australia. They also confirmed that they were able to manage their daily lives in their new cultural contexts (Gafur was comfortable, Haroon had no problems, Madina believed everything was improved, Naisha was happy, Sadaf was having the best time of her life, and Shama was looking forward to living permanently in Australia). These participant beliefs indicated that they had made successful socio-cultural adjustments into their Australian environment. This ability to successfully socio-culturally adjust would have provided positive reinforcement and influenced their internalised identity development.

When the participants’ reflected on their personalities (self-identities) during the interviews, they communicated to me favourable views of themselves and that they were motivated to achieve their goals. These characteristics were also indicators of self-efficacy. Literature on efficacy has shown that in addition to influencing the participants’ self-identity, efficacy development could also impact on the ability to make psychological and behavioural adjustments during acculturation.

Participant self-efficacy indicators.

Efficacy self-belief system characteristics were found in the participant's stories. These included evidence of motivation, confidence, independence, and determination to achieve personal goals while thriving in the Australian context.

Gafur.

Characteristics of Gafur's self-efficacy were evidenced in his story. Not only did he think that Australia was "the best place in the world and I shall go to Australia and live over there" (Student G1) but after a period of time he identified his goal was "to try [for] my PR [permanent residency] because I want to live here because I'm very used to of Australia" (Student G1). He explained that "If I get my PR I will open saw mills here--- because my father have saw mills in India" (Student G1). Gafur's belief in his ability to achieve his goal encouraged him to contact a saw mill owner when he was looking for work over the Christmas holidays. His behaviour evidenced that he was sufficiently confident in his saw milling skills and abilities that he would be able to work in the timber industry in Australia. After meeting with the owner he was told "if you want a job in your school holidays you can come in my factory and you can work for me" (Student G1). Gafur was motivated and determined to achieve his goal of living in Australia. This was evidenced by his comment on the actions he considered were necessary for him to achieve permanent residency (PR). He told me that "because now days rule are going to be changed for students --- [and for some] short courses that government is not able to give PR to those students" (Student G1). Gafur had decided that "if I study in hairdressing and after my PR work in that occupation and [I believe] that's not good for me--- I get my PR I work full time here--- [then] I want to open my business here" (Student G1).

Haroon.

Haroon's motivation was not residency but a desire to gain a "chance to learn more and more about different culture, different countries, different peoples" (Student H1). Haroon's self-efficacy was evidenced in his declared self-confidence and his self-belief in his abilities. As well as telling me that he was "very confident about myself" (Student H1), he also stated that at work when people do "naughty things with me--- [now I] know how to operate them and how to treat them" (Student H1). Haroon had gained a "Queensland security licence, and I'm doing security --- [at a] music venue" (Student H1). Haroon's work reinforced his self-efficacy beliefs as he was provided with positive personal development experiences which further developed and galvanised his self-esteem, self-confidence and his self-belief that he was capable of managing and dealing with different situations.

Madina.

Madina's self-efficacy was identified by her statements on her behaviour and her self-confidence. Although she stated that she "don't scare from many things, just little bit from dark" (Student M1) she also commented that although "I'm not confident" (Student M1), she was "more confidence better than past and when I came in Australia" (Student M1). Madina dreamed of becoming "a good hairstylist and want to open her own salon and want to run her own business" (Student M1) but she was aware "in India womens don't do any hairdressing. People will not accept it" (Student M1). Madina's goal was to take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test and "if I will get 6 seat [score] then I will apply for temporary

residency” (Student M1). However, if she was not successful she believed that she “will go back to India or I will a need take other study [in Australia]” (Student M1). Madina’s self-efficacy did not appear strong. Her belief in herself and her ability to manage situations evidenced a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. She described herself as “an introverted person” (Student M1) and that she considered it “good that I’ve left the job and now I have more time to do, to watch TV and for my hobbies and to clean my house” (Student M1).

Madina evidenced situation avoidance behaviours. She appeared to avoid making friends as she “don’t like to talk to other peoples because some people--- you can’t trust on them” (Student M1) and she did not take on more activities than she believed she could handle. She told me “Now I don’t work. I left that job from last two months because of study, it’s too much burden” (Student M1). Madina’s avoidance behaviour demonstrated signs of apprehension, fear and anxiety over situations that she believed may be outside of her capability to control and manage. This reinforced my belief that she had low self-efficacy.

Naisha.

Naisha’s self-efficacy was very obvious. During the interview, she advised me a number of times about her growth in self-confidence. Naisha also said that her goal to relocate was made “when I was young--- I just just make decision to head off for New Zealand” (Student N1). However, “my parents said you can’t go alone you have to be get married” (Student N1) and her “parents arrange everything” (Student N1). Naisha did not want to go to Australia but as her husband preferred Australia, she said “OK...then we will go” (Student N1). Although Naisha and her husband desired to stay in Australia, she was very vocal and expressed her disappointment with the Australian government’s decision to change the student migration rules. She told me “you can only apply for a temporary residence in hairdressing but there is no permanent residency in hairdressing--- We want to stay here you know. But they are changing every day... new rules. I can’t believe it.” (Student N1).

However, Naisha remained motivated and believed in her ability to manage any situation that arose. She said of her Australian experiences that “they all go with me for life” (Student N1) and that she viewed circumstances and situations as “different opportunities [and that] you have to fight with the new challenges ... After being in Australia ...I am very confident” (Student N1). Naisha’s determination to manage issues, overcome challenges and be successful was also evidenced. She told me how she overcame her difficulties with English through a determined effort to resolve the problem. She explained that from her first day “my induction day in College” (Student N1) she identified the problem and at first thought “I just have doubt of my skills of my listening skills” (Student N1) but that “after that I give a very hard time to me to try to keep the words up to the mouth, like how you speak” (Student N1). She was determined to actively manage the situation by working with her English skills and “try... I always try to understand. I talk to people, I watch news, TV and so that I can understand” (Student N1). Naisha’s behaviour demonstrated that her self-belief and efficacy were strong.

Sadaf.

Sadaf’s efficacy was evidenced by her determination to achieve residency for herself and her husband; “because I am dreaming to live here” (Student S1). Early in the

interview she advised me that she was “trying to apply for a temporary visa” (Student S1) and that if she was not successful then “I will try to get Australia visa as I am working” (Student S1). She told me that her goal and that of her husband was to come to Australia “for a comfortable life” (Student S1). When I asked Sadaf about the possibility of returning to India if she was not able to gain a visa, then she admitted that “maybe [that would] cause some tension from that thing... because I am hoping that I will get that” (Student S1). Sadaf appeared to believe that she would be successful in achieving her goal and that if events impacted on her ability to reach her goal, then she would be able to manage that problem (tension). Rather than seeing negative events as an end, she appeared to consider them as obstacles that she could overcome. Sadaf’s strong self-efficacy was evidenced by her focused determination and her self-confidence that supported her as she was not afraid to “take new risk” (Student S1).

Shama.

Shama was also very confident that she would achieve her goal even though it might take “at least three years more to get settled up in Australia” (Student S2). Her goal was to “reach the target [of gaining temporary residency] first of all, and then secondly I’m gonna follow all the regulations to get...to follow PR and citizenship in Australia” (Student S2). Shama’s confidence in achieving her goal was assisted by her father as he had commenced the application process “for business visa up in Australia” (Student S2). Shama’s father intended to open a business and for the family to eventually migrate to Melbourne. Shama stated that her father was “going to have his own business, I’m gonna just take care of it” (Student S2). Shama was motivated to achieve her goal as although she was aware that “my father will help me out” (Student S2), she was also looking towards the future as “he [her boyfriend] is also applying for TR [and] I am also applying for TR” (Student S2) and that “we will be on civil side, so we can think about our next step, and then we can expand our business” (Student S2).

Shama’s strong sense of self-confidence and self-belief was evidenced when she stated that she wanted to “explore --- myself” (Student S2) and that “I’m going to open my salon” (Student S2). When Shama explained to me about her work and how well she was managing her life, feelings of pride were demonstrated when she said “I was totally dependent on my father--- [but now] I’m independent” (Student S2). Shama’s self-efficacy was demonstrated in her confidence and her focused belief that her future lay in Australia and that her children “will be Australian” (Student S2).

Comment.

While Madina’s avoidance behaviour and lack of confidence may evidence her low self-efficacy, the other participants’ self-efficacy systems appeared strong as they believed in themselves and their ability to achieve their goals. Their confidence, determination and commitment to be successful were shown by their behaviours. They had identified and initiated actions and activities in order to reach their goals.

As discussed in Chapter 2, personal efficacy was vital for “successful adaptation and change” (Bandura, 1995, p. 34). As well as influencing the participants’ self-identity development and acculturation, self-efficacy also impacted on the individual’s ability to establish networks and be resilient when faced with difficulties. Networks supported an individual’s efficacy development as it provided them with models of

perseverance and achievement (vicarious experience), verbal supporters to reinforce their efficacy beliefs (social persuasion), and a positive uplifting environment to assist them (psychologically and emotionally) to analyse and identify coping actions. A supportive quality network would enhance an individual's ability to be resilient against adversity as these networks provided feelings of connectedness.

Participant networks, connectedness and resilience.

Each participant's personality influenced their ability to form networks, develop connectedness and use resilient behaviours when faced with perceived or real adverse circumstances. Their individual self-belief systems, motivation and determination to achieve their goals were factors that influenced the strategies they employed and their attitudes when coping with difficulties.

Gafur.

Gafur played cricket "on Sunday [and] I mostly play for my suburb" (Student G1), however, he said that "I always meet with my friends at work" (Student G1). He stated "I have a lot of friends now--- I'm working at Coles" (Student G1). Gafur's local network consisted of three Australian friends with "most of my friends of them are Indian" (Student G1). Although Gafur's Indian friends "help me when I was in difficult difficulty [times]" (Student G1) and one even "paid my room rent and --- he pay for everything for me--- when I had no money" (Student G1), one of Gafur's Australian friends was very special to him. Gafur's emotions came out in his voice as he said "he's picture is always burning my eyes. He'd just care about me. He's a really good person. I have never seen a person like him" (Student G1). The support this person provided to Gafur allowed him to develop a feeling of connectedness. Gafur knew "I can call Mr R, he's good for me--- [and] he'd help me, yeah" (Student G1). A feeling of connectedness and a sense of place was also provided by the teachers at the institute. Gafur considered the teachers were "really helpful, they help in every matter--- they don't really worry about study or not...here the teachers are very careful and if we don't do study they just complain about our our management" (Student G1). Gafur appeared to feel supported by his local network of teachers as he was able to access assistance and yet maintain the belief that he remained in control of his studies. His comment on his study approach was, "it's my choice here" (Student G1).

Gafur's family support system was strong. Although he felt "I am alone here" (Student G1), because his "uncle and aunty they live in Sydney--- [and his cousin] changed his house and now he's living in Chermside" (Student G1), he believed that "family members they always support you, but friends sometimes they support you, but [sometimes] they don't want to support you because they have busy life" (Student G1). Gafur explained how his family in India supported and motivated him when he was experiencing difficulties in managing his life in Australia. He reflected on the lesson this period gave him and said that this was "things learning in my life in six months. When I came in Australia I was studying and I had no job--- my parents gave me \$2,000 and --- I don't know how to live in Australia because that expenses [food, rent, school fee]" (Student G1). He commented that he was "self-dependent and I always think about my money--- but I couldn't find any job" (Student G1). His voice lowered when he said "These days are very bad for me and one day I quit, I asked my parents I don't want to live here I want to come over

there” (Student G1). However, Gafur managed through this difficulty as his family supported him “say[ing] no don’t worry, try to do and try to want and try to get any job--- [and they] send money for me—[and his cousin] gave me \$1,000 to live here” (Student G1). Gafur showed his resilience during the “three to four months [that were] very depressing for me” (Student G1) as he was aware that the “Government can’t do anything for students because we are student, we are not permanent here” (Student G1) and he needed to be able to manage his life in Australia.

Gafur’s attitude towards positive and negative events that occurred during his sojourn adventure was expressed with “I accept everything like this is part of life. And because if we have been whole life so how do we know what is said” (Student G1). However, his voice showed his frustration when he told me that sometimes people ask “really silly questions” (Student G1) about his beard and turban. He said “if someone don’t know another people’s religion why they comment on it--- so I think keep quiet and don’t ask anyone why you don’t do this and why you do this and why you do this” (Student G1). His comment on people who questioned him on his physical differences was “they don’t understand my religion and they don’t understand me and they just ask question which question they have no meanings” (Student G1). Gafur’s resilience was also indicated by his philosophical approach to life. He believed that sadness was part of life and that he should remain happy and not waste time being sad. He expressed this with these words “sometime I just spend my life with my natures and because of happiness and this is part of life. So I don’t get if I’m sad I spend my life.” (Student G1)

Haroon.

Haroon had developed a strong local network of friends. Of the people he was living with, he said: “before they are all stranger upon me but now we are living as a family” (Student H1). He described his friends as “we all are nearly my years--- [and they are] at a different college or some of [my] friends their just finished their studies and now they are on visiting visas. They applied for TR” (Student H1). He indicated they also came from India as he said “they are very very close to my place, say within 15 or 16 kilometres-- I met them after I came here” (Student H1). Haroon told me that he met most of his friends “on my job” (Student H1) and that “I’ve got Australian friends--- [and] some Columbians--- they are all working with me” (Student H1). As Haroon had “equal (Australian and other nationality) friends, same like 50/50 yeah” (Student H1), he was able to develop a feeling of connectedness and find his socio-cultural fit. He was successful in managing his life and had adapted saying that he was “I’m just fine now” (Student H1). His teachers also assisted him develop connectedness as they provided him with another support network; “Yeah, they help me out all the time” (Student H1). However, Haroon’s family network was in England and their support was not mentioned. His only reference to them was that “they asked me to come up there and meet them because it’s one and half years. It’s too long for them” (Student H1).

Haroon did not indicate he had any financial or emotional difficulties and told me that “I don’t remember” a time when he needed assistance from his friends. The only problem he identified was “after [one] year [I] picked up [English] language. That was the only difficulty I got up here” (Student H1). However, Haroon did describe an incident where “three or four peoples there they ask me for money and er I’m a bit scared but not much” (Student H1). He explained to them that “I haven’t get er cash

out --- [and] one of them he just pushed me but his friend ... his partner he said he said just leave him leave him to go” (Student H1). Haroon’s strength of resilience was evidenced as he confidently said “most of the problems I have to find myself and I sort out” (Student H1).

Madina.

Before Madina would consider expanding her network of friends in Australia she said that “I want to finish my study first” (Student M1). Although Madina admitted “it’s really true I don’t have any friends, only classmates and only in the college time” (Student M1), she did believe that she “only have one friend” (Student M1) and that her Indian friend who she “met to India --- before me he came in Australia [has now] --- moved to Sydney. [He was our] only friend” (Student M1). As for other Indian friends she said “I don’t have any Indian friends here, they are still all in India” (Student M1). Madina considered that her teacher provided her with some support as “She is very nice and she helps us as far as she can do and um she never get angry. If we ask her anything she repeat us again and again she never mind” (Student M1). Madina did inform me about another friend who was “my [previous] employer. She’s in living in Australia and she’s an Australian resident. She helped us lot” (Student M1). Madina appeared to avoid opportunities to establish friendships as she “don’t like to talk to other peoples” (Student M1). She told me that “you can’t trust on them. But some a[re] really good” (Student M1). However, Madina did have a local family network as her “husband’s uncle and aunt [are] living here and normally on weekends we go to their house” (Student M1), but she did not mix with their friends, “No, you just visit them” (Student M1). Madina’s sense of connectedness and socio-cultural fit did not appear well established.

When I asked Madina about any difficulties that had occurred, she told me “one day one man drunk and he broke our stuff like phone, laptop and extra” (Student M1). She told me that her previous employer “gave me a place to live in her house for ah, I think about 19 days after that I got my found place to live and I moved from there to my new place” (Student M1). Madina advised me “we were living with other friends, I can’t say to them friends cause they were living in the house--- so that’s why we don’t like to make any other friend--- and we don’t like to live with someone else” (Student M1). However Madina commented “I don’t like to live with other communities but I liked to live with her because I lived” (Student M1). Madina’s previous employer had provided both her and her husband with emergency accommodation and transport to travel to work when “we did not have a car” (Student M1). This support would have assisted Madina build a sense of social connectedness and be resilient against the adverse situation. Madina’s efficacy development may also have been boosted through this vicarious experience.

Naisha.

Naisha advised “it’s very hard” (Student N1) for her to make friends. She said that “I don’t have a lot of friends here --- [as people] in my age group of friends in here like Australian girls and boys, they don’t want to make friendship with us” (Student N1). She added “I don’t know if age thing or like can you say a cultural thing--- but some of them sometimes they just abuse us--- [and] speak in a very wrong way and if they can’t accept people” (Student N1). Naisha stated that many of her friends were “mostly Indians. Yeah. I always try to make friends from different countries but they are not very interested to have a friendship” (Student N1). Then Naisha’s voice

softened as she told me “we like have a friendship here with others, who are 70 or 75 [be]cause they are alone [and] they want to talk with someone so I have one of my grandfather, he’s Australian. We love him so much” (Student N1). Naisha had established feelings of connectedness due to this relationship. Naisha referred to them as “granny and grandpa” (Student N1) as she told me that “he’s just next to sweet and he have his own family--- they are all lovely. They all want to talk and he always come with every occasion” (Student N1). Naisha felt supported by this family as he “make me really comfortable and really ...really happy” (Student N1). She said that “he buy a lot of stuff for me because he know I’m like, you know, without my parents here and my husband. Sometime he drive me to work” (Student N1). Naisha also had another Australian friend that she met “when I was working in [hairdressing] salon” (Student N1). Naisha explained that “she is from Vietnam but she also Australian citizen. She was very lovely and was very helpful to me --- I learnt a lot from her --- she always tried to help. She was very nice” (Student N1). This person would have provided Naisha with a model of efficacy and resilient behaviour.

Although, Naisha advised that her teachers “are very good” (Student N1), it appeared that she relied on her own efforts as “we just have to give it time a little bit so we can cope with everything” (Student N1). Naisha’s family support was evidenced when she told me that “I live alone here for 3 or 4 months in Brisbane. It’s so hard. I was crying and crying. --- I was so disappointed with Australia I wanted to go back” (Student N1). Her family reacted by her “mother, she ring me ... she give me motivation” (Student N1).

Naisha openly spoke about her most difficult time when her “husband went to Sydney for a job and he’s staying up there and I was living here with a friend” (Student N1). She stated that she “tried to commit suicide” (Student N1). She said that the people where she was living “were getting very rude with me and they just want to let me out” (Student N1) and they told her “you can go anywhere but you are not allowed to be here” (Student N1). Naisha explained “that time my husband not able to come to Brisbane and oh I was I don’t have any more friends and just one of my friends she just help me out. They take me from home to their home” (Student N1). Then she explained that an “Indian guy--- he was abuse all the time of the girls and one day --- he take my luggage and put it out from the home. I can’t do anything and again one of my friend he help me” (Student N1). Naisha was feeling alone as she “was on the bridge and I was thinking nobody is here and my husband ... he just leave me alone here and he’s not here. I just want to go” (Student N1). Then Naisha thought “what about my parents--- for my parents and for my future I have to lead a good life. I have to be challenged. I have to go through the challenges which get in my way” (Student N1). Naisha’s resilience and self-efficacy was evidenced as she told me “Sometimes I think from that time I am not sitting here you know—[but] after that now everything is alright” (Student N1).

Sadaf.

Sadaf’s social network revolved around charity work where she and her husband “go on trips and country trips to collecting donations” (Student S1). Although she said that she was working at “a hair salon in Inala” (Student S1), Sadaf stated that most of her friends she met “before I work in the hair salon ...before that I was working with them in the charity” (Student S1). On the nationalities of her friends, Sadaf advised

“most of them are Indian, and after that I have a few friends from Afghanistan, and then after that, Australian” (Student S1). She advised that she had “about eight to ten” (Student S1) Australian friends who she goes with on “trips and movies and shopping and then sometimes pub, because we have done things together before and we are good friends” (Student S1). Sadaf appeared to have established a strong feeling of social connectedness as she commented that “I like to talk to other people, and that’s why I make friends easily” (Student S1). Sadaf did not talk about her family network and her discussion on her studies focused on there being “less theory and more in salon” (Student S1) which she found “very interesting [and that] ...the thing I am amazing like I do that thing” (Student S1).

The only difficulty that was mentioned by Sadaf related to a train station incident. She recalled the events and said “it’s near about 7 o’clock winter time, the guys are there like teenagers with... not teenagers but nine or 10 years old, and then I come out of the lift--- [and] they make lots of different noises” (Student S1). While Sadaf was telling this part of her story the tone of her voice and body language evidenced strong self-efficacy which would have assisted her to be resilient at that time. Sadaf and her husband then “moved to this side in south area. It’s much better, not so far to travel --- [and] my friend like on south side” (Student S1).

Shama.

Shama’s family network supported her emotionally from the day she arrived in Australia as her father came “with me... [and] he just let me settle down for like four or five days, and then he went to Melbourne for his business tour, and then he went back to India” (Student S2). Financially her father supported her “during one year, I was totally dependent on my father, like my own expenditures, my rent, every single penny’s come from India” (Student S2). Although Shama considered this support to be “worst experience I had in Australia” (Student S2) as she wanted to demonstrate that “I’m independent” (Student S2), Shama’s future was assured as her father “is going to have his own business, I’m gonna just take care of it [and] --- I’m going to open my [hairdressing] salon” (Student S2). Since commencing her “marketing job” (Student S2), Shama stated that “I don’t have much friends up here --- [because] I don’t have time” (Student S2) to make friends, however, she intended to “expand my friends” (Student S2) when she had finished her studies. Currently Shama had “only three friends here. One is Chinese, one is Indian and one is from France [or]...Greece” (Student S2) and she maintained contact with her “two or three” (Student S2) Australian friends “through Facebook” (Student S2). Shama’s thoughts about her teachers were expressed with “[they] are really, really cool. Like they are really friendly, they don’t treat us like we are their students, we are just like we are friends, like there’s no differences between anyone” (Student S2). Although, Shama’s local network might be considered small, her friends have supported her when she needed assistance with changing “my dressing sense” (Student S2) and in the future Shama planned to “hand over (the salon) to my Chinese friend--- and then I can move” (Student S2) to Melbourne with the family. Shama evidenced strong social connectedness and self-efficacy.

As Shama’s self-belief and connectedness were strong, her ability to be resilient was also strong. This was demonstrated by her capacity to remain positive and focused on achieving her goals even though she faced a number of situations where she was frightened. Shama described a time when she was publically abused with “*Fucking*

Indian, go back and all that stuff” (Student S2). On another occasion, she was the victim of an attempted robbery. Shama recalled “when I get off from the train, there were five boys, African people behind me, like they were all black and I was so scared” (Student S2). She continued with, “one of the guy, he came over and he was like, “*Do you have some money?* and I was like, *I don't have anything, I don't keep cash on me*, so he just showed me the knife” (Student S2). Shama admitted that the incident “really make me scared” (Student S2). Then another circumstance caused her to question making friends with Indians in Australia. Shama stated that she informed others “never be in contact with Indians, especially the Punjabi Indians, [be]cause they will actually ruin your life --- start making Aussie friends, don't be scared with them” (Student S2). Within Shama's story were a number of share accommodation situations where she had lost money. At one place “our contract was about to finish --- [and] an Indian couple --- they just ran from there--- [and] they need to give us the money for all the electricity bond and all that” (Student S2). The next situation was similar and Shama stated “the same thing--- an Indian family, and then she took \$450 bond from me” (Student S2). The next share accommodation issue was soon after and “when this thing happened with the Aboriginal people, they abused me--- [and] I tried to make her understand that see, I can't live here--- [and] she take that money also. She didn't return my bond to me” (Student S2). Shama advised that she once more moved and “the same thing again... Up there he then gave me the bond and he ran away and then a couple came out of there. He is so bad, like started interfering in my life, in my boyfriend's life” (Student S2). Shama commented “he's totally Punjabi background, very bad background. The people there are actually...like you won't be imagining how bad these people are” (Student S2). She continued with “I moved out only last week --- [as] he used to discriminate me. *Your husband is the lord, your boyfriend is the lord*--- he used to abuse them [my friends] also” (Student S2). Shama was able to psychologically and emotionally overcome her share accommodation issues due to her resilience.

Comment.

The above illustrated that of the six participants only Madina appeared not to have established a strong local network. Madina's situation would have negatively impacted her ability to develop feelings of social connectedness. Without a strong feeling of social connectedness, Madina's reactionary behaviour, lack of supportive resources (local network) and her ability to be resilient to adverse situations would have been affected. Literature on resilience postulated that the ability to bounce back when faced with adversity was built from strong socio-cultural connectedness and self-efficacy (Baker, 2010). From the vicarious experience provided to Madina by her previous employer (labelled by Madina as an Australian resident), she might have gained some sense of social connectedness. This would have assisted her in making socio-cultural adjustments and might have possibly provided her with some self-efficacy positive reinforcement.

As the other participants evidenced strong supportive local networks, they would have developed feelings of social connectedness. These feelings would have assisted them in their efforts to be resilient as well as strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs and would have positively supported their socio-cultural adjustments. Evidence from literature has noted that when international students strengthen their social connectedness and support networks, they also improve their socio-cultural adjustment and their chances of success in reaching their goals (Baker & Hawkins,

2006; Sawir et al., 2008). As the goal of five of the participants was to gain Australian residency and Haroon's goal was to continue learning, their socio-cultural adjustments were reflected in the discursive and internalised identities that they developed.

As mentioned earlier, identities developed due to acculturation would be formed to meet the needs of the individual for a particular time, place and situation. Behavioural and psychological socio-cultural adjustments would be made in order to fit in with the host society (Ward, 2013). Thus the socio-cultural characteristics of the Australian community and the VET sector also impacted on the identities the participants developed.

Australian society and VET sector.

During the processes of acculturation and identity development, the participants viewed their positive and negative experiences within their community and academic environments in different ways. Their perceptions of these environments impacted on their self-belief systems (efficacy) and their ability to maintain focus on successfully achieving their goals.

Gafur.

In Gafur's interview, the only comment he made on his work or community environment was "here peoples are always helpful [with] health and safety occupation but not in India...peoples there they don't know what is real meaning of health and safety" (Student G1). He then added "I like this. Because people put health and safety first because health is wealth" (Student G1).

In relation to his studies, Gafur compared his previous Indian teaching experiences with his VET environment stating that "I like this way [in Australia]--- in India like if we don't study teachers some time in school days teachers punish students but not here I have seen" (Student G1). Gafur also commented on his improved English skills with "my mother tongue is Hindi and in Australia people speak English so it's easy for me to gain and to improve my skill in English" (Student G1).

Gafur's positive feelings about his VET environment and his knowledge and belief that Australia consciously maintained a safe and healthy community, reinforced his motivation and determination to successfully achieve his goals of migration to Australia. In Australia, Gafur believed he would be "living in good standard" (Student G1) and could set up a timber mill business. Gafur's positive psychological and emotional beliefs about his community and academic environments would have encouraged further development of his self-efficacy.

Haroon.

Haroon's comment on the Australian community was that "the peoples are they are ready like cooperative--- Yeah, they are most of the peoples very very cooperative" (Student H1). He also felt that "when on the job place and people so very cooperative and I have to got chance to learn more about Australia" (Student H1). Haroon's goal was to continue studying as he wanted to "meet some Australian peoples and --- [some other students] from another overseas country so I like to talk to them because I got chance to know about their culture" (Student H1). Haroon felt positive about his

VET environment and said “I like the study up here because ah it’s a completely different way to learn something and I have to I got a chance to learn more and more” (Student H1). However, he confessed that “in the beginning I’ve got some difficult difficulties in the shopping centres and in the college [with English]--- but after [a] year [I] picked up [the] language” (Student H1).

As Haroon appeared to be enjoying his life in Australia, his positive community, work and VET environments would have reinforced his self-efficacy and motivation to continue studying.

Madina.

Madina no longer worked as she wished to concentrate on her studies and found it difficult “to make time to clean the house” (Student M1). She was now able to “have more time to do to watch TV and for my hobbies and to clean my house” (Student M1). Madina believed that “people are more sensitive in Australia rather than India” (Student M1) and that she felt Australian “people just help you if you ask something to them they don’t ignore you and um even in the every field if you go to bank they just help you in any manner” (Student M1). Even though Madina stated she was not confident when interacting with others, in conversations she was “not scared to ask them (people) anything and er, we are I feel that they will not get angry” (Student M1). However Madina said that early in her sojourn experience “I was scared to sit in the bus --- I was scared to ask to the driver I want to drop at that station can you please help me. But everything has been improved” (Student M1). When discussing her study environment, Madina told me that “in India study is hard and in Australia study is easy--- it’s better in Australia, I think so, according to my opinion” (Student M1).

Although, Madina advised “now I have ah more confidence better than past and when I came in Australia” (Student M1), her self-belief systems appeared not to be energised by her Australian community experiences but her VET environment might have provided her with a positive psychological and emotional experience that reinforced her self-efficacy beliefs.

Naisha.

Naisha was very vocal on the 2009 Australian government student visa changes. She angrily stated “we have to like pay fee, you know how many fee they ask \$24,000” (Student N1). She was equally angry when she told me “they [the government] said you can only apply for a temporary residence in hairdressing but there is no permanent residency in hairdressing” (Student N1). Her voice lowered as she said disappointedly “[they] change the rule at least they don’t have to change the rules” (Student N1). Although Naisha appeared to accept the altered student visa requirements, her life in Australia and her efficacy development was positively influenced by her work. She told me “I just love to get work--- I work in a restaurant evening time as a part-time job and er there are a lot of people come from different countries and er ...Australia is a multicultural country” (Student N1). However, she was aware that there were people in the community who “speak in a very wrong way --- sometimes they just abuse us, they you know when we drive like trains or buses” (Student N1). Naisha retained positive thoughts on the main community stating “some of peoples just love to talk to us and they are really helpful to us--- Always when someone likes to talk to me I always give my time to them” (Student N1).

When discussing the VET environment, Naisha confessed “First one year I just pray to God never to give that time for anyone, a really struggling time but now everything is alright for me. I am very happy and don’t want to go back” (Student N1). Naisha found that even though she had studied “half the year English convent school but the pronunciation is different, slang is a different” (Student N1). As she was motivated and determined to improve her English skills, Naisha used a number of mechanisms to assist her, then “after like two or three months I am just fantastic” (Student N1). Naisha also commented on the differences between her previous Indian learning environment and her VET studies. She told me “It’s all practical. No more like a book worms like we are used to before--- We are using this... it is useful” (Student N1). She also believed that her Indian studies were “just a wastage of time. No skills, no tactile skills” (Student N1). Naisha also confirmed Gafur’s comment on Indian study environments with “like in India if you are not good in studies you are beat by teacher. Sometimes they deal with you verbally or physically, smashing you know, they are really hard, I don’t want to remind my school times” (Student N1). She followed this with “they don’t want to be ah you are skilful person like you have learned on your own with the new techniques, no” (Student N1).

Naisha evidenced positive psychological and emotional reinforcement of her efficacy from both her Australian community and her academic community environments. Her ability to remain motivated, confine any anxiety feelings and cope with situations with little or reduced stress would have assisted her to grow and extend her self-belief systems.

Sadaf.

Sadaf was the only participant who was working in the hairdressing industry. She stated early in her interview “Yep, I am working. It’s a hair salon in Inala” (Student S1). Sadaf made no further comments about her current work or community interactions. She did tell me “before that [job] I was working with them in the charity--- [and now my husband and I] --- go on trips and country trips to collecting donations--- [up to] 500 kilometres outside Brisbane” (Student S1). Sadaf stated that for her husband she believed his life in Australia would have “no change because there [India] the same and here [Australia] the same--- but here, like men and women will have equal which is...I think is best part of my life now” (Student S1).

Sadaf considered her VET studies prepared her for work in Australia. She told me “Here --- we get more practical sort of thing, so you can get more opportunity to get a job. We don’t have any job experience in hairdressing, but I got experience from the college” (Student S1). As Sadaf’s goal was residency, she was “trying to apply for a temporary visa--- [by practising and getting] ready for IELTS test” (Student S1). She stated that if she was not successful in gaining a temporary visa, “I will try to get Australia visa as I am working” (Student S1).

Sadaf admitted she was very confident in herself and in achieving her goal of residency. It appeared that she was very focused and determined in her actions and efforts to achieve her goal. Both community and academic environments provided Sadaf with positive reinforcement that her activities were assisting in successfully achieving her goal. Through this psychological and emotional encouragement, Sadaf’s motivation and self-efficacy would be have been strengthened.

Shama.

Shama explained her plans with “I’m gonna follow all the regulations to get...to follow PR and citizenship in Australia--- [It will take] at least three years more to get settled up in Australia, because rules are really hard up here” (Student S2). Shama believed that when she “got job finally, and then there is no discrimination out there” (Student S2). Shama’s efficacy and resilience assisted her in overcoming her earlier situations as “when I came up here [Australia] first, it was like people used to abuse me” (Student S2). Shama believed that her VET hairdressing “studies are good up here [in Australia]” (Student S2). She told me that if “I want to study the same thing in India, it will take me three or four years to complete that and so these studies are faster, much, much faster up here” (Student S2).

As Shama’s father intended for the family to migrate and have businesses in Australia, Shama saw her future “in Brisbane [be]cause I’m in Brisbane [and then] we can think about our next step, and then we can expand our business as well” (Student S2). Shama’s goal of residency was assisted by her father’s efforts but Shama was also motivated and determined to be successful in the Australian environment. Shama’s self-efficacy was reinforced and encouraged by her psychological and emotional experiences from her community and academic environments.

Comment.

Of the six participants, it appeared that only Madina’s self-efficacy was not strengthened by her Australian experiences as she actively avoided interacting with others in the community. This behaviour would have been detrimental to her motivation and self-belief that she could achieve her goals. However, the VET context provided all six participants positive reinforcement that they would be successful. The participant’s experiences from the Australian community and VET contexts encouraged and confirmed that they were capable of successfully achieving their goals. These behavioural, psychological and emotional confirmations fed the participants’ motivation, determination and self-efficacy. With further development and growth in their self-efficacy, the participants would have been inspired to set increasingly more difficult goals, maintain effort towards achieving them, increase their resilience to failure and persevere against adversity.

Thinking through the case study descriptions.

The participants in the case study descriptions were volunteers who were eager to tell me about their lives since arriving in Australia. These students were proud of their achievements and wanted to share their stories of internal strength, resourcefulness, cultural boundary crossing, personal growth, individual achievement, independence, and acculturation. As I analysed the participants’ conversation transcripts, I was struck by the consistency of their story themes and sub-themes on self-efficacy, resilience, connectedness and supportive networks. These characteristics were shown to be key requirements for successful acculturation. During the processes of finding their socio-cultural fit and locating themselves within their Australian environments, the participants became aware of the psychological and behavioural identity adjustments that were needed.

Themes Evidenced from the Second Data Analysis

From the discussion in this chapter, the linkage established in Chapter 2 literature between identity development and acculturation adjustment, had been extended to include self-efficacy, resilience, and connectedness. It was shown that these three concepts directly influenced the six Indian international students' identity development and acculturation adjustment.

During their Australian acculturation identity development, the international student participants described changes that included physical, biological, economic, social and cultural (Berry & Sam, 2014). These newly formed discursive identities and practices (Hall, 1990, 1996) were built to meet their individual needs of time, place, situation and group alliances. In making decisions on self-identity changes, the participants would have reflected upon their new socio-cultural discursive identities.

Discursive identity development and acculturation adjustment.

Chapter 6 discussed the various discursive identities formed by the participants as they moved into different social and cultural groups during their acculturation. The discussion in this chapter showed that the participants discursive identities were temporary structures (Bauman, 2009) and that the changes they had made could be attributed to acculturation conditional adjustment.

Because of difference (Grossberg, 2010) and the power relationships within socio-cultural groups (Castells, 2010), the participants' discursive identities were continually being built during their acculturation. The development of a discursive identity or role was identified in Chapter 2 literature as being necessary so as to be recognised as a distinct type of person (Gee, 2004). Each identity-type characteristic and practice that was taken on or rejected by the participants would have been influenced by their decision to be insider or outsider of a particular group. In finding their Australian socio-cultural fit or group, the participants might have found that they were excluded from other socio-cultural groups. For example, Shama altered her clothes and mannerisms so as to fit-in when in Australia and found it necessary to return to traditional clothes and behaviours when she was in India "last year in June" (Student S2). Shama stated that due to feelings of embarrassment from her neighbours "staring at me" (Student S2) that she was forced to return to traditional dress. This notion that different discursive identities were developed to suit an individual's situation and personal needs was also discussed in Chapter 2. By developing discursive identities that included certain behaviours, individuals would be able to locate themselves within specific socio-cultural groups.

Shama's discursive identity situation demonstrated that at times individuals might not be in full control of the identity characteristics they wished to develop. Pressure or hegemony might be exerted by others due to the power relationships within the socio-cultural groups they wished to join. Another example of group inclusion and forced positioning was cited in Chapter 2. In Vahed's (2007) study, individuals and groups within the Indian community in Brisbane were sectioned, positioned, and ethnically identified because of the power relationships within the main Indian community. A similar circumstance was experienced by Naisha when an "Indian guy" (Student N1) told all the girls in the accommodation that they needed to "get

out from this place, only boys are going to live here” (Student N1). The man then “take my luggage and put it out from the home” (Student N1) and “nothing was in my hands. I can’t do anything” (Student N1). This situation only galvanised Naisha as when she was being abused by an employer, she terminated her employment and told him “You’re cheating us” (Student N1). She then found new employment and demonstrated her self-efficacy by negotiating “an increase in my pay” (Student N1).

This research on the participants’ identity changes supported the idea that international student behavioural changes reflected their socio-cultural adjustment (Ward, 2013; Ward et al., 2001). All six participants agreed that they had made identity changes, both when interacting with others and during their adjustment to their new Australian environment. These cross-cultural behavioural adjustments made by the participants during acculturation allowed them to thrive, as they found their socio-cultural fit within their communities (Wang & Shan, 2006). Figure 7.1 provided a model of some of the perceptions and influencing variables that might have affected the participants’ conditions, orientations, and outcomes while undertaking the process of acculturation.

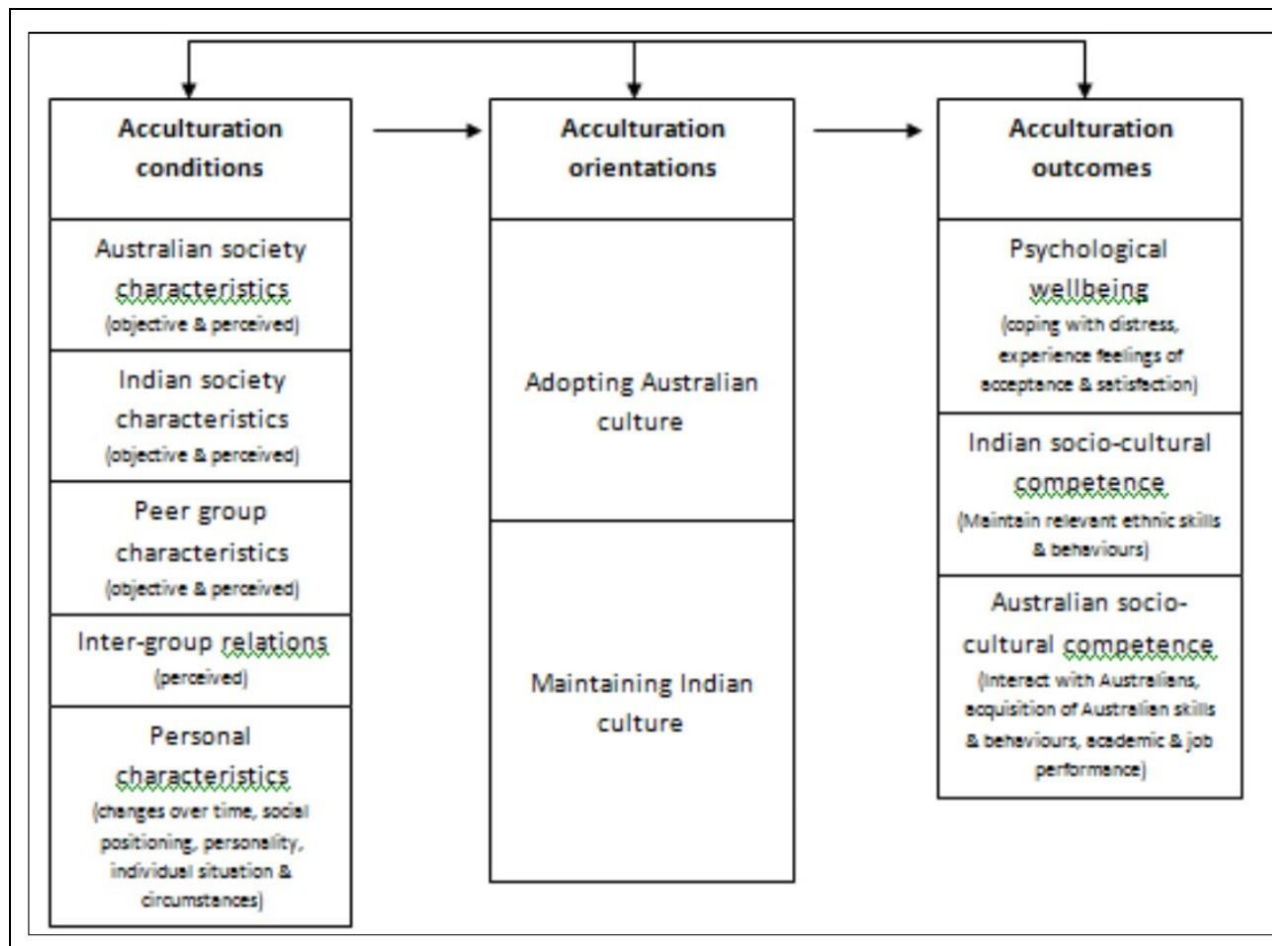


Figure 7.1. Model of participant acculturation. Adapted from “Framework of acculturation variables,” by J. Arends-Tóth and Fons J. R. van de Vijver, 2006, *Assessment of psychological acculturation*, p. 143. Copyright 2006 by D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology*.

Together with the acculturation conditional adjustments that five of the participants described, all six believed that their self-identities had changed. Their self-reflective images disclosed evidence of internalised acculturation adjustments or psychological adjustments.

Self-identity, acculturation adjustment and adaptation.

The participants' stories revealed self-generated changes together with reactions resulting from their socio-cultural experiences both positive and negative. For example, when Naisha stated that since being in Australia "most of the things in my life I have changed [as I] learn lot of things and the main thing is [that now] --- I am very confident" (Student N1). This was an example of psychological acculturation adjustment which involved stages of internal identity building and change that typically would be on-going eventually leading towards cross-cultural adaptation.

Although Sadaf was the only participant who stated that she remained the same and had not changed, the other participants confirmed they had adjusted their behaviour and ways of communicating with others. However, acculturation change might be demonstrated as behavioural and psychological change. While the participants' behavioural changes referred to their socio-cultural adjustments in order to fit in with the host society (Ward & Kennedy, 2001), their psychological adjustments referred to changes in identity, values, and attitudes (Berry & Sam, 2014). The psychological adjustments of all six participants were evidenced, even Sadaf confirming "I think is best part of my life now. So I come to think I can do anything here" (Student S1).

As the participants' acculturation change continued for over 18 months (considered a significant period), successful psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Sam, 2006) was able to be recognised. A high level of cross-cultural adaptation (Berry, 2006b) could also be acknowledged as the participants had gained host country cultural knowledge, interactive contacts and other than Madina, demonstrated positive inter-group attitudes.

Cross-cultural adaptation.

Successful cross-cultural adaptation (Berry, 2006b) was considered an outcome from positive psychological, cultural, social, and whole-of-body health adjustments. The milestones leading to adaptation were described in Chapter 2 as a continuum. At one end was a negative or poor adaptation position where if the person resisted change and did not make sufficient cross-cultural environment adjustments, they found that their life was unpleasant and uncomfortable. As a result they might have physical or mental health issues. At the other end of the continuum was a positive or successful adaptation position where cross-cultural psychological and behavioural changes had occurred. These changes allowed the person to effectively integrate into their environment where they were able to thrive as they were happy and content with their life.

Only one of the participants, Madina had not successfully cross-culturally adapted. Madina was reluctant to adjust to her environment and build local friendships, preferring to study and retain her cultural heritage by mixing only within Indian family groups. The other participants were eager to psychologically and

behaviourally adjust to their environment. Even Haroon, who stated he had no intention of migrating, made successful cross-cultural adaptation.

Although Madina, along with Gafur, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama confirmed that her intentions were to migrate, she had not yet accepted that to “fulfil my dreams” (Student M1) she would need to make further adjustments to successfully integrate into Australian community life and thrive.

Psychological acculturation adjustments.

The participants’ ability to successfully establish lives and thrive would be affected by their psychological acculturation adjustments. In making adjustments, an individual’s “performance and functioning” (Novera, 2004, p. 476) are impacted. As five of the participants showed that they had successfully socio-culturally adapted, their psychological adaptation would also have been strongly and positively influenced (Berry, 2006b).

Gafur, Haroon, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama demonstrated they had successfully socio-culturally and psychologically adapted. Not only were they happy with their new lives and looking forward to spending more time in Australia, they were also managing their daily lives including coping with the successes and failures that occurred while interacting with others.

Self-identity acculturation adjustment.

During the first analysis (refer Chapter 6), I accepted the participants’ recognition and belief that they had changed since being in Australia. Even though Sadaf advised “I’m the same” (Student S1), her demeanour evidenced her self-esteem had increased as she believed “Here [in Australia], like men and women will have equal [rights]...I can do anything here” (Student S1). These behavioural and psychological changes evidenced by the participants were further investigated in the second analysis and described earlier in this chapter.

Many studies had attempted to measure the process of acculturation adjustment. But no standard instrument had been able to quantify the exact changes in an individual’s personality and identity (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006). The rate and level of behavioural and psychological change (Bochner, 2006; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Kruusvall, Vetik & Berry, 2009) were variables determined by individual choice and the social contexts during the process of inter-cultural contact.

Evidence from the participants’ stories on the changes they made and the circumstances that surrounding them, appeared to confirm their identity changes had been stimulated by acculturation. This realisation based on the data discovered from both analyses then built upon my understanding of what was known from earlier research on identity and acculturation. The conceptual areas that extended my understanding of identity and acculturation meaning, then included: (a) identity development and acculturation adjustment; (b) self-efficacy; (c) networks, connectedness and resilience; and (d) Australian and VET sector contexts.

Efficacy self-belief systems.

Confident individuals who coped with acculturation difficulties when adapting to their new socio-cultural environment were considered to have developed efficacy as they treated the adjustment as a challenge rather than a threat. However, those with low efficacy (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007) appeared to lack confidence, approached situations with apprehension and fear, and could suffer from anxiety issues.

Madina evidenced low efficacy as she lacked confidence and was apprehensive and anxious about meeting people and establishing local connections. While Gafur, Haroon, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama were confident in their ability to be successful and set goals for themselves that they believed were reasonable and could be achieved. For example, Gafur sought a job in a saw mill, thinking that he might establish a saw mill business in Australia; Haroon wanted a job that would be interesting, so he trained as a security guard; Naisha enjoyed working in the restaurant and negotiated her salary conditions; Sadaf intended to gain temporary residency in Australia and if she was not successful with her English test (IELTS), she had identified alternative options; Shama was determined to be financially independent of her father so she took a marketing job.

The psychological term, self-efficacy described an individual's self-belief in their own competence to manage situations. As a person's efficacy beliefs might impact on their cognitive, motivational, affective, and selective process behaviours (Maddux, 2002; Tsang et al., 2012), the participants' strong efficacy or self-belief positively influenced their psychological adjustment and adaptation. The participants showed that they were able to emotionally adjust to changes in their environment (Baker, 2010) without feeling confused and overwhelmed.

In Chapter 6 and this chapter I discussed the evidence that demonstrated the participants' efficacy development. Although Madina appeared to be less developed than the other participants, all of the participants were exposed to experiences that assisted in developing their efficacy. Although efficacy needed to be built over time, the five situational ways that participants might have experienced efficacy reinforcement which would have encouraged further efficacy development included: (a) mastery experiences; (b) vicarious experiences; (c) social persuasion; (d) imaginal experiences; and (e) physiological and emotional states (Maddux, 2002; Maginness, 2007; Tsang et al., 2012). While mastery or performance experiences required an individual's successes to be built upon previous successful activities, vicarious experiences were provided from models of similar successful outcomes. For example, Madina's vicarious experience with her previous employer who was an Australian resident. Social persuasion would be through verbal reinforcement. For example, Haroon as a security guard was seen by patrons as a protector and would have been given a higher positioning or status than others around him. Individual visualisation would be built from imaginal experiences. For example, Gafur, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama who dreamed of "no India, all Australia" (Student S2). These imaginings would have spurred them on and assisted them to face adversity in order reach their goal. This was voiced by Naisha when she said "[life] give you different opportunities [and] you have to fight with the new challenges" (Student N1). As efficacy stability and the ability for further efficacy development could be affected

by an individual's physiological and emotional state, Madina remained an example of an *at-risk* international student.

Self-efficacy could be reinforced, increased or depleted due to the individual's past and current experiences and relationships with others. The participants' efficacy beliefs that they were able to be resilient to adversity and would successfully achieve their goals, was strongly influenced by their networks and feelings of connectedness.

Participant networks, connectedness and resilience.

The importance of the connection between quality networks, developing a feeling of connectedness and the capacity of international students to be psychologically and emotionally resilient when facing difficulties, had been discussed earlier in this chapter as well as in Chapters 2 and 6. Successful acculturation and eventual adaptation (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Sawir et al., 2008) has been shown to be linked to social connectedness, efficacy and resilience.

What Madina was lacking in social connectedness and local networks, Gafur, Haroon, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama used as an asset in their acculturation. As mentioned earlier, a lack of social connectedness had been identified as a major contributor to Madina becoming at risk. Although Madina evidenced a solid academic network, the other participants with a strong social and academic network, felt supported and more in control while they psychologically and culturally coped with changes during the period recognised as adaptation (Sawir et al., 2008). Establishing connectedness with a local network assisted them in building their resilience (Baker, 2010; Baker & Hawkins, 2006) as it strengthened their self-efficacy, providing them with a mechanism to overcome negative experiences, cope with issues and situations and rebound from difficulties.

All six participants were goal orientated, planned for the future and were conscious of their strengths and weaknesses. Their resilience strength was shown by their abilities to remain motivated and excited about finding their future in Australia while discovering who they were and who they wanted to be (Maginness, 2007; Skodol, 2010; Taylor et al., 2000). While Madina's resilience might have been reasonable, the other participants evidenced high levels of resilience strength.

The environment and the situations that the participants became involved in and were able to be resilient to, indicated their strength in efficacy, quality of networks and local connectedness. However, a person's self-belief systems or efficacy might be positively or negatively influenced (Bandura, 1995) by the environments and situations that they chose to become involved in. The environments that the participants had chosen might have influenced their resilience abilities.

Australian society and VET sector influence.

People tended to avoid activities and environments which they considered were above their coping abilities. But those who accepted the challenges that they found within their environments and situations believed that they could manage them and be successful (Bandura, 1995). Naisha and Shaima provided two examples of efficacy. While Naisha acknowledged that, "for my parents and for my future I have

to lead a good life. I have to be challenged. I have to go through the challenges which get in my way” (Student N1). Shaima advised that “whatever you have to do, [your father is not here and] you have to do it by yourself” (Student S2). A person’s efficacy influenced their motivation which would regulate how they thought, felt and behaved when dealing with events, circumstances and situations.

The way the participants responded to their experiences, identified whether their self-belief systems were enhanced or diminished. While Madina decided to avoid contact with people, Gafur, Haroon, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama were enjoying the experience of studying, working and living in Australia. Even Haroon, who had advised he did not intend to apply for immigration declared, “I’m not sure about that because, er... but I like to live here [in Australia]. I think” (Student H1).

An individual’s efficacy beliefs would be informed, energised and further developed through experiences that confirmed that they were able to cope and manage adverse situations. While positive experiences would provide behaviour support and reinforcement, an individual’s response (resilience behaviour) to negative experiences could alter their perception of the event as they believed they were able to manage the situation. Haroon and Shama demonstrated this when they described their experiences of being targeted by criminals. Haroon conveyed that his experience was able to be managed when he commented, “I’m a bit scared but not much” (Student H1). Shama also showed her belief that she managed her situation when “he just showed me the knife” (Student S2) and although she was scared “I just ran out from there straight away” (Student S2)

Conclusion

In Chapter 6 I developed six vignettes and profile commentaries from the first data analysis which built a response to my first question. In summary, Chapter 6 found data themes that related to my conceptually framed interview questions on socio-cultural behavioural and psychological changes during acculturation. The results confirmed and expanded the components of my conceptual framework while indicating that there was more to be found within the data. During the first analysis, some evidentiary signs of data on identity, acculturation and adaptation were illuminated.

In Chapter 7 I addressed the second research question. This chapter opened with a description of the second analysis process. The Reissman thematic method using narrative and grounded theory tools was again used so as to inductively derive themes from the data. During this second analysis I was able to reflect on the data, the vignettes and the profile descriptions in Chapter 6.

A multiple case study approach was used to report on the identities built by the Indian international VET students. This reporting technique described in Chapters 4 and 5, followed the Yin (2013) method. Evidence on the participants’ socio-cultural behaviour adjustments and self-identity development were discussed as separate characteristics or traits with the case study information being dispersed throughout each section. Under each characteristic, individual case studies were developed that demonstrated changes in the participants’ discursive identity, self-identity (or internalised identity) and the influences of efficacy, networks, connectedness,

resilience and environment. The use of actual interview dialogue in the case studies allowed the participants to explain in their own words their acculturating adjustments and reflected personality changes.

For this sample of students who were learning within the VET sector, resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit entailed drawing on their external and internal resources which had increased and reaffirmed their self-efficacy. As their efficacy developed, they recognised and accepted that discursive identity changes were required. By reflecting on their discursive behavioural changes, they also recognised that they had made self-identity psychological changes. This chapter confirmed the connection between the concepts of self-efficacy, resilience, connectedness and supportive networks in relation to identity development and successful acculturation.

While the participants evidenced the formation of discursive identities to psycho-socially culturally fit within their Australian work, community and VET contexts, these external resources (local networks) were also used during the formation of their self-identities. Their local networks which provided them with feelings of connectedness also supported their resilience abilities through efficacy reinforcement. In using their agency the participants' formed acceptable behavioural identities for interacting with others and psychological identities that were self-actuating.

The participants' stories evidenced that their self-efficacy growth, motivation and belief in their abilities and prospect of successfully achieving their goals was influenced, supported, promoted and reinforced by their networks. These family, friendship, teacher and Australian quality networks provided support and experiences which enabled them to build success upon other performance successes (mastery experience), identify with other models of cross-cultural perseverance and achievement (vicarious experience), and listen to verbal supporters of their ability to be successful (social persuasion experiences). The feelings of connectedness developed by the participants assisted them in being resilient to adversity as they were able to identify coping strategies and other resources which strengthened their self-efficacy to overcome negative experiences. Their efficacy beliefs and ability to spring back from difficulties was also assisted psychologically and emotionally by the positive and uplifting experiences provided by their work, community and academic environments.

The results from the first and second analyses on this sample of Indian international VET students reflected personal stories which had a specific time and context. The thematic characteristics evidenced in the data should not be generalised across the population (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011; Stark & Torrance, 2005) of all Indian international VET students studying in Australia. However, some thematic characteristics might be found in the discourse (identity) constructions and discursive practices of other international students in the VET sector. It would be through readers' perceptions and understandings on the case studies (Stake, 2005b) within this chapter, that participant similarities and individualities might be identified which had some relationship to their work and its context.

In Chapter 8 I reviewed and synthesised the evidence gathered and described the analytical processes that lead to my findings and development of a new conceptual

framework and illustration of resilience. My theoretical, methodological and empirical contribution to knowledge and this study's inherent limitations were discussed. Opportunities for future research were also described as the discovery findings from this case study research were but the beginning of a trail towards further knowledge on identity change and development of international students in the VET sector within an Australian context.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis, I explain the research will investigate issues on discursive identity development and self-identity changes that international students make while studying in the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector. I discuss the background issues that have given impetus to my interest in international student identity change during acculturation and put forward the rationale behind this research project. Identifying the central theme of this research as *identity change*, I state the two research questions that frame this study are:

1. *What identities do Indian international students build as they study in the VET sector within an Australian context?;* and
2. *How did the participants demonstrate resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit?*

In Chapters 6 and 7, I present the results from the first and second analysis on the six Indian international student one-to-one interviews. Their stories provide evidence of socio-cultural adjustments, identity development and acculturation into their Australian contexts. From the results, presented as vignettes, profile descriptions and case study descriptions, new evidence emerges which alters and expands thinking on cross-cultural identity change due to acculturation and adaptation. Therefore a post-finding conceptual framework is developed that illustrates, explains and blends these new insights with my original concept thinking.

Although Chapters 6 and 7 present the results from this research, Chapter 8 reviews and synthesises these discoveries and briefly describes the analytical processes which illuminated the key narrative themes. In retracing the research process, I also highlight and briefly discuss the limitations inherent in this type of narrative inquiry research. I then provide an in depth discussion on the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to knowledge of this research. These contributions reflect an investigation into the identity adjustments of Indian international students' during their acculturation into the Australian VET and community contexts. Included within this research's theoretical contribution is a new representation of the resilience concept: Shock absorbing resilience. This version is presented as a modernisation of the Carver seminal model of resilience. In concluding this chapter, I discuss the significance of the shock absorbing resilience diagram (refer Figure 8.2) and furnish an outline of future research opportunities that may extend this work on the identity development of international students who are studying in the VET sector within the Australian context.

Locating the Study and Results within the Substantive Area of Identity

This research seeks to gain an understanding on the self-identity development of six Indian international VET student participants as they acculturated and adapted to their Australian contexts. Chapter 2 discussion on identities explains that they are generally viewed as temporary formations that allow individuals to easily move between social identity groups (Bauman, 2009). Identities are actively created and re-created over time through the choices and decisions individuals make. These choices and decisions can be influenced by exposure to different environments, realities and

discourse positioning levels, contexts and constraints (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2011). This investigation also demonstrates that identities are never static formations as they are created to meet the behavioural (discursive identity) and psychological (internalised identity) needs of the individual.

Analytical framework.

I have framed this research using narrative and post-positive social constructivist theories. Chapter 4 further explains that the theoretical frame falls under the cultural studies understandings of identity development. This framework recognises that identity and identity development are internal historical, cultural and social productions which take on specific discursive forms and practice (Hall, 1990, 1996). Using a socio-cultural frame, I am able to theorise the social world and the identity development processes within it. This frame allows me to gain an understanding of the Indian international VET student participants' self-identity development through their stories.

Chapter 5 describes the gathering of story data through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions from a protocol interview question bank. These questions are developed from the notions within my original research conceptual framework (refer Figure 3.1). The sample of interview participants is two males, Gafur and Haroon (pseudonyms), and four females, Madina, Naisha, Sadaf and Shama (pseudonyms). The interview transcripts reflect participants' recalled stories on the events in their social worlds. Although these stories are accepted as the participants' *truth* at the time of the interviews, I also acknowledge that parts of the actual events as they recall them may have dimmed, clouded or diffused as they wish me (the listener) (Riessman, 2008) to take a certain meaning from their story.

From the six Indian international VET students' transcripts, data sequences are identified, bounded and analysed twice. The first process produces individual vignettes (Appendix G) and profile descriptions (Chapter 6) and the second process creates thick, rich case study descriptions (Chapter 7). While a narrative approach using thematic narrative and grounded theory tools are used for both analytical processes, it is the unexpected findings that emerge from the first analysis that identify the need and initiate the second, more in depth analysis.

Profile findings.

Chapter 6 draws on the individual participant vignettes developed on Gafur, Haroon, Madina, Naisha, Sadaf, and Shama (pseudonyms) to construct participant snapshot profile descriptions. Each vignette reflects the participant's responses to questions during one-to-one discussions. These interview questions (see Appendix D) which spring from my conceptual framework are grouped under the headings of Background, Social differences, Studying differences, Social profile, Personal profile, Experiences and Social support.

Within each of the participant's stories there did not appear any evidence of dramatic or strong adverse effects from cultural or learning shock. Five of the participants were thriving in their new environments as they were able to establish strong supportive networks which provided them with feelings of connectedness. The sixth

participant, Madina, did not appear to be as successful as the others in her acculturation adjustments as she had not established strong local networks and feelings of social connectedness. However, she did consider herself to be successfully managing her life in both the community and academic environments. While five participants did say that they made changes to their identity, comments or actions by all six show that their self-confidence increased.

During the analysis of the vignette data to develop the profile commentaries, evidence of a different type of sojourner is revealed; one that is focused on gaining residency using VET studies as the bridge. Acting on this unexpected data find where the participants appear to accept the identity of student while acting like immigrants, I realise that a second thematic analysis of the data is required. Reflecting on this unanticipated data result and the need for further analysis, my second research question develops. This second analysis responds to this new question by drawing out additional themes from the data on identity and the elements that influence identity development. Thick, rich case study descriptions on the six Indian international VET students are built from these data evidentiary themes.

Case study findings.

Chapter 7 uses a multiple case study approach to present the results on the participants' changes in their discursive identities and self-identities. Evidence from the analysis on their identity changes demonstrates the influence of efficacy, resilience, connectedness and supportive networks when making acculturation adjustments. Each case study description is constructed through a reflection on the vignettes and profile findings from the first analysis (refer Chapter 6) together with the new evidence that emerged through the second narrative analysis.

Other than Sadaf, five of the participants say that their discursive identities have changed and that they made use of their agency when adjusting their behaviour and ways of communicating with others. In their stories, the participants describe who they think they are, how they believe others see them and how they believe they need to act and react in order to manage their lives within their Australian environments, while achieving their goals. Their dialogue evidences that they are making acculturating conditional adjustments to their discursive identities in order to find their socio-cultural fit and locate themselves within their community and academic contexts. The characteristics of each discursive identity that the participants develop are influenced by the group identities that they wish to take on (student, worker, wife, manager), their perceived social position within the group (leader, member) and their own perceptions of themselves in that identity role.

The participants also recognise the changes that they have made to their internalised identities since being in Australia. These adjustments to their values, attitudes and identities (or personality) appear to be stimulated by the participants' acculturation rather than a process that is related to their normal psychological changes or ontogenetic development. As there is no exact method to confirm or refute that their identity changes are due to acculturation or ontogenetic development processes, I consider the change in their socio-cultural environment appears to be the influencing factor. The six participants advise that as a result of their identity changes, their lives

in Australia have improved, giving strength to the notion that the need for an acculturation adjustment is the motivator for their psychological identity changes.

Along with acknowledging that different characteristics of their self-belief systems have increased since being in Australia, the participants also advise that they are happy in their environment and they are successfully managing their daily lives. While Madina's acculturation adjustment and adaptation appears to be at a lower milestone on the adaptation continuum, the other participants evidence positive adaptation. These five participants evidence they have successfully adapted and integrated into their environment. The indicative characteristics of their success are by their psychological, cultural, social, and whole-of-body health adjustments which have assisted them to socio-culturally fit and establish a high level of contentment within their lives. This evidence of successful adjustment positively reinforces and influences any further psychological and behavioural acculturation changes.

The participants' self-identity is influenced by their self-belief systems. Other than Madina, the participants' evidence increased strength in their self-efficacy or self-belief systems. The characteristics of self-confidence, self-esteem, self-determination, commitment to be successful, and self-belief in themselves and their ability to achieve their goals are evidenced by five of the participants. Due to Madina's social avoidance behaviour and lack of confidence, she evidences lower efficacy strength in some of her self-belief system characteristics.

Self-efficacy also influences the participants' ability to establish networks, develop feelings of connectedness and be resilient when faced with adverse situations (Baker, 2010; Maginness, 2007). While Madina did not appear to develop a strong local network, feelings of connectedness and resiliency behaviours, the other five participants evidence strong feelings of connectedness due to the strength and quality of their local network relationships. These feelings of connectedness also assist them in developing psychological and behavioural resiliency, in strengthening their self-efficacy beliefs as well as provide them with positive confirmation that their socio-cultural adjustments are assisting them to achieve their goals.

The participants' environment is also considered an important factor during their acculturation (Bandura, 1995). As people tend to avoid activities and events they consider to be above their coping abilities, the environments and situations the participants select evidence the strength of their self-belief systems. The participants' Australian and VET experiences have the capacity to positively or negatively influence and strengthen the participants' efficacy, motivation and determination to achieve their goals. Five of the participants did experience positive Australian contexts. Madina's social avoidance behaviour considerably reduces her capacity to gain experiences that may inform or energise her self-belief systems. However, the VET context did provide positive experiences for all six participants. These positive experiences feed the participants' motivation, determination and self-efficacy which may inspire them to consider increasingly more difficult goals, maintain their efforts to achieve those goals, and increase their ability to persevere and be resilient against adversity.

The evidence from the two inductive analysis processes highlights the participants' identity development during their acculturation process and the factors that influence

their acculturation strategies. These factors include the participants' strong sense of self-efficacy, feelings of connectedness, development and use of support networks, their resilience to potential or actual adversity together with their positive or negative experiences within their Australian and VET environments. The discovery of these concepts and their affect on the psychological identity adjustments that the participants make during their acculturation and adaptation, is instrumental in the development of the new shock absorbing resilience diagram (refer Figure 8.2) discussed as a theoretical contribution to knowledge in this chapter.

Due to the epiphany that arrived with the emergence of this new evidence from the second analysis, a post-finding conceptual framework reflects this evidence. The adjustments that I have made to my original conceptual framework reveal that while some concepts within the first framework are confirmed, new concepts are incorporated.

Post-findings conceptual framework.

My original conceptual framework is not a hypothesis to be confirmed but a structure that enables concepts to be corroborated by this project's findings. Using a flexible framework, adjustments are able to be made that illustrate the findings from this research. The post-finding conceptual framework, presented as Figure 8.1, demonstrates that while some concepts from my original conceptual framework (refer Figure 3.1) have merged, other concepts are new introductions.

The rationale for redesigning rather than simply adding concepts to my original concept framework stems from the results of the first and second data analysis. While many conceptual notions are confirmed in both analyses, evidence of conceptual linkages also demonstrates the interactive functioning of a few concepts. Thus the linkages between concepts are reflected in conceptual clusters and newly identified concepts also appear in the post-finding conceptual framework.

Unpacking the post-finding conceptual framework.

The following paragraphs will describe the differences between the first framework and this new conceptual framework. The reasons for shifting, resorting or re-labelling of the concepts are also explained.

Australian and VET contexts.

While borders in this research are identified as political country or national borders, socio-cultural boundaries are seen as social, community and educational discursive group traits. In the post-findings framework, these concepts of border and boundary crossing are no longer shown. They are linked to and embedded within the Australian and VET context concepts. Within these context areas, political and socio-cultural situations and circumstances arise. Thus events that relate to border and boundary crossing can occur within both contexts.

Within the Australian and VET contexts, students are provided with positive or negative experiences while they undertake border crossing activities or socio-cultural boundary crossing adjustments. These experiences occur due to students' decisions on agency activities, acculturation and adaptation. As these decisions have the ability

to influence identity during acculturation and adaptation, the concepts of borders and boundary crossing are shown in my original conceptual framework.

Within the findings, the participants make decisions on border and boundary crossing with a view to acculturate and adapt. Evidence in the narratives describes border crossing activities with five of the participants targeting the goal of a temporary migrant visa. Participant boundary crossing actions are also shown. Using assimilation and acclimatisation strategies as well as their agency or self-will, the participants develop their preferred socio-cultural behaviour characteristics and identities. Through these psychological and behavioural identity changes, the participants are able to be accepted and find their socio-cultural fit within the Australian and VET community contexts.

Networks and support systems.

The linkage and inter-relationship between the international student's support network and their identity development is shown in my original framework. These concepts remain in the post-findings framework as important influencers on the participants' psychological and behavioural adjustments during their acculturation and identity development. The findings demonstrate that feelings of social connectedness and resilience are able to be built and reinforced when individuals have quality relationships that provide a strong supportive network. Resilience both psychologically and behaviourally are then shown in the findings when the participants face difficult situations and challenges.

Self-efficacy and resilience.

In my post-findings framework, the concept of self-efficacy or self-belief systems has been expanded. While my original framework did consider the strength of the international VET students' self-efficacy as an influencer on their resilience, the findings demonstrate that the strength of the individual's efficacy belief system also indicates their ability to achieve greater resilience to adversity. This research evidences that the participants' efficacy is a core ingredient in their ability to remain motivated, confident and determined to achieve their goals as it positively influences their self-esteem as well as reinforces their self-belief in their ability to be successful.

VET context and networks.

The concept of third space no longer appears in the post-finding framework. Third space, identified in my original framework is now embedded within the concepts of VET context and networks. A third space in the VET environment, relates to the support provided by the teachers. Within this academic network support system, the positive and negative experiences of the participants impact on their efficacy development.

From the findings, all six participants said they experienced a third space and supportive academic network. This positive experience, further evidences that either in a community or academic context, a strong supportive network reinforces and encourages efficacy development.

Ability to cope.

Safety and wellness issues in the post-findings framework are expanded to include safety difficulties related to discrimination, criminal targeting, accommodation issues and wellness issues of depression and loneliness. In my original conceptual framework, safety and wellness issues are shown to be influenced by the quality and strength of the international VET students' support network. These extended safety and wellness themes remain related to the resilience concept as the participants' ability to overcome adversity is dependent on their ability to develop resilient behaviours and strategies. From the findings, the participants' resilient behaviours and strategies are scaffolded and strengthened by their networks.

Cultural/learning shock, socio-cultural differences/challenges, student diversity.

The concepts of cultural and learning shock and socio-cultural differences and challenges are absorbed into socio-cultural differences in the post-findings framework. These concepts in my original framework are recognised as identity development influencers. This clustered socio-cultural differences concept is now shown to influence resilience behaviours.

Diversity of international VET students' value and belief systems in the original framework has been expanded and in the post-findings framework relabelled as self-efficacy. This new concept has become central in the acculturation process. Research findings demonstrate that the strength of the participants' efficacy beliefs are dramatically impacted by: (a) their identity development; (b) their ability to develop networks, connectedness and resilient behaviours; and (c) their acculturation strategies and adjustments.

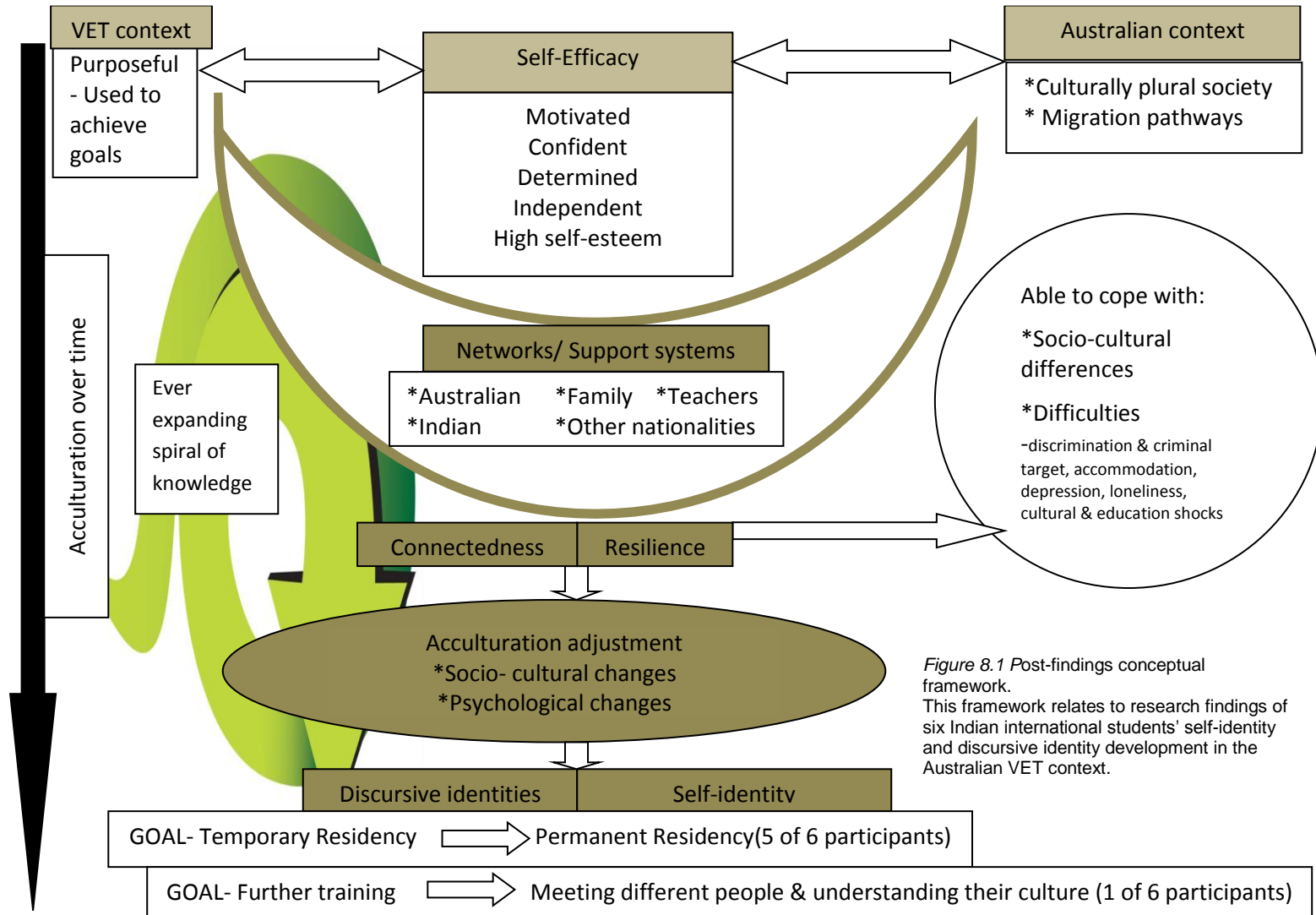


Figure 8.1 Post-findings conceptual framework. This framework relates to research findings of six Indian international students' self-identity and discursive identity development in the Australian VET context.

In the original conceptual framework, knowledge gained from the research findings is believed to be the beginning of an information spiral. This framework design is based on the principle that knowledge is an ever expanding spiral with one piece of knowledge forming a path that leads to another source of knowledge. This underpinning concept remains in the post-finding framework as this is a discovery research project about people and change.

Research Limitations

As mentioned in previous chapters, the findings from this qualitative research on the six Indian international VET students should not be generalised across other populations (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011; Stark & Torrance, 2005). Each participant's narrative is influenced by their experiences and is a subjective reflection of their own situated story (Riessman, 2000, April 20) with person-specific characters, settings and plots.

Questions on the research's sample size and method of sampling are not considered limitations as this is an exploratory study that used an inductive research approach. It is not a phenomenological study where the focus is on the lived experience during a specific event, or a grounded theory study where development of a theory on the empirical world is sought (Patton, 2014). However, issues on the way the research is designed and conducted may be raised and these are discussed under the headings of: (a) Was it real?; (b) Is it true?; (c) Will it be relevant?; and through reflection on my research process decisions, (d) What I might have done differently?

Was it real?

As the intent of this humanistic research is to respond to a question on self-identity, in Chapter 4 I show that a qualitative approach is the most appropriate. This approach allows me to appreciate the individual's perceptions about the historical events within their lives and their perspectives on the world around them (della Porta & Keating, 2008). So as to gather this subjective story data, a positive relationship with the participants during their one-to-one in depth interviews is created. This style of relationship allows me to "delve deeply into social and personal matters" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315) whereas a more public group-style interview would tend to stifle dialogue.

The purpose of the interview is to make meaning. This is achieved when both the participant and the interviewer share in the "interviewee's personal experiences and attitudes" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316). As each conversation is considered a personal and intimate encounter, I am careful to ensure the participant recognises themselves as the conversation-controller. It is they who direct me as to the start, finish, topic, and speech turn-taking points within the conversation. The participant's recognition of their positioning is essential as conversation interaction and the flow of talk are influenced by the interviewee's social positioning perceptions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The participant's belief as to their position (superior/inferior or leader/follower) and their level of confidence in telling me their story, can effect the story plots that they decide to include and exclude.

Being aware of my ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological world lens, I acknowledge that the selection of research design, sampling procedures, and data collection strategies and instruments (Merriam & Simpson, 2000) is influenced by my lens. Further, I am also conscious that I need the ability to identify data to be excluded, so as not to fall victim to the *frame problem* (Gee, 2004). In qualitative research, the frame problem relates to the ability to identify and select sufficient and appropriate data to include when answering the research question as well as recognise information that should be excluded.

My lens also assists me when selecting appropriate data analysis techniques and strategies to use for interpreting the findings. In selecting an analytical approach to read the data, I am aware that processes from different analytical frameworks will read data differently (Honan, Knobel, Baker, & Davies, 2000). Therefore in an attempt to avoid these potential research problems involving data accuracy, I did not interpret the talk of the participants. Rather, in sharing their stories on the important events in their lives, I am informed by their voices and are provided insight into the meaning of their experiences through their own words. As their stories are reflective descriptions of their histories, the participants view themselves as actors (Riessman, 2000) within their Australian social and academic contexts. Therefore, the data are the participants' reality at the time of the story telling, as they recall their lives, and remember the situations and events that influenced their socio-cultural discourses and discursive practices and internalised identity development.

Is it true?

In addition to the previous discussion on data reality, the truthfulness of the analysed findings is shown in the participants' actions and words. The six participants are not reluctant or concerned about sharing their stories. In fact, revelling at the opportunity, the participants' enthusiasm on two of the three interview days is shown by a few participants hovering in a waiting pattern around the interview room door. As they are proud of their achievements and some of them even consider themselves to be role models; they are anxious not to miss the opportunity to share their story. Their self-positioning is shown by their words:

Gafur: [I will tell others] how to improve your personality and how to live [a healthy life]. (Student G1)

Haroon: [If I went back to India] I'll try to help my friends. Help them to how to get success and how to get and experience. (Student H1)

Naisha: [Other international student workers] I always try to make them understand, this is a reality guys, you have to live in reality why do you live in a dream--- why you don't like grow up and your skills your learning skills, speaking skills you know. Use it. (Student N1)

Sadaf: When I came to here, I was new, and some of my other friends were also new, but I don't know why ... you know, like they trust me and think I know more than them, I don't know why. (Student S1)

Shama: [New international students need to] start making Aussie friends, don't be scared with them. (Student S2)

Recognising my findings are influenced by my epistemological stance, I also acknowledge that readers will add their own parts (Stake, 2005b) to the case study descriptions and in forming their own perceptions and understandings, identify participant story similarities and individual differences. As it is the readers or users

of the case study findings that seek generalisability more than researchers, I am aware others need to be able to draw their own conclusions as to the extent the research findings are able to be generalised to other situations (Merriam, 2009). By providing the opportunity for a vicarious experience through the vignettes in Appendix G, snapshot profile descriptions in Chapter 6 and the case study descriptions in Chapter 7, readers may therefore be able to make some naturalistic generalisations (Stake, 2005b). My position when I provide others with this vicarious experience is based on my ontological perspective of truth being relatively constructed and shared and as such I recognise that there are multiple voices of truth.

Will it be relevant?

The aim of this research is to contribute to the body of knowledge on Indian international students' identity and acculturation adjustment as they studied in the VET sector within an Australian context. International students in the VET sector have not previously been the specific focus of research in an Australian context and this research opens a space for thinking about discursive and internalised identity for this particular group of international VET students. Other than Haroon, the activities and goals of the participants within this group did not align with the normal expectations of sojourners in Australia as they appear to label themselves as students while taking on the acculturation behaviours of migrants.

The findings from this research on Indian international VET student experiences in Australia provide the theoretical foundation for future studies that will fill the gap in Australian VET literature. This research promotes a better understanding of the cultural and academic situations of Indian international VET students. The stories from these participants on their identity development and socio-cultural experiences will assist in understanding the constraints, controls, goals and roles played by future international VET students. It is through their stories that governments, educators and other interested parties are able to be provided with information and a greater understanding on the personal, cultural, social and academic situations that are faced by these students.

Also conveyed is a greater understanding on the strategies and resources available to international students as well as the agentic actions that they may use during their acculturation and adaptation into Australian social and academic environments. Since the 2009 student visa changes, many existing and prospective international students are unsure of their safety and financial security while studying in Australia and this concern may affect the discourse identities and discursive practices that international students develop. Socio-cultural confusion and misjudgements may occur when international students during acculturation take on various identity mantles. With increased information, governments, educators and other interested parties will find a reduction in cross-cultural misunderstandings.

This is highly personal case study research due to the unique interaction between the participants and myself. The quality and utility of the meanings generated from the research findings may be of value even though reproducibility is difficult in this kind of research (Stake, 2005b). Other general implications from this research are explained in the empirical contributions to knowledge section of this chapter.

What might I have done differently?

This case study research is based on two exploratory questions. These questions on identity change ask the *what* and *how* about Indian international students in the VET sector. The factors that influenced and guided me in selecting this methodology are the form of my questions (the *what* and the *how*) together with a review of my ontological, epistemological, and axiological stance (Yin, 2013). The choice of research methodology is the first in a series of decisions that I made during the research process, with any one of the alternatives having the potential to significantly impact on the outcome of the research. As the number of decisions that are made during the research and the decision making processes are now historical records, in this section I discuss four options that on reflection may have enhanced or enriched this research in some way. This discussion is not an exhaustive list but considers research decision alternatives and how they may have affected the outcome.

The first change item relates to the number of days that the Institute Manager allowed me to present the research information and conduct the participant interviews. As discussed in Chapter 5, I did regard a three day timeframe within a single week a limitation because it did not allow students time to think about the research project and consider their participation. The volunteers who participated in this research are from spontaneous reactions to my request for participants. It would have been interesting if I had asked the Institute Manager for three days in the following week. This would have allowed some students' time to think about participation. This extra time may have increased the number of participant volunteers. This increase in potential volunteers may include students from the hidden population; those who are experiencing socio-cultural difficulties and are not thriving in their VET and community environments.

Another decision relates to interview location. Conversations away from the institute with its inherent hairdressing room noises and people distractions, may have made a difference in the interviews. However, interview location remains the participants' choice and all interviewees chose to stay at the institute. The most likely reason they selected this time and location is because after classes they have bus schedules and work or personal commitments. Unless interviews are conducted during their lunch break (the only time given by their teacher and the Institute Manager), they may not have been able to participate. As an interview location produces "micro-geographies of special relations and meaning" (Elwood & Martin, 2000, p. 649), it would have been interesting to record and examine their stories and find how the stories may have changed (or did not change) due to variances in location and conversation dynamics.

A third area that I would wish to do differently is to arrange to meet with international VET students whom had recently arrived in Australia. Specifically, those who are commencing their studies. The participants in this research have been in Australia for over a year and their stories are recollections of their earlier experiences as well as discussions on their personal growth and identity changes. Being aware that "sociocultural adaptation increases steadily over the first four to six months, and then tends to level off nearing the end of the first year" (Masgoret & Ward, 2006, p. 70), I am interested in examining the identity changes of international VET students during their first year in Australia. Unfortunately, when beginning my

field research in 2011, for the first time there are no new enrolments at the research site. The cause is considered to be the new student visa requirements announced in 2009 which triggered withdrawal of approximately 17% (or more) of existing student visa applications (Trounson & Lane, 2009). It would have been enlightening to listen to the Indian international VET students' stories at the beginning of their journey and meet up with them again after a year and listen to their stories on identity changes, acculturation adjusting strategies and cross-cultural adaptation. This is something that may be valuable to pursue in future studies.

The final area that may add a different perspective and increase my understanding on the identity changes of the participants may have come from interviews with the teaching and administration staff of the institute. It would have been interesting to see if the staff, who regularly interacted and supported the Indian international VET students, have noticed similar or different discourse identity and discursive practice changes to those spoken about by the participants. As different perspectives are involved in this comparison, I doubt if the stories will match. However, this line of inquiry may enhance the overall understanding of the experiences of Indian international students undertaking VET studies in Australia. This area may also be considered for future research.

Contributions to Knowledge

My explicit focus on the combination of identity development, acculturation and adaptation of international VET students in the Australian context may attract a critical lens to my findings from other researchers. Although not anticipated, the combination of these concepts strengthens the interpreted data results. The outcomes of this study will add to the theoretical, methodological and empirical information on international student social, cultural and educational issues. This nexus is addressed through: (a) theoretical knowledge on international student identity change and resilience during acculturation and adaptation; (b) methodological knowledge on the use of case study descriptions to understand narrators' experiences when living in different socio-cultural worlds; and (c) empirical knowledge through Indian international VET students' testimonies on the socio-cultural and psychological issues they encountered in their journey towards their goals.

Theoretical.

As the focus of this research is on identity and identity development, its contribution to theoretical knowledge will add to existing theories found in psychology, social psychology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies (Holland, 2010). The identity development specifically addressed in this research relates to international VET students whom I have called *focused sojourners*. These students accept the label of student while acting more like migrants (refer Chapter 7). This contribution will add to and confirm existing research by Baas (2006) who conducted a 2005 study on Indian international students in Melbourne. His conclusion shows that the majority of Indian international students who come to Australia are actually focused on migration.

While examining my findings on focused sojourners, I also discover a significant theoretical insight into resilience. As noted in Chapter 2, resilience is seen as the

individual's ability to bounce back when faced with adversity (Baker, 2010). However, the diagram of resilience I propose is a variation on the Carver seminal model as there is no physical or psychological downturn that is accompanied by a gradual return to the pre-adverse level of functioning. Rather, it shows that the individual has the ability to function continuously showing no significant fluctuation in their levels of performance. This modernisation of the design introduced in Chapter 7, adds to the research on resilience conducted by social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, educators and many others (van Breda, 2011). The name of this new manifestation which was evidenced by this group of students, shock absorbing resilience, describes the characteristic processes of resilience when there are no or minimal signs of physical or psychological downturn.

Shock absorbing resilience model.

Located within the core of this representation is the individual's support network that holds up and reinforces the resilient (protective skin) abilities of the person. For the participants in this research, it is this network and their personal feelings of connectedness that provide a shield or barrier, allowing them to continue functioning as they deal with stressful and adverse situations. While their self-efficacy develops the resilient protective skin, it is their support network together with their self-efficacy that creates the patches to repair any punctures or intrusions that may impinge their ability to function. Using their shield of resilience, they are able to employ psychological and behavioural coping mechanisms to reduce, deflect, or dissolve difficult situations. While remaining positive and focused on their goals, their self-efficacy beliefs continually propel them forward along their journey. Figure 8.2 shows this representation of shock absorbing resilience where self-efficacy plays an important role as it: (a) initiates the development of resilient behaviours; (b) is assisted by support networks to maintain a type of protective skin; (c) ensures focus remains on achieving goals; and (d) provides the driving mechanism that transports them along their journey.

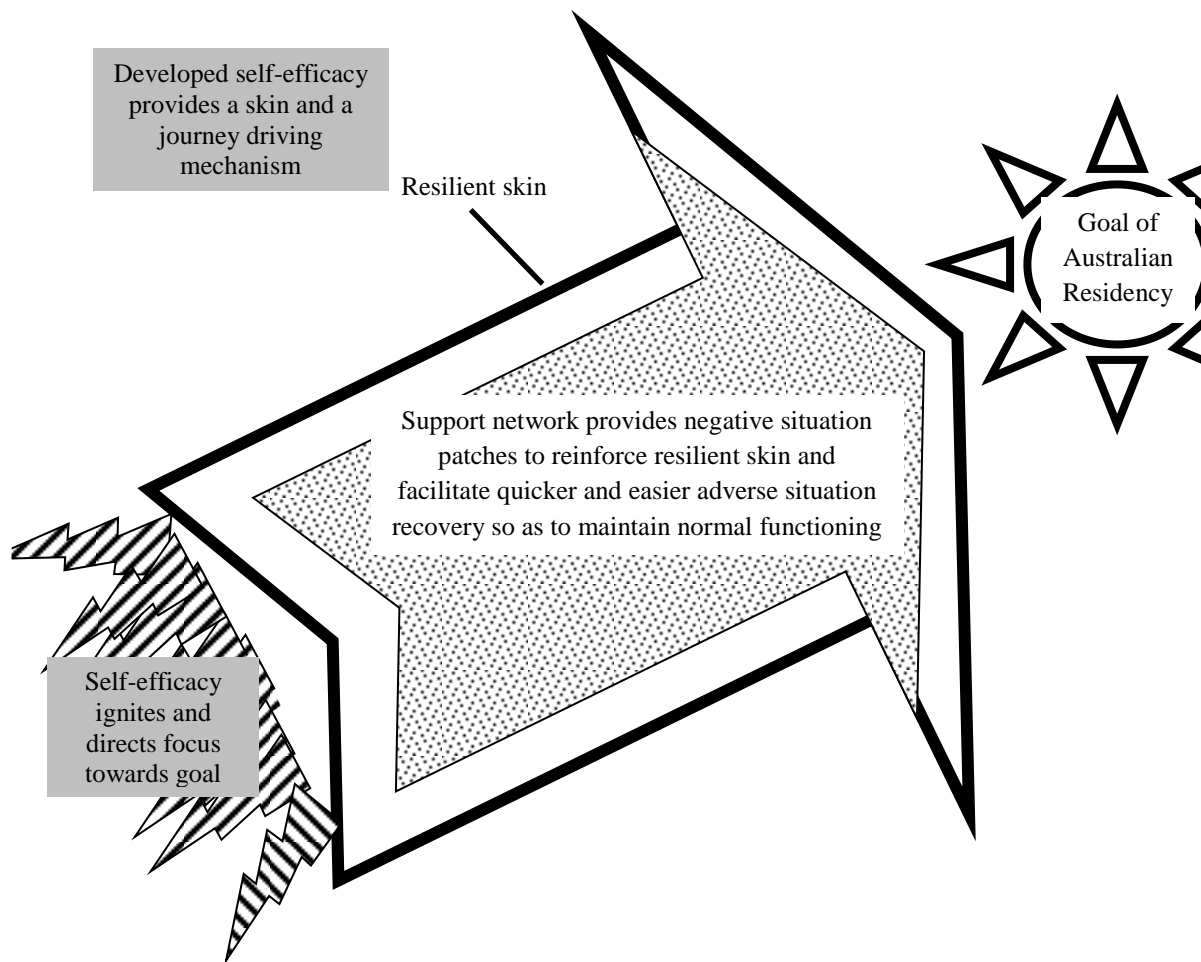


Figure 8.2 Schematic of shock absorbing resilience. With the individuals in this research group, their self-efficacy ignites and directs their belief that they can set and achieve the higher goal of Australian residency. Students eventually develop a resilient skin and are propelled along the path towards their goals when they have a high level of self-efficacy. The core of their resilience is their support network which patches up, reinforces or assists the student to be resilient to potential or actual adverse situations. Through a process of resilience patching and reinforcing, the students feel a lesser impact to any negative situation requiring them to have little or no reaction to an adverse event which allows them to maintain their normal level of functioning. Individuals within this research group have well developed self-efficacy which requires little or no phase of recovery when dealing with adverse situations. This diagram is seen as an adjunct to the Carver (1998) model where there is a physical or psychological downturn accompanied by a gradual return to the pre-adversity level of functioning. Adapted from "Resilience and Thriving: Issues, Models, and Linkages", by C. S. Carver, *Journal of Social Issues*, 54, p.246. Copyright 1998 by The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

Methodological.

One important contribution to methodological knowledge is the cohesive and cooperative linking and use of grounded theory tools (open, axial, and selective coding) and narrative method tools. Despite the use of grounded theory tools, this is not to be considered grounded theory research. The thematic analytical approach (refer Chapter 4) follows the techniques advocated by Reissman (2008). In combining these data analysis processes, I establish and retain an auditable evidence trail which adds to the rigour of the research methodology.

Some narrative researchers may not select this approach as it is known to be a slow process requiring attention to dialogue subtleties (Riessman, 2000). However, its strength is in its ability to organise and methodically assist the researcher to inductively locate data meaning from bounded data sequences. In demonstrating an organised approach in data analysis, research rigour is increased. Through an increase in rigour, confidence in the research process is also increased. Research confidence in the quality, applicability and thoroughness of the research can be established as researchers are allowed to: (a) document the process and interpretative work they perform; (b) provide persuasive arguments on their theoretical linkages; and (c) evidence a certain standard is used in the research analysis processes. I highly recommend using this analytical method with other socio-cultural narrative research. As well as strengthen research rigour, it also reduces opportunities for analytical practices that may be considered untrustworthy by others.

Another contribution to methodological knowledge is the process of identifying and binding data sequences within the participants' narrative transcripts (refer Chapter 5). Two approaches are used in selecting and binding data sequences. The first approach allows the participants to identify the beginnings and endings of the sequences through verbal signifiers. Whereas the second set of sequences to be bound are research theme driven and selected by myself (the researcher). Vignettes and profile snapshot descriptions of the six international VET students are developed from the first group of data sequences (refer Chapter 6). These use the participants' voices to describe their stories' meaning. With the second group of data sequences, the narrative theme findings build case study descriptions which are also supported by the participants' dialogue (refer Chapter 7). Each of these data sequence binding approaches has a different focus and seeks to identify narrative data for analysis. These data binding approaches can be employed for other dialogic research where data should not be fractured but held intact to analyse for story meaning.

My final contribution to methodological knowledge is to encourage researchers to follow their intuition when they suspect that there is more to be found in the data (Merriam, 1998). Through to the influence of this belief, a second analysis of the data is undertaken as the first analysis shows a number of unexpected identity-related concepts (refer Chapter 5). Even though it may appear complex for some qualitative researchers, sometimes there may be more to be understood about the data. If researchers become too familiar with their data, they may find it difficult to think more speculatively. Even though, it may appear that there is danger of going into the *never-never land* of inference (Merriam & Tisdell, in press), researchers should explore further, especially if they know (or feel) that there is something still to be discovered. Future socio-cultural researchers may wish to consider this when

analysing narratives as stories can have many layers. When researchers are provided with insights that they may not be able to explain, this sense can also suggest that there are more findings to be uncovered.

Empirical.

An empirical contribution to knowledge is in the Indian international VET student stories on their struggle to overcome a diverse range of socio-cultural experiences. Yet they did not see themselves as victims, but as survivors and even role models for others (refer Chapter 7). The participants' self-efficacy that radiated through their narratives appears to have prompted them to become research volunteers as they wanted to share their stories with me. As contemporary literature shows a number of contradictory findings on identity and acculturation (Kosic, 2006), this investigation will provide further insight into the strategies and processes of acculturation and the role of personality (or self-identity).

The primary contribution to empirical knowledge, I believe, is to be found in the vignettes (see Appendix G) and the profile descriptions presented in Chapter 6. These profile stories on the participants identify their goals and the strategies that they used in order to continue on their journey towards successfully achieving those goals. Although, as individuals or human agents different strategies are used to address situations, they remain positive. They also appear to see facing adversity as the price they pay for their success (Kosic, 2006) and the potential benefits that they may reap from their new Australian contexts.

This empirical finding adds to the debate on personality (or self-identity) across cultures. While one group's notion considers that social behaviour is controlled "primarily by traits or endogenous dispositions in the individual" (Kosic, 2006, p. 113), others think that specific situations and the context stimulate development and control of an individual's behaviour. Based on the findings from this investigation on six Indian international VET students, I subscribe to the first group's notion. Finally, it is through these empirical participants' narratives that a deeper insight and appreciation of the positive and negative actions and behaviours of Indian international VET students, is provided to vocational education public and private policy and decision makers.

Another significant outcome that contributes to empirical knowledge is the different aspect of students' lives from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. As this cultural diversity knowledge may not have been previously available, and acculturation has an effect on the student and the receiving institution and community, these factors may have significant impact. When people meet from different backgrounds, there are cultural pattern changes in both groups (Sam & Berry, 2006a). Acculturation (refer Chapter 2), sometimes confused with assimilation, is the adjustment or accommodation that occurs in the exchange and mutual improvement of societies after contact, as there is "reciprocal influence and change" that occurs in both cultures (Sam, 2006, p. 14). The knowledge that is gained from these narratives will assist VET institutes and their staff, local governments as well as State and Federal governments, in providing support services to address the needs of international VET students.

A further empirical finding relates to the English language skills of the participants during the interviews (refer Chapter 5). Only a few times during their dialogue is their speech stilted due to their mental word-searching processes. Generally, they have no difficulty in expressing their ideas and communicating their stories. While the six Indian participants do acknowledge an increase in their English skills, Gafur, Haroon and Naisha advise that their acculturation and adaptation became easier when their English skills improved. This further supports the notion that an individual's English skills dramatically affects their ability to adapt into Australian social and academic society (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). As shown by this study, the strength of an individual's English skills greatly impact on their ability to acculturate. Successful acculturation is achieved when individuals can effectively manage their lives and communicate with others in their environment.

Further Research

Because this research investigates a previously unexplored area in an Australian context there are multiple opportunities for further research. Several areas of future research on self-identity development, acculturation and adaptation in the VET sector have been suggested. These include:

- Gathering stories from the hidden population, those international students who are experiencing socio-cultural difficulties and are not thriving in their VET and community environments.
- Interviewing the same participants in different locations to examine if their stories alter due to differences in location or perceived social positioning as conversation interaction and the flow of talk are influenced by the interviewee's perceptions.
- Interviewing international VET students at two milestones: (1) four to six months in Australia (the beginning of their journey); and (2) again after a year (when significant adaptation has occurred).
- Interviewing international VET students as well as vocational education teaching and administration staff who regularly interact and support the students, making a comparison of their stories on student discourse identity and discursive practice changes.

Another area for further research that has not been discussed previously and can extend this work is a structural analysis of the participants' narratives. Structural analysis of the transcript data in the vignettes (Appendix G) may be able to discover the turning points where the participants' decided to change their identities. This type of analysis may also be useful by confirming the findings from this research.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I discuss the linkages between identity changes, acculturation, adaptation and the advantages of efficacy, resilience, networks and connectedness during that process. The thesis findings come from investigatory research on six Indian international students in the Australian VET sector. Stimulated by a need to understand and explain to others, this research starts exploring the identity changes made by the participants during their acculturation and adaptation in the Australian VET and community contexts. It also looks at the decisions the participants make when faced with political borders and socio-cultural boundaries. Plus, while

respecting the participants' position and journey, the philosophical and theoretical questions that surround self-identity and socio-cultural change are ethically and sensitively examined. Through this investigation, a new framework for thinking about international student sojourners in the Australian VET sector is developed.

As the aim of this research is to discover and explore the identity changes made by Indian international students in the VET sector within the Australian context, I find that I need two research questions. Each of these research questions (refer Chapter 1) has progressively been answered in various ways throughout this thesis. I have shown through the data and discussion presented, that the issues I have tried to investigate are complex and inter-related.

Responding to the research questions.

Research Question 1:

What identities do Indian international students build as they study in the VET sector within an Australian context?

This question is aimed at identifying the self-identities and discourses built by Indian international VET students in the Australian context. It is answered by allowing the students to speak for themselves in the form of vignettes (see Appendix G). By listening to their voices I am able to form snap-shot profiles descriptions and case study descriptions (refer Chapters 6 and 7) on the individual participants. From their narratives, I can identify that their primary self-identity is focused and confident in their ability to achieve their goals. While planning and maintaining sight of their goals, they remain motivated and excited about finding their own identity through self-discovery. Other discourses that the students build show individualistic variations, as these are identities that need to be seen by others and although affected by agentic choice, relate to their desire to find their socio-cultural fit within their community and academic environments.

Research Question 2:

How did the participants demonstrate resilience while finding their socio-cultural fit?

Rising out of the first data analysis, this question seeks to examine the Indian international VET students' ability to be resilient during the acculturation process where they are finding their socio-cultural fit. In explaining the negative events that occurred during their acculturation journey, the participants' dialogue also describes their reaction to each situation. When facing non-threatening (for example English difficulties) and threatening (for example physical abuse) negative events, a resilient reaction is expected. These psychological and behavioural reactions to a situation identify a person's resilience. For this group of Indian international VET students, there is little or no downward movement in motivation, confidence, independence, and determination to achieve personal goals, when they are faced with adversity. Their level of resilience is dependant, supported and reinforced by their self-efficacy, connectedness and supportive networks. These three elements are shown to be essential requirements for resilience development and successful acculturation. Adding to previous work on resilience, a new representation of resilience that I

named *shock absorbing resilience* is presented as a contribution to knowledge from this research.

Final Word

In sum, this thesis makes several significant contributions to research at different levels. As identity change relates to issues of difference, the need for more research into identity development of international VET students is evidenced. Further research on the acculturation and adaptation of international students in the Australian VET sector is also required. For international students who may see themselves as sojourners or as student-migrants, acculturation is a process where strategies (efficacy and resilience) and resources (networks and connectedness) are used to make changes to their identities. These identity changes allow them to psychologically and socio-culturally fit into their environment and manage their lives while they strive to achieve their goals.

Research that furthers the work presented in this thesis will assist policy makers, international student VET providers and teachers, deliver quality education and support for international students. These professionals and other interested parties are continually seeking to improve the quality and marketability of education and supportive services in Australia. With increased insight and greater understanding of the identities and discursive practices of international students, the objectives of improved access to appropriate Australian international student support systems and services as well as the development of the Australian education service economy, will become a reality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: International student enrolments in Australia 1994 to 2011

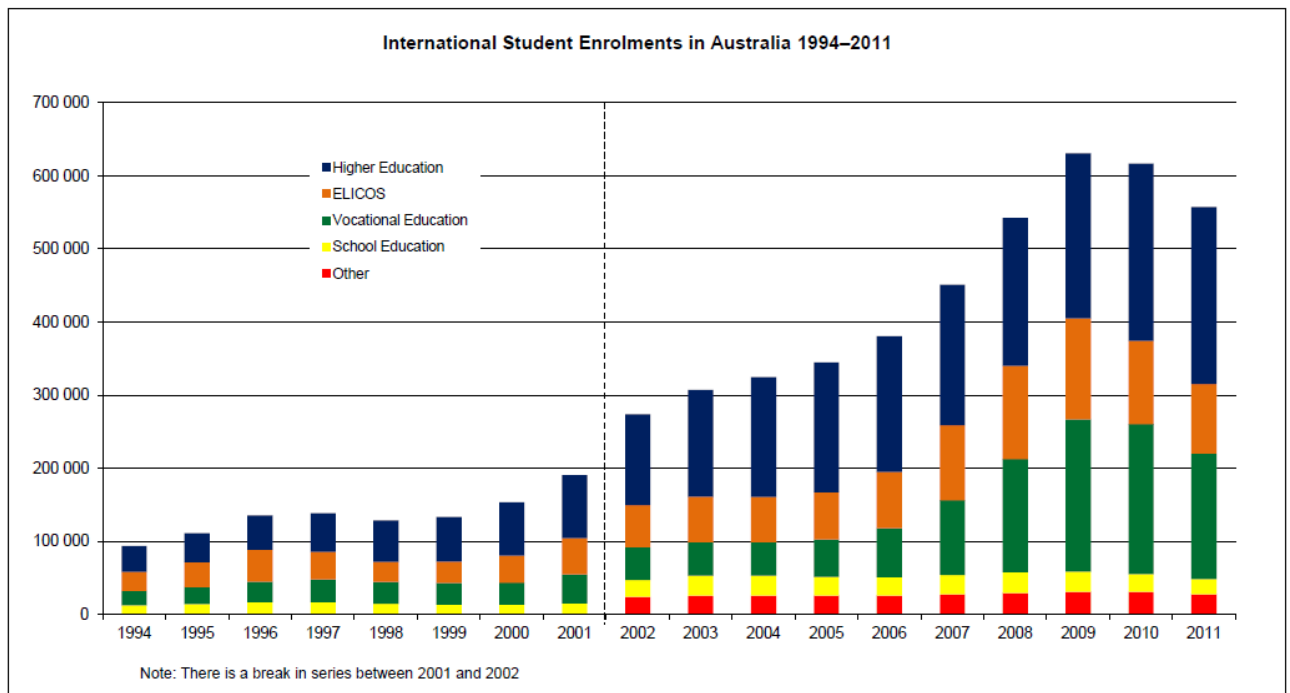


Figure A1. International student enrolment annual statistics from 1994 to 2011 show increased numbers up to 2008-2009 and then a decline in 2010 and 2011. Australian Education International (AEI) student enrolment data are derived from the Provider Registration and International Students Management System (PRISMS) database and counts enrolments by students studying in Australia on student visas. Extracted from "International student data 2011", Australian Education International, n.d. Retrieved from <https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Pages/InternationalStudentData2011.aspx>

Appendix B: 2010 international student information

Table B1.

International student countries of origin, numbers and education sector percentages in 2010.

Country	Numbers	% Sector Distribution				
		Higher Education	VET	ELICOS	Schools	Other
China	126,313	54.8%	11.3%	21.4%	7.0%	5.5%
India	68,758	29.3%	67.3%	2.7%	0.2%	0.5%
Republic of Korea	25,909	28.2%	28.7%	27.9%	12.6%	2.7%
Malaysia	21,451	80.7%	10.4%	2.3%	2.9%	3.6%
Vietnam	18,920	39.7%	21.2%	24.9%	10.5%	3.6%
Thailand	16,449	20.6%	42.6%	33.0%	2.8%	0.9%
Indonesia	14,491	54.4%	26.9%	11.0%	2.0%	5.7%
Nepal	14,462	30.5%	65.1%	4.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Brazil	11,245	5.8%	35.8%	56.2%	1.9%	0.4%
USA	10,255	24.5%	11.6%	0.2%	0.9%	62.8%
<i>Other nationalities</i>	141,366	43.6%	24.0%	20.8%	3.5%	8.1%
Total	469,619	43.2%	27.9%	18.4%	4.6%	5.9%

Note. This snapshot provides an overview of the number of international students studying in Australia on a student visa in 2010. International student numbers relate only to international students in Australia on a student visa and are derived from Australian Education International data by matching a number of different variables such as date of birth, name and gender. Adapted from "Research Snapshot: International student numbers 2010" by Australian Education International, 2011, May. Retrieved from <https://www.aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/2011051801.pdf>

Appendix C: Recommendations on the welfare of international students

Summary of recommendations made by the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that international students be provided with personal safety information including reporting requirements, prior to coming to Australia. This should be reinforced at the orientation session provided by the relevant provider.

Recommendation 2

The committee supports public transport concessions for international students. It recommends that the Commonwealth again recommend to the states of Victoria and New South Wales that they introduce such travel concessions for international students.

Recommendation 3

The committee also recommends that all states undertake an audit of the travel concessions given to international students with the aim of standardising them.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that education and training providers should be required to provide up to date information on their website regarding accommodation in Australia, including information regarding tenancy rights and responsibilities. This may be via a link to the *Study in Australia* website; however, it may also include more localised information.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) undertake a review of the appropriateness of the 20-hour limit on working hours for international students.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the issue of voluntary work not counting towards employment hours be clarified in material provided by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that DIAC undertake a review of the ability to use discretion or a compassionate exemption for students with work rights who breach their visa conditions in relation to work.

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that:

- students receive information packs, based upon resources such as the *Study in Australia* website and the Rainbow Guide, in hard copy and preferably in the language of the country of departure at the time their visas are granted. The information packs should include comprehensive information regarding tuition and extra fees; living costs including all relevant expenses such as accommodation and health; employment opportunities; rights conferred by law (including tenancy rights and employment rights); dispute resolution procedures and relevant contact organisations; and support services and amenities.
- both the online manual and hard copies should include state-specific information, detailing the various rules, laws and rights applicable in each state and territory.

Recommendation 9

The committee recommends the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Ombudsman be extended to cover the international education sector.

Recommendation 10

The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the national body to be developed for the VET sector adapt the registration process to develop a comparative information tool on education providers. This information tool should differentiate between the capacity of providers by comparing such things as the level and quality of support services available to students. The information tool would be made available on a relevant website.

Recommendation 11

The committee recommends that, to improve enforcement, the National Code be reviewed by the new national regulatory authorities for higher education and the VET sector, in consultation with stakeholders, to provide clarity and specify details of minimum standards upon which registration would be dependent.

Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that clear and timely mechanisms must be developed by the regulatory authorities and peak bodies to ensure that, if a provider closes, students are informed of their rights and of either getting their money back or transferring to a new course. Students also need to be made aware of the avenues they can use to ask questions or lodge complaints.

Recommendation 13

The committee recommends that in engaging agents overseas, DEEWR ensures that agents and sub-agents are able to access authoritative information regarding studying in Australia.

Recommendation 14

The committee recommends DIAC continue to expand the eVisa system, as an effective tool to encourage the professional conduct of overseas agents.

Recommendation 15

The committee recommends that providers deal exclusively with education agents who have successfully completed an appropriate course such as the Education Agent Training Course (EATC) and that this requirement be phased in over the next three years.

Recommendation 16

The committee recommends that as a matter of urgency the issue of medical internships receive priority in workforce planning and that this be the subject of a special study by Health Workforce Australia.

Note: Extracted from "Inquiry into the welfare of International Students" by the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, 2009. Retrieved from http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eet_ctte/international_students/report/report.pdf

Appendix D: Research protocols

Following Yin's (2009) advice on protocol frameworks for case studies based on interview data, the below procedures were used to frame the research process. By providing a structure that evidenced the ethical considerations for selection of participants and the research site, research rigour and trustworthiness in the research processes and practices was demonstrated. The protocol framework for this research included:

- (a) the international student interview questions;
- (b) an overview of the research project;
- (c) procedures to access and ethically protect data sources; and
- (d) a production guide for a doctoral report.

International student interview questions

Background information

- How long have you been in Australia?
- Are you here alone or with family?
- Who made the decision for you to study in Australia?
- How long have you been studying in Australia?

Social differences

- What did you expect life in Australia would be like?
- Have you found many differences compared to your home country? What are they?
- What places do you go to and what things do you do in your spare time?
- What social or study groups in Australia have you joined?
- How easy has it been for you to make friends while you have been in Australia?
- What nationality (or culture) would you say most of your friends are?
- How many Australians have you been able to make friends with?
- How and where do you tend to meet most of your friends?

Studying differences

- What did you expect studying in Australia would be like?
- What are some good things about studying in Australia?
- Are there any things about studying in Australia that concern you?
- What are some of the interesting things you are studying?
- What are some difficult or not so interesting things that you are studying?

Social profile

- If a friend was introducing you to a group of students, what would you hope they would say about you? For example, "This is _____. He/She is _____"
- If a friend was introducing you to a teacher, what would you hope they would say about you? For example, "This is _____. He/She is _____"
- If a friend was introducing you to a social group (one outside of college), what would you hope they would say about you? For example "This is _____. He/She is _____"

Personal profile

- In a few words can you describe your personality (characteristics) when you first came to Australia?
- Which if any of those characteristics have changed since you arrived in Australia and which have remained the same?
- Can you describe a situation or identify a time when you decided to make those changes?

- Can you explain why you did not need to change some of your personality characteristics?
- Do you act differently now with people compared with how you used to when you first came to Australia? How do you act differently? Why?
- Do you think your personality will change again once you have finished your studies? Why do you think you may change?

Experiences and social support

- What are some good things that have happened to you recently?
- Since arriving in Australia have you experienced situations where you were frightened or felt uncomfortable? What sort of situations were they?
- How did you handle those difficult situations?
- Did your friends help you with those difficult situations? How did they help?
- Do you think you will remain in contact with your friends once you have finished your studies?

Thank you for your time and assistance with this study

Overview of the research project

This research will examine the multiple discourses, discursive practices and self-identities built by a group of Indian international students as they study in a VET context and live in an Australian community. The findings from this investigatory research will illuminate the discursive identities and self-identities of Indian international students who have faced and dealt with socio-cultural differences and boundaries within Australian education and community contexts. The role of this study is to add a VET dimension to the strong research on international students' acculturation and adaptation as they attempt to "fit in" to their Australian environments; socially, culturally and educationally. There is much research on identity, acculturation and adaptation of international students attending university but no current research on Indian international students in the Australian VET sector.

Procedures to access and ethically protect data sources

Data collection procedures

1. Identify a suitable institute for collection of data.

The institute needs to allow access to interview Indian international students who are completing vocational education studies.

2. Screen candidates using an expressions of interest (EOIs) process.

The expression of interest process incorporates an oral and written informed consent stage which aims to advise potential research candidates on the purpose and details of the research as well as counsel them that participation is voluntary. Potential candidate volunteers are advised of the research selection criteria and are given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. They are also advised details on any potential risks, benefits and limitations that may relate to the research project.

The selection criteria for participation requires that they:

- a) are a current vocational education student
- b) are of Indian nationality background
- c) have no prior exposure to Western education, and
- d) are not be living with family.

3. Filter EOIs.

If more than 20 EOIs are received, candidates who are considered data rich sources are to be selected.

4. Collect data using an interview process.

One-to-one participant interviews are used as the main data collection technique. A pilot tested bank of questions are used during the semi-structured interviews. So as to maintain conversation flow, interview questions sources from the question bank may be altered or not used. With participant permission, interviews are to be digitally recorded.

Data storage procedures

1. During the period of data collection and analysis, all soft copy files, hard copy data, analysis records and diary notes are to be stored in a locked filing cabinet.
2. All current and archived soft copy data files are to be maintained on an external computer hard drive. No participant names are stored on or with the digital audio recorded data or the hard and soft copies of interview transcripts.
3. Digital records of interviews are to be destroyed on completion of the data analysis reporting phase.
4. After a period of 5 years following the completion of the research, all hard and soft copy data are to be destroyed.

Production guide for a doctoral report

1. The reporting format needs to reflect current doctoral research requirements. In 2014 the research standard was the 2013 American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition manual.
- .

Appendix E: Ethical research requirements and considerations

(1) Office of Research and Higher Degrees Approval

From: Ethics

Sent: Wednesday, 17 November 2010 1:10 PM

To: Vicki Roberts

Subject: Ethics approval H10REA087.2

Importance: High

Dear Ms Roberts,

The Ethics Chair has recently reviewed your application for amendments to approved project "Ten international students in Australian vocational education context: Stories of circumstances and challenges" (H10REA087.1) as stated in your memorandum dated 16/11/2010. The requested amendments have been endorsed and full ethics approval has been granted.

Your amendment approval number is H10REA087.2

Ethics approval for the project expires on 31/12/2011.

The standard conditions of this approval are:

- (a) conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC
- (b) advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project
- (c) make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes
- (d) provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval
- (e) provide a 'final report' when the project is complete
- (f) advise in writing if the project has been discontinued.

For (c) to (e) proformas are available on the USQ ethics website:

<http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethicsbio/human>

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now implement the amendments. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Regards

Helen

Mrs Helen Phillips
Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
Level 5, S Block, West Street, Toowoomba QLD 4350
Email: patricia.phillips@usq.edu.au
Ph: (07) 46 312 690

(2) Section of research approval letter from the institute

Dear Vicki

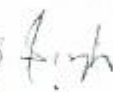
We wish to provide you with approval to conduct a PhD research study at our institute on the social, cultural, and educational experiences and challenges faced by international students in a vocational education context as they live and study in Australia.

This letter is to confirm approval for you to approach the institute's international students, teachers and administration personnel with a request to participate in your study and collect research data from their interviews and group discussions. We acknowledge you will be asking participants in your study for permission to digitally (audio) record their interviews and group discussions.

We will also be able to provide you with access to institute documents and teacher records. However, as you are aware, to access student records requires approval from the student. After you have spoken with the international students and they have given their consent to participate, upon request from each student, we will provide a Student Record Consent Form to the student to be completed and returned to our office. After processing the form, you may then have access to individual student records.

If you have any questions please call us on 07 [REDACTED]

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED] 
[REDACTED]

(3) Participant's information sheet**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET****WHO DO I THINK I AM?
A STUDY OF INDIAN INTERNATIONAL VET STUDENTS IN
AUSTRALIA.****RESEARCHER DETAILS***Vicki Roberts*

Telephone: (07) 3276 0549 (Work and Home)

Email: D9510646@umail.usq.edu.au**The researcher:**

For a number of years I have been involved with international students as a teacher and friend. From this exposure and my observations of international students I have noted a number of cultural and environmental challenges which confront international students who study in a western environment.

The project:

This research study is examining the multiple discourses and discursive practices of Indian international students as they study in a VET context and live in an Australian community. The findings from this empirical research will describe the discursive identities of Indian international students who have moved through and into a number of socio-cultural worlds within Australia. The role of this study is to add a VET dimension to the strong research on international students as they attempt to "fit in" to their Australian environments; socially, culturally and educationally. There is much research on international students attending university but no current research on Indian international students in the VET sector.

To collect data, I will be providing an information session at Australian Careers College (the institute) where you will be invited to participate in the research project. Participant expressions of interest (EOIs) will be gathered at the information session. If more than 20 EOI are received then the EOIs will be considered and filtered using two selection criteria items– (1) having no prior exposure to Western education, and (2) not currently living with family. One-on-one interviews will be conducted with selected volunteer participants.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research which would involve one or two interviews which will discuss your perception of your identity and your social, cultural and educational practices. I would like to digitally (audio) record the interviews. Relevant research data may also be found in student and teacher records as well as institute documents. I would like to request permission to access your institute records. I acknowledge that in order to gain access to your records, the procedures of the institute need to be followed and you would need to sign the institute's consent form.

Below is more information on participation in the project and the identified project risks and benefits to the participants, the institute and the vocational education sector.

Participation:

International students' participation in this project is voluntary. Participants are required to allocate approximately two hours over a three month period for interviews. The timing of the interviews will be negotiated with the participants and if appropriate the Training Manager of the institute. The most suitable time available will be discussed to ensure participants are not impinged by a difficult activity schedule.

Expected benefits:

This research project will benefit yourself and future international students by enhancing the understanding and knowledge of public and private policy makers, regulators and VET institute staff who wish to nurture and improve student wellbeing as well as the social and academic experience of international students. By participating in this project and sharing your stories with the researcher you will also benefit through practising your English skills.

Risks:

There are no physical risks associated with participation in this project. However, if at any time you or another participant show signs of discomfort, uneasiness or stress, the interview will cease immediately and advice will be sought from the institute's counsellor.

Confidentiality:

All comments and responses will be recorded anonymously and will be treated confidentially. The names of individual students will not be recorded during data collection. The interview recordings and the transcripts will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet.

Please be assured that:

- your identity will not be revealed as fictitious names will be used to represent yourself, your course, your teachers, the administration staff and your institution;
- digital recordings used during interviews will be used only for research or educational purposes;
- a transcript of your interview will be provided to you.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw at any time without comment or penalty. As the Director of the institute has given permission for this study, your decision to participate will in no way impact on your current or future relationship with this training institute.

Results of research

A meeting will be arranged with each participant to present the findings of the research. A report on the findings as well as copies of any published papers that are produced as part of this research project will also be presented at the meeting. For those participants who are no longer attached to the institute, copies of all the

documents will be emailed to them. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain participants and training institute confidentiality.

Questions/further information:

To provide an opportunity for us both to develop a mutual understanding of the research project and of our parts in the research process, there will be a number of opportunities for you to ask questions, discuss information and make decisions on your level of participation. If you have any questions, are uncertain about anything or require further information about the project, please feel free to contact the researcher.

Concerns/complaints:

Should you have a concern, about the conduct of this research project, please contact the USQ Ethics Officer, Office of Research & Higher Degrees, University of Southern Queensland, West Street, Toowoomba QLD 4350, Telephone (07) 4631 2690, email: ethics@usq.edu.au.

(4) Participant consent form

STATEMENT OF CONSENT – INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**WHO DO I THINK I AM?
A STUDY OF INDIAN INTERNATIONAL VET STUDENTS IN
AUSTRALIA.**

RESEARCHER DETAILS

Vicki Roberts

Telephone: (07) 3276 0549 (Work and Home)

Email: d9510646@uemail.usq.edu.au

Statement of international student consent:

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- have read and understood the information sheet about this project;
- have had any additional questions answered to your satisfaction;
- understand that you can contact the researcher if you have further additional questions;
- understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- understand that you are able to decline access to your institute records, without comment or penalty;
- understand that I will record my conversation (interview) with you;
- understand that, if you have a concern regarding the implementation of the project, you should contact the USQ Ethics Officer, Office of Research & Higher Degrees, University of Southern Queensland, West Street, Toowoomba QLD 4350, Telephone (07) 4631 2690, email: ethics@usq.edu.au.

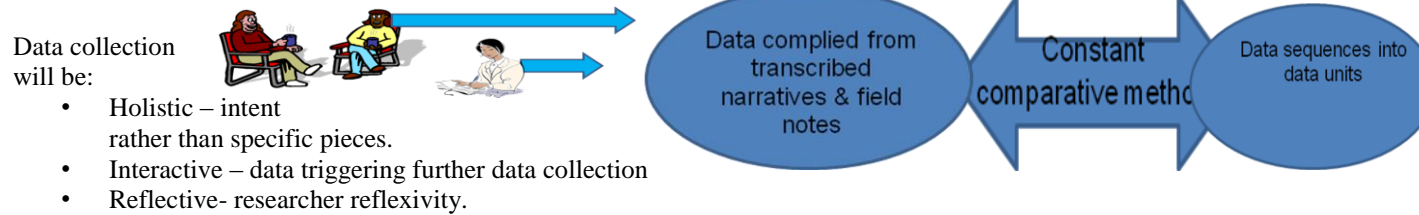
Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix F: Schematic of the data gathering and analysis method

Stage 1: Data collection



Stage 2: Narrative analytical approach

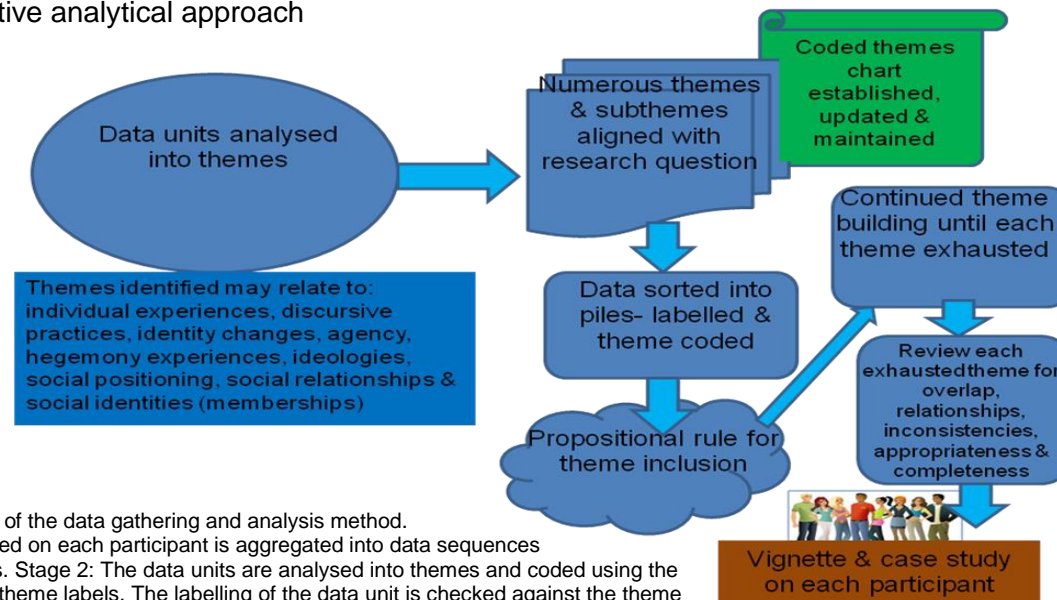


Figure F1 Schematic of the data gathering and analysis method. Stage 1: Data collected on each participant is aggregated into data sequences which form data units. Stage 2: The data units are analysed into themes and coded using the list of theme and subtheme labels. The labelling of the data unit is checked against the theme propositional rule. Data are added to themes until saturation occurs. Exhausted themes are reviewed for overlaps, relationships, inconsistencies, appropriateness and completeness. A vignette and profile are developed on each participant. A case study is then developed using the data and the participants' vignettes.

Appendix G: Vignettes of six Indian students in the VET sector

Although the participants were able to speak and understand English, there were times during the interviews when there were blank spaces or silence during the conversations. In order to augment understanding of the participant sequences in the vignettes, I have used signifiers to indicate areas of non-speaking thinking time or places where missing or previously mentioned words needed to be inserted. Table G1 lists the signifiers and their meanings.

Table G1.

Story dialogue indicators and their meanings.

...	The participant gathered their thoughts before continuing their story.
---	The participant spoke about this more than once in their story and the conversation parts have been joined.
[words]	The participant's comments related to a previously discussed topic or there appeared to be words missing from their comment.

Note. These are participant dialogue indicators that represent places of non-speaking thinking time or areas where missing or previously mentioned words needed to be inserted.

The dialogue sequences presented in these participant vignettes are considered evidential data. As there may be more than one characteristic or theme within the meaning of a sequence, each sequence was divided into smaller data pieces during the first and second analysis phases. Each thematic piece may be used more than once and evidence different thematic characteristics due to the multiple meanings held within the data.

Gafur (G1)

Decision maker

When I asked Gafur who made the decision that he should study in Australia, he said, "Me and my brother" (Student G1). Gafur then told me that his brother was still in India. He did not add anything more about his brother, so the conversation moved on to his thoughts about Australia before his arrived.

Expectations before arriving

Gafur talked about using social media to undertake some research on Australia prior to the two brothers making the decision that Gafur should go to Australia. Gafur recalled:

When I was in India I think Australia is nice place. My friends live in Australia and just posted some pictures on Facebook and I see those kind of pictures and I say, "*They are really living in good standard*" and these [pictures] have a good effect on me and I think they are in the best place in the world and I shall go to Australia and live over there. (Student G1)

Discoveries after arriving

The conversation moved into the area of social differences between India and Australia. Although Gafur recognised there were “a lot of difference between live here and in India and study here and study in India” (Student G1), these cultural differences appeared to be acceptable to him. The culturally different areas that Gafur did notice related to living and education social responsibility arrangements. With living arrangements, Gafur explained:

In India we live with family and here we live with friends. Family members they always support you but friends sometimes they support you but [sometimes] they don't want to support you. (Student G1)

Learning shock

On study related social differences, Gafur revealed that in India there was a delineation of duties and responsibilities. While financial responsibility remained fully with the parents, the student concentrated solely on academic achievement. Now as a student in Australia, Gafur was trying to be financially independent and be responsible for his school fees. These social differences he described with:

I did my graduation in economics and I did diploma in computer engineering --- [In India] we always study five days in a week, and five days, and we wouldn't worry about the fee because my parents pay all the fees and this kind of things like we have teachers, tuitions and because we just we just concentrate on our study. But here we concentrate on our study ...because student can work 20 hours and because I'm also working 20 hours and --- which money I have from the work I pay for my school fee here because my parents are ready to pay for me but I don't want them to pay for me. Now, I'm going two days in a week but when I [first] came here I did four days [study] in a week. (Student G1)

Gafur would have undertaken a number of oral and written English-based activities during his studies. His improvement in English skills Gafur attributed to the subject of Communication. He also stated that he enjoyed learning and gaining skills that related to business management, money management, human resource management and health and safety. Gafur explained:

When I came here my communication skills were really bad because my mother tongue is Hindi and in Australia people speak English so it's easy for me to gain and to improve my skill in English. And another thing like the money has been subject to how to manage in your staff and if you have any business how to manage. So it's easy for me to discount to manage with this and the second time health and safety. Here peoples are always helpful health and safety occupation but not in India...Peoples there they don't know what is real meaning of health and safety and when I came here they do induction in the class, this is your exit door, this is fire evacuation and like this but not in India. I like this. Because people put health and safety first because health is wealth. (Student G1)

Learning support

Investigating further into studying differences and how Gafur perceived these, it was the teaching methods and teacher support that impressed him the most.

I like this way [of studying] because the teachers just say do work and they just want students study and not sometime... not in Indian schools I like ...

schools and teachers [in India they] come and they give lectures and they don't really worry about study or not...here the teachers are very careful and if we don't do study they just complain about our, our management and this kind of things are really good. Because in India like if we don't study teachers some time in school days teachers punish students but not here. But here if we don't study teachers are just say only if you study its good for you but if you don't study we don't care but it's your choice. (Student G1)

He confided in me that at first he had difficulty with practical activities but his skills improved due to the teacher's support and encouragement. He explicated:

When I started this course it was really hard for me because I am not used to what help of teachers and seniors so it's easy for me now ... I can now... teachers say you now can do if you practice because my teacher always say practice make perfect so that's why now I'm used to this. Teachers really helpful, they help in every matter. (Student G1)

Current social contacts and activities

Although Gafur was studying as well as working, he was able to make Australian and Indian friends through work and social activities. Gafur advised that his main social activity where he met people was playing cricket:

In India I was a cricketer. Here I used to and on Sunday I mostly play for my suburb. (Student G1)

Friends' nationality

It also appeared that even though he was open to making new friends, he had only one friend before he found work. Gafur was in Australia for six months before he was given his first job in a factory. Now that he was working at Coles, he had been able to establish many friendships. Gafur elucidated:

Cause in six months, like when I came in Australia I was studying and I had no job. When I came here I have just only one friend--- He was living with me and er but unfortunately he left me and he changed his house and now he's living in Chermside and now I'm working at Coles, I have friends. If you met someone, if you want to get with someone so it's for you to make friends so I have a lot of friends now. I always meet with my friends at work. [I have] only three [Australian friends]. Most of my friends of them are Indian. (Student G1)

Discourse and discursive practices

Gafur, as did other international students, made decisions on the formation of social profiles or discourses (identity types). These decisions related to his adaptation into the Australian environment. The discourses or discursive identities Gafur developed were influenced by his perceptions of who he thought he was, who he wished to be, and how he wished others to see him. Gafur speculated that in being introduced to fellow students, these words would be used:

First off he would describe about my things because I always help me and I always make fun in the class because we have no families here. I think it easy for each other to enjoy and have a moment of fun so if my friend describe me he would always describe about he is enjoyable person. (Student G1)

When being introduced to a teacher, Gafur believed that this would be said:

She'd say he's a good boy, he's a cheerful person and he don't worry about anything and this life he is just studying and spending his life and he's enjoying everything in life. And she always describe he don't get everything. I accept everything like this is part of life. And because if we have been whole life so how do we know what is said. (Student G1)

If Gafur joined a friend's social group he said he hoped his friend would introduce him with:

He always helps peoples. [As] I'm a good sportsman he'd say he always makes good decisions because that is the first thing of a sportsman to make good decisions to help other peoples. Because in a team we play alone we can't be in a team and if we are in a team we play together and we achieve and we can win anything (Student G1).

Gafur's reasoning for wanting to be known as someone who would help people appeared to stem from his personal belief on humanity and that people should help others. He explained:

I want to help peoples because it's my first duty because I'm human being. I would ask everyone to help each other and if someone have a problem try to solve that problem try to fix it. (Student G1)

Self-identity

When I asked him to describe his own personality (or self-identity), Gafur stated "I would describe something about me ... I'm good and I am very pretty" (Student G1). This positive self-image indicated Gafur believed in himself and had a strong sense of efficacy. Immediately after describing himself as good and pretty, Gafur then spoke about his frustrations on how people in the community saw him. He explained his feelings with:

People think that, according to my in Australian culture people don't like my reason. People don't like this person [because he] has beard and turban--- that is depressing. Because I face one person when I was in Roma ... he said "Why you don't clean shave" [and] I say "It's my religion to keep beard" and he say "Oh I have never seen peoples who keep beard in religion so how do you" [and] I say "Because in my religion all peoples keep" and he say "Do you wash your beard every day?" and I say "Do you wash your hair?" and I say "Yes". He say, "I don't believe, I don't believe". If someone don't know another peoples religion why they comment on it. If someone don't know about another one so I think keep quiet and don't ask anyone why you don't do this and why you do this and why you do this. They don't understand my religion and they don't understand me and they just ask question which question they have no meanings. (Student G1)

Behavioural and psychological changes

When questioning him on whether he had made changes to his self-identity (personality) and what changes he believed he had made to his persona since being in Australia, Gafur explained that personal presentation (clothes) reflected the strength of your personal values (qualities) and the discursive identity (personal presentation) that you wanted others to have of you. He explicated with:

My personality has been changed because when I was in India I look good but I don't care about my personality because if people here they always care

about their clothes like these kind of things and it's really good for me. When I was in India I think oh don't worry I'm looking good but here peoples think if you look good it means we are ... we have good qualities. Personality is very important for everyone. Yes, I learnt a lot of things about presentation, how to present yourself and other peoples now and other country. (Student G1)

Gafur then recalled when he had made these personal changes. His account of the event illustrated that within his first six months in Australia, he realised that a part of his discursive identity (the way he appeared to others and the way he spoke when interacting with others) needed to change. Gafur decided to make changes to his clothes (presentation) and ways of speaking (communication) so his demeanour was more socially acceptable. He recalled:

Yes, this kind of things learning in my life in six months. Cause in six months, like when I came in Australia I was studying and I had no job and I just have \$200. My parents gave me \$2,000 and er you know, I don't know how to live in Australia because that expenses, expensive like home rent and there were school fee and your food because er here, I'm self-dependent and I always think about my money because expenses are making hole in my pocket and I always do, I always worry about this, I don't get any job and I'm trying to find good paid job because, because I'm studying two days and not three or four days and I want a job in four days because I want to earn something to pay my school rent, school fees and rent but I couldn't find any job. These days are very bad for me and one day I quit, I asked my parents I don't want to live here I want to come over there, my parents say no don't worry, try to do and try to want and try to get any job and they say, my parents say, you'll just work one day, find work two or three days and just earn some money and pay your home rent but I say no, I don't want, I didn't any job and I want to come back because the problem is er ... So that's why I want to change my way and I want to turn my presentation, the problem is presentation and communication skill. (Student G1)

Acknowledging he appeared happy with the changes in his discursive identity, I asked Gafur if he would revert and change again if he returned to India. His reaction indicated that he had other plans and had no intention of returning to India:

Now I'm act good now, because I have good job. I'm studying full time and I'm used to Australia and I know how to live in Australia. How to behave. How to behave in peoples too. How to manage in Australia life. So I'm very comfortable. I like my personality now. So if I get my PR [permanent residency] I work full time here and I don't want to leave. Yeah, I want to try [for] my PR because I want to live here because I'm very used to of Australia. So yeah I want to open my business here. My father have saw mills in India. If I get my PR I will open saw mills here. (Student G1)

Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences

Gafur had not discussed a positive experience but he had described two situations where he felt concerned as his future appeared bleak. Both situations related to employment and showed the strength of his Indian support systems as well as how he was able to extend his support network to envelope new friends in Australia.

Support mechanisms available and used

After leaving his first job in a factory, it was three months before Gafur was given work at Coles. He recalled how he financially survived due to his family and local support systems:

This thing three months ... very depressing for me. I managed because er my parents send some money for ... send money for me and my friend who lives here, --- he gave me \$1,000 to live here. My friends really help me when I was in difficult difficulty, one of them is my friend and --- when I had no money he paid my room rent and everything and he pay for everything for me and I'm really helpful, I'm really thankful. (Student G1)

Later that year when he was looking for work over school holidays, he contacted a company and spoke with the Australian owner. Gafur remembered how he met this Australian who was now his hero:

I had no job here and he has saw mill in another city and I'm looking for job and I ring him. Mr X do you have any job? He told me, do you have any experience? And I say yes, I have experience because my father has saw mills. He say, alright, he say I want to meet with me. He just talked to me about er the work in saw mill and this kind of things and he really helped me and he say Gafur if you want a job in your school holidays you can come in my factory and you can work for me and you can live with me. He's an Australian and --- he ring me, how are you and he'd just care about me. He's a really good person. I have never seen a person like him. I always ask Mr X, you are a great person. I have never seen a person... he's picture is always burning my eyes. (Student G1)

Haroon (H1)

Decision maker

When I asked Haroon who made the decision for him to study in Australia, he advised me that the decision was based on his ability to access further learning opportunities. He stated:

It's my own decision. Yeah, I decided myself because I have to get more access study somewhere to study for me, like no-one decided to come here, no one prepared to come here. Yeah, [my parents] they are all happy because after I came here I started so I have to get my own decision by myself. So they are all happy. (Student H1)

Expectations before arriving

Haroon told me that before he left India, he had thought about the social differences that he might find between Australia and India, and was prepared to deal with them. He explained:

[I thought that if I go to Australia] I have to get some trouble up here because it's very different to everything; like different culture, different peoples. I already thought sometime I got some troubles. So, after I came here slowly, slowly. I'm just fine now. (Student H1)

Discoveries after arriving

Before Haroon arrived in Australia, he appeared to have expected to experience some culture shock but he was aware that over time he had adapted to his new environment. Continuing his story, Haroon explained that although he found some social differences, his self-confidence had returned. He was able to deal with situations (problems) and the cultural differences he faced did not affect him (chase troubles) as people assisted him to find ways to cope with these differences and difficulties. He said:

Yes, it is very different [since I got here in Australia] because most things ... the culture ... the culture is very different like other country... the peoples they are very different... language problems but the peoples are ... they are ready like cooperative. So that's why I like that ... so I chase all troubles, all the problems because I'm ... the thing is like, I'm very confident about myself so that's why things are fine now. (Student H1)

Learning shock

Haroon did not expand on what he found as cultural differences as he believed that he had chased away "all troubles" and "all the problems" and "things are fine now" (Student H1). He did comment on his problem with English language which took a year to resolve:

In the beginning I've got some difficult difficulties in the shopping centres and in the college as well. After [one] year [I] picked up language. That was the only difficulty I got up here. (Student H1)

Learning support

Further exploring Haroon's perception of differences between the Indian and the Australia academic environments, he stated that

Yeah, I like the study up here because ah... it's a completely different way to learn something and I have to... I got a chance to learn more and more and

er... the staff member and my trainer and my teacher, they are all very cooperative and they are always ready to help me. (Student H1)

As well as finding that his teachers supported him, Haroon also identified that he enjoyed the practical component of his course as he was able to meet people. He explicated:

Yeah, because whenever we are doing practical work we get chance to meet some Australian peoples and um, we got to more and more for learning. Because in my college there are some students there (that) are from another overseas country ... so I like to talk to them because I got chance to know about their culture and er what country. (Student H1)

He also revealed that he had some difficulties with the course content but that his teachers assisted him. Haroon recollected:

Yeah, because I've never studied before in hairdressing in India, so only in Australia I study hairdressing, so end up getting back some trouble and got some problems with my technical work... but now I really felt really fine ... but in the practical work I've got some problems but my trainers are very cooperative ... they help me out all the time. (Student H1)

Discourse and discursive practices

At the time of the interview Haroon had nearly completed his Diploma in Salon Management. He had also studied and gained his Queensland driver's licence and a Queensland security guard's licence. These licences provided him with more employment options. However, Haroon advised that he was not going down the Australian residency path. He stated that he was seeking work experience in hairdressing as well as more study options. He explained that his preferred options did not require him to undertake an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination:

In future like now because I'm nearly finished my Diploma so I've decided to working in a salon because I want to ... I want to get practical experience. So I'm looking for a salon job. So I hope I can get grateful. [I'm not doing the IELTS test], not yet, because I think ... because I want to do more study up here and after that maybe I'll work with that. (Student H1)

When I asked about returning to India or staying in Australia, Haroon stated that he probably would go to the UK. He explained:

[Staying in Australia] I'm not sure about that because, er... but I like to live here [in Australia]. I think. Because my sister and my mum they are all in the UK so they always ask me to come there. Because my sister got married with an English guy and so that's why ... and at the moment my mum and dad they are also up there and they asked me to come up there and meet them because it's one and half years ... it's too long for them. Yeah, because I haven't finished my study yet ... so maybe after I finish my study I'm going and see them [in the UK]. (Student H1)

Although Haroon was studying and intending to continue studying, he was also very happy working as a security guard at a Brisbane venue. He described his work with these words:

I'm doing security in a night club. It's not like a night club ... it's a different thing... it's a music venue ... so like weekends they performing up there so I like music so that's why I like my job up there. It's not like a night club ... in

night club you know there's a lot of trouble. I am happy with there. (Student H1)

Current social contacts and activities

He also advised that he had made many Australian friends at his work and they were socially active. Haroon recounted:

Yeah, because up there lots of the staff ... they are volunteers but they are from Australia ... but they are volunteers. So we are like working Friday... [then] Saturday and like on Sunday, we are playing some games up there ... all the staff. So I have a nice time up there. I had a lot of fun. (Student H1)

Friends' nationality

Haroon's weekend social activities with his friends also included "going some outside like [places]... so many places up here like Forest Lakes, [and] National Lamington National Park" (Student H1). His other activities included, "I like to drive and I like to walk" (Student H1). Haroon appeared to be very socially active with both Australian and Indian friends. Although arriving alone, Haroon portrayed himself to be a very gregarious type of person who had made strong friendships. He elucidated:

I am here alone with my friends. They're at a different college or some of friends they're just finished their studies and now they are on visiting visas. They applied for PR [permanent residency]. Like, we are living full friends in my case so we all are nearly my years, yeah. They are very, very, close to my place [in India], say within 15 or 16 kilometres. I met them after I came here. Before they are all stranger upon me but now we are living as a family. (Student H1)

When I asked Haroon about his friends' nationalities, he made the following statement:

Because now one and half year I am living here so that's why I've got equal friends... same like 50/50 [Australian and Indian]. Some Columbians [are] here [also]. They are working with me. (Student H1)

Behavioural and psychological changes

The conversation then moved to the topic of how he would like to be introduced to fellow students, Haroon suggested:

[This is Haroon] and he is [to] join [us] and he is new in our workplace ... so ... I'm happy to meet new people and happy to communicate with new people because of everything I get chance to learn more and more about different culture, different countries, different peoples. (Student H1)

The identity Haroon preferred if he was being introduced to a new teacher, took on a more academic mantle. He hoped the following would be said:

Oh, she could say like ... a good student ... and they are ... she can say um, he is very friendly, so because you are new so you have to talk with him and if you need any help you can ask him, feel free. (Student H1)

If he was being introduced to members in a social group by a friend, Haroon said he would like his friend to say:

He can say like ... this is Haroon and he is very friendly, and he is an old friend, and he is a very interesting guy. So, you can say he is living with us so all the time. He is help to each other and he is very innocent. (Student H1)

Self-identity

When I asked Haroon to describe his own personality (self-identity), he described himself as:

I'm very friendly, everyone um, I'm very confident about myself and um after one meeting everyone wants to see me again and talk to me again and again. Mmm I'm happy to meet everyone. I'm a good personality. (Student H1)

Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences

This description was followed by a discussion on changes in his identity since being in Australia. Haroon described how his persona had altered. He stated:

When I came into Australia, like I got a bit nervous and I'm not confident like as I am now ... I am but I am, but er um, I'm pretty confident about myself er, I haven't got good English on that time and er ...

Haroon's level of self-confidence reduced when he first arrived but over time increased as he chased his troubles and problems away and his English skills increased. As an increase in confidence appeared to be the factor that wavered in his self-identity, I asked Haroon if he could recall when he became more confident. He responded with:

It were the moment I got good English. But in the future I want to see me like er ... like as same as like ... same as like Aussie people speaking English. I want to see it like that. (Student H1)

I then inquired if, compared with when he first arrived in Australia, did he act differently with people as he was more confident because his English skills had improved. Haroon stated:

Yeah, now I feel like much better because now I've got good English and er um, I know lots of peoples up here ... I haven't got like alone, I haven't feel alone and er say other thing. Now I know all about the area so I haven't got any trouble up here so it's much better than when I [first] came here. (Student H1)

As Haroon recognised parts of his identity had changed, I asked him if he thought he might revert and change again if he returned to India or moved to the UK. His response was:

UK is also like up here ... so if, if I was ... if I not came to Australia and I just came and went to UK straight away ... but then sometimes I got too much trouble ... but now if I'm going to UK so I never feel any difficulty or any problem there because er now I ... I am really fine with this culture. English is better and I know how to talk with er peoples here. (Student H1)

Acknowledging that his statement did not state a change would or would not occur, I then asked if he returned to India, did he think parts of his identity might change. He responded with:

Now so when I talk to my parents on my phone ...and my family they said ... you've got routines ... and then ... but I don't think so, but they think I've changed. (Student H1)

This confirmed that Haroon believed his family had noticed there were changes in his identity. I then asked Haroon if he returned to India, would he make any changes due to the Indian cultural environment. His response only reinforced the notion that he would not revert and he felt confident in acting as a role model for others so that they could have a similar experience and be successful. Haroon's comment was:

First of all I want to make changes in my home [in India] as well after that I'll try to help my friends [in India] ...help them to [find out] how to get success and how to get and (have an) experience... Because they now [can also] have [an] experience. (Student H1)

The discussion with Haroon then turned to discuss his experiences since being in Australia. Haroon remembered a positive experience that occurred the previous year. He recalled:

Mmm like er before um last one year I haven't got any job. But for three or four months [later] I got a good job and its only two or three days but it's pretty well. I like to work them. That's a job [that] I'm looking for, so that the right thing. That's a good thing that has happened to me. (Student H1)

I then enquired about any negative experiences where he felt scared or frightened. As Haroon was a professional security guard he told me that he tried to resolve his own safety and security issues and could not remember a time when he was in danger and his friends helped him. However, there are two experiences that made an impression on him. The first situation he recalled related to his security work:

Yeah, because when I'm working I just stand outside from our venue so because on the weekend peoples are walking up there and sometimes they are doing some naughty things with me but now I know how to operate them and how to treat them. (Student H1)

This situation provided an example of Haroon developing a discursive identity or discourse so as to be seen by others as a person in control of security. In order to *operate* or manage the behaviour of people, Haroon needed the public to recognise him as the security guard. Haroon believed he successfully portrayed this role as he was able to control the situation because he knew how to *treat* people.

The other incident provided an example of targeted robbery. Haroon remembered:

And like before six months er um, the bad thing that has happened with me--- Er one day I came to college and on the way on the bus stop, I'm just walking up there on the way, and er some ... I don't know, some dirty peoples, and three or four peoples there, they ask me for money and er ... I'm a bit scared but not much... because that sort of day, early morning so peoples are walking up there as well I'm a bit scared but not ... Yeah, because of the road... and they ask me for money, and I said I haven't get er cash out, so I just sort of credit card, sorry saving cards, and er um ... one of them he just pushed me but his friend ... his partner, he said ... he said just leave him, leave him to go. (Student H1)

Support mechanisms available and used

Even though Haroon appeared to stand alone, he also indicated he had strong local friendships with Australians, Indians and other nationalities. Recognising that his family was influencing him to relocate to the UK, I asked Haroon if he would keep in contact with his friends if he left Australia. He was resolute in his response:

Yeah, definitely. It doesn't matter if I'm going back to India or going to UK ... but definitely keep in contact with them. (Student H1)

Madina (M1)

Decision maker

In responding to the first question, Madina told me about her dreams to come to Australia and be independent. Madina recalled her vision:

Um, I was thinking I will, I can fulfil my dreams. Because in Australia we can have opportunity to work as well as to study. Just a cementing process. I can work, I can earn money and I can study by myself. I don't have to ask money from my parents or any relatives. (Student M1)

Expectations before arriving

Madina also remembered her thoughts about studying in Australia. She recollected:

Ah, I was thinking it to be wonderful to study in a new country and er, I never sit in a plane and I was thinking I would take a ride in an aeroplane and um er, I will make new friends and um, I will have more experience of life because I'm going to meet the people who lived in other communities or other religion. So that was reason. (Student M1)

Discoveries after arriving

After Madina spoke about her expectations of life in Australia, I asked if during the last eighteen months, she found many social differences between India and Australia. She responded with the following:

Yes, there is many differences of dress, of studying and eating as well. Normally people in India are mostly, people are vegetarians they don't eat meat. But in Australia, it's hard to get vegetable food. And um, the dress code also. In India, women have to cover their body with their clothes and in Australia womens can wear anything; whatever they want. (Student M1)

Learning shock

She then continued with:

One thing more, there is one difference as well. In India study is hard and in Australia study is easy. [In India] there are too many exams like ah ... but you have study today. You have to give that exam after one year or after two year. And in Australia what we have [to] study today we can finish like assignments. We don't have to give exams after six months or after one year. We don't have to read anything again and again. In Australia, yes, it's easy, in India it's hard. (Student M1)

Madina appeared to believe that the Australian VET system was better than her previous ways of learning as the teachers ensured that the standard of her work reflected industry requirements. Madina explained:

Yeah, [learning in Australia], it's better. In average it's better in Australia. I think so, according to my opinion. Because, teacher forces you to. They don't pass you until you are not perfect in that thing. Like in hairdressing, if we are doing something teacher don't pass us. They say to us to do it again and again until we not pass it. But [that is] the practical stuff here as compared to India. Yeah. In India theory is hard to pass, in Australia theory is easy to pass. (Student M1)

Learning support

Madina appeared to be enjoying her Australian VET studies. She told me that she preferred practical work rather than the theoretical components of her course and that her teachers were very supportive and made sure that the students became competent hairdressers.

[Be]cause which [practicals] I have passed, I know how [much] difficulty [to] do those still now and um, my teacher ... She is very nice and she helps us as far as she can [to] do and um ... she never get angry. If we ask her anything she repeat [it to] us again and again. She never [seems to] mind. Yeah, if we ask her again and again. (Student M1)

Behavioural and psychological changes

In the month following the interview, Madina finished her course. She explained her plans were dependent on her IELTS score. As an IELTS test was not available at her institute, Madina had arranged to take the test at another institute. Madina's future plans included:

Yeah. I am finishing my study next month so will be able to [do other things] after then. [After I finish] I want to apply for temporary residency and for that I need to have in IELTS six [level position] seat score and if I will get six [level position] seat then I will apply for temporary residency. Otherwise I will go back to India or I will ah, [I] need [to] take other study. I will take admission. [I will study] maybe in Australia or maybe in India. I have not decided yet. (Student M1)

In order to concentrate on her studies and achieve good results, Madina was prepared to stop working. Although this may have caused Madina to suffer some financial hardship, she was focused on achieving her goals. She explained:

My occupation is cleaning and I'm working in um, I clean the banks. Now I don't work. I left that job from last two months because of study, it's too much burden. (Student M1)

Friends' nationality

As Madina was no longer working I enquired if she was able to spend more time with her friends. Madina responded with:

Actually, it's really true I don't have any friends, only classmates and only in the college time. I don't like to talk to other peoples because some people....you can't feed on them, you can't trust on them. But some are really good. (Student M1)

This statement led me to enquire as to why Madina believed she could not trust people. She replied with:

Because when we [my husband and I] came in Australia, um, I think one and a half year ago and we were living with other friends. I can't say to them friends [be]cause they were living in the house in which we came and one day one man drunk and he broke our stuff like phone, laptop and extra. Yes, and so that's why we don't like to make any other friend and after that me and my husband living in um separate room and even we don't like to live with someone else. (Student M1)

Problems with accommodation are faced by many international students. Madina continued her account with:

And my [previous] employer, she's in living in Australia and she's an Australian resident and um she helped me to. She gave me a place to live in her house for ah, I think about 19 days. After that I got... I found place to live and I moved from there to my new place. (Student M1)

Even though Madina commented that "it's really true I don't have any friends, only classmates" (Student M1), I probed this topic further to discover if she had any other types of friendships and also to elicit details on the nationalities of her friends. Madina informed me that her friends were Indian and that she had no Australian friends. Madina stated: "But I don't have any Indian friends here. They are still all in India." (Student M1)

Current social contacts and activities

Although Madina advised she was supported, financially by her husband and emotionally by her family and friends in India, she believed that she has no friends in Australia, only classmates. This lack of connectedness was concerning as a sense of connectedness was important for international students to be able to successfully acculturate (Baker & Hawkins, 2006).

Support mechanisms available and used

Madina then told me that there was one couple that she visited. She explained:

Actually, my husband's uncle and aunt living here and normally on weekends we go to their house because they invite us. That's it. [We don't mix with their friends either]. (Student M1)

Immediately after that comment Madina revealed:

I know there is something in me. We don't want to, we can say introverted. I am not extroverted. I don't like to talk too much with other people. (Student M1)

Madina indicated that she did not feel comfortable speaking with *other people* and attributed this to her *introverted* personality. However, she may be feeling a lack of confidence as her self-efficacy appeared to be still developing.

Discourse and discursive practices

As Madina commenced talking about her self-identity, the conversation moved to discuss her social profile or discursive identity. Although I hoped to expose the extent Madina used agency and identify the discourses that she had developed, I was aware she did not have a strong local network to assist and support her with any socio-cultural adjustments during her acculturation process.

In discussing social identity profiles, Madina advised that she believed if a friend introduced her to another student in her class, they would have said:

I think they would say I am an introverted person and otherwise they would say I am not good person, I think so and um, ... I get scared all the time. [I think I get scared because] I'm not confident and ... but never tell lie. (Student M1)

Madina indicated that her peers may have a negative impression of her discursive identity as a student. This may be due to her perceived positioning in the student group and a lack of confidence as her self-efficacy was still being built.

If she was introduced to a teacher by another student, Madina thought they would say:

She has an ability to laugh and she is a very nice student. She will follow those ways the teacher will say to us. And um, she will pass her course. And I'm not a naughty student. (Student M1)

The above statement by Madina illustrated the different discursive identities she portrayed. Her peer-to-peer identity was negative and yet her student-to-teacher identity was positive. As noted earlier, Madina's social contact was low as she did not work so she could concentrate on her studies. However, Madina said that if she did join a social group, she thought that she would be introduced with these words:

She would say her name is Madina and she has come here to join our group to help other peoples, to help other communities and um, it is her dream to help the other peoples in their difficulties or in their sorrows. [If it is a fun group then] Umm they would say she has come to join our group for fun for entertainment and together we can have more fun and we can meet each other or we can talk to each other so we can know about everyone. (Student M1)

This statement showed that along with Gafur, Madina also believed that social groups were generally community support groups. This could be a reflection of their prior knowledge and experiences where the focus of social groups in India was on community support and not social networks. Madina then explained her initial misunderstanding of the question was due to never being asked to join a social group in Australia. She also reaffirmed to me her commitment to complete her studies before expanding her social network and activities. Madina explained:

I don't know [why I have not joined social groups]. Anybody never offered me or I also did not get any places where we can go [to join]. [I might join later] ... it depends on if I will get some time to do it, then I don't have any problem. I would like to go for it, but according to time, after finish my study I can join any social group or any social activity. (Student M1)

If she did join a social activity group, Madina would like someone to say:

Her name is Madina and she had completed her study in Certificate III in Hairdressing and IV in Hairdressing and Diploma of Centre Management and um... she want to become a good hairstylist and want to open her own salon and want to run her own business. (Student M1)

Behavioural and psychological changes

This view of Madina provided another identity-type; one that was confident and had a goal to be a salon manager. Discussing the business idea, Madina stated that it needed to be in Australia as only men are able to be hairdressers in India. Madina explicated:

In India womens don't do any hairdressing. People will not accept it. No [women allowed]. In about five or six years ago there was someone news in a newspaper in India. One lady was hairdresser and the communities did not accept her as a hairdresser and she was popular in the news about this, that issue. And also there is [another] one difference in Australia and in India.

People womens, women have more chances to do job to stand on their feet to be independent. (Student M1)

Self-identity

The conversation continued to evolve and I asked Madina to describe herself when she first arrived in Australia.

When I came to Australia I was really scared, even from the airport as well. My husband helped me to do everything, like go to the immigration officer and blah, blah, blah and if someone asked me any question I did not answer because I was scared. I was thinking no, I will not get any success. I can't live in Australia. But when I entered in Australia after a couple of months I thought no its better now and I can do everything by myself. (Student M1)

She then added:

And um, you don't have... you don't have to be scared about anything because there is a police which is very helpful. Police in Australia, police is very helpful. (Student M1)

In these statements, Madina illustrated her growth in resilience and self-efficacy. Initially she was very frightened and did not believe that she could live in Australia but over a couple of months, she changed her mind and began to believe that she "could do everything" (Student M1) by herself.

Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences

Following on from the self-identity (personal profile) conversation topic, I asked if she had made any changes in her identity in the last two years.

Now I don't scare from many things, just little bit from dark. And ur when I came in Australia I was scared from the interviews as well. I did not want to apply for any job. But now I have ah, more confidence, better than past. And when I came in Australia I was scared to sit in the bus because we did not know where to go and how to like if the next bus stop is coming. And we don't know after this bus stop [if] my stop will come and um, I was scared to ask to the driver "I want to drop at that station can you please help me". But everything has been improved. (Student M1)

It was interesting when Madina stated earlier that she believed her classmates saw her as being scared all the time and lacking in confidence. Yet she saw herself, her internalised identity, in a different frame where her confidence had grown and most things no longer frightened her.

Following along this line of conversation, I asked Madina if she remembered when she decided to make these changes in her identity. Instead of a direct answer to the question, Madina started describing the rights and expectations of women in India. This was followed with how the differences in socio-cultural rights and expectations of women in Australia facilitated the changes that she saw in her identity. Madina revealed:

Um, the thing is that in India womens not allowed to go in dark and in Australia if we are working till late night or 12 or 1am, there is no [need to be scared of] any scared thing... which can [be] there [as there] is not any factor of it [no one] can stop you to do it. (Student M1)

She continued with:

Now I have more confidence, um, rather [more] than which I was ... which I had when I came in Australia. And the main thing is people just help you if you ask something to them. They don't ignore you, and um, even in the every field. If you go to bank, they just help you in any manner. So that is why we are not scared to ask them anything, and er, we are... I feel that they will not get angry. (Student M1)

Madina then explained how in India women had few rights and did not complain and in her family, she felt there were no restrictions imposed on her. She elucidated:

Women don't have too much rights [in India] as compared to Australia. All the time they are scared to complain because they think they are depending on their husbands or their families. But in my family they never say to me no you can't, you can't go for study outside. You have to stop your study. In my family, my father gave me more opportunities to do whatever I want. For some times [many years] we can say women don't have freedom for their life in all cases. In some cases they can do. But in all cases they have to consider their families, about their families, about their husband, about their parents. (Student M1)

The flow of the conversation then moved to whether Madina believed her identity would revert or alter again if she returned to India. Her response described her belief that she did not intend to go back to India and that her family did not expect her to return. Madina informed me:

No [I won't change]. I don't think so. Maybe I will go home [to India] because um my brother died just five months before and my parents don't have any [other] children. Maybe because of that reason, but I don't think so. Because I'm married now, so that's why [my family] they defer the decision to my husband. (Student M1)

When I asked Madina about her Australian experiences, she recalled both positive and negative situations. The positive event:

Four months ago, when I got my job. And it's also good that I've [now] left the job. And now I have more time to do [things], to watch TV and for my hobbies and to clean my house. That is a hard thing for me to make time to clean the house. (Student M1)

Then Madina remembered a number of negative incidents. She started with this event:

[One] hard thing was when we came here [to Australia] we did not get any job for 8 months, eight months. Because of after eight months, and it was hard for us because our parents were sending money to Australia and the Australian economy is very high as compared to India. (Student M1)

When I asked if there were any other experiences other than the previous story of the man breaking her possessions, Madina enlightened me on the difficulties she and her husband had faced when locating suitable accommodation and work. She elucidated:

It's hard to find place if you don't have any friend or don't have any relative, hard to find place to live, and um, --- and hard to find job as well. If you don't have any friend its hard to get. And the difference in your home country [India]... you can [not] believe on other people. And to move to a new

country, it's hard to trust on other peoples, and to live I think it's really hard. (Student M1)

Then Madina expanded and closed the story on her accommodation problems with this:

Yeah, [there was] only one situation happened to us [with the man that broke everything] and we moved the same night from that house and everything was fine after that. And one [other] thing was when I came in Australia there were some people, I think, I don't ... I'm not pretty sure they are from India or not ... some things get stolen and we moved from that house again. And after eight months we got separate unit for me and my husband. Share accommodation is not really good. (Student M1)

As discussed earlier, Madina appeared to be typical of an at risk international student. She did admit to me that "I was missing my family and I cried a lot" (Student M1). So the conversation moved from discussing her unpleasant experiences to identifying if she was provided with any local assistance or support. Madina advised that the only person who assisted her and her husband was her previous employer who provided her with accommodation and transport. Madina explained:

[As well as my Indian friend in Sydney] I can say my employer is also my friend. She helped us lot. Maybe eight months ago when we got a job we did not have a car and she has a Landcruiser and all this time she picks us, she dropped us [off] and she never mind to do that. I don't like to live with other communities [in share accommodation] but I liked to live with her because I lived. And she also took care of us. And she smokes, but at front of us she never smoked, at the time when I lived in house, her house. (Student M1)

The conversation then flowed to whether Madina would remain in contact with her previous employer if she did return to India. The response demonstrated that a strong friendship bond had been formed:

Yes, I do [want to keep in touch]. Cause now she is very well known me. Even her children, she has three daughters and they loved me and I loved them. [And] Yes, she want to [give me a job again]. Just due to my study I want to finish my study first. (Student M1)

Naisha (N1)

Decision maker

In responding to the first question, Naisha told me about her dream to go to New Zealand and how her wish altered. In Naisha's words:

Ah, cause that I when I was young I study on that time. I just, just make decision to head off for New Zealand. Like, somehow my parents said you can't go alone you have to be get married. (Student N1)

So to follow her dream, she agreed with her family's request. Naisha elucidated:

Yes [my marriage was arranged]. In India, always your parents arrange everything for you. Until you go and get married, everything is their responsibility; for your study, people normal things for girls, clothes, it's all their responsibility. Then you go [and get married] [be]cause you know the parents responsibility, and all that kind of stuff. And after that me and my husband will get married. (Student N1)

Naisha then explained why she initially did not desire to come to Australia:

[After we were married] my husband said oh, he just want to go to Australia not New Zealand. And I said a lot of people go to Australia I don't want to go to Australia, I want to go New Zealand. And I explained and everything. [be]cause both my cousins they are like 10 years 11 [years older than] me, because they came 14 years before to come here for study hospitality. Ah, another one, the second one, he just come back in India after 3 months. The first one he stay here for five years and he go to Holland, Europe. He got married in Europe. He was pretty good here and everything was alright with him. But the second one, he was very upset and he came back. Because of him I don't want to come to Australia, because he was only here for three months. He like[d it here]. He came here for good qualification and everything but he has to, to go to farms [to work]. That's why I don't want to go. And er, he called his parents and was crying, like "I don't want to stay here. I want to come back". And his father give him permission to come back, and he came back. Yeah, now he's on a good job as engineer in India. So that's [what I said and] after that my husband say to come to Australia. So I said OK, then we will go. (Student N1)

Expectations before arriving

With her plans now focused on Australia, Naisha dreamed about her new life. She recalled:

I was dreaming it was reality. I was talking to, what about this reality. And I was thinking there would be no hard work or things like that. So I was very happy when I came. (Student N1)

Discoveries after arriving

The conversation then flowed to discuss the social differences that Naisha noticed between India and Australia. She advised that where her family lived in India, people wore traditional dress while in Australia there was more freedom with clothing styles. Naisha explained:

Yeah, probably dress-up [is different]. Yeah, we a not used to have shorts or anything. A lot of people have in India, it is a very forward country now, but

from [the area] which I, we all are coming [from to stay] here on study, we are all used to traditional dress. When we came and talk to someone here, when we talk to someone I think it's not feel comfortable with us. [The students], they feel like they are very backward. It is a little bit of difference also. How you would dress up in like, like my mum or my grandma. She never wear this stuff. That is the difference. (Student N1)

Learning shock

Naisha also told me that before she left India she was aware studying in Australia would be different. She recalled:

I know a lot like studying in Australia was not very hard because I heard from one of my friends who are in India now. He came back from Australia and he said you have to work all the work on laptop or computer. That is the main different between Indian study and Australian study. We never have to do any searches. [In Australia], they put anything on laptops and computers. [In India], we have just the bookworm. (Student N1)

She informed me that she believed her current studies would assist her locate work while her Indian studies did not. She explained:

I've done my graduation and now I'm thinking I missed three years for what? Nothing! No work and even I'm happy to do work everything here [be]cause I can use it somewhere. I can open my salon... even I can work with someone else, or I can be a manager or operate somewhere else. We are using this... it is useful. But in graduation it is not useful. I got certificate of graduation but I can't do anything with that. So I really appreciate Australian study, yeah. (Student N1)

Naisha told me more about the differences between her Indian studies and her Australian studies:

I wasted my three years just read from books, have exam, you get pass and that's it. It is not um, it is not useful in your future. It is all history. We don't want any history. It is just a wastage of time. No skills, no tactile skills. And like in India if you are not good in studies you are beat by teacher. You are punished by teacher. (Student N1)

She then followed this statement on punishment with additional details on her Indian learning experiences:

Sometimes [the teachers], they deal with you verbally or physically, smashing [you]. You know, they are really hard. I don't want to remind [myself of] my school times. And then I go to grade 11. I was so happy [be]cause I just get out of the school where I was. It was really hard that sometimes they are just very strict. [When] they want to put something in your mind [they do it] with the punishment. They don't want to be, ah, you are skilful person, like you. [You] have learned on your own with the new techniques. No. One teacher I [had to] done on the board that [writing] and I have to learn that and repeat that in front of teacher. (Student N1)

Naisha continued to discuss her current studies. She described her enjoyment when completing the course tasks:

It is not very difficult. We just have to give it time, a little bit [of time] so [that] we can cope with everything. [The activities], they are very good. Now

we are doing diploma and it is all research work. We have to go to the internet searching things and like what are Australian policies, procedures and laws, everything yeah. Everything [is interesting]. Like the main thing which I like is that when I got to internet I just learn about all the new things. And ah, it is enjoyable. It is not like a burden on your head like we have to learn this and speak up in front and things like that. Even like we have [demonstrated our] skills...our practical book, followed by assessment in which teacher assesses us for a meeting. And like, for you and me and three or four more people. Then we [gain experience] like [as if it is] a reality. It is. I can give this, I can sit there, I can talk like this, and I can do my best in the meetings. And it really make your confident to talk with any other person. [The course], it's all practical. No more like a book worms, like we are used to before. (Student N1)

Learning support

The conversation then turned to study difficulties to discover if Naisha had experienced any issues during her learning. In response to my question Naisha indicated that other than some initial problems with English language, she experienced no other course difficulties. Naisha remembered her English language problems at the beginning of her course and the steps she took to resolve the situation:

I mean I study half the year English convent school but the pronunciation is different. Slang is a different. This slang is different. American slang is different, and this Australian slang is different... They are different they don't speak English. [I] couldn't understand. And like first when I came it was just like, um just like deaf and dumb. I can't understand anything. I studied for like... I graduate myself up here in India but it is really hard to understand people in Australia, like what are they talking about. My first day ... my induction day in College I mean I had um, he just came and he was giving us induction and I can't understand anything. What he's talking and er I just have doubt of my skills of my listening skills. And after that, I give a very hard time to me to try to keep the words up to the mouth, like how you speak. I just try, I always try to understand; I talk to people, I watch news, TV and [so on] so that I can understand. This is a different English, but all the slang together they are using. And after like two or three months, I am just fantastic. I am so confident I can talk to anyone. You know it was a very, very hard time for me. First one year I just pray to God never to give that time for anyone, a really struggling time. But now everything is alright for me. I am very happy and don't want to go back. (Student N1)

As a final comment on study difficulties, Naisha voiced her opinion that female students might face relationship issues which could impact on their studies. She illustrated her point with:

The one thing that is difficult is that when your partner is not helping. You have to spend all the time to do his work and you don't have time to make your own assignments and for the study. Sometimes we just get time for studying at night time. If there is only one bedroom you can't do this because if you want to turn light on your husband don't want. And then he says make it in the morning, don't disturb me and I say what time can I make, I have this time only to have all my own work done. And sometimes I have to turn the

light off and go to bed. That disappoints me. Some of them [husbands] are very cooperative with their wife, and some of them not. (Student N1)

Current social contacts and activities

As Naisha had already indicated she was enjoying her life in Australia, I enquired about her spare time activities. She responded with: "I never go anywhere I just study, go to work, have house work. I look forward to relax" (Student N1).

Immediately following this statement, Naisha described why she enjoyed going to work in a restaurant and how the work assisted in her development. She explained:

I just love to get [to] work. You know it's something different you [will] learn about, or like working [with] or how what kind of personality these people [have]. Because, I just love. I work in a restaurant evening time as a part-time job and er, there are a lot of people come from different countries and er ...Australia is a multicultural country... [there are a] lot of people there. And, at first I have work placement in a salon and I also met a lot of people up there. And [the] young girls and boys, they all have different kind of things in their mind. You know, if they are young, they think something different. They are the only one in the world. Middle age people they just love to talk to each other. And, like people [who] are 80, 60 or 70, they [are] people [who] are so quiet and courtesy. I learn a lot. But it makes me very, very, very, confident. Always when someone likes to talk to me, I always give my time to them. (Student N1)

This comment by Naisha showed that she was observing discourses and making decisions as to which discursive traits she would accept as being socially acceptable and which socio-cultural groups she preferred to associate with; young people, middle aged people, people who are 60 to 80 years old.

Friends' nationality

Following this line of conversation, I asked Naisha if she was able to make friends in Australia. She explicated:

It's very hard. Still I don't have a lot of friends here. --- Yes, like in my age, in my age group of friends in here, like Australian girls and boys, they don't want to make friendship with us. (Student N1).

Although Naisha advised that she did not have many friends, I enquired about their nationalities. Although her response did not surprise me, she also mentioned that she had problems making friends in Australia. She informed me:

[My friends are] mostly Indians. I always try to make friends from different countries but they are not very interested to have a friendship. (Student N1)

In response to the question on Australian friends, Naisha commented that most of her friendships were formed at work. She stated that when she undertook work experience at a hairdressing salon, she made friends with an Australian citizen:

Up there [at the salon] is one lady. She is from Vietnam but she also Australian citizen. She is from here [Australia] but her background is Vietnam She was very lovely and was very helpful to me. She always push me to work, like do like this, do like this, and I learnt a lot from her. She showed me a lot of things. She always tried to help. She was very nice. (Student N1)

After telling me that the young people she met were very selfish, she continued with: They don't want to help you. And er if you want [them] to help you, and if you want[ed] to help someone, [then] they don't. Even I don't think they want to give you back something if you tried to help them. Like I don't know if [it is an] age thing or like can you say a cultural thing but everything is not like same. Some of peoples just love to talk to us and they are really helpful to us but some of them sometimes they just abuse us. They, you know, when we drive like trains or buses, some of them can speak in a very wrong way and [it is as] if they can't accept people. Some of them are really very nice. That's why it's really hard for me to form friendship with some [same] age persons but we [would] like [to] have a friendship here with [some] others who are 70 or 75, [be]cause they are alone they want to talk with someone. So I have one of [these friends and he is like] my grandfather, he's Australian. We love him so much. (Student N1)

Support mechanisms available and used

It was obvious from Naisha's dialogue and emotional intonation that there was a strong personal relationship with this Australian man who she fondly called *grandfather*. She then described how she also felt supported by her new grandfather and his family:

He's just next to sweet and he have his own family. They are all very nice. They are all lovely. They all want to talk. And he always come with every occasion. He buy a lot of stuff for me because he know, I'm like, you know, without my parents here and my husband. Sometime he drive me to work and pick me [up] and drop me to work. It's really nice and it just make me really comfortable, and really, really happy. (Student N1)

Discourse and discursive practices

The flow of the conversation was then directed to discover Naisha's social profile and whether her environment adaptation decisions had shaped and changed her discursive identities. I asked Naisha to describe her identities; how she thought others saw her, and how she saw herself. Naisha believed when being introduced to a fellow student by a peer, the person would say: "This is Naisha. Like her, she is very good in her skills. She is very practical lady" (Student N1). However, when being introduced to a teacher, Naisha expected the student would say:

Anything good about myself; not anything bad stuff. One thing is with me is that I always try to come early here. I don't know how come I'm late. I'm always late; five, 10 minutes, 15 minutes. And my teacher said you're late, and I'd say that's not my mistake, and I don't know what is happening with me. I always try to come early. I do my best. I always get out of home very early. I try but I don't know, I'm always late in class. That is the only bad point, otherwise I'm really, really, good. (Student N1)

When I asked about being introduced to a social group, Naisha advised that as she had never joined a social group, she was unsure as to what a friend would say. She stated:

I love to talk to people and er, I enjoy their company and everything. But I never had any social group. So that's why I don't like [know] how I would be introduced in front of them. (Student N1)

However, after she considered the question and imagined the situation, Naisha made the following comment as to how she hoped she would be introduced. She thought the person would say: “She’s a nice lady and you can enjoy her company” (Student N1)

Self-identity

Following this conversation line, I asked Naisha to describe her own personality (her self-perceived identity) and if she thought her behaviour had altered in any way. She explained the changes in her discursive identity with:

Yeah, before my personality was, I was very, very, you know, silent type of girl. I never talked too much and er, I don’t know anything, and I always just [think]. Things go around in my mind but I never speak of them, and like I always keep shut my mouth. And [I am] not very friendly with people. And now I am in Australia, I learn lot of things and the main thing is [that] my [way] now is that I am very confident, very confident. I like which I think, which [I think] is not right, I always speak [up] in front, [and tell them] this is not right thing. I don’t agree with that. And [I] even [tell them when I am] on workplace sometime with my supervisor and sometime with my friends. I don’t know people what they think [I can not read their minds], and I always try to make them understand, [that] this is a reality guys, you have to live in reality [the real world], why do you live in a dream? And they say you are very practical and I say yes I am. (Student N1)

Behavioural and psychological changes

Naisha then followed the above statement with dialogue that expressed her frustrations with the way Indian workers used cultural discrimination in Australia. Her comment was:

Like from two years I’m in Australia now. I think like why they, [why] they get so forward from our country [India] and why you don’t [act] like grow up [people]. And your skills, your learning skills, speaking skills, you know, use it. Like Australian people take everything very nicely. They accept everything. Er, our [Indian] people, they always want like discrimination, they always do discrimination with each other like even [at] a workplace. If we are three Indians [and] are working together, you and me, you always try [to get] me to be [like] you, [you] are always [trying to get me from] behind the back, you know. (Student N1)

Then Naisha provided a recent example where she highlighted the workplace discrimination to her manager in an attempt to reduce its occurrence:

It makes you really difficult to work in front of each other. Because, I’m in this situation now. I work with another friend ...and ah, we are only seven, eight Indian girls working together. Last night I was talking the same with my manager. She is also Indian, and I said “*Hey mam, why, why they think always behind the back. I don’t like politics. I am very straight forward person... whatever in my mind or my heart I will speak in front of you. If I think anything bad about you or good, I will speak in front. Why do you guys doing like this... we are to work like team.*” (Student N1)

Naisha completed her dialogue with a statement which recognised that in order for people to adapt to the Australian environment, a change in their discursive identity was required:

They are Indian mentality. They don't want to change themselves here you know ... That is disappoint, very disappointing on a workplace. They talk with you [as if they are] something else. They are going [and telling] other people something else. Like when we are, we are all here for the last two or three years, nearly two years, we have to change our person. (Student N1)

As Naisha admitted that her confidence was stronger and she was no longer afraid to speak her mind, I asked her if she had changed in any other way. Her response acknowledged and confirmed that her identity had altered in a number of ways:

Most of the things in my life I have changed. Like because I'm now aware about everything, that's why I speak up everything in front of everyone. Some people like it, some don't. (Student N1)

Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences

Moving the conversation to discover some of the positive and negative experiences that Naisha faced which might have influenced her identity changes, I was not surprised to hear that she negotiated her own wages. She recalled:

Ah, [a good thing that happened was] an increase in my pay. Now it is the right way with me... Because when I just starting my job I tell my supervisor I'm not working cash in hand because after that we are going to be [watched and]criticised by Immigration. (Student N1)

I then enquired about negative experiences and Naisha recollected two situations where she felt fearful and uneasy. The first situation related to financial distress where Naisha's family support system aided her. She relived the memory of the circumstance:

After a few, like after one month, when my money finished and then I start thinking, me and my husband, like what to do. We need to get job [be]cause I know we are not allowed a job after 20 hours, you know, in a week, but what to do. What to do. We both are really upset. Then we go here and there and search for job and we can't find anything. Then after that my husband make a decision. He went to Sydney with one of his friends who do have a job over there. And I live alone here for three or four months in Brisbane. It's so hard. I was crying and crying. On that time I was so disappointed with Australia. I wanted to go back ... but my mother she ring me. She gives ... she give me motivation and she said nothing is like that when you go somewhere out by your own. It always happens with you. It feels [like] you don't know about the place. You don't know about the persons. And just the language, they find is hard. (Student N1)

As this situation happened one month after Naisha's arrival, her efficacy and ability to be resilient had not sufficiently developed to assist her and she felt alone and disappointed with her Australian experience.

Naisha recalled another time when her employer was operating illegally by paying staff a low hourly rate. She explicated the situation:

Before, we [another student and myself] both work in the same company. We used to work and after, fortnight pay and now they are starting after one

month [pay]. Which Australian company gives the money after one month?
So far my pay coming in after the fifth week. (Student N1)

She continued:

Then they don't want tax file because they give you cash in hand. Who is responsible? Immigration ask for ... [immigration] come and ask us question. Why you guys doing cash in hand? Why they [immigration] don't go to them, like why they don't check [on] them? ... Because Immigration come and ask them, [why] you guys don't pay any tax in two years? Why you girls are working cash in hand? Why you don't complain? Why you guys, why you don't go to them who are giving this much money, only \$8 or \$10 per hour? (Student N1)

Then Naisha further elucidated on how Australian owners were using Indian supervisors to relay messages to staff. She recalled advising the owner that she was terminating her employment:

And the owner is a Australian man. His name is Mark and I go through with him two times straight. I go into his office and I [told him I] don't want to work with you. You're cheating us. Because they make supervisor and manager, both are Indians who are manager and supervisor, because he don't want to come in front of us. Mark don't want to come in front of us. He appoints supervisors and Indian managers to talk to us. He knows they can work on \$8. (Student N1)

Before moving the conversation to another topic, I enquired if Naisha had any other bad experiences. She commenced telling me about a time when she felt depressed, isolated and had lost her local support structure. Naisha recalled her thoughts on committing suicide:

One day I was [thinking of] committed suicide. I tried to commit suicide [be]cause my husband went to Sydney for a job, and he's staying up there and I was living here with a friend, and somehow they were getting very rude with me, and they just want to let me out from the [living] centre. You can go anywhere, but you are not allowed to be here. That time my husband not able to come to Brisbane, and oh I was... I don't have any more friends. And just one of my friends she just help me out. She even was not here in Brisbane. She was on farms, somewhere. And [she] ring her husband/fiance and she said Naisha is alone, she is on crying, she need our help, and you can go take her luggage to our house. They take me from home to their home. I go up [to] their place. Up there first of all people one week very good ... but there was a lot of boys there and we were only two girls, altogether three girls and seven boys. First week they were very nice and everything, very friendly with me and one of them fiance of friend, and they live together. And after one week and again politics start. One guy, he was the worst guy. He was abuse all the time of the girls. And one day I said don't be like this OK...I'm not alone ... I got some suggestion like this... but I'm not alone, and my husband here in Australia. He take my luggage and put it out from the home. And at that time, where to go. He fight with everyone. All the girls need to get out from this place, only boys are going to live here. Even he is Indian guy...nothing was in my hands. I can't do anything. And again one of my friend he help me. My

husband he said, “*You can go from there*”... But we don’t know anyone ...
Where to go? (Student N1)

She continued her story:

And after that, one of the guys from the group, and he take his luggage in his car and he said I know one girl I can talk to and [I can] take you to her home. From that time, [to] this time, I’m living with them for one and a half years. We are all living together now. Like at that time I think evening time I go to the city. I was on the bridge and I think [be]cause it’s a bad [time] you know. Every time something is going bad. [And when] you think like that, automatically you [start to] think like that. And I was thinking nobody is here and my husband ... he just leave me alone here and he’s not here. I just want to go to [back]. I just stay up there for five to 10 minutes and I was thinking, thinking and then I said myself, what about my parents. You know if I get die my parents will have to pay \$12,000 to reach India with my body for my parents and for my future I have to lead a good life. I have to be challenged. I have to go through the challenges which get in my way. And I said that everything [will be fine], I have said [that] and after that now everything is alright. Sometimes I think from that time I am not sitting here, you know.
(Student N1)

This was an example of the depressive states of mind that some international students can reach when they have not developed a sense of belonging and their ability to be resilient to adversity was not strong. These negative feelings can be generated due to a lack of connectedness.

Although Naisha did not appear distressed and wished to continue the conversation, I believed a change of topic was appropriate. I asked Naisha if there were any other topics that she wished to add to her story. She then commenced discussing two items she felt strongly about: the inability of spouses to work full time and the government changes on permanent residency applications. On the topic of spousal working hours, Naisha stated:

My husband is working, but it’s really hard. They said you are not allowed to work on a full time. I just want to [know] whoever is going to be taking a decision on that. Like, even if we are studying [during] that term of ... [our] spouse could not be in full time work. So we don’t have any money. We have to like pay everything. We have to like pay fee. You know how many fee they ask, \$24,000 in that week, we have to pay. Whereas if we want to live here, we have to pay rent and you have to pay electricity, mobile bills and everything. Like how if we work 20 hours, how could we like take all expenses? How can we pay all expenses? I’m the student, so even like... so he can just [be] free all the time. If he can work full time, it’s a bit of a support with me, you know. (Student N1)

Naisha then explained that she felt cheated by the government changes as the information given to her at the time she signed up for the Diploma in Salon Management stated that she was entitled to apply for permanent residency on completion of the course. The government residency application process changed and hairdressing was no longer on the list of skill shortage areas when the students in her group were about to complete their course. So Naisha believed that she had been

wronged. She likened it to a situation where an item was purchased and the product shelf life had expired before the sale was completed. Her metaphor was:

Like we come here then you give something like if you sell one product I am giving it to you ... selling it to you... and [it is to] last for long period --- and after one week you come to me and you are very happy with the product and you say I like it, it's nice on my hair and after that I said already ... it was expired. How can you say ... How would you feel. It's expired after selling, it's expired. You are just going to sue me. (Student N1)

She continued expressing her frustration:

The change ... [they changed] the rule. At least they don't have to change the rules for those people who are already sell the product. You known [it was expired]. Now we already pay for that. How can we go back now? And how can we pay \$24,000 for further studies? (Student N1)

Naisha then became a spokesperson for other international students:

Yeah, they said you can only apply for a temporary residence in hairdressing but there is no permanent residency in hairdressing. If they know there is no permanent residency in hairdressing, why they sell that product to us. Because, everybody goes for that because, we want to stay here. If we know we have to go back, why should we spend a lot of money here? (Student N1)

She finished expressing her disappointment with:

Because of all of this... because of work, because of paying money, because of like [issues], Indian boys and girls, they are breaking up the rules in Australia. I can tell you... it's amazing. Because they have to pay everything rent money, and fees and travel if they work many hours, they can't afford it all. They said ... the Australian government... there is no PR [permanent residency] in hairdressing Like when all the people come for same goal. Why do you start them before [and then change the rules]. You know, if you don't need this much person [with skills] in your country, why didn't you stop them before. You get all of them paying, now you start visa [problems]. Nothing! You know people [they] came here, but they don't get anything. (Student N1)

Although Naisha was very vocal and spoke confidently, she also advised me that due to another student's experience with immigration, she was not willing to return to India to visit her family. She explained:

I think one of my friend recently he just sending back from the Brisbane airport, I don't know what was wrong with him, maybe he do something wrong that's why they send him back. He depart on the Brisbane Airport from Delhi Airport and he arrive here and immigration don't give him permission to go outside the airport. They send him back. Like he arrived here seven in morning and they send him back 12 o'clock. It's just shocking. This time I want to go and see my mum, mum and dad and my brother. But I am not going to go now. Because I don't know, if they don't want us to be sent back. If they send me back [then] I can't live here. No! (Student N1)

Naisha wanted to follow her dream but the pin that would burst her bubble appeared to be the immigration residency changes. She finished the conversation with:

We want to stay here you know. But they are changing every day... new rules... every day new rules. I can't believe it. I just want to apply for a temporary residency but they said that we have to have a six standard [in] IELTS. They [life] give you different opportunities [and] you have to fight with the new challenges. After being in Australia, I am very confident. Sometimes I say [to] myself, I can go anywhere, I can be and never lose.
(Student N1)

Sadaf (S1)

Decision maker

Sadaf began the conversation by informing me that it was her husband's decision to come to Australia. As her husband was not undertaking any studies and Sadaf was the holder of the student visa, she intended to apply for temporary residency and then her husband would be able to apply for a spousal visa. She explained the steps to apply for temporary residency:

I'm trying to apply for a temporary visa... and until I am ready for IELTS test... I am testing this Saturday and got result after two weeks ... after that, you can go for six-seven weeks after IELTS test [and then] I get to apply for temporary residency. (Student S1)

Discoveries after arriving

Continuing the conversation, I asked Sadaf to describe the social differences between India and Australia that she had observed. Although she said that there were "lots of differences between India and here" (Student S1), she commenced discussing the cultural differences in the roles taken on by women and men in Australia and India:

Like in India culture, a lady... Muslim lady, you can't do many things. But here [in Australia], like men and women will have equal [rights] which is... I think is best part of my life now. So I come to think I can do anything here. (Student S1)

She then spoke about the cultural differences for her husband:

[For my husband], he's OK, because... he has come here... like me, he has come for a comfortable life. But I think with their life [a man's life in India and a man's life in Australia], no change because there the same and here the same. (Student S1)

Sadaf indicated that she was very pleased to be in Australia as she felt her status was raised compared with her position if she were in India. She then altered the topic and talked about the political differences between Australia and India. Sadaf highlighted the problems in India with:

Like in India, we can't get things easily, [because of] corruption, transport [issues] or meeting locals [expectations]. (Student S1)

Learning shock

Following along with this conversation line on differences between India and Australia, I asked Sadaf if she had discovered any differences between studying in India and studying in Australia. Her response was:

It's different to India... in India study more theoretical ... here [the study is] too much practical... like we do less theory and more [practical] in salon ... we are practising. [Because] we get more practical sort of thing, so you can get more opportunity to get a job. Because [I did a lot of practical] then I got a salon job. We don't have any job experience in hairdressing, but I got experience from [doing] the college [practical]. (Student S1)

Sadaf also commented that as well as the practical component of her course, she also enjoyed learning when the audio-visual aids were used to demonstrate course theoretical components. She elucidated:

When we do theory we also do some audio visual aids ... Like sometimes they use projectors. They show us how we can cut and how we can do colour on the hair. That's different in vocational, when we see how others do things. Yeah, I like the audio visual stuff. [It is] more comfortable than reading the books. (Student S1)

Current social contacts and activities

Sadaf advised me that she had not encountered any areas in her course that she found difficult. The conversation topic then moved to making friends and building relationships. She informed me that in her spare time she went on car trips with her husband. Sadaf explicated:

My husband [is] working for charity and before I work[ed] in the hair salon, [I worked] before that. I was working with them in the charity, about 500 kilometres outside Brisbane. [What we do is] we go on trips and country trips to collecting donations. We go in those areas because we know those areas. Because we're going [into] different country [areas]... in those areas [there are] lots of Indians and we make friends [while we are] collecting donations. Like last week we went to Coffs Harbour. Yep. [And we] stayed two nights with friends. [My husband works with] the Cancer Research Trust. He is working there as a driver, driving door knockers around. (Student S1)

Continuing along this conversation thread, I asked Sadaf if she found it easy or difficult to make friends in Australia. She responded with:

It's good. I don't think, not very difficult. Like if you are asking about the Aussie people ... that part of it, it's like... mostly they like to talk about our country... I don't know... I am very like ... I like to talk to other people, and that's why I make friends easily. (Student S1)

Friends nationality

As to the nationality of her friends, Sadaf commented:

Most of them are Indian, and after that I have a few friends from Afghanistan, and then after that, Australian. Yeah, I have near about eight to ten [Australian] people, [and] like [we go] together on trips and movies and shopping and then sometimes pub. Because we have done things together before and we are good friends. [I met them when I was working] in the charity. Yeah, but now they're all doing the different jobs. (Student S1)

Following on from Sadaf's description of the friendships she had made in Australia, I moved the topic of conversation to social profile and discursive identities. Sadaf was not as vocal as the other participants and this behavioural trait may have influenced her perceptions of how others saw her and how she saw herself.

Discourse and discursive practices

When I asked Sadaf about being introduced to another student by a friend, she stated that they would say:

[This is] Sadaf. She is doing hairdressing and if you like ... [or if] you have any hair problems, she can do better for you. She likes to meet new people and get new knowledge. She would like to meet you... because I like [people]. (Student S1)

Then if a friend was introducing her to a teacher, Sadaf believed they would say: “This is Sadaf and she really like to study new things” (Student S1).

The conversation then moved to discuss study and social groups. In response to this question Sadaf advised she was actively involved in a study group. She elucidated:

I have some friends that we study from same college and five [other] people from same college. We also have [made friends with] their families. And most probably we meet on the weekends. (Student S1)

As Sadaf was familiar with activity groups, I asked her how a friend would introduce her to members of a social group. Sadaf said:

This is Sadaf and she likes to help other people who have some problems. And I can do any work for anybody who really need [it]. I can help [people]. (Student S1)

Sadaf appeared to have the same notion on the purpose of social groups as did Gafur and Madina. Rather than a social network, they indicated the purpose of a social group was to support the community. This common view of social groups appeared to affect the discourse identities they described.

Self-identity

Finally I asked Sadaf how she saw her own identity and if she believed any of her characteristics had changed since being in Australia. She responded with:

When I came to here, I was new, and some of my other friends were also new. But I don't know why ... you know, like they trust me and [they] think I know more than them. I don't know why. But like one of my friends when she came here, and she said, “*Please take me with you when you go back to home because I don't know how we should go back, please help me*” but I was also new [at] that time. But I don't know why she was saying can I help her, yep. (Student S1)

Behavioural and psychological changes

Sadaf then continued to explain that she was not afraid and others saw that she was confident:

Yeah, because I don't have any shyness in me. Like, if I have any problems, I just ask people. Like ask driver how I can go to my home. Yep, I'm still confident. (Student S1)

Explaining why others looked to her for assistance, she added:

I like to take new risk. You know, maybe when you come over there [to a different place] sometime ... Maybe those girls think that you [have] knowledge and [you know] what you [have to] do there. Like, [maybe it is] because I like to take a risk. (Student S1)

Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences

When I asked if she has changed in any way since being in Australia, Sadaf responded with, “No, I don't think so. [I haven't] changed anything. No, I'm the same, yeah” (Student S1). Sadaf's comment again demonstrated her strong self-efficacy.

Acknowledging her belief that she had not altered her personality in any way and that she was soon to take her IELTS examination, I enquired as to whether she had

made any plans if her IELTS score was not high enough to allow her to apply for temporary residency:

[If that happened then] maybe [that would] cause some tension from that thing... because I am hoping that I will get that [IELTS score] because I have a good knowledge in hairdressing. So if I go back in India, I can do anything like by myself. Like, I can open my own salon. So I can't lose my confidence with that thing [if it happens]. But I was a bit shocked with that [comment you made], because I am dreaming to live here. (Student S1)

Sadaf confirmed her belief that she would achieve her goal of residency and was shocked that I should want to discuss an alternative plan.

Even though Sadaf believed that she had made no discursive identity changes since being in Australia, I enquired about her positive and negative experiences over the last two years.

When I asked Sadaf to recall a positive event, she demonstrated pride in herself and her husband. The source of her pride was due to their success in reaching their financial position where they were self-sufficient. She elucidated:

One thing that is [good, is that] when we come over here, we did get [a] good job and then [at first we] live in shared accommodation. But now we get our own house. Now me and my husband, we live alone. Now we both have good jobs. And now we work at our good jobs. Share accommodation has lots of problems. (Student S1)

Following that comment, I asked Sadaf if she had experienced any situations which may have been unpleasant. She described an event where she was harassed when travelling home on the train. Sadaf remembered:

When we came over here, we lived in Zillmere. Some of our friends live there so they provide us with accommodation there. Then [one time I] go back from college... yep...[and] it's near about seven o'clock winter time. The[se] guys are there [and they are] like teenagers with... not teenagers but nine or 10 years old. And then I come out of the lift, [and] they just frighten me. They make lots of different noises and this [sign]. I [start to] think this thing happened all [over] Australia. I was very afraid from then [on], and I only...you know, after that I said to my husband, "Come to the station and I will call you" and then [I] ring him. But after few days people see me... then we moved to this side in [Brisbane] south area. A few friends they already here for ELICOS or something ... they tell us that this is Northside. But if you live Southside it is better. And I also think this area is calm and peaceful. They called us illegals or something... also my friend like[s to live] on south side. (Student S1)

As a concluding question before the conversation closed, I asked Sadaf would she remain in contact with her friends in Australia if she did not gain temporary residency and returned to India. She indicated that her friendships were strong and stated:

Yeah, I will try to stay in contact. Like, I have friends who are very close to me. So I will call them and asking them what are they doing in Australia. (Student S1)

Shama (S2)

Decision maker

Shama informed me that it was her boyfriend who first seeded her thinking about going to Australia to study. She recalled:

He said, *“You want to explore yourself, your studies, your career. [Then] you can choose Australia”*. He just said it once. It’s really made me think about my future and my goals. (Student S2)

As I was aware that it was against Indian cultural tradition for a single female to travel alone, I asked Shama about gaining her family’s permission to study in Australia. She recollected the conversation with her father:

Ah yeah. God, it was like I’m really close to my father and he was like, *“No, I want you to stay up here with me only. I don’t want you to go far from me”*. So it was just emotional times, between him and me. But I convinced him finally just...that finally, after I get married, I have to go to another home also. So even if you see my future, I want to be something in my life. And I want to become independent in my life. I doesn’t want your help anymore. So for that, I need to stand on my foot myself. So [as I wish for] better life, better studies, better lifestyle, I choose Australia. (Student S2)

So as to ensure Shama was in no danger, her father travelled with her to Australia. She remembered her first few days in Brisbane:

Because I’m actually really close to his heart...I’m the first girl of my family, so he was really, really tense about me [going to Australia], so he was like, yeah. Actually my father came here [to Brisbane] especially to leave me. Like he came with me when... I was transferred [to the college]. [He checked], just to see that I’m fine or not... everything will be good with me or not. He goes with me [and] he just let me settle down for like four or five days. And then he went to Melbourne for his business tour. And then he went back to India. (Student S2)

Expectations before arriving

I then asked Shama if before she left India, she had any ideas on what her life in Australia would be like. She responded with:

Ah I was like... I’m going to reach the target first of all, and then secondly I’m gonna follow all the regulations to get... to follow PR [permanent residency] and [gain] citizenship in Australia. (Student S2)

She then continued her dialogue with:

But when I came here, I wasn’t aware of the things which are actually going on, [e]specially for the Punjabi students. I’m not from Punjab; I’m from the centre, yeah. And I’m not from a Punjabi family. I’m from a really big city. Just really beautiful up there, and as me and my... my parents are really broadminded, so our plan was not to actually get into the wrong things. Our target first was to enter the studies and do all the things, [then] follow step to step, [and] begin to follow [the path towards] PR [permanent residency] citizenship. (Student S2)

Discoveries after arriving

This topic was followed by a discussion on the social differences Shama had discovered between India and Australia. When I asked the question, Shama acknowledged that there were, “a lot of difference” (Student S2). So I asked if she could describe the differences that she had encountered. Her comment opened with the differences in the attitudes of people:

It was like up in India, like we can see the difference, by seeing the people. India's not developed that much. It is developed but just not like abroad cities. If you count any abroad city, like you can talk about Canada, USA, any... any country except India, they all are really, really like developed. India's not developed because people are really selfish up there. They're selfish. Like, main thing [they do is] interference... interference in everybody's life. So up there, people thinking are not broadminded. They are thinking really low. So up here [in Australia] everything is broadminded, everything's open. (Student S2)

Shama continued and compared parents in Australia and India:

If you want to... whatever you want to do [in Australia], you can do it on your own. You just need to tell your parents. Parents are here [in Australia] like friends. They're not like actually parents. But up there [in India], they are really strict; really, really, strict. If we want to do something, we have to ask them first, that's why there are parents. But still like, some things are really rude up there. Main thing [is] that neighbours interfere [with] everybody's life a lot. Yeah, they do, they do. (Student S2)

She then illustrated the differences in acceptable socio-cultural behaviour:

I remember like, I remember I went to India last year in June. And then I brought the dresses from here [in Australia] up there [to India]. My father hasn't stopped me doing anything. But when I went there... and I wore the dress and I went out with my friends, and the neighbours, they were staring at me, and like... and then we were like, “Oh, she has really changed. She has changed, she doesn't have sense to wear the clothes in India”. And then I was like so embarrassing. I love wearing these kind of clothes up there [in India]. And then I bought the stuff which was fully covered. And then I wore that up there. (Student S2)

Learning shock

The conversation moved to discuss Shama's learning experiences and the differences she found between her previous studies in India and her Australian VET studies. Initially she reiterated her previous statement on the propensity of some people to interfere, and then she responded with:

Studies are good. Yep, studies are good up here [in Australia]. It's like whatever I'm studying, if I talk about hairdressing, whatever I'm studying right now up here, if I go back to India, [and] I want to study the same thing in India, it will take me three or four years to complete that. And so these studies are faster, much, much faster up here. (Student S2)

When I asked what component of her studies she found enjoyable, Shama elucidated with:

Especially the creative part of hairdressing. Yeah, [be]cause back in India I've done [an] Indian designing degree which is really creative. So I was actually thinking to do something creative only, because I'm not really good in theory part. I love to do practicals, so that is why I'm enjoying the creative part, like that. (Student S2)

Continuing this conversation line, I enquired if Shama had found anything difficult within the course. She advised:

Nothing that I don't like. Right now I haven't found anything, except for theory part, I don't like it. (Student S2)

Learning support

The discussion then flowed onto the teaching staff and Shama stated:

Well up here [in Australia], like teachers are really, really cool. Like, they are really friendly. They don't treat us like we are their students. We are [treated] just like we are friends, like there's no differences between anyone. You can call them by their name, but up here [in India] we have to give them the full respect. We have to call them Sir, Madam, we have to. Up here [in Australia] I've found like, people are really friendly and they don't just treat us like we are older or younger, but everything is equal up here [in Australia]. (Student S2)

Current social contacts and activities

So as to discover Shama's work-study-life balance, the conversation drifted to discuss her other commitments. As Shama began to describe her studies, she informed me that when she commenced her studies, she also sought employment. Shama explained:

Because I come here [to college] only two days, so it's only two days, yeah. I finally got a job and got really independent now. Because my main goal was to complete my studies first, not even think about the job. My father was like, "*Don't think about the job, complete your studies, I'm there to help you*". So, I was like, it will be really hard for you. At least I can earn that money which can [then] be easy [paid] for my rent. So he was like, *No, I'm there to help you out*. (Student S2)

Shama was determined to work as well as study. She described how her job assisted her in adapting to the Australian environment:

I'm working now. I'm doing marketing job now. I do normally three and a half days. It's a SIM card, promotion of SIM card to call international for really less money. [It was my job] which really made me learn that if you want to talk to someone, talk very politely, don't get scared at all. You can make friends easily by talking to them in a very nice manner. (Student S2)

I then asked Shama about her activities during her spare time.

I normally cook food in my spare time. [but] well since I got this job I don't [go many places]. But usually whenever I get time, I go at my friend's place or whether she comes at my place, [be]cause I don't have much friends up here. (Student S2)

Friends' nationality

The discussion moved onto Shama's friends and their nationalities. As she indicated she did not have many friends, I enquired about her friends' nationalities. She advised me:

I have only three friends here. One is Chinese, one is Indian and one is from France...[or] Greece. I meet my Chinese friend at my [previous] college... not this college. When I came first to Australia, I was in a different college, and I met her up there and then her husband is Indian. So I met her husband second friend, and then her --- she's also working in [the] same company. (Student S2)

Because she had not mentioned any Australian friends, I asked Shama if during the last two years she had made any Australian friends. She responded with:

One person has been in contact [recently] now. He's actually a UK citizen, so... but he's moving to Australia --- He came to Australia two months ago. Yeah, he is back there [in the UK], but he is going to come to Australia this year. (Student S2)

Later in the discussion with Shama, she explained that currently her spare time was limited but she maintained contact with her Australian friends through social media. She said:

[I have] two or three [Australian friends], but I'm not actually interacting with them right now because I don't have time. And it's like, I contact them through Facebook. I want to [make more friends], and [later] I can expand my friends [but] I [also] want to explore [myself]. (Student S2)

Self-identity

Shama appeared to be very much in control of her own destiny. She also revealed that plans had been made between her father and herself to establish a business and that she would be the manager. Shama elucidated their plans:

I'm going to open my salon. Yeah, [be]cause my father, he has applied for [business visa]. Yeah, my father will help me out for that. Yeah, he is going to have his own business, [and] I'm gonna just take care of it. I will be soon [be the manager], [be]cause he is opening this room for me. (Student S2)

She then described her family's plans to move to Melbourne:

Yeah, he has applied for business visa up in Australia. He is gonna open it in Brisbane [be]cause I'm in Brisbane. [It will be] like the five [salons] for Melbourne...because it's all the friends [he] have got in Melbourne... so my family will be... my father, my brother and my brother and sister, they will be moving to Melbourne soon. [Then] I will move to Melbourne. (Student S2)

Shama also explained the salon business succession plans which her father had already endorsed:

With the salon, I can hand over to my Chinese friend. She is a hairdresser since she was nine years old. She's right into hairdressing, so she's actually a professional hairdresser. So I can let her take care of it.--- Yeah [my friend and my father have met], because my father he visit in Australia at least twice a year. So he is coming next month again to see me. (Student S2)

The conversation topic on friends and her father's supportive influence was then revisited when Shama informed me:

So my father knows all my friends. He knows that he will only suggest to me not to make Indian friends, [but] try to make [friends with] some other people... Yeah, because it will be very good for you [to make Australian friends]... [be]cause before when I was new up here some Indian [friends] would be useful because they are from my own community, from my background and stuff like that. But it won't take long really [for the salon]. (Student S2)

Following this comment, Shama provided a timeframe estimate for setting up the business:

[It will take] at least three years more to get settled up in Australia, because rules are really hard up here. [It is] not just because some Indian people are making mess up here. So due to them [causing problems], everybody has to suffer, of course. Everybody is Indian [and are the same]. (Student S2)

Discourse and discursive practices

As Shama was grooming herself for a business career in Australia, I was curious as to how she thought others saw her and she saw herself. When I asked, Shama said she hoped when a friend introduced her to another student, they would say:

Hi, she's my friend, her name is Shama. I know her from this much time. She want to join our group--- and we can be friends. (Student S2)

Shama then explained that if a friend was introducing her to a teacher, she was unsure of what they will say, but she thought:

Hi ma'am. She's my friend, her name is Shama, and she's really good in this field. So if you need a ... [statement not completed]. I don't know [what would be said]. (Student S2)

When I asked if a friend introduced her to a social group, what did she hope they would say? Shama stated:

They can introduce like ... She also have um much interest in social life and then she want to join this group. And if you really think that, you can take her in your group and tell her what we have to do for the social life to help the people and all that. And you can most welcome her into the group. (Student S2)

Behavioural and psychological changes

Shama demonstrated a strong personality but as I wished to discover how she saw herself, I asked if she thought she might have changed in any way since being in Australia. She responded by describing how her behaviour had adapted to the Australian ways of dressing:

In India, I used to be very like...really like, really bad girl. Like I used to wear full type of clothes [be]caused it's like my father is really close to my heart, so whatever he used to bring for me, I used to wear. I never said [to] him that I didn't like it, [or] why you are letting me wear full clothes. Full, full every day clothes. So I used to tie my hair, never used to look good, never think about it until the time I was in Australia here. Because I was so

friendly with my Dad I was like... I didn't want to hurt him. So whatever he used to bring for me, I used to do that only. (Student S2)

She continued and spoke about a circumstance that motivated her to change her behaviour:

I have never bought anything myself until the age of 20. So when I came here I saw the people around. It was like four or five months I was in the same clothes which my father gave it to me. And then it was like, no this won't work because like, when I went for the jobs, I used to be all like [these] things. There was no one else who wants to support me and [no]one's tell me, No, this is not the right thing. [So I said to myself] you are in Australia, you are in a new country. And then it was like every time when I'd go for a job, [and] they used to discard me. No ... [they thought] you look stupid. (Student S2)

Shama's dialogue then illustrated that she was aware change was necessary in order for her to successfully adapt to her environment:

And then it was like somebody have abused me as, "*Fucking Indian, go back*" and all that stuff. And then I really realised. Well if I want to stay here, [if] I want to do something in life up here, [then] I have to change my personality and I started wearing these clothes. (Student S2)

Support mechanisms available and used

Shama continued and elucidated how her friend assisted her to adapt:

It was really difficult for me because I had never worn such things back in India... never ever... it was really difficult first of all to buy these clothes, because I have never gone for shopping alone, it was first time. And then my Chinese friend, I met her in my college, and then her style is totally Chinese, totally [different] from mine. And then I told her ...can you help me out? And then whenever I want to go shopping, I used to take her with me, and then slowly, slowly she changed my dressing sense. And then now, I really [know] everything. (Student S2)

Behavioural and psychological impacts of Australian experiences

She then explained the differences between her previous identity and her present self-identity and behaviours:

Like I'm independent first of all, and secondly my nature, like um I used to be really angry and angry about India. I used to fight a lot with my brother and sister. Up here [in Australia], everything is different. It's like I'm independent so that actually made me realise how life goes on and importance of money first of all. [be]cause in India, [e]specially up here [in Australia], like you are independent only if yourself, if you are 12 or 13 years old. You are separate [people] by your parents. But up in India it's nothing like that. (Student S2)

She commented further on her behavioural differences and then described her observations of life in Australia and why she needed to make changes in her behaviour:

So I left India when I was about 21...20, about 20, and before that time, I was totally dependent on my father. Everything I need, I need to ask for money to

my father. I was having my personal car, my personal laptop, where I'm going, what time I'd get back, no...no asking, nothing, I was living my life to the fullest. When I came here, when I see people... they are really working hard to get money. It actually made me realise, "No, you have to get on the right track now, you have to do... go online, you have to look for the jobs, you father back... your father is back in India. So up here, whatever you have to do, you have to do it by yourself". And it has to be step by step, so that actually made me realise that main thing importance of money. There is really changing my behaviour. (Student S2)

Shama then explained the pleasure she gained from saving money and sending it to her mother:

Whenever I want to buy something, I think first. And, if I save money for my parents for sending gifts and all that, and [then] they also get really happy. Because my mum, she's really fond of Indian dresses so she always like say to my father, "*No, you're not letting me buy this, you're not letting me buy that*", so I send her money for that, and she really gets happy when I send money for that. (Student S2)

This statement was followed by Shama explaining the financial hierarchical role played by her father:

Yeah, because A***, my sister, and my brothers, we are three children together. But everything is my father's doing. Like, he is the main person who is actually making money and doing all the household things and all that. My mother is housewife, so one person is taking care of all the houses and it is a big expenditure, all the specific bills. (Student S2)

The conversation then flowed to discover if Shama would revert or change her identity if she returned to India. As some psychological and behavioural changes since being in Australia had already been identified by Shama, when I posed the question she responded with:

Nope. No, I'll stay the same. It might be bad change, for my parents. They have never stopped me. First of all, that I have realised from living in Australia, that if anybody's saying something to you, don't care about that [be]cause it's your life. There is none of their business [what you are] doing in your life. So just forget them. Let them say whatever they want to say to you. Do whatever you feel like. Don't care about [what] people [think]. They are watching me all day, or saying something to you, so that [is] interference [in your life], [so] say to them straight away, "*You have no life*". (Student S2).

Shama had indicated a number of times during our conversation that her father was very supportive as well as influential on her future activities. She also displayed respect and appeared to acknowledge him as a guiding discourse entity. With these insights in mind, I asked Shama about her father's thoughts on her relationship with her boyfriend. Her reply demonstrated that her father had come to terms with Shama and her boyfriend living together:

So when I came to Australia first time it was a bit scared to tell him [my father] about him [my boyfriend], because he'll be like... he [my father] will call me liar or something like that. And then I [would have] made him sad...

[So] I made him realise, “See dad, you hate me now, I know that you’re going to hate me in the future also, but right now if somebody is there to help me out, that is my boyfriend”. He [my boyfriend] didn’t force me to come to Australia, and he just tell me one thing... seize your dream in Australia... this country is really good. So he [my boyfriend] really understood that, and then slowly, slowly, I told him [my father]... “See Dad I like him every much”. So he [my father] was like, “I’m going to see him first, if I like him, then I can tell you that”. But touch wood he liked him very much. (Student S2)

Shama then commented:

Yeah, he [my father] actually said... he was like, just make your careers and then you can think about all that, but he really like him, so I have no rules. (Student S2)

She also explained her boyfriend’s plans:

Yeah, [he is] Indian. Yeah, he’s completed the [hospitality] studies almost. [Then] he’s gonna apply for the IELTS testings also. He has to do all the things, yeah, yep, to apply for temporary residency. (Student S2)

Shama closed this topic by reiterating her plans to apply for residency and expand the business:

He [my father] has already part [approved our marriage] ...the main thing is to set it down, it’s like if he [my boyfriend] get his TR, and I’m going to apply for my TR in by two months. So we all...we almost, we will be on civil side. So we can think about our next step, and then we can expand our business as well.--- Everyone [in the family is moving to Australia]. And then it will be like no India, all Australia. [Our children], they will be Australian. (Student S2)

The conversation moved to discuss positive and negative experiences. When I asked Shama about an event that was positive, her response was:

Um, yep. Because like I got job, finally. And then there is no discrimination out there. Because like when I came up here first, it was like people used to abuse me. (Student S2)

She continued this topic to explain that before finding a job, she was financially dependent on her father. Shama described this as a difficult time:

And since I was in Australia, like for one and a half years, I don’t get job... when I came to Australia. I haven’t got job. I haven’t got job at all. First year, right. It was like... it was like the one year I was totally dependent on my father. Like my own expenditures, my rent, every single penny’s come from India, and Indian money is really... really high [amount]. Up here we are spending \$1, but in Indian Rupees, it is 45 rupees. So that is a real lot of money up there [in India], so that was the worst, worst experience I had in Australia. (Student S2)

Continuing this topic, I asked Shama if she experienced any unpleasant accommodation issues. Her response was:

When I came first in Australia, at my boyfriend’s place, there were a couple, living... an Indian couple living, and then... then about the [time the] lease

[was] up there, they just ran from there. Our lease, our contract was about to finish... [And they] run out and they were like, they need to give us the money for all the electricity bond and all that. They ran away. And then... I moved to Murarrie, and out there, it happened [again], the same thing. I've moved again ... [in with] an Indian family, and then she took \$450 bond from me, and then when this thing happened with the Aboriginal people, they abused me, I will... I lived there for like three months only, two months, two and a half months. And then I tried to make her understand that see, I can't live here, it is not a safe area. My job finishes at 10.30 at night. I got the cleaning job at the time. I used to work three days, and it used to be night job. Yep, I do day job now. So I make her understand, she didn't understand. She take that money also. She didn't return my bond to me. (Student S2)

She then recalled the sex discrimination incidents that occurred at her accommodation:

And then I moved to Nundah and the same thing again... Up there he [asked for the bond and] then [after I] gave [him] the bond and [then] he ran away. And then a couple came out of there. He is so bad, like started interfering in my life, in my boyfriend's life. There [he started talking about where] is the girlfriend going, "See what kind of clothes she is wearing", it doesn't make any sense. Yeah, he is Indian. Like, he's totally Punjabi background, very bad background. The people there are actually... like you won't be imagining how bad these people are. Mm, very aggressive. (Student S2)

Shama continued and explained the Indian cultural aspect behind this discriminative display:

He used to say [to] me bad (things)... [be]cause in India, you can't tell your husband to help people. Whatever you have to do, you have to do by yourself. Your husband will only take care of their business and the home expenditures. That's all. They will never help you out like in your home works and all that. Like that is a discrimination out there, like husbands ... like [he] is lord... so that is the thing he used to discriminate me. "*Your husband is the lord, your boyfriend is the lord and so you don't have to see him to help you out and all that*". When I used to go to parties and my friends ... he used to come up there. He used to abuse them also, and all that. Yeah, he was [in] joint accommodation, yeah. I moved out only last week. Yeah, I have my own unit with my boyfriend, so we do our living out there now. (Student S2)

So as to draw out any other negative events, I asked Shama if she could recall any experiences that made her uncomfortable or frightened. She responded by describing an incident where she was harassed and a knife was brandished during an attempted robbery:

Oh, it was Saturday or Friday night. I just left my work and I used to live in Murarrie. So that even the train has a lot of Aboriginal people and then in Murarrie, up there all the African... African people live there. So when I get off from the train, there were five boys, African people behind me. Like they were all black and they were all... I was so scared that they can say something to me. And then what happened, one of the guy, he came over and he was like, "*Do you have some money?*" and I was like, "*I don't have*

anything, I don't keep cash on me". So he just showed me the knife, take all the... take all the money or something like that. And I was like, "*Seriously, I don't have any*", I showed him my wallet, "*See, I don't have anything*" and then that really make me scared, it is not safe place to like... I just ran out from there straight away. (Student S2)

Shama advised that her friend experienced a similar incident. She recalled the event: Yeah, because it happened with my friend also, like she was... I was waiting for her at Central Station and then she was about to come in three to four minutes. She was at Bowen Hills, and then what happened. Next to her, there was two teenagers, Australian teenagers, and they were just staring [at] her like... And then when she reached to Central Station, they just pull her from the train. And she just fall down, and [they said] "*You fucking Indian, you go back to the country, you make mess in our country,*" blah, blah, blah, [and] abuse her. Then she reported it to the police straight away. (Student S2)

The dialogue continued and Shama commented that a few of her friends had experienced racial-based abusive language:

But it happened with me and with my friends a lot of times. Like we are just going and people are like saying us bad words, like "*Fucking Indians, go back to your country*". [Generally they are] young [people], some older also, but most of them youngsters. (Student S2)

To ensure our conversation had uncovered as many facets in Shama's story that she wished to share, I asked if she had any other comments she wanted to add. Her response summed up her feelings:

It's like I just love Australia, just because I've really grown up here. [As well as being independent] I've learned one more thing. That never be in contact with Indians, especially the Punjabi Indians. [be]cause they will actually ruin your life. We didn't get any life. Start making Aussie friends. Don't be scared with them. So I interact with everyone now. (Student S2)