

Linguistically and culturally diverse students' experiences of small group projects at a university in Canada: The significance of relationships and identity building processes to the realisation of cooperative learning

Submitted by

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to the University of Exeter

as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

in

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

March 2014

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Abstract

Cooperative learning is a pedagogic approach that is prevalent in all levels of education as it is seen to yield higher learning outcomes than individual learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In the global university, it is believed to have the potential of increasing intercultural contact since students work together in small groups to conduct projects related to their discipline. The assumption is that students will learn the intercultural skills they need for an interconnected world by studying and learning in groups with linguistically and ethnically diverse others (Association of Community Colleges Canada, 2010). Although cooperative learning is based on social interdependence in which group members work together for the mutual benefit of their group, there has been very little research conducted into the relationships that the group members actually have with each other. It is the aim of this study to examine these relationships and find out their impacts on cooperative learning experiences.

Drawing upon insights from pragmatism and dialogism, in this thesis, learning is conceptualised as an embodied, socially situated, and relational process. This means that the key to learning is the relationships that learners can construct with others. An integral part of forming relationships is the negotiation of identities in which people see themselves and others as certain kinds of people. In learning in cooperative groups, the ability to negotiate legitimate, competent identities is regarded as essential. For this reason, the study reported in this thesis uses a view of identity as socially constructed as a lens through which to analyse relationships in cooperative learning.

The study focuses on the experiences of **12** students participating in group learning projects in first year business courses. Narrative inquiry is the methodology used as it is ideal for highlighting the complexities in human relationships and issues of power. The narratives of four international, four Canadian immigrant, and four Canadian-born students are analysed.

A key finding from the analysis is that the relationship students are able to negotiate in cooperative groups and the types of identities they are able to construct with others strongly impacts their learning. There appeared to be a hierarchical order to student identities in groups with Canadian-born students assuming more powerful identities. Frequently these students are results oriented showing only interest in achieving high marks in their group projects. This leads to an absence of emotional connectedness amongst students and a disregard for the process aspect of working together which is core to cooperative learning.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the ways that cooperative learning could be changed to make it more process oriented. Finally, I make recommendations for further research which can build on the findings from this study.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the many people who have made this study possible. Firstly, I want to express my gratitude to the students who volunteered to participate in my research. Secondly, I would like to thank the university where I work for granting me educational leave which enabled me to spend the first year of my studies in Exeter.

I am also very grateful to my supervisors Dr. Sarah Rich and Dr. Gabriela Meier. In particular, Dr. Rich has guided and counselled me throughout my whole “thesis” journey and I cannot thank her enough for her advice and guidance.

Most importantly, I am indebted to my family, especially my husband Ron, without whose tremendous encouragement, unfailing support, and humour, this project would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my late mother, Eva Hector, who was so proud before she passed away, that I had just finished writing my thesis. She instilled in me the love of education and the determination to succeed. She herself, though desiring higher education as a young woman, was denied such an opportunity because of the economic conditions and the discriminatory practices against women that prevailed at the time. However, she ensured that I was not denied such opportunities.

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Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

The study reported in this thesis explores the relationships between three diverse groups of students; locally-born, immigrant, and international, as they meet and construct their learning in the global university. The aim of the thesis, as will be explained below, is to examine the interconnectedness of the relationships between students and the identity positions that they are able to construct and how these resulting identity positions impact students' experiences in cooperative learning projects. In particular, it focuses on the experiences of 12 diverse students studying first year business at a Canadian university.

In recent years, the student body at most universities in English speaking countries has become increasingly diverse due to large numbers of overseas born students and growing numbers of local minority students seeking higher education. International students are desired by the host countries as they bring about mutual understanding, provide knowledge workers in the host society, generate revenue, and build capacity (OECD, 2009, p. 451). These students, along with diverse local students, are transforming the campuses of global universities, although the benefits of the latter, while similar to having international students, often go unnoticed.

This growing number of non-traditional students, defined as minorities, the disabled, mature adults, rural students, and indigenous students (Thomas & Quinn, 2006) is partly in response to government led incentives, particularly in the UK, to widen participation in higher education. "Widening participation

means helping more people from under-represented groups, particularly low socio-economic groups, to participate successfully in higher education” (Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Indirectly linked with widening participation are the changes that have occurred in recent years in the demographic composition of countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia, which have received many immigrants from non-English speaking countries, particularly those in Asia.

1.2 Learning in the global university

Today, learning is viewed as a socially situated process in which people construct meaning by engaging in discursive practices. Thus learning is much more than merely a cognitive individual process in which individual minds acquire knowledge. Bloomer (2001, p. 440) emphasises that “knowledge and meaning are created *between* rather than *within* people.” Social interaction is the first stage of the process and it is within this that people form relationships. Intricately linked with this is the negotiation of identities in which people see themselves and others as certain kinds of people (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Rich & Davis, 2007). Bloomer (2001, p. 441) explains that “while learning is to do with changes in what people *think* and *do*, it also entails changes of a more fundamental nature, in who people are.” In other words, central to learning are relationships and identities. This is a critical aspect of learning according to Silseth and Arnseth (2011) and Purvanova (2013). Having a positive academic identity, which means that one is valued, trusted, and welcomed as a learner, is critical for one’s successful participation in learning activities.

Language is the main vehicle through which people construct relationships, identities, and meaning within the learning situation (Hodkinson, Biesta, &

James, 2008; Wegerif, 2006). In the global university, in which cooperative learning pedagogies (described below) are increasingly advocated and widely used, heterogeneous students are brought together to carry out joint learning assignments. Not only can language problems complicate the joint learning, but different world-views can mean that their dialogical negotiations can be full of tension. Hermans and Dimaggio (2007, p. 46) explain what happens:

In a globalizing environment, people are confronted with myriad opinions and ideologies that are different from those that they have learned in their local environments. When these views are experienced as threatening or undermining their local point of view, they are motivated to defend their local positions, often in emotional ways.

While the construction of legitimate academic identities is considered essential for participation and for learning to occur in educational settings, it is not an easy process for ethnically and linguistically diverse students.

1.3 Cooperative learning in the global university

In cooperative learning (CL), students study together in small groups to carry out joint assignments for shared marks. The benefits are described as positive interdependence which results in higher achievements, more constructive attitudes towards learning, more support for the other students in the group, and more effective interpersonal skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). When cooperative learning first became popular in the late 1980s, it was seen as a “paradigm shift” from the transmission of knowledge to learning (Rassuli & Manzer, 2005). It is regarded as a pedagogically sound practice as students construct knowledge through interacting.

A computer search of the words *cooperative learning in higher education* reveals that it is used in most disciplines and is particularly prevalent in

business education. Indeed, for accreditation with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (ARCS), one of the main accreditation bodies of business schools in the world, the curriculum of Bachelor's degrees or lower must include cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning simulates the world of work with students being exposed to problem solving and critical thinking (Burdett, 2007; Cartney & Rouse, 2006; Gabriel & Griffiths, 2008; Hassanien, 2007; Li & Campbell, 2008; Phillips, 2005; Rassuli & Manzer, 2005). One of the major aims is teaching social responsibility in preparation for the global business world (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2013). Thus cooperative learning provides a venue for the development of these multicultural and intercultural skills.

Aside from these aims, a practical reason for the growth of cooperative learning in recent years, is that first and second year class sizes in university have been steadily increasing with between 100 – 400 students being common. Thus it is impossible for the lecturer to actively engage such a large number of students. Cooperative learning is seen as an effective pedagogic way of doing this as it complements lecturing and other teaching approaches and it enables the teacher to be more learning-centred (Mills, 2010). It is logical, therefore, to assume that with government pressure for more students to access higher education, cooperative learning has a long life ahead.

1.4 Rationale for the study

It is in cooperative learning projects that ethnically and linguistically diverse students are most likely to have the opportunities to interact with each other.

Within these contexts, students discursively co-construct and reconstruct multiple identities and these interactions, as Dervin (2010), McKinney and Norton (2007), and Shi (2006) emphasize, are situated within differentials of power. Van Lier (2004) explains that the language used to communicate is not neutral and for Blackledge “in multicultural societies, the language choice, use, and attitudes are intrinsically linked to language ideologies, relations of power, political arrangements, and speakers’ identities” (2005, p. 35). In group learning situations these factors may limit or facilitate the positions students take up (Harré, Moghaddam, Pilkerton Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). This points to the extreme complexity inherent in relationship building and identity construction in this learning situation

These complexities of relationships and identities have not been the focus of research in cooperative learning. Researchers such as Johnson and Johnson (2002, 2009), whose names are synonymous with cooperative learning in North America, have tended to overlook these in favour of research into the cognitive aspects of the shared task. Although there has been extensive research into other aspects of cooperative learning (see Appendix 2), relationships and identity have been disregarded until recently.

It is these complexities of relationships in this learning situation that are the focus of the research reported in this thesis. As an administrator of ESL students in a Canadian university, I have frequently had my department blamed for the inadequacies of the “ESL” students in university classes with complaints about these students frustrating the local students in the group activities; this is despite the fact that these ESL students may actually be the local students. An

example of this attitude can be seen in the following extract from an article about international students written by two Canadian faculty members in the Canadian university newspaper, *University Affairs*: “Qualified students can be hardly blamed if they slouch in their seats and study their shoelaces, as the professor iterates, yet again, something they learned in grade school” (Friesen & Keeney, 2013). They add that “Their [international students’] receipt of Canadian credentials occurs to the detriment of the Canadian students and institutions.” It is the assumptions and attitudes of faculty members like these which aroused my interest in finding out the experiences of diverse students as they interact in cooperative learning groups in the global university.

As an instructor responsible for teaching ESL, I teach in a rigorous programme that prepares students linguistically for university studies. I have seen confident and articulate young men and women starting their university studies, only to find that their Canadian counterparts are domineering and unwilling to listen to them. I want to learn if they are indeed given a space in which they can negotiate meanings and identities and whether these identities are ones in which they are seen as academically competent. I want to learn if there is more I can do to prepare my students for the realities of cooperative learning in their university courses.

My research interest is to peel away some of the complexities mentioned to gain a more in-depth understanding of the interconnection between relationships, the construction of identities, and learning in groups. For this study I have selected narrative inquiry as a methodology as it is socially situated and focuses on people’s experiences and the meanings they attribute to those

experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). For this reason, narrative has become the methodology of choice for researchers interested in identity as it provides a rich source of information about the relationship between identity and learning (Block, 2007a). The narratives of twelve students' experiences of cooperative learning are the focus of the study. The participants, like the student body of the university, consist of Canadian students; both Canadian-born and immigrants, and international students.

1.5 Research aims

The research aims of this study are as follows:

- To describe participants' narratives of their relationships with students of different linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds in cooperative learning projects at a Canadian university
- To determine what promotes and what constrains the formation of relationships within cooperative learning projects
- To examine the types of identities ethnically and linguistically diverse students are able to establish within these relationships and how these impact their experiences in cooperative learning
- To consider the implications of the study with reference to preparing ESL students for university studies and to improving the current model of cooperative learning.

The research questions can be seen in section 4.2

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is significant in several ways. Firstly, although there are some recent studies which have examined the experiences of international students at universities in English speaking countries as mentioned in section 1.4, I have

found no studies similar to mine which use narrative inquiry to view group learning from a situated relational perspective through the lens of identity.

Secondly, as Rich (2011) and Trahar (2006) observe, few studies in higher education have been conducted with participants from a variety of countries including the local or “host” country. Frequently these local students are omitted as they are not seen as having problems. This study which includes narratives from locally-born students, immigrants, and international students may provide new insights on how diverse students build relationships which promote learning in cooperative groups.

Thirdly, there may be a local practical result arising from the study. There may be immediate pedagogical improvements that can be made to cooperative learning and to the teaching of ESL that arise from the findings of this study.

1.7 Outline of the study

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. In chapter 2, I provide the contextual background to the study. In particular, this chapter provides general Canadian demographic and higher education information. It also focuses on the setting of the study and the students therein. In chapter 3, I develop my conceptual framework by looking at a more nuanced understanding of the significance of cooperative group work through an examination of relationality and learning, and the significance of identity. In chapter 4, I present my research design and methodology. I provide a rationale for why narrative inquiry is best suited to capturing the experiences of students in cooperative learning. In chapter 5 I present the findings of my research. First, I give a visual reconstruction of a group meeting and then I present my findings using a thematical analysis. In

chapter 6, I present my discussion of the findings and consider the implications of these. Finally, in chapter 7, I provide a brief conclusion to the thesis and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 Background to the study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the contextual background to the study into relationships and identity construction in cooperative group work in the global university. In particular, it focuses on these things with reference to a group of students studying at a Canadian university. To help conceptualise the study, an understanding of Canada with its diverse population resulting from successive waves of immigration, its system of higher education, and the characteristics of its student body is undertaken. I begin by providing an overview of migration trends in Canada and by defining the terminology used to describe the ethnicity of the population. From there I describe the organisation of higher education. After that, I discuss the characteristics of the student population in higher education and consider how these might impact cooperative learning. Next, I turn to a discussion of the physical site and demographics of the particular university that comprised the setting of the study and highlight specific student characteristics that could impact on cooperative learning there. Finally, I discuss business studies at the university, its use of cooperative learning, and the reasons why it was an appropriate discipline in which to situate my study.

2.2 Migration trends in Canada

Compared to many nations, Canada is a young country since it was only established in 1867. The original inhabitants, the First Nations, are an aboriginal people who today comprise 4% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2009). The two founding nations of Canada as a country were the British and the French and these subsequently gave rise to Canada's English and French bilingual status. Until 1970, with a few exceptions, the immigrants to Canada

were mainly white Europeans. In 1971, for example, 61.6% of all new immigrants were born in Europe (Statistics Canada, 2011) with only 12.1% of immigrants born in Asia. In the last ten years, this has reversed and as mentioned in Section 1.1, the largest proportion of immigrants have come from Asia.

As well as a change in the originating countries of immigrants, there has been a change in the types of immigrants. In the last ten years, the government focus has been to increase the numbers of economic class immigrants who are defined as skilled workers or business people (aged between 25-45) and correspondingly to decrease the numbers of family class immigrants who are defined as spouses or close family members of Canadians. In 2011, 62.8% of all immigrants to Canada were described as economic class, 22.7% as family class, and 11.2% as refugees (Chagnon, 2013). This has an impact on higher education as the economic class immigrants are generally university educated and desire that their children will be as well. As pointed out below, there is a strong correlation between the education level of parents and whether their children enter higher education. The family class immigrants are often less well qualified as are the refugee migrants.

Refugees have settled in Canada from the 1970s onwards as wars and strife occurred in various parts of the world. Today the government of Canada reports taking 1 in 10 of the world's refugees from over 140 countries (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). The number of these immigrants fluctuates according to need and their educational background is also variable.

Canada's rich immigration history means that the large cities where most people have settled reflect a rich multicultural mosaic. This in turn is reflected in the student population of most higher education institutions.

2.2.1 The terminology used to describe the ethnicity of population in Canada

The ethnicity of the population in Canada is typically described as comprising Caucasian or white, Aboriginal, and visible minority. Statistics Canada provides the following definition of visible minority, "The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour'" (Statistics Canada, 2008). The term "visible minority" came into being in 1984 when the government wanted to ensure equal employment opportunities for all Canadians (Judge Rosalie Silberman Abella, 1984). While the aim was laudable, since then, the term visible minority has become ubiquitous and in 2009 it was adopted by Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2012c).

2.3 The organisation of higher education in Canada

In Canada, as a result of confederation when the provinces joined together to form one country, certain levels of responsibility remained with the provincial governments and education was one of these responsibilities. This means that there is no ministry of education attached to the federal government in Ottawa but instead there are ten provincial and three territorial jurisdictions each with their own Ministers of Education. Although there are similarities across the country, this results in many differences in curriculum, assessment, and accountability (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2008).

In higher education there is no national accreditation body and recognised universities, which can be public or private not-for-profit, are given the authority to grant degrees through some act or quality assurance process from their provincial government. Universities are fairly autonomous and can set their own entry requirements. Within most provinces there is an articulation system in which courses at different institutions are recognised as equivalent so that students can transfer from one institution to another (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2008). This system encourages students to study at a local university or community college for the first two years of their post-secondary studies then either transfer to one of the better known provincial universities for their last two years or complete their degree at their local university. As a result of the provincial system, and the articulation of university courses across institutions, most students study for their first degree in their home province, usually at the university they live nearest to. It is a way of providing more accessible higher education so that participation is widened since students can save money by living at home. With this understanding of the Canadian system of higher education, I now turn to examining the student population in higher education.

2.4 The student population in higher education in Canada

The student population in higher education consists of Canadian students and international students. The Canadian or local students can be broken down into those who were born in Canada, referred to as *Canadian-born*, and those who came to Canada as immigrants during their childhood, referred to as *immigrant*. The international students have a student visa to study in the country. Table 2.1 shows these categories.

Table 2.1 A classification of students in higher education in Canada

Canadian Students		International Students
Canadian-born	Immigrant - born outside of Canada	In Canada on student visa

Following this, I briefly discuss issues related to Canadian and international students.

2.4.1 Canadian students in higher education

In this section I examine the ethnicity, age, determiners of success, and employment patterns of Canadian students in higher education (both Canadian-born and immigrant).

Accurate information about the ethnic backgrounds of Canadian students is difficult to obtain since it is completely dependent on students self-identifying. In their 2012 survey of 15,000 graduating students from thirty-seven universities across Canada, the Canadian University Survey Consortium found that 32% of participants self identified as belonging to an ethnic group. Of these, 28% were Chinese, 20% South Asian, and 14% Black (Prairie Research Associates, 2012). The majority (65%) of these students were aged between 18 - 24 years (Association of Universities and Colleges Canada, 2011) with 28% of women and 21% of men of this age group attending university. The highest determinant of youth participation in higher education, regardless of their ethnic background, is the education level of the parents (Finnie, Childs, & Wismer, 2011). Since a much higher proportion of immigrants (51%) aged 25-64 have a university degree than Canadian born citizens (19%) (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013), this may help to explain why McMullen

(2011) found a higher university participation rate for children of immigrant parents.

One factor related to the success of students in university is employment. Many Canadian students work and the Canadian University Survey Consortium found in their 2011 survey of 8,549 undergraduate students in twenty-five universities that 53% of full time students worked an average of eighteen hours per week and 81% of part-time students worked an average of thirty hours or more per week. They found that typically, if students spend thirty hours working, they can only spend about 18.9 hours per week on studying (Prairie Research Associates, 2011). These figures are similar to what D'Alessandro and Volet (2012) found in the USA and Australia. In the USA, 57% of university students worked an average of 20 hours per week, while in Australia, 70% of students worked an average of 15 hours per week.

2.4.2 International students in higher education

The main countries sending students to Canada are the People's Republic of China, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. In 2008, 67% of international university students were enrolled in Bachelor degree programmes. The most popular of these programmes are business management and public administration with 23.3% of the international students taking these. The majority of students at the bachelor's degree level are aged 18 - 24, much younger than they were a decade ago. There has also been an increase in the number of female students with 48% at the undergraduate level (McMullen & Elias, 2011). Since the Canadian government started to allow up to twenty hours of off-campus work in 2006, more international students are working. The

2009 survey of international students by the Canadian Bureau for International Education found that 10% of the students were working off-campus for an average of 18.4 hours per week, while another 23% worked on-campus for an average of 12 hours per week (Prairie Research Associates, 2009, p. 50).

2.4.3 Similarities and differences between Canadian and international students and implications for cooperative learning

In this section, I summarize the factors which may impact my study on cooperative learning. There are many similarities between the Canadian and international students. One of these is age as most are between 18 and 24. Because of this, it would be expected that these students would have commonalities when interacting in group projects. A second commonality is that many of the Canadian students have ethnic roots in the countries the international students come from and most likely can speak the same languages. It would seem that this would be a benefit for students working together in cooperative learning groups. The Canadian and international students also favour the same kinds of courses with business studies being popular with both, which would indicate that that they could interact and learn from each other thus creating a rich learning situation.

As well as these similarities between Canadian and international students, there are also some differences. The first of these is language since most international students have completed their schooling in their native language with English being an additional language. This may create communication difficulties when they first arrive in Canada. Another difference is that international students have to study full time to fulfill their visa requirements whereas Canadian students often study part-time and as a result they tend to

be employed many more hours than international students. This may have implications when students interact in cooperative learning since the Canadian students may not have as much time available for group meetings.

2.5 The setting for the study

In this section, I give details about the institution where the study takes place and where I work. The institution is referred to by the pseudonym University Arbutus and is located in British Columbia in western Canada. Firstly, I present a historical overview to give background details of the university. This is followed by a physical overview which shows the complexity of the multiple locations. Then I give an academic overview. Following that, I consider the demographics of the catchment area, since as mentioned earlier, most students in Canada attend their nearest university. Next, I describe the student body. Finally, I describe business studies which forms the backdrop for my study.

2.5.1 Historical overview

University Arbutus (UA) is a relatively new university. It was established as community college in 1981 and then in 1995, it metamorphosed into a degree granting university. It retains many of its earlier community college trappings in the form of adult basic education, academic programs for students with disabilities, and trades programmes. The class sizes too, reflect UA's earlier life as a college with academic classes capped at thirty-five students. Again, in line with its early beginnings, the main focus of the university is teaching rather than research. The institution has many similarities with the post-1992 UK universities which have the mandate of widening participation in higher education (Archer, 2007; Kimura, 2014).

2.5.2 Physical Overview

The university is located in the greater Vancouver area of Canada which has a population of about 2.3 million people. The university is spread over four campuses with the most distant two campuses being about forty-five kilometres apart. Despite the growth of on-line learning, the distance between campuses can provide logistical problems for students as face-to-face courses are not duplicated on all campuses. This results in students sometimes having to commute to get the courses they want which negatively impacts the time they can linger on campus and socialize with others.

2.5.3 Academic Overview

University Arbutus is fully accredited by the provincial government and offers a wide variety of programmes at the bachelor's level, including many which are career focused such as nursing and fashion and design. There is a laddering process so that students can spend two years studying for an associate degree then they can do two more years to finish a bachelor's degree. This offers them the flexibility of working for a few years and returning later to finish their degrees. There are also many one year certificate programmes which also ladder into the associate degrees. This gives students multiple pathways to a degree. Students with bachelor degrees can transfer to other universities in Canada to continue their education.

There is a minimum language requirement for students entering the university. In keeping with UA's earlier roots as an open access institution, the English threshold level is lower than at the longer established universities. There are many pathways that underqualified students can follow to obtain the necessary

English and mathematics qualifications for university entry. There is a philosophy that no student, regardless of his or her lack of qualifications, should be turned away. In other words, widening participation is important.

2.5.4 Demographics of the university catchment area

As mentioned in the overview of higher education in Canada (see Section 2.3 above), most students attend the university that is geographically nearest to their homes. This means that each university has a local catchment area where most of the students come from. The two campuses which comprised the site for the study reported in this thesis are located in separate municipalities about twenty-four kilometres apart and are referred to as city A and city B.

Using information from the 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) and the 2011 Census of Population (Statistics Canada, 2012a, 2012b), I provide a synopsis of the demographics of catchment areas A and B. More detailed information on the demographic information, the main ethnic groups, and the educational background of the inhabitants can be seen in Appendix 1.

Both cities are multi-ethnic with a large population of immigrants of whom about 25% were 19 years or younger in 2011. This is reflected by the percentage of the population who had a first language other than one of the official languages of Canada: in City A this was 61% and in city B, 44.5 %. The population of both areas is increasing rapidly with a growth of 9.2 % in A and 18.6% in B over the period 2007-2011. Not surprisingly, the percentage of visible minority population is high with 65% of mainly Chinese ethnicity in A and 44.5% of mainly Punjabi ethnicity in B.

The communities around the catchment area have similar demographics. It is expected that the Canadian student body would be representative of these communities.

2.5.5 The student body at University Arbutus

In this section, I will give information about the Canadian and international students at University Arbutus.

2.5.5.1 Canadian students at University Arbutus

This section describes all the Canadian students. A walk along the corridors of the university campuses in A and B confirm that the student body is representative of the catchment areas with Mandarin and Cantonese being heard everywhere on campus A, and Punjabi being heard on campus B.

Approximately 87% of UA’s students are from the catchment areas and as can be expected in an area of high immigration, the range in age of the Canadian students is quite wide since many older immigrants attend university to obtain Canadian qualifications. Table 2.2 illustrates this using information from government statistics for 2010 – 2011 (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012).

Table 2.2 Age group of Canadian students

Percentage of students	Age Group
69	17 – 24 years
14	25 – 29 years
8.5	30 – 39 years
8.5	40 years and older

What is significant about these students is that only 33% were studying full time in 2011. The predominance of part-time studies seems to be a historical pattern

at the university (Institutional Analysis and Planning, 2012a). Another factor linked with this is the percentage of students working. University records show that 63% of the Canadian students worked in paid employment with 52% of them working more than ten hours per week (Institutional Analysis and Planning, 2012a). The following table gives a breakdown of the number of hours Canadian students worked.

Table 2.3 Weekly hours of employment for Canadian students in 2011

Percentage of students	Hours worked per week
37	Not working
11	Less than 10 hours
22	10 – 19 hours
14	20 – 29 hours
16	30 or more hours

As in the rest of Canada, more female students (53%) enrolled than males (47%) and it is reported that 40% of the Canadian students speak only English while 60% speak another language in addition to English (Institutional Analysis and Planning, 2012a).

Much is known about the younger age group of students who transition directly to UA from high school. Since entry standards are lower at UA than at many other universities, it attracts a large percentage of students with low high school marks or grade point averages (GPA). Sixty per cent of high school graduates transition to UA immediately and of these 53% have no academic GPA; in other words, their average marks in high school are less than 50% or they studied non-academic subjects. Of the others, 28% were described as moderate achievers and 20% as high achievers. Correspondingly, it is reported that 53% of all high school students who transition have studied ESL in high school and some of these continue to study ESL at UA (Institutional Analysis and Planning,

2012b). This implies that many of the high school graduates entering UA are immigrant students who are underprepared for university.

Other factors such as a 10.2% drop-out rate in the first year and the fact that only 51% of students complete their bachelor's degree in five years point to the under-preparedness of the students. (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2010). It is also indicated that many students have intermittent or fragmented studies.

2.5.5.2 International students at University Arbutus

At UA, about 7% of the student body is international. Although these students come from most areas of the world, the majority are from China and India like the diasporas in the university catchment areas. Government records for 2011 show that 82% of these international students were 18-24 years old with slightly more males (55%) than females (45%) (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012). Only about a quarter of them worked up to twenty hours per week (*University Arbutus*, 2012).

Similar to the findings across Canada, 60% of the international students were enrolled in business studies. The second most popular area was ESL with 21% of the international students (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012). In the 2011 student survey, UA found that 73% of international students learned English after aged five (*University Arbutus*, 2012). This is somewhat ambiguous and may mean that the students started learning English at these ages since language learning is a process that takes time. The following table shows a breakdown of this.

Table 2.4 Age at which international students learned English

Percentage of students	Age of learning English
27	Under 5 years of age
31	Between 5-10 years of age
27	Between 11 – 15 years of age
15	Older than 15 years of age

With many students learning English in their teenage years, it is not surprising that a large number have to take ESL classes prior to starting university studies.

2.5.5.3 Summary of the student body with implications for cooperative learning

The student body at University Arbutus is fairly representative of the student body in higher education in Canada reported on Section 2.4. The factor that may have the most impact on cooperative learning is that only 33% of the Canadian students at UA study full time and about 66% of these students work. 30% of these full-time students are reported to work more than 30 hours per week so this leaves little time for the rigours of university studies. In a study of group projects with first and second year marketing students who worked, D'Alessandro and Volet (2012) found that students who worked over 16 hours per week had negative perceptions of group projects and this greatly affected group learning. Related to this is the fact that many Canadian students seem to be intermittent learners who take only a few courses at a time. The international students, on the other hand, must attend on a full-time basis. Added to this is the under-preparedness of many of the Canadian students. This may have an impact on cooperative learning as these under-prepared students may be working in groups with international students who are highly qualified for university studies.

Another interesting dimension is that Canadian students may work in learning groups with international students from the same ethnic background as themselves. One would expect the Canadian immigrant students to have good relationships with international students from the same countries as themselves. Related to the student composition, another noteworthy observation is that the percentage of “white” Canadians, reflective of the catchment areas, is in the minority in the student population. In group projects, when they become the “visible minority”, the relationships they form and the roles they play will be revealing.

2.5.6 Business studies at UA

In keeping with the requirements for international accreditation (see Section 1.3), the School of Business makes extensive use of cooperative learning groups in almost all of its courses and for this reason I selected it as the site for my study. All areas of business studies are extremely popular with both Canadian and international students so, in selecting this discipline, I anticipated being able to get a mix of students for my research.

The School of Business is the largest department at UA with 150 faculty members and 3,500 students annually. Its international accreditation and numerous global achievement awards give it a very high profile. It offers five different degree programmes and a one year post-baccalaureate diploma in Human Resources Management. With all of these degree programmes, it is possible to do one year certificate and two year diploma programmes which ladder into the degree programmes.

A study of the course outlines of the business courses reveal that all except accounting, which is very individualized, make extensive use of cooperative learning. In most first year courses, the group project component accounts for 25-30% of the final course marks and this percentage increases with each successive year of study. Participation and working in groups is thus highly valued by the School of Business.

These cooperative learning groups are usually made up of five students and are formed either randomly by the instructor or through self-selection at the beginning of a fourteen week semester. For example, in the classes I observed as part of the study (see 4.5.1 below), students were given three opportunities during their first class to talk in small groups for about five minutes each time, then towards the end of the class the students were asked to choose their group members. Most of the students did not know each other so the instructor advised them to select their group members based on their grade point averages. This means that students with high marks would select similar students and vice versa. What actually happened was that some students from the same ethnic background formed groups, other students formed groups with people sitting around them, then a few people who were left out formed a group. This seemed a rather haphazard method but other instructors use different methods. Once formed, these groups work together for the semester to complete a team project for marks.

For the team project, the instructor gives the students loose guidelines about what their topic should be. For example, the group that I observed were asked to develop a hypothetical product related to *new media and entertainment*. They

had to decide on a product, think of who the target market for their product would be, think of the design for their product and a name for it, decide on pricing and the exact steps they would take to market the product. Basically, the students were following what they were learning from their text-book and applying it to their product. The group of students that I observed decided that their product would be a wind-up mobile phone.

Towards the end of the course, each group of students submits a joint written assignment describing all the different steps they have taken in developing and marketing their hypothetical product. They also make an oral presentation of their project to their classmates. The instructor gives one assessment for the project but, in addition to this, the members of each group peer assess each other according to the contributions they have made to the project. These confidential assessments of their teammates are given to the instructor who then uses them to give a final project mark to each student. For the instructor, it reduces the marking load considerably as instead of 35 projects, he or she only has to grade seven.

The question may be asked if the practice of cooperative learning, so rigorously followed by Business schools, is affected by the multicultural nature of the student population in a country like Canada. Seasoned business educators such as Gaffney (2008, p. 114) acknowledge that there are many challenges for cross-cultural groups to work effectively in academic settings. It is the aim of this study to explore how such diverse students do work together in small group projects.

Chapter 3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is firstly, to critically examine the theories informing cooperative learning and secondly, to present an alternative lens through which to analyse this. Finally, informed by this alternative lens which stresses the interconnectedness of learning, relationships, and identity, I critically evaluate existing research into cooperative learning with diverse students.

The chapter is organised in the following way. At the beginning there is a description of cooperative learning and the concept of group. Then I consider the theory of social interdependence which is central to cooperative learning. From there, I critically examine cooperative learning with diverse groups of students. After that, I appraise the methodologies that have been used to research cooperative learning. I finish this first section on cooperative learning by examining a new strand of research into the social and relational processes that take place in groups. Next I move to the second part of the chapter which develops my conceptualisation of learning as a socially situated and relational process in which the construction of identities is considered key to learning as outlined in Section 1.2. I develop my understanding of these things with reference to my reading of pragmatism, dialogism, critical theory, critical sociology, and positioning theory. In the last section of this chapter, I critically review research into cooperative learning with diverse groups. I conclude the chapter by summarising the key concepts that emerge from the literature and the research studies.

My conceptual understanding of relationships and identity construction in small groups developed in this chapter is underpinned by epistemological and ontological insights derived from post-structuralism, post-modernism, and critical theory. These are often intertwined in the literature with the first two frequently used interchangeably; consequently, for clarity, I provide a brief definition of my understanding of these terms informed by my reading of some key texts where these terms are employed (Crotty, 1998; Elliott, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2011; Papastephanou, 2005; Pennycook, 2001).

Post-structuralism is a move away from the positivist idea that society is based on structures and patterns, rule driven, which can be scientifically researched. People construct their worlds and their sense of who they are. There is a questioning of taken for granted categories in the world such as culture and there is an acknowledgement that power is reflected in everything. Post-modernism reflects post-modernity which is a way to describe the current state of the world. It contests modernity which seeks to describe the world as bounded and structured. This is replaced by fragmentation, a blurring of boundaries, dislocation, and multiplicity. It is a way of thinking and being. In today's globalised world, with its compressed space and time, migration and diasporas, and transnational flows of knowledge and commodities, complexities abound which demand new and expanded ways of thinking and being, with renewed questioning of assumptions. The third influence, critical theory, addresses social inequalities which arise through power and oppression. It problematises these, tries to expose them and takes action for change. In this chapter, I want to problematise the taken-for-granted assumptions within the theories of cooperative learning and propose an alternative view.

3.2 Cooperative learning and intra-group relationships

3.2.1 Cooperative learning – an overview

Cooperative learning, as mentioned in Section 1.3, has become a popular method of learning in the last thirty years. It is referred to by a variety of names including collaborative learning (Giwa, 2008), team learning (Kapp, 2009), workgroup learning (King, Hebl, & Beal, 2009), group work or group learning (Gatfield, 1999; Ledwith & Seymour, 2001), and learning groups (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2008). There is no consensus of opinion regarding the terminology but, for simplicity, in the research that is reported here, group work or cooperative learning are the terms used. Johnson and Johnson (2006, p. 477) provide the following definition of cooperative learning:

Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize everyone's learning. Within cooperative learning groups, students discuss with one another the material to be learned, help one another to understand it, and encourage one another to work hard.

Since its inception, cooperative learning has been extensively studied and researched. Some of the key studies I consulted can be seen in Appendix 2. To give an idea of the breadth of the field, I have grouped these into the main foci of the research but there is much overlap between the categories. In the *Theoretical Perspectives* category, most of the literature focuses similarly on the principles behind cooperative learning. Slavin's work, (1980), the earliest referred to, gives a history of cooperative learning and outlines the basic principles which are still used today. These are a shared group task, reward incentives for task completion, and group members being in control of their own activities. These will be discussed in detail in 3.2 below.

The second category, *Social Interdependence and Culture*, consists of studies which consider the effect of diversity on task completion. Most use an essentialist view of culture in which people from different countries are seen as having a common fixed culture; for example, Onwuegbuzie et al. (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Jiao, 2009). Frequently Hofstede's (Hofstede, 1980, 1986, 1991) explanations of cultures being either individualistic or collectivist are referred to as reasons for behavioural patterns in groups. Other researchers, like Currie (2007), who has found great diversity amongst Chinese MBA students, argue against Hofstede's explanations of culture and instead blame an ethnocentric curriculum for problems students have with task completion in groups.

The third category, *Student Attitudes towards Cooperative learning*, has become an increasingly researched area within the last few years. These studies are mainly concerned with investigating how well students from different ethnic backgrounds work together in group projects and how the students feel about working together. Most have been done only with international students but recently researchers have begun to research both the home country students and international students. Three of these relevant to my study, Kimmel and Volet (2012), Turner (2009), and Montgomery (2009) will be discussed in Section 3.4.1.

The next category, *Group Composition*, generally examines how individual group member variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status affect the task completion. In an early study into school age children's groups in the UK, Bennett and Allyson (1989, p. 19) make a thought -provoking

statement that still holds true for many understandings of groups today: “Groups are no more than physical juxtapositions of children engaged in individual tasks.”

The category *Communications within Groups* is one that is much researched and the examples in Appendix 2 show only a limited representation of the research. In mixed ethnic groups, the inability of international students to use English proficiently seems to be blamed for any problems these students have in cooperative learning. Henderson, however, refutes this and states that it is “inconsistent with principles of social justice that students who gain entrance to a university with levels of English deemed suitable by admissions offices should then be differentiated from others on the basis of their English use” (Henderson, 2009, p. 408). The general finding is that international and immigrant students are often blamed for their inabilities in communication when there are often other issues that impede communication.

The next category *Teambuilding Activities* seems to have arisen with the realisation that the theories of cooperative education are in themselves insufficient to guarantee success in group work. Suggestions are given on how to structure cooperative learning activities ranging from different types of groups such as jigsaw or crossover groups (Jaques, 2003). Other studies such as Hughes and Jones (2011) provide instructor advice on issues such as giving feedback.

The *Assessment* category is a contentious one as there is disagreement amongst researchers whether group assessment should include peer

assessment or not. Some researchers such as De Vita (2002) believe that the group mark that students get for their work in cooperative learning only reflects the work of the most able group member. Other researchers such as Kagan (1995) believe that giving group marks is completely unfair so there is no consensus on this issue.

The *Group Learning* category is a mixed category that has elements of many of the other categories. For example, Freeman and Greenacre's (2011) work investigates student behaviours which jeopardize group learning while Ryan and Viete (2009) address issues which impede international students from participating.

From the point of view of the research reported in this thesis, the last category, *Social Aspects*, is a promising one as it shows four studies which are loosely related to the social aspects of group learning. While Van den Bossche approaches this from a mainly psychological perspective, the other studies take a more relational approach. These studies will be discussed in detail in Section 3.2.7.2.

Despite such a variety of studies into cooperative learning, almost all have a common foundation based on the theories of American researchers, brothers David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson. They have spent their lives researching and popularising cooperative learning and are widely acknowledged as leaders in this area. Their theories underlie most of the principles and practices of cooperative learning that are adopted and at

University Arbutus, the School of Business follows their principles in group projects. Consequently, I refer to much of their writing here.

3.2.2 The theory of cooperative learning

The basic premise in cooperative learning is that if people have a common goal, they will work together to achieve it. In their earlier work, Johnson and Johnson (2002) claim that cooperative learning has its roots in three main theories: social interdependence theory, cognitive development theory, and behavioural learning theory. Social interdependence theory has its origins in the Gestalt School of Psychology which proposed that the whole of something rather than the parts should be studied. Johnson and Johnson (2002) trace the development of this: “The lineage of social interdependence theory can be traced back from Kurt Koffka, through Kurt Lewin, to Morton Deutsch, and, subsequently, to David Johnson and Roger Johnson” (2009, p. 375). In cognitive development theory, Johnson and Johnson recognise contributions made firstly by Piaget’s (1950) view that “cognitive conflicts” occur in discussion and these create “cognitive disequilibrium” which enable students to see the perspective of others and learn; and secondly by Vygotsky’s (1978) view that “knowledge is social, constructed from cooperative efforts to learn, understand, and solve problems” (Johnson & Johnson, 2005a, p. 445). Behaviourist learning theory with its focus on external rewards has also informed the underpinnings of cooperative learning, although these approaches to learning are not compatible, as Johnson and Johnson (2005a) admit.

In their more recent work, Johnson and Johnson (2009) refer to social interdependence theory as the “clear theoretical foundation” (p. 366) of

cooperative learning and describe its extensive application to educational practices. This theory was derived from Kurt Lewin's psychological approach to human behaviour which "argued that at any point in time, a group exists in a social and psychological field of forces, and those forces interact dynamically to determine the behavior of groups and the individuals in them" (Forsyth & Burnette, 2005, p. 12). I elaborate on Johnson and Johnson's theory of social interdependence next.

3.2.3 Social interdependence as the basis of cooperative learning

Social interdependence which is at the core of cooperative learning is defined by Johnson and Johnson as follows: "Social interdependence exists when the outcomes of individuals are affected by their own and others' actions" (2009, p. 366). It is further broken down into positive (cooperation), negative (competition), and no interdependence (individualistic). Positive interdependence, when group members work together for the mutual benefit of their group, is the basis of cooperative learning.

Johnston and Johnston (2009, p. 367) explain that there are three ways to create positive interdependence. Firstly, the outcome of the joint task with the rewards it brings can cause positive interdependence resulting in greater achievement for the group members. Secondly, the methods of achieving the outcome must be interdependent; for example, students share their knowledge and resources, have certain roles, or divide up the assigned task. Thirdly, "the boundaries between individuals and groups can define who is interdependent with whom" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 367). This final category of interdependence is not particularly clear but the writers explain it by saying that

it can be caused by “abrupt discontinuities among individuals that segregate individuals into separate groups” and give examples of “environmental factors,” “similarity,” “proximity,” “past history together,” “expectations of being grouped together,” and “differentiation from other groups.” They conceive of individual group members being bound together as one entity working in one specific place. Such group members would have positive interdependence with each other but would have negative interdependence with people who are in separate groups from them such as in a class situation in an academic environment in which a class of thirty-five students might be divided into seven groups. They refer to negative interdependence as the “outside enemy” (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 367).

Basically, positive interdependence forces people to be responsible to their group members so that the group outcome is achieved. The writers (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) stress that belonging to a group in itself is not sufficient nor is interpersonal interaction. They conclude that positive interdependence creates “*responsibility forces*” (p. 367) in the members of a group.

In addition to positive interdependence which is the primary factor leading to group cohesion and effectiveness, Johnson and Johnson (2005a, p. 451) list four other essential factors: individual accountability, face-to face promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing. The first of these, individual accountability, is created by the *responsibility forces* mentioned above but, in addition, it is usually built into cooperative learning situations by having individual peer assessment as well as group assessment for cooperative projects. The next factor, promotive interaction results from positive

interdependence and is defined as encouraging and facilitating other members of the same group. The third factor, social skills, refers to how well students can interact with their group members. It involves trust, good communication, support, and constructive resolution of conflicts. The fourth factor, group processing is when group members work together to reflect on individual member contributions and future actions for the group.

When positive interdependence exists within a group, there are said to be three distinguishing features of this type of learning:

- “1. Effort exerted to achieve
 2. Quality of relationships among participants
 3. Participants’ psychological adjustment.”
- (Johnson & Johnson, 2006, p. 95)

These distinguishing features, which the writers refer to as outcomes, were drawn from a statistical meta-analysis they conducted of an extensive body of experimental research (over 555 experimental and over 100 correlational research studies. It has resulted in their saying (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 374) that “cooperative learning is an unusually strong psychological success story.”

According to the research findings, members of a group work harder, have better relationships with each other, and are more competent at working with each other than students working individually or competitively. It should be stressed that these findings result from a comparison of studying cooperatively to studying individually or competitively. This means for the second outcome, for example, that students have better relationships when they study in groups to what they have if they study alone or competitively. However, this gives no

information about the actual relationships within the group since intra-group relationships have not been highlighted as key to the success of cooperative learning groups. Moreover, in accordance with Johnson and Johnson's (2005a) views, other researchers into cooperative learning such as Van der Bossche et al. (Van den Bossche, Gijsselaers, Segers, & Kirschner, 2006) specifically state that only task cohesion (defined as commitment to achieving the task) and not social cohesion (defined as interpersonal attraction between group members) has a direct result on team effectiveness. In the next section, the theories behind cooperative learning are critically analysed.

3.2.4 A critical analysis of the theories underpinning cooperative learning

Although group learning is socially situated and relational, the theory behind it, social interdependence theory, leans more to a cognitivist explanation of learning. The interaction between team members is regarded as solely for the purpose of achieving task completion. The co-construction of the task is emphasised but it is only cognition that is emphasised in cooperative learning, not the embodied nature of learning which involves the construction of identities.

I contend that this view of learning as social cognition is a narrow one as it does not acknowledge that the shared conception of the task is the result of socially constructing meaning. Cooperative learning seems to fit Hodkinson et al.'s criticism that "the social' is seen as a characteristic of the situation where learning takes place, but not of the person who is learning" (Hodkinson, et al., 2008, p. 31). In cooperative learning, despite the students being brought together in small learning groups, the learner is not seen as an embodied social

being since only task cohesion is important. The learning is seen as “occupying a context, rather than as part of it” (Hodkinson, et al., 2008, p. 32). Thus social interdependence theory, while acknowledging there is a social aspect to learning, fails to fully account for learning as a social process in which learners negotiate meanings and identities.

What is also missing from social interdependence theory is the impact of power since when people interact with each other, the relationships they form are impacted by power differentials. This is supported by Hodkinson et al. who emphasise, “power inequalities and relations are central to activity within any social setting, and learning is no exception to this” (2008, p. 32). The negotiation of identities and the power differentials within cooperative learning groups have tended to have been disregarded by Johnson and Johnson (2002, 2005a, 2009) and others such as Gudykunst (2004) and Michaelsen (2004) in their theories about such learning.

A study of the history of cooperative learning in North America partly explains the emphasis on the individual in social interdependence theory. In the early 20th century, there was a split between psychology and sociology which meant that research into groups in psychology lacked the social meanings that earlier sociologists had made of collective phenomena (Abrams, Frings, & de Moura, 2005; Abrams & Hogg, 2004; Hogg, 2004; Simon, 2004). This was exacerbated by an early psychologist named Floyd Allport (1924) stating “There is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals” (cited in Abrams & Hogg, 2004, p. 149). Social categories and groups tended to be seen as just another attribute of an individual. Allport was

influential in North American psychology with many psychologists and social psychologists following his behaviourist and reductionist approaches. This may help to explain the emphasis on task cohesion and the corresponding lack of emphasis on social relationships in social interdependence theory. Abrams and Hogg (2004) point out that “an individualistic meta-theoretical framework ... pervaded the enormous area of group dynamics” (2004, p. 149) with group dynamics being defined as the scientific study of groups (Forsyth & Burnette, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2006).

Another criticism is that Johnson and Johnson’s (2009) third method of creating positive interdependence through boundaries between individuals and groups is ambiguous and could be construed to mean that differences between group members such as ethnicity or age could act as negative interdependence; in which case, Johnson and Johnson’s (2009, p. 367) “outside enemy” could be within. People belong to many groups in society such as other learning groups or societal groups such as religious affiliations, ethnicity or gender. The complexity of their belonging to these various groups has not been analysed coherently by Johnson and Johnson (2009). Hughes (2010, p. 48) points out that “any group or community does not operate in isolation from other groups, and to engage fully individuals must reconcile learning group or cohort identities with wider social identities from other community memberships.”

A third criticism could be made about Johnson and Johnson’s (2005a) acknowledgement of Vygotsky’s (1978) influence on their work by crediting him for the theory of the socially constructed nature of learning. As with the previous point, there is a lack of clarity in their explanation. Certainly, Vygotsky

was instrumental in moving theories of learning away from a purely mental endeavour in that he saw a social plane and a mental plane both playing a role in the cognitive development of children. He theorised that when children learn, they first interact in an interpersonal mediated way with their social and cultural environments. Liu (2011) explains that after this there is intrapsychological reflection. Vygotsky thus saw the social sphere as a way of helping children to acquire cognitive skills. In the literature, there are disagreements on Vygotsky's concept of social environment and Liu claims that this has led some scholars, usually those who do not adhere to the theory, to believe that he originated social constructionism (2011, p. 15). Another point contradicting Johnson and Johnson's interpretation is made by Gredler and Shields (2007) who state that Vygotsky did not advocate peer interaction as a method of learning; rather he recommended interaction with someone with higher mental functioning such as a parent or teacher. In their words, "A common misperception in some of the current literature about Vygotsky is that he advocated peer collaboration in the classroom" (Gredler & Shields, 2007, p. 90). They blame this mistake on inferences made from the translations of Vygotsky's work. This gives some credence that the theory of social interdependence may be based on some faulty theoretical interpretations.

3.2.5 Cooperative learning and diverse groups

The term "diverse groups" appears frequently in the literature on cooperative learning. At the most basic level of meaning it refers to differences between groups of people. The meaning of diversity used is critical because the primary type of research into group work has been a two factor analysis in which two categories are measured and compared. A variety of umbrella terms have been

used to describe diversity such as surface level and deep level or visible and non-visible (Mannix & Neale, 2005). From research studies into group and team work ranging over the last fifty years, Mannix and Neale define some important ways of categorizing and classifying types of diversity. These are shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Categories and types of diversity (from Mannix and Neale, 2005, p. 36)

Social-category differences

Race
Ethnicity
Gender
Age
Religion
Sexual orientation
Physical abilities

Differences in knowledge or skills

Education
Functional knowledge
Information or expertise
Training
Experience
Abilities

Differences in values or beliefs

Cultural background
Ideological beliefs

Personality differences

Cognitive style
Affective disposition
Motivational factors

Organizational-or community-status differences

Tenure or length of service
Title

Differences in social and network ties

Work-related ties
Friendship ties
Community ties
In-group memberships

While Mannix and Neale's categories of diversity are taken mainly from research into work teams, similar categories are used for student learning

groups. Johnson and Johnson (2006, p. 445) identify three main categories of diversity. These are:

1. Demographic diversity

- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Language
- Handicapping conditions
- Age
- Gender
- Social class
- Religion
- Regional differences

2. Personal Characteristics

- Age
- Gender
- Communication style
- Economic background
- Personality – introverted or extroverted
- Education level
- Values
- Attitudes
- Opinions
- Lifestyles
- Styles of interaction and commitment

3. Abilities and Skills

(no examples given)

Although Johnson and Johnson (2006) have fewer categories of diversity, there is considerable overlap with the categories identified by Mannix and Neale (2005). Johnson and Johnson (2006) add that most learning groups are diverse to some extent since people have multiple characteristics and abilities. Team members may be homogeneous in some attributes and heterogeneous in others. They believe that group diversity has the propensity to give a higher level of task achievement since the cognitive conflict is greater and hence the decisions made can be more creative and unique but at the same time diversity increases tension in groups and leads to a lack of cohesion.

To explain this lack of cohesion in diverse groups, Johnson and Johnson (2006) have developed a social judgment theory to account for how individuals form relationships with diverse others. It states that the degree to which people accept or reject each other influences the social interdependence they feel for each other which in turn has implications for the group processes. Group cohesion is the way this is measured. This theory seems to arise from the inability of social interdependence theory to account for intra-group relationships; however, it does not specify in detail how people accept or reject each other.

A lack of group cohesion due to demographic diversity may be overcome by what Johnson and Johnson (2006, p. 462) call the creation of a “superordinate” group identity which can unite the group. This is a single group identity that the group members can relate to. The researchers compare this to personal identity which they define as “a consistent set of attitudes that defines “who you are.”” They add that “a personal identity consists of multiple subidentities that are organized into a coherent, stable and integrated whole.” The subordinate group identity should be similar with each person’s individual identity being subsumed into it. They make a comparison between this and a superordinate American identity. Here the writers seem to acknowledge that there can be difficulties in diverse groups.

In the literature on group work, the term “diversity” does seem to be problematic as it has been applied to almost any difference that can exist between people as is seen above. In an extensive review of research done from the 1990s until 2007 into conflict and cooperation in diverse workgroups, King, Hebl, and Beal

(2009), found there was hardly any consensus about what “diversity” meant. For instance, they found that some researchers believed that diversity referred to salient differences between people such as ethnicity, age, or gender; while other researchers included dimensions such as personality, values, and beliefs. Many of the studies on group diversity that King et al. reviewed were into what they called the information/decision making perspective (King, et al., 2009, p. 272) which is the view that diversity can create positive outcomes for a group. This is referred to above and, as Johnson and Johnson (2006) point out, the advantages of diverse thinking and decision making have to be balanced against the increased difficulties of such groups to function. In King et al.’s (2009) analysis of the research, there was no conclusive evidence that diversity produced increased task performance but they did find from their analysis that heterogeneous groups have a greater possibility of having conflict.

3.2.6 A critical analysis of the concepts of group diversity

There are several criticisms that can be made about these concepts of group diversity. These relate to the interpretation of diversity and identity, and to the method that has been put forward to overcome problems with diverse groups.

Firstly, the underlying philosophy behind Johnson and Johnson’s (2006) definitions of diversity and identity given in section 3.2.5 appear to stem from a post-positivist view of the world in which people tend to be seen as having one stable unchanging personal identity which contains fixed social identities such as culture, religion, and gender. The lists of categories of diversity (Johnson & Johnson, 2006; Mannix & Neale, 2005) are like what Anthias calls “a rucksack” approach with all the various commodities of diversity being packed and

transported as people move from group to group. The implication is that these are objective, preset constructs which can be examined and measured. In addition to being preset, this interpretation of diversity, as Anthias (2011, p. 205) points out, “already presupposes ... a core from which it diverges.” It fails to recognize that in the globalised cities of the world, diversity is a norm rather than an exception (Anthias, 2011; Holliday, 2010).

While Johnson and Johnson (2006) do acknowledge that most groups will contain some form of diversity, the method they propose to overcome difficulties due to this, uniting the students in a learning group under a common umbrella of a superordinate identity, stems from an individual psychological view of identity.

The theory generally used to explain diversity in groups; social judgment theory, similarly stems from an essentialist view of the world in which people have a distinct self and a collective identity with common traits which bind them together. It is assumed that being part of a group is sufficient to give an individual a group identity. I concur with Anthias (2011) that this viewpoint incorrectly sees a group as a thing that exists rather than a process that is taking place.

From this perspective, social judgement theory is over-simplistic in that intra-group relationships are not really analysed. Johnson and Johnson (2006) do not say how or why individuals make social judgments about each other but rather refer to a process of acceptance of rejection which “is based on individuals promoting mutual goal accomplishment as a result of their perceived positive interdependence” (p. 100). This leads us back to section 3.2.4 in which positive

interdependence was criticised for having ignored the relational aspects of learning.

To sum up, Jenkins' observations with respect to groups are appropriate, "Groups are, at best, taken for granted as simplified and reified features of the human landscape, actual interaction is largely ignored, and identification appears to take place solely 'inside people's heads'" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 115).

The next section gives an overview of the trends that are taking place in research into cooperative learning. Most of the research reported has been largely informed by the orientations and understandings described above in this review of cooperative learning. However, a discernible shift is taking place with an increasing number of studies focusing on the social aspects of cooperative learning.

3.2.7 Research into cooperative learning

This section examines how research has generally been conducted into cooperative learning and then it highlights how it is now beginning to change in direction. The first part discusses research which generally compares cooperative learning to individual learning using structural conditions such as task type. The second part discusses research in which cooperative learning is viewed more as a social and relational activity.

3.2.7.1 Research focusing on structural conditions

Most of the research into cooperative learning has focused on measuring the efficacy of cooperative learning on individuals or on the influence of structural criteria such as group size and task type (Olivera & Straus, 2004; Pauli,

Mohiyeddini, Bray, Michie, & Street, 2008). Most studies compare group to individual learning using a variety of dependent variables and conclude that cooperative learning is hugely successful. Johnson and Johnson, from their meta-analysis of over six hundred studies (2009, p. 371), give the most common three broad categories of dependent variables: “effort to achieve, positive interpersonal relationships, and psychological health.” For example, when examining the relationships between Caucasian students and “minority” students, controlled laboratory-like conditions in which the relationship between the two groups of participants is compared when working individually, competitively, or cooperatively in groups. A conclusion that working cooperatively promotes positive interpersonal relationships is based on these comparisons. However, as pointed out in section 3.2.2, this gives no information about the actual relationships the students have with each other within their groups. In the vast body of research reported by Johnson and Johnson (2009), the objective is to show the superiority of cooperative learning over other methods of learning.

Johnson and Johnson (2006, p. 452) do admit that there are several problems with the way the research has been done. The most serious of these is that they have only been able to focus on attributes of diversity that can be measured in an experiment and which are easily discernible in group members. This means that hidden aspects of diversity have not been measured. Next, the complexity and unpredictability of real life tasks are very difficult to replicate in experimental conditions. Finally, they know little about how the group composition and the tasks interact. Thus they cannot make recommendations about how diverse students should work together to improve their output.

Others have also found that research into the processes that impact the relationships within heterogeneous groups and their outcomes are “consistently inconsistent” (King, et al., 2009, p. 227). For decades researchers have been trying to understand these. King et al. (2009, p. 257) note the predominance of performance outcomes, using controlled laboratory-like conditions, in studies of group diversity and the corresponding lack of research on social processes. Interpersonal processes within groups, as mentioned above, are often regarded as non-task related and therefore not studied. This view is supported by Schmuck and Schmuck (2001) who discuss how rationality as opposed to emotionality has been prominent in group dynamics with the focus on task rather than the social-emotional aspects.

It seems that the focus on much of this research has been on the variables that are credited for the achievement of the task and there has been a corresponding lack of research on the social and relational aspects of learning.

Abrams and Hogg (2004, p. 149) sum up the situation succinctly with the following comment:

Despite its roots in Lewin’s potentially collectivist field theory (e.g. Lewin 1952), group process research has largely been a study of interpersonal interaction in small face-to-face groups, in which “I” reigns supreme, and any reference to “we” is largely descriptive; “we” is simply an arithmetic aggregation.

3.2.7.2 Research focusing on social aspects of cooperative learning

With an understanding that learning is a social and relational endeavour, more recent studies into cooperative learning in the last decade have started to focus on the actual interactions between group members. From a case study of 16 groups of grade six triads solving mathematical problems, (2003) Barron, using

discourse analysis, found that group tasks consist of a content space and a relational space which have to be integrated in order for the group to be successful. In previous research, the content space was the one primarily studied. In Barron's findings, it was in the conversational processes that the relational issues were expressed. These conversational processes are influenced by the school environment and the competitive aspects of learning whereby individual grades may take precedence over mutual learning resulting in group members pushing their individual competence (Barron, 2003, p. 350). Barron's research also suggests that friends work better cooperatively as they are used to having problem solving dialogues with each other. In her conclusion, Barron recommends that there is a need for a much better understanding of the relational aspects of cooperative learning.

Van den Bossche et al. (2006) agree with Barron (2003) that the social contexts of cooperative groups have barely been investigated. From their viewpoint, it is the social context that enables a shared understanding of the group task. This is achieved through discourse and negotiation amongst the team members. The end point of mutually shared cognition is what is considered necessary for success. In a study of 75 teams of first year students, Van den Bossche et al. analysed four variables that they believed were responsible for a construct called team learning behaviour which they define as "conversational actions enabling team members to become partners in the construction of shared knowledge" (Van den Bossche, et al., 2006, p. 504). These variables were interdependence which is the view that the outcome and task will lead to shared responsibility, cohesion which refers to the commitment to the task and to the emotional bonds between members, psychological safety which is a shared

belief that it is safe to take risks in the group, and group potency which is the belief that the group can be effective. From this quantitative study, the authors found that all of these were important. In particular, they found that psychological safety enables people to engage in learning. While this study does not appear very much different from earlier psychological studies, the authors believe that their research indicates that interpersonal processes that encourage learning need to be addressed in the classroom. They further recommend that qualitative research would be able to give further insights into relationships in group projects.

Relationships in group projects were further investigated by Purvanova (2013) in a longitudinal study of 134 four-member groups of students from first year psychology courses in university. The students worked on a project which accounted for 20% of their course marks. Purvanova found that *the sense of feeling known* played a very important role in the outcomes of face to face and virtual groups. By feeling known, the students feel that others understand, value, and trust them. Feeling known gives the psychological safety that Van den Bossche et al. (2006) highlighted in their study. Purvanova (2013) adds that more research needs to be done on this infrequently studied aspect of group processes since her research suggests that group outcomes depend on this sense of feeling known.

In addition to these studies, there have been a few recent ones which have specifically investigated the relationships of ethnically and linguistically diverse students in group projects (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2008; Montgomery, 2009; Y.

Turner, 2009). These studies show complexities which are relevant for the study reported in this thesis and will be discussed in Section 3.5.

3.2.8 Implications from the literature on cooperative learning

While it is acknowledged that cooperative learning seems to be highly successful compared to competitive and individual learning, there are limitations in knowledge regarding how ethnically and linguistically diverse students interact within groups. As discussed in Section 3.2.4, the theories underpinning cooperative learning overemphasise learning and knowledge as social cognition and do not fully account for learning as a social process.

It is only recently that researchers have begun to learn about the connection between group member relationships and group outcomes. By studying group relationships from an identity perspective, the study reported on in this thesis may add new information to this emerging area of research. In the next section, I will present the views of identity that underpin the current study.

3.3 The significance of identity to cooperative learning

As indicated in section 1.2, the view of learning that underpins this study is one which is embodied, socially situated, and relational. This means learning involves the whole person participating with others to generate meaning. The key to learning lies in the relationships that learners can construct with others. An integral part of forming relationships with others is the construction of identities. (Bloomer, 2001; Hodkinson, et al., 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rich, 2011). Identity is defined as “the social positioning of self and other” with people being seen as having multiple identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586).

In this view, identity is seen as positions, often momentary, which people take up or are assigned during conversations or interactions with others. These positions are related to the social meanings that people construct of themselves and others and these are influenced by the amount of power the interlocutors hold in relation to one another in the local context (Harré, et al., 2009). The process is explained as follows by Moje et al., (Moje, Luke, Davies, & Street, 2009, p. 431) “A person calls out, another responds, meanings are made, identities assigned and acted upon in the next round of meaning making.” Therefore, this can be seen as doing identities (Andreouli, 2010; Moje, et al., 2009). This is in contrast with other commonly held views; for example, identity may be seen as the true self residing inside individuals or it may be seen a self shaped by socio-cultural forces (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Quinn, 2010). In the view of identity adopted in the study reported in this thesis, the positions or identities that people are able to occupy influence the actions they can execute.

This process of identity construction as social positioning is complex and tense due to the varying differentials of power that exist between people (Block, 2007b). To be able to participate successfully in learning activities, learners need to construct legitimate, competent identities (Morita, 2004; Purvanova, 2013; Silseth & Arnseth, 2011). In cooperative learning groups in which individuals have to work closely together to achieve a common goal, having such identities would be critical since the resulting learning experiences would seem reflect on the type of identities constructed.

Given the role of identity in learning, a view of identity as socially constructed is proposed as a lens through which to analyse relationships in cooperative

learning. This view of identity as a product of relationality has been influenced by pragmatism, dialogism, critical theory, and positioning.

My reading of American pragmatism, Bakhtin's dialogism, Bourdieu's critical theory, and Harré's positioning theory have provided me with valuable insights into identity being socially constituted and a product of relationality and it is to a discussion of these that I now turn.

3.3.1 Insights from pragmatism

The early American pragmatists who opposed the Cartesian duality of the mind and the body were instrumental in seeing human beings as located in a social world. (Crotty, 1998). Important contributions were made by John Dewey (1859-1952), George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), and Erving Goffman (1922-1982). Dewey, as Biesta (2009, p. 41) explains, saw interaction as the foundation of knowledge, a term that Dewey called "transaction." In other words, people learn as they interact with everything in their environment. For Dewey, language was central to meaning generation in interaction. He saw this interaction as participation in a social environment in which there is joint learning (Biesta, 2010). Simply put, "meaning exists in social practices rather than in the minds of individuals" (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, p. 166).

Dewey's insights of communication as participation bringing about a shared understanding, as described by Biesta (2010), have implications for cooperative learning. Biesta points out that "the creation of a shared outlook will not result from simple co-existence or from forms of pseudo-participation in which the activity is set and controlled by others" (Biesta, 2010, p. 717). All the people

involved must have a real involvement in what they are doing. Biesta emphasises that communication with others is not necessarily participation and that Dewey's work enables us to understand why in today's pluralistic societies "communication across differences" (p. 718) is problematic. It does not, however, give us any answers.

A colleague of Dewey's, George Herbert Mead, had similar pragmatic views to Dewey in that he saw social interaction as a key to meaning making. Mead took his understanding of social interaction a step further than Dewey in that he saw communication, which he referred to as the meaning of gestures, arising intersubjectively (Biesta, 1999) with people taking the perspectives of the other. After interaction over time with members of one's sociocultural group, Mead said that the perspectives of the generalized others would be adopted (J. Martin, 2007). This perspective taking is always relational and, as Martin points out, it is at the centre of Mead's "selfhood and agency" which is explained in the following way:

Mead's self thus has two distinctive aspects: (1) a "Me" that is constituted by the perspectives of others based on past experience, and (2) an "I" that reacts to the "Me" and the immediately present context. It is the reactivity of the "I" to the "Me" that constitutes the particular form of self-reflexivity that for Mead constitutes human agency. (J. Martin, 2007, p. 442)

By linking the self and agency to social interaction, Mead was able to put forward a view of the self which was free of the mind body essentialism. His self was a multifaceted decentralised one. Also because Mead saw the social as only emerging in interaction and not a stable reality, his view of the self was one that was emergent (Biesta, 1999).

If one applies Mead's views to cooperative learning, then the social aspects of learning would appear to be key rather than the cognitive focus that is highlighted in social interdependence theory. The definitions of diversity which are generally seen as preset should instead be regarded as emerging in interaction.

A follower of Mead's, Erving Goffman further developed the idea of a multifaceted self. Goffman used the analogy of the theatre to explain social behaviour. He said that people take up roles like actors and these can be either "front stage" or "back stage." Front stage roles are performances people put on for others: the social aspect of the self. They are the impressions people want to give others. Correspondingly, back stage roles are non-scripted and private: the reflective aspect of the self. Goffman saw a multiplicity of roles that people perform in different contexts. Sometimes these can be to conform to societal norms. By seeing identity as a performance with a multitude of selves, Goffman introduced a much more fluid and situated self (Elliott, 2008).

In cooperative learning, the ways students interact with each other could be compared to the front stage or back stage impressions that Goffman writes about. In the duration of a group project, many different performances would be given, depending on the situation, and these resulting multiple identities could affect the cohesiveness of the group. Again, Goffman's view would suggest that more emphasis be placed on the social aspects of the cooperative learning situation.

3.3.2 Insights from dialogism

From the work of the early pragmatists, then, it is seen that people's interactions with others are constructed socially through language, signs, or symbols. Our understanding of language has been greatly enhanced by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), a Russian philosopher and literary scholar. Although his main focus was the analysis of the literary prose, he has written widely on discourse in general. From his writing, we can understand the nature of language, the process of using language, and the implications of these.

For Bakhtin there is no such thing as a neutral word because all words are impacted by how they have been used previously. He writes, "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 295). Words therefore have a history through time and space. For people to use language, they have to struggle to use words to create their meanings in their own contexts (Farmer, 1995). Bakhtin sees this happening dialogically. Firstly, individuals have an inner dialogical struggle with the myriad of contexts that surround words. Secondly, when individuals use language, it is a social dialogical process that also involves struggle over different viewpoints. Without considering the dialogic nature of language, Bakhtin warns that language becomes a reified thing (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 355). As Farmer stresses, "It is impossible to recognize a voice in isolation, that is, without the dialogizing background of those other voices against which it may be heard" (1995, p. 309). He adds that voices are always in relationship to each other.

Meaning, for Bakhtin, emerges between what the speaker says and what the listener replies; it is not a one way method of communication. Wegerif explains this further by saying that there must first be a “space of dialogue” (2008, p. 353) and in this “the self and other mutually construct and reconstruct the other.” He adds that this means “being able to listen to others and see through their eyes (Wegerif, 2006, p. 59). Since meaning is dialogic, it is always open to change. “There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future)” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.71, cited in Wegerif, 2006, p. 60.)

Underlying Bakhtin’s theorising is the fact that the person and language cannot be separated since the person is always in dialogue. In Bakhtin’s words, “we do not separate discourse from the personality speaking it” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341). There are no stable identities, only unfinished entities which are always in process. As Farmer explains, the self is “a relationship to all those other voices that constitute the self in its long journey to what Bakhtin calls ‘ideological becoming’” (1995, p. 305). What Bakhtin’s contribution signifies is that it is always through dialogue with others that people’s identities emerge. It is the voices that are heard in an interaction that gives people a sense of who they are in that context at that moment in time.

Since students in learning projects are in Bakhtin’s sense dialogic selves, it follows that meaning and identity are closely interwoven in their discourses. As such, identity cannot be removed from the learning situation since all identities emerge in discussion and also through it. There can be no sharing of cognitive knowledge in learning groups without the emergence of identities. Thus, as

claimed previously, it is the relationships that students form within the group that is key to learning.

While the theoretical perspectives of the American pragmatics and Bakhtin are very informative regarding relationships between people and hence the construction of identity, they do not adequately address issues of power in relationships. In their discussion of Bakhtin's dialogism, for example, McKinney and Norton (2007) point out that the process of creating new meaning is difficult and tense as people have different value systems and ideas which impact the identity of others in the conversation. Weedon (1997, p. 21), agrees with this view and says, "language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested." Weedon contends that discourse is produced within realms of power and that the process of construction of identities or subjectivities is always a struggle. To address these issues of power, I turn next to Bourdieu's critical theory and then to Harré's positioning theory.

3.3.3 Pierre Bourdieu's critical theory

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has been influential in the study of language and power. Carrington and Luke explain that "Bourdieu's perception of the social world rests upon the belief that all social relations, including linguistic exchange, are 'symbolic interactions' premised upon relationships of symbolic power" (1997, p. 104). Symbolic power is defined by Bourdieu as an "invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 164). Bourdieu's concern is with the different

hierarchies in social life and he believes that since symbolic power does not carry any physical force, it is often “misrecognized” and seen as legitimate by those subjected to it. Moreover, those who are subjected to this symbolic power do not question the social structures which give some groups more power than others (Thompson, 1991). This imposition of certain ways of seeing the world is termed ‘symbolic violence’ by Bourdieu (Lin, 2008). To illustrate symbolic violence, Lin (2008) discusses “English Only” advertisements in the United States which imply that English is the one legitimate language. Similarly, Blackledge (2005, p. 14) states that “relations of power in society are influential in determining which voices gain authority as they are transformed along chains of discourse, and which voices diminish either partly or entirely.”

Bourdieu has put forward useful metaphors to explain his thoughts on power. The most useful of these is what Bourdieu calls “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1991) which is explained as follows: “habitus derives from the predominantly unconscious internalization – particularly during early childhood – of objective chances that are common to members of a social class or status group” (Swartz, 1997, p. 104). With his interest in the inequalities of society, Bourdieu explains that children of the social elite have the linguistic habitus that enables them to succeed in school whereas children from lower classes have not developed a linguistic habitus that is attuned to the language practices of education. Even if these speakers are able to speak the standard language, the way they speak will distinguish them from the ‘legitimate’ speakers. Bourdieu claims that “the competence adequate to produce sentences that are likely to be understood may be quite inadequate to produce sentences that are likely to

be *listened to*, likely to be recognized as *acceptable* (emphasis in original) in all the situations in which there is occasion to speak” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 55).

Bourdieu’s views of habitus are very applicable to international and immigrant students who may be using English as an additional language to participate in group work in university courses. By passing English entry requirements, these students have proved that they have the competence to use English but this does not mean that the ‘legitimate’ speakers of English will listen to them. As Bourdieu adds, “speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence” (1991, p. 55). This silence and exclusion is widely documented in numerous studies which have addressed the silence of the “non-native English speaking” student (Cheng, 2000; Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Jackson, 2002; Jaworski & Sachdev, 1998; Jones, 1999; Kubota, 2001; Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005). While Bourdieu’s views are useful for understanding how inequality might originate, they do not illustrate how power plays out in interactions. This is addressed in the next section.

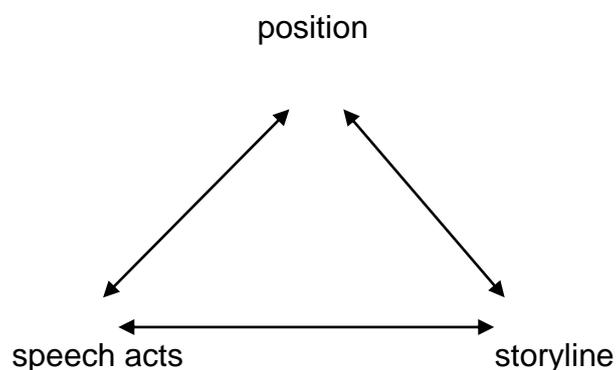
3.3.4 Rom Harré’s positioning theory

Harré and van Langenhove’s (1999) positioning theory, derived from the ideas of Goffman (1959) and Hollway (1984), articulates the process of interactive and reflective positioning. Interactive positioning is described as how speakers position themselves and others in conversation while reflexive positioning is an internal process in which people reflect and adjust their understandings on the basis on reflective positioning. Harré and van Langenhove claim that “a position in a conversation ... is a metaphorical concept through reference to which a

person's 'moral' and personal attributes as a speaker are compendiously collected" (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 17). The speaker can position himself or herself in different ways and can be positioned by others in various ways. Harré and his colleagues add that positioning "can be deliberate, inadvertent, presumptive, taken for granted, and so on" (Harré, et al., 2009, p. 10).

Harré describes conversations as a three-way dialogic structure of storyline, position, and speech acts with each part interrelating with the others. The topic being talked about is called the storyline. This can change throughout the conversation and is linked to the positions people take. The speech acts made also connect with the storyline and the positions taken. Figure 3.1 illustrates this tri-polar structure of conversations.

Figure 3.1 Tri-polar structure of conversations (after van Langenhove and Harré 1999)



Positioning is seen as a dynamic process that takes place in all conversations. Different types of positioning are identified by Harré. The most important of these are discussed here. First order positioning is the way people initially position themselves and others in a conversation. Second order positioning is when first order positioning is questioned or not accepted by someone in the conversation. The process could continue to third order positioning. As Harré points out positioning is a simultaneous process. By positioning oneself, one automatically positions others at the same time.

In conversation, the process of positioning is an opportunity for the participants to negotiate alternative positions. Most first order positioning is usually not intentional but second and third order positioning are always intentional. This intentional positioning is further categorized into self or other deliberate or forced positioning (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 24). With the self, deliberate positioning is used for expressing agency, giving one's opinion, and referring to events in one's life. Forced positioning is when one asks another person to position himself/herself by asking a question. By so doing, one also forces a position on oneself. With others, deliberate positioning can occur in their presence if a moral rebuke is given or without their presence if an opinion is given about their behaviour. Forced other positioning is a more complex form of this. The deliberate positioning of others is often referred to as interactive positioning.

3.3.4.1 Reflexive positioning or agency

There is another form of positioning that is described as reflexive (Moghaddam, 1999). This is an intrapersonal positioning which occurs when people have private "conversations" with themselves. It is dialoguing with the self.

Moghadden describes it as a “figurative concept through reference to which one’s moral and personal attributes as a speaker are compendiously collected by oneself so that one’s speech-acts can be made intelligible and relatively determinate to oneself” (1999, p. 77). This means that a speaker’s reflexive positioning will affect and be affected by the way speakers position each other. It is where people consider their responses in relation to their previous experiences and their views of the future; in other words, according to their unfolding life narratives. Reflexive positioning could therefore result in intentional speech acts and actions in the tri-polar structure of conversation.

Reflexive positioning is understood as a dialogic approach to agency (Ahearn, 2001) where agency is seen as socially situated and constructed. Again, this is a process that is ongoing and fluid. Bucholtz and Hall maintain that this is the only view of agency that considers the complexity of people in dealing with the constraints of power (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Drewery (2005, p. 315) reiterates their opinion, “Persons cannot be agentive on their own, but only in relationship with others. Thus to be positioned agentively is to be an actor in a web of relationship with others who are also engaged in coproducing the conditions of their lives.” This dialogic form of agency is contrasted to the essentialised notion of agency being located within the mind of the rationalized self producing the conditions of his or her life without constraints (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Drewery, 2005). It does not mean that people cannot act on their own but these actions will have a social impact of some kind resulting in relationships with others. It does mean that there is no such thing as absolute autonomy because in life people are always in relationships with others. Agency therefore enables people to negotiate positions based on their past, present, and imagined futures.

3.3.4.2 Agency and imagined futures

People's imagined futures, in particular, can have a powerful impact on how they negotiate positions with others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Norton, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995). Norton refers to students having envisioned worlds of the future which influence their reflective positioning or agency. Norton and Toohey (2011, p. 437) have found that when students' imagined futures are not accepted by teachers, the students may take the agentive action of being unwilling to participate in learning. Kanno and Norton (2003) give the example of an experienced Polish teacher who dropped out of her Canadian ESL class because the ESL teacher said that her English was too low for her to take a computer course. Here the ESL teacher positioned her as deficit which was contrary to the Polish student's imagined identity and imagined future.

3.3.4.3 Insights from positioning theory for understanding relationships and identity construction in cooperative groups

Positioning theory, both interactive and reflexive, provide a means of understanding how power is exercised in interactions between people. In cooperative learning, as group members use language to construct meanings and identities, they will at the same time position each other as certain types of people since as Bakhtin (1981) pointed out, language is never neutral. As explained above, this positioning will subsequently influence the types of identities students are able to construct and the agentive actions they take. The interplay of power with the construction of meanings and identities has so far been ignored in studies of cooperative learning. The next section takes the above view further by showing the social aspects of identity positions that result from positioning.

3.3.5 Positioning and identity

Building on van Langenhove and Harré (1999)'s ideas on positioning and Bourdieu's (1991) thoughts on power, Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 599) propose tactics of intersubjectivity which show how different types of positioning are related to identity construction. These tactics of intersubjectivity stem from their view that identities "always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors"(p. 598). It is these social meanings that comprise these tactics and although presented here separately, they tend to operate in conjunction.

The first of the tactics of intersubjectivity are "adequation" and "distinction." Adequation suppresses social differences while distinction suppresses similarities. Adequation is thus understood as "sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes" (p. 599) while distinction has the effect of distancing people from groups they do not want to be associated with. For example, in a university situation, immigrants from a country may want to position themselves as different from international students from the same country. This would be referred to as distinction.

The second set of relational tactics is named "authentication" and "denaturalization" (p. 601). These refer to social processes through which speakers identify each other as genuine or false for whatever the purpose of the interaction is. If, for example, people say that they know about an aspect of a specific field because they have worked in the field for forty years, then these people are authenticating their right to know. Denaturalization is a contrasting process and is often used when dominant beliefs about something are proved

false. An example of this could be computer technicians based in India who have learned to speak English with an accent from some part of Britain. During a telephone interaction, it is logical to assume that these technicians are British.

The third set of relational tactics is named “authorization” and “legitimization” (p. 603). It deals more directly with power structures, often organizational, but not necessarily so. If an identity is authorized, it can be either acknowledged or imposed on someone. The opposite tactic, illegitimation, means that the identity is not recognized, but repressed or ignored.

These tactics of intersubjectivity provide a useful lens through which to examine the specific relationships members of learning groups have with each other, particularly students from ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Adequation would be a desirable tactic for students in such groups.

The views of identity and positioning presented in this section are key to how ethnically and linguistically diverse students interact in learning groups. As shown, identities are socially constructed mainly through language (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Block, 2007b) and are referred to by Sfar and Prusak (2005, p. 21) as a “discursive construct.” This point is further emphasised by Ros i Solé who states, “Language is not only a means of communication, but it is the place where identity is contested, as it is through language that we organise our social selves” (Ros i Solé, 2007, p. 205). This means that the negotiation of identities is central to intra-group relationships in cooperative learning. This would indicate that if group members are unable to negotiate academic identities whereby they are regarded by others as having the appropriate skills and

student attributes, the group will fail to be cohesive and, as a result, would find difficulty in achieving the group task.

3.4 Exploring cooperative learning with ethnically and linguistically diverse students – an overview of the research

In this section I critically examine studies that are related to aspects of identity construction with ethnically and linguistically diverse students in cooperative learning projects. Although there have been numerous studies into cooperative learning in the last fifteen years (see Appendix 2), few have addressed the importance of relationships in cooperative learning groups and none has addressed these from an identity perspective with a view of learning as situated and relational. As Kimmel and Volet (2012, p. 159) point out there has been a “paucity of empirical work on the impact of learning contexts on students’ culturally diverse group work experiences.”

There are two strands of research that are examined in this section. The first is research that has foregrounded relationships in learning groups as this is the most insightful for the study undertaken in this thesis. The second strand of research, while not as directly linked to relationship in groups, provides insights into some of the challenges of cooperative learning with culturally diverse students.

3.4.1 Relationships in university classrooms

There are still few studies into relationship in learning groups but one by Morita (2004) and another by Leki (2001), both from a community of practice stance, provide perspectives that are applicable to my study. A community of practice approach to situated learning means that the learner works like an apprentice

along with more knowledgeable members of the community and learns from them while doing increasingly complex tasks related to that community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These two studies will be discussed in turn.

The first of these, Morita's (2004), was a longitudinal, multiple case study which used data collected from participant reports, interviews, and observations to examine how six Japanese graduate students were able to participate and negotiate their identities in their learning situations at a Canadian university. A major finding from Morita's study is that identity negotiation is situated and has a reciprocal relationship with participation. This finding is one that is key to my study reported in this thesis. If students are seen as having competent and legitimate identities, then their voices are listened to by others. For the participants in Morita's study, constructing competent identities was a struggle due to the power relations that existed in the classroom communities. Other learners, and occasionally instructors, imposed deficit identities on the participants which they found difficult to overcome and which restricted their participation. Sometimes the participants used agentic actions such as non-participation or silence to resist such marginalized identities. Others used the resources they had built up in their lives to challenge such identities. Morita (2004) summarises that the multiple complexities of the classroom context are directly linked with students' identity construction and participation.

The second study, Leki's (2001), is drawn from a larger longitudinal series of case studies using data collected from weekly participant interviews, class observations, professor interviews, and participants' written class work to examine the experiences of six international students in group projects across

university disciplines. The findings in Leki's (2001) study mirror Morita's (2004) in that local students adopted expert roles and assigned novice roles to the international students who expected to be seen as equal partners in their group projects. Although 15 of the 17 projects were described as negative by the participants in the study, the outcomes of these, as judged by the professors who were unaware of the dynamics of the groups, were all positive. Leki found that there was little discussion about the projects; with the local students becoming leaders and allocating the more menial tasks to the international students. This positioning appeared to be connected to the perception of the international students as being limited in their use of English, although this was not true of all the participants. One observation made by both Leki (2001) and Morita (2004) was that group projects sometimes involved having implicit knowledge of North America and this further marginalised international students. Leki concludes that teachers across the disciplines in universities have a major role to play in structuring group projects so that international students can have legitimate participation.

Informative in both of these studies was the role that observation played in the collection of data. Morita (2004) found that observing students provided her with information about their verbal and non-verbal behaviour which she would not have been able to obtain just from interviews. Similarly, Leki (2001) found that observing gave her access to how the group members interacted with each other and from her field notes of these and her verbatim notes of the students' discourse, she was able to construct one of her cases.

The finding of Morita's (2004) study that identity construction is situated and is key to participation, indicates the potential of using identity as a lens through which to examine the experiences of culturally diverse students in cooperative groups. From a community of practice perspective, both Morita's (2004) study and Leki's (2001), provide rich insights into the complex power struggles that exist in group learning. By focusing on relationships and identity being key to learning, the study reported in this thesis may be able to give further insights to these complex power struggles.

3.4.2 The challenges of cooperative learning with culturally diverse groups

The most informative studies into cooperative learning and diverse student groups are those which have investigated internationalisation (Ippolito, 2007; Montgomery, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Tian & Lowe, 2009; Y. Turner, 2009; Wright & Lander, 2003); those which have investigated students attitudes towards working in culturally mixed groups (Baker & Clark, 2010; 2008; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Marshall, 2010; Summers & Volet, 2008) and those which have analysed the impact of language or cultural problems in group projects (Brown, 2009; Duff, 2002; Gabriel & Griffiths, 2008; Henderson, 2009; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Ledwith & Seymour, 2001; 2001; Marlina, 2009; Marshall, 2010; Miller, 2004; Talmy, 2010; Waterstone, 2008). Often there is overlap in the focus and content of these studies. Based on the specific insights they provide, I have selected five of the most relevant of these studies for analysis in this section.

The first selected is Ippolito's (2007) study into the success of a curriculum module for increasing opportunities for internationalisation. The reason for selecting this study is that it is connected to widening participation and it

includes local minority ethnic students who are speakers of first languages other than English. In my study, I also had such speakers. From a framework of critical pedagogy linked with intercultural communication theory, Ippolito (2007), using data collected from semi-structured interviews with students and teaching staff, reflective questionnaires, and documentary analysis of students' assignments, examines how successful diverse students were in interacting with each other. Her results point to homophily related to nationality, gender, ethnicity, and religion. She identifies four barriers that impede interaction among diverse students. These are academic and time pressure, indifference of local students, perceived language difficulties of international students, and privileged local knowledge. What was relevant in her findings was that minority UK students with a first language other than English were empathic towards international students who sometimes were more proficient in English than they were. At the same time these local minority students claimed superior knowledge over the international students. She highlights that such complexities of power relationships between local and international students are often overlooked.

The second study examined is Turner's (2009) UK reflective case study into student integration in a group project which was planned to give Master's degree students in International Management practical experience to accompany a curriculum module on cross-cultural management. The reason for the selection of this study is that it gives detailed information about local and international students' experiences in group projects. The conceptual framework for this study is that learning is cognitive, affective, and social but conceptual colonialism makes the international higher learning space an unequal one.

Having developed a curriculum module to address such challenges to the integration of ethnically and linguistically diverse students in group projects, Turner (2009) analysed data from 65 students' reflective experiences of working in diverse groups. The findings show that there was an absence of positive group interaction which Turner blames on learner inequalities. In particular, the UK students reported that the international students had poor English; they were quiet; could not focus on the task or work individually and were too slow. On the other hand, the international students reported that the UK students were domineering and opinionated; aggressive, intolerant, and impatient. They said they talked non-stop even though they were not always correct; they showed no interest in getting to know them, and they were unsupportive of the group. In general, the international students' saw "groups as uneasy, pressured environments that compromised effective intellectual engagement in favour of continuous noise" (Y. Turner, 2009, p. 251).

The third study in this section is Kimmel and Volet's (2012) multi-method longitudinal study using data from questionnaires and interviews to find out why students at an Australian university self-select into either diverse or non-diverse learning groups. This study was selected for inclusion as it provides detailed information regarding students' choices of group members in cooperative projects. The philosophy underpinning the study is that individual learners and the social context co-construct how students interact in group learning. Kimmel and Volet (2012) compared participants from two disciplines in university; one was science in which students followed a cohort format while the other was business in which students were generally unknown to each other. The results indicated that Australian students (ethnically diverse) displayed a strong in-

group bias by preferring to work with close peers or friends from a similar cultural background because it is less stressful, more relaxing, and more fun. Other reasons reported for their reluctance to work in diverse groups were communication difficulties, working styles, and work ethics. Disturbingly, Kimmel and Volet found that students linked language proficiency with academic ability and work ethics with many students being concerned that their marks would be lowered and their work load increased. Many of the international students also favoured same-country groups because a common understanding and similar working styles enabled them to focus better on the task. These international students felt that local students have too many off-campus work responsibilities which results in their dividing up the group project so that students work on it in isolation rather than collaboratively, a source of frustration for them. Overall, it was found that being part of a cohort group (science) did not encourage students to participate in diverse groups even though the local students in science said that their international peers had no language or academic barriers. Interestingly, it was revealed that students in the cohort group formed homogeneous cultural groups in their first year of university resulting in little subsequent mixing with others.

The next study in this section is Gabriel & Griffiths (2008) examination of the effects of heterogeneous groups on the learning process. With conceptual underpinnings in Hofstede's (Hofstede, 1980, 1986, 1991) views of culture and Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) language ideologies, the researchers, using data collected from questionnaires and interviews, explored reasons why 37% of the MBA students in their study reported mixed or very negative experiences in fifty-five group projects. The reason for the selection of this study is that it

gives insight into the importance of language in dysfunctional groups. The findings pointed to language and cultural differences being at the root of problems in groups. Above all, Gabriel and Griffiths (2008, p. 515) noticed “the link between group dysfunctions and the difficulties that people experience in expressing themselves, being listened to and being respected.” The source of the problem was either too much or too little “voice.” The students with too much voice are seen as arrogant, domineering, and sometimes racist while those with too little voice are seen as imposters lacking legitimacy. Gabriel and Griffith’s found that local students frequently described international students as having “poor English” if they could tell or understand jokes and stories, if they did not interrupt others, or if they went quiet if they were interrupted. Some fluent English-speaking students in their study were “othered” as being poor communicators on the basis of their appearance. The researchers found a disproportionate number of female Asian students, mainly Chinese, suffered extreme problems in their groups. In dysfunctional groups emotions tended to spiral downwards thus obstructing learning. However, in the successful groups, local students who really wanted to communicate with their international counterparts found ways of doing this.

The final study in this section is by Montgomery (2009) who addresses how perceptions of cooperative learning have changed over a decade. This study has been selected for inclusion as it highlights the reasons why more positive attitudes towards cooperative learning are developing. Informed by social network analysis, intercultural communication, and learning communities, Montgomery (2009) uses qualitative research methods with focus interviews to find out about British and international students’ attitudes towards cooperative

learning. She uses an earlier similar study by Volet and Ang (1998) in Australia as the historical context. Montgomery's (2009) study is somewhat different from other similar studies in that two of the disciplines involved had actively been developing communities of learning with a particular focus on the social and cultural environment and the importance of peer support. Also the type of group projects the students were engaged in created more equal opportunities for both international and UK students. Furthermore, a number of the students in the study had lived in different global locations or had parents of different nationalities. The findings point to a much greater openness to working in multicultural groups. Generally the students could see future benefits of this and most found it enjoyable. In particular, students were beginning to note cultural differences within their own nationalities. Most of the conflicts were regarding different opinions over disciplinary matters and there were fewer language conflicts. Despite the changing attitudes that Montgomery found, there was still prejudice against Chinese students who were blamed for not speaking English well and not contributing to discussions. There were also bossy UK students who were singled out in UK only learning groups. Montgomery (2009) concludes that attitudes may be changing but she does caution that it is important to see her research as socially situated since the context of her study was one in which much work had gone into improving student relationships.

These five studies into cooperative learning point to the complexity of the relationships between ethnically and linguistically diverse group members in cooperative learning projects. In four of the studies, the local students seemed to position themselves as the authentic students while the international students were positioned as deficit and thus denaturalized according to Bucholtz and

Hall's tactics of intersubjectivity (2005, p. 601). Contrary to Johnson and Johnson's (2005a, 2009) theories of social interdependence, the cooperative learning task did not promote quality relationships or social cohesion among the group members. In the fifth study, there were more equitable relationships possibly because of the global experiences of the local students. Overall, the studies imply that as group members interact, there is much negative positioning that occurs which seems to prevent students from constructing relationships, identities and hence learning. The lens of identity used to study the experiences of diverse students in cooperative learning groups in the study reported in this thesis has the potential to uncover some of the reasons for the positioning and the differentials of power that exist. This is something that these studies have not been able to do.

3.5 Conceptualising cooperative learning as a relational activity: implications for this research study

In this chapter, I have argued that the theories underlying cooperative learning have overlooked the key element of identity construction which is essential for its success. Although it is a dialogical model of learning which focuses on the relationships between individuals, it has been analysed mainly from a psychological and cognitive perspective. It is only in the last decade that researchers have begun to consider the relational aspects of group learning. Following my discussion of cooperative learning, and drawing on Dewey, Mead, Goffman, and Bakhtin, I show that relationships, within which identity construction is integral lie at the heart of learning in cooperative groups. Since learning is embodied, situational and relational, I argue that members of learning groups cannot share knowledge without constructing each others' identities. However, since language is never neutral, the role of power must be

considered in any relationship. Here, I am informed by Bourdieu and Harré who show how differentials of power arise and how they are enacted. Finally, I consider Bucholtz and Hall's tactics of intersubjectivity which show relationships between positioning and identity.

In the analysis of recent research on cooperative learning, one general finding is that international students in groups are often impeded from establishing academic identities due to positioning by more powerful group members.

Frequently, as Kimmel and Volet (2012), and Turner (2009) point out, groups are formed along ethnically and linguistically diverse lines.

All of the above indicate that there is a necessity to study cooperative learning from a relational perspective. Based on my conceptual understanding outlined in this chapter, I suggest that the lens of identity would be a beneficial one to use for this purpose. By studying the identities students are able to accomplish in their relationships in group projects, the research that is reported in this thesis may give a greater understanding of how ethnically and linguistically diverse students interact in cooperative learning groups.

It is seen from the research literature that relationships between such students are extremely complex. Because of this, the research design of this study must be able to capture a rich description of students' lived experiences. Narrative inquiry appears to be a good choice as it provides the voices of the participants so that their lived experiences become vivid and real rather than remote.

Narratives are also how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) and for this reason, it is an appropriate

methodology for understanding of the complexities that participants face in negotiating identities in cooperative learning projects. As Riessman (2005, p. 13) emphasises, “in narrative study, particularities and context come to the fore.” In the many studies consulted on cooperative learning, narrative inquiry was not the methodology used. It is believed that its use in this study would provide a new focus on how the participants make sense of their experiences in cooperative learning projects and the meanings they attach to them thus providing new insights about the role of relationships and identity in group learning. Because of these reasons, narrative inquiry has been selected as the most suitable methodology for this research as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical perceptions that inform the study of relationships and identity construction in cooperative learning that is reported in this thesis, the methods used to gather and analyse the data, and the rationale behind the ways the results are presented. First, I present the research questions. Second, I describe the theoretical foundations of my study. After that I discuss my reasons for selecting narrative inquiry. Within this section I show the procedures that I followed in gathering the data. I then give details about the context of the research and the participants. Next I explain in detail how I analysed the data. Following that, I account for how I reported the findings. This includes accounting for my position as the researcher. After that I address the steps I took to ensure the research was ethical and valid. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the design of the study.

4.2 The research questions

As outlined in chapter 1, the main aim of this study is to examine how the relationships and the identities that students of different linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds construct affect their learning experiences in cooperative projects at university.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What kinds of relationships are ethnically and linguistically diverse students able to establish in cooperative learning projects?
2. What are the affordances and constraints for the establishment of relationships?
3. How do the identities the students are able to construct within these relationships impact on their learning experiences in cooperative projects?

4.3 Theoretical foundations of the study

This section examines my theoretical foundations which as Grix (2004, p. 57) specifies are like the foundations of a house. Without them, the research lacks strength and clarity. First I discuss what is meant by ontology and epistemology, then I turn to a discussion of the theoretical perspectives informing my study.

4.3.1 Ontology

The foundation of all research is one's ontology. This is one's picture of social reality or vision of the world. Without a vision, there is no foundation for research. Crotty (1998, p. 10) defines ontology as "the study of being" while Grix (2004, p. 66) defines ontology as "What's out there to know?" As a foundation, one's ontology tells that person, consciously or unconsciously, what it is possible to learn from reality and thus it determines the nature of research (Pascale, 2011).

There are two main views of social reality. One, known as realism, takes the view that there is a world that exists independently of human beings which can be seen, touched, or experienced in some way (Pring, 2004). The other view, known as relativism or nominalism, is that human beings are part of the world and there are no independent phenomena outside of this world (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Crotty, 1998). It recognises that the world exists but it has no meaning if humans do not engage with it (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). As Crotty explains, it is the interactions of human beings with things in the world over history that has made these things meaningful for us. If there had been no people to experience, name, and interpret these things, they would be

meaningless. In addition, the meanings that are constructed by people may vary according to their culture or where they live or according to the historical period in which they lived. For example, in the Inuktitut language used in north-eastern Arctic Canada, there are more than a dozen words for snow (Schneider, 1985). The interaction of the Inuit people with snow has given them multiple realities of snow. The life and culture of the Inuit enable them to see snow in these multiple ways.

From this perspective, then, people have inherited different ways of thinking about the world; therefore, when they interact with objects and persons they see different realities. This means that there can be no such thing as true reality or one truth (Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Furthermore, Pring (2004) explains that each time a person interacts with another a reality is created and therefore that nothing can exist independently of anyone. As the term relativism implies, everything in the world is relative to the person interacting with it.

Since my view of the world is one of relativism, there are certain implications for my research. As I try to understand the relationships students have in cooperative learning projects, I must heed Crotty's (1998, p. 64) advice that "description and narration can no longer be seen as straightforwardly representational of reality." What my participants tell me and then what I retell will be filtered through many lenses in the telling. These interpretations will likely be influenced by the cultural backgrounds and history of the participants and by my background as I construct the reality of their experiences. They will be multiple interpretations and realities.

4.3.2 Epistemology

While ontology is about the way we see the world, epistemology is about ways of knowing and learning about the world and the relationship between the researcher and what is known (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Snape, 2003).

In research, epistemological decisions are connected to the ways of producing knowledge. They are tied to people's ontological assumptions so it is difficult to separate ontology and epistemology (Blaikie, 2004; Crotty, 1998; Pascale, 2011). One does not cause the other and as Pascale (2011, p. 28) emphasises, "Ontological and epistemological beliefs are entwined in each other." A person's ontological and epistemological beliefs enable him or her to see the big picture. Pascale further explains that these beliefs are "integral ... conceptual parameters" (p. 29) which enable us to see certain possibilities rather than others in research projects. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) make the analogy of the researcher being in a net of theoretical beliefs which they refer to as a paradigm and this is what shapes research frameworks and interpretation.

The term paradigm, however, is not a particularly useful one as it is widely acknowledged that there has been a proliferation of paradigms in recent years (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Handel, 2006; Lather, 2006). To avoid the varying connotations of the word paradigm, I will use the term "theoretical perspective" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) to refer to the entwined ontological and epistemological beliefs which guide research.

Very generally, theoretical perspectives fall into three broad categories although this is debatable with the growth of multiple paradigms referred to above and

the blurring of boundaries in research traditions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Nevertheless, the three perspectives that are seen as umbrella ones are positivism which is sometimes referred to as the scientific tradition; interpretivism (or constructivism); and critical theory (Crotty, 1998). In the first of these, the emphasis is on the discovery and verification of truth in an objective, non-biased manner. The second of these focuses on understanding social life, while the third addresses the misuse of power and oppression and ideally researchers following this theory would like to transform such situations (Cohen, et al., 2007; Crotty, 1998).

4.3.3 Theoretical perspectives guiding this study

Since the main goal of the research project described in this thesis is to understand how the relationships students are able to establish impact their learning experiences in cooperative groups, the theoretical perspective of this study clearly falls under the interpretivist umbrella. However, the study also aims to find out how power impacts learning in groups therefore it has a critical stance. This section will explain my understanding of these.

There are many different types of research under the umbrella of interpretivism but most arise from the concepts of late 19th century German philosophers Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey that a single type of scientific research is inappropriate for studying the social world. They recognised that people are unlike material objects in that they try to make sense of their experiences. The world around them is a human one created by people (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000; Yanow, 2006). While the natural world is explained, the human world needs to be understood. Weber used the term “Verstehen” meaning

understanding when referring to research in the human world. This was in contrast to the term “Erklären” meaning explaining which was used for research of the physical world. It is generally recognised that despite Weber’s concern that the human world is understood and interpreted, his methodology mimicked that of the natural sciences with its desire for scientific proof (Crotty, 1998). The early philosophers following Weber similarly tried to achieve understanding in the human world through using scientific methods.

Notwithstanding its early scientific beginnings, the combination of the desire to understand from within (Verstehen) and the recognition that the viewpoint of the researcher shapes knowledge was a catalyst for two different forms for interpretivism in Europe, phenomenology and hermeneutics, and in North America, symbolic interaction, pragmatism, and ethnomethodology (Crotty, 1998; Yanow, 2006). Although wide differences exist between them, and even within individual forms of interpretivism throughout their historical development (e.g. phenomenology), Yanow (2006) points out that they hold common philosophical ideas of social reality and follow similar methodological beliefs. These varied philosophies have influenced present day interpretivism in what Yanow (2006, p. 7) sees as spectrum going from philosophy to methodology.

The interpretivist heritage is therefore one that has its roots in a social world that is produced and made meaningful through interaction. Knowledge is produced intersubjectively with people being socially and historically situated. (Crotty, 1998; Pascale, 2011; Pring, 2004; Yanow, 2006). Unlike the positivist view of research where objectivity is deemed important, the interpretivist researcher is informed by prior knowledge based on previous experiences.

Each time the person interacts, there is a new experience or a new reality. Different people have different realities based on the context of their lived experiences. Therefore the social world is one of multiple realities. There can be no single interpretation as in the positivist view of the world. There are only multiple perspectives and ambiguities (Yanow, 2006, p. 21).

For the interpretivist researcher, the focus is on understanding from the perspective of the subject of the research in whatever situation is being studied. The researcher and the subject are jointly involved in the outcomes of the research. Phenomenology and symbolic interaction have given rise to methodologies that enable the researcher to put his or her subjective ideas aside so as to learn the views of the one being researched. Care is taken in data gathering and analysis to ensure the researcher's views are not imposed. Language or dialogue is central to the process as is retroactive reflection (Crotty, 1998; Yanow, 2006). Hermeneutics, which was originally an interpretative practice used to understand religious scripts, is now seen as "both a process of reasoning and interpreting" (Yanow, 2006, p. 15). It was initially used only with text but now conversations or actions can be written as texts and analysed in this way. It is a circular repetitive process in which one makes provisional interpretations. Each analysis gives more interpretations (Crotty, 1998; Yanow, 2006). Yanow sums up the differences between phenomenology and hermeneutics this way, "where phenomenology focuses on processes of perception, hermeneutics focuses on principles of interpretation" (2006, p. 17).

Interpretivism today has been criticised for being an uncritical form of research despite its critical foundations. The Frankfurt School of critical theorists view

interpretivists as seeking understanding only, whereas the aim of critical theorists is to expose and free people from unequal power relationships. People's experiences are not seen as neutral but rather as a form of dominance due to culture and tradition. Additionally, people are often not aware of being disempowered since the way people think is viewed as the result of relationships of power that have social or historical origins (Crotty, 1998, p. 157). According to Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 181), neither positivism nor interpretivism accounts "for the external conditions which distort and constrain actors' understandings." Furthermore, they believe that neither do anything to change the situation. For critical theorists, the main objective is not just to understand, but to improve, transform or emancipate (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cohen, et al., 2007; Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998).

While the study that this thesis reports is primarily informed by interpretivism, the issues of power in society that concern critical theorists are acknowledged. The aim being in part is to understand and expose issues of power that affect relationship-building between students involved in group projects. My perspective, therefore, is a critical interpretivism.

There are various methodological strategies that are used within an interpretivist approach. Narrative inquiry is one methodological tradition which falls within the interpretive and critical approach to research.

4.4 Narrative inquiry – an overview

Narrative inquiry is found in a number of diverse disciplines reflecting differing theoretical perspectives and methodologies since it is an inquiry that can yield rich, complex, and possibly conflicting data (Chase, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin,

2006; Riessman & Speedy, 2007). As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explain it is about the stories that people tell and make sense of their lives with. It is emphasised by Clandinin, Murphy, Huber and Or (2009, p. 82) that narrative inquiry is the study of “storied phenomena” such as identity and is both a phenomena and a methodology. In this study, I am interested in the experiences students have as they construct relationships and identities in cooperative learning groups and the sense they make of these experiences.

There are three checkpoints or “commonalities” that researchers must explore in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The first of these is “temporality” which means that one must see research participants with lives in transition with pasts, presents and possible futures. The second is “sociality” which refers to the personal and social conditions affecting the participants. The third is “place” which refers to the settings of the research and the impact these have on the participants. These commonalities are discussed in detail with reference to this study in section 4.4.2. Rather than referring to commonalities, other scholars such as Chase (2005, p. 656) use the concept of “analytic lenses” to focus on these different aspects of the inquiry.

Traditionally, narratives consisted of lengthy, autobiographical stories which Bamberg (2006) and Georgakopoulou (2006) refer to as “big stories” or “narrative as text” (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 123). In contrast, “small stories” (Bamberg, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006) highlight “what is *done* in interaction” (Bamberg, 2006, p. 146). Narrative is the methodology for studying small stories, not just the end result as in big stories. In this small story approach, identities are seen as being negotiated and contested within the constraints of

the socio-cultural and political dimensions of the “site of engagement” (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 126). The present study fits both of these approaches since the research is explained through narratives – Georgakopoulou’s “narrative as text”, but the stories produced in interaction between the researcher and the participants show the types of relationships that were negotiated in the group projects reported in this study.

4.4.1 Rationale for the use of narrative methodology in this study

Informed by Clandinin et al. (2009), I saw narrative inquiry as a relational inquiry that could highlight the tensions in the relationships and draw attention to the “bumping places” (Clandinin, et al., 2009) that I needed to explore. As they stress, “We have come to see tension as a central component in understanding the experience of people in relationship” (p. 88). This concept of tension resonated with me since the students in cooperative learning groups in my research were from a variety of social and linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, Trahar (2006), Yanow (2006), and Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2006) (Section 4.3.3), report that narratives are ideal for showing the complexities that exist in cross-cultural groups. It was these complexities that I hoped to show in my research and this informed my choice of narrative inquiry as a methodology.

4.4.2 The approach taken to narrative inquiry in this study

In this section I explain my approach to narrative inquiry in this study. An important consideration is whether the narrative inquiry begins with telling or with living. Telling is the more common and in this the narrative inquiry usually begins with the stories told by the participants, commonly in interviews (Chase, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Riessman, 2008). The second method

requires the researcher to first observe and participate in the lives of those researched, usually for a lengthy period. As I will elaborate below, my research primarily focused on the telling, but I spent part of my time initially “living” with the business faculty and students so as to understand their situations.

As mentioned in section 4.4 (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 482) the commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place must be heeded, especially by novice inquirers such as myself. In considering temporality, the narratives of participants’ cooperative learning experiences were situated against their previous experiences since as Traher stresses people are “influenced by ... ‘memories’ of learning in other contexts.” (2006, p. 204). Additionally, experiences give people “tools to plan for the future” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 16) and for most participants these futures involved working in teams in the real post-university world.

The second commonplace of sociality was at the heart of my study since my main interest was to learn about the relationships students have with each other in group learning projects and how issues of power influenced these. This meant that in addition to attending to the personal conditions of the participants, I had to consider all the existential factors (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007) such as the historical, political and social contexts and the impact these had on the participants’ narratives.

The third commonplace of place made me think more critically about the role of this in the inquiry because sometimes as participants talked they travelled back in time to earlier places in their lives and sometimes they travelled forwards in

time to possible work sites. Places of relevance for the participants were considered important data.

Another consideration is the position the researcher takes in presenting the findings of the research. From the participants' narratives or field texts I created cohesive research texts by restorying. In composing these, I followed Chase (2005, p. 664) who describes how narrators separate their voices from those of their participants in what she refers to as the "authoritative interpretative voice." One role of the authoritative voice is to ask the "how and what questions" (Chase, 2005, p. 664) that enable everyday taken-for-granted-practices to become visible and understandable. Another role of the authoritative voice is to communicate the research findings to a "scholarly and public audience" (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 600). While the authoritative voice has a different focus from the participants' voices, it is respectful to these. In the presentation of the findings in chapter 5, my authoritative voice is used while extracts of the participants' narratives are given separately so that readers can make "alternative interpretations" (Chase, 2005, p. 665).

In addition to using an authoritative voice, I use a supportive muted voice to present in chapter 5 a fictionalized representation of two group meetings. As Clandinin et al. explain, "Fictionalized field and research texts are not fictional but rather are texts composed from multiple field texts based on various research experiences" (Clandinin, et al., 2009, p. 85). In this, I use participants' refracted voices (Chase, 2005) to show the relationships in group work. Influenced by Trahar's (2011, p. 125) "fictionalised representation" and Holliday's (2004, p. 275) reconstruction of distilled data, I am able to reveal a

much greater depth of context than what would otherwise be possible. As Holliday points out this method shows “the interconnectedness of diverse aspects of social life to show the full context of what is going on” (p. 280).

4.5 Research setting and participants

4.5.1 Research setting

As discussed in section 2.5, the research took place at a university on the west coast of Canada. First year marketing courses were selected as the research setting because in these courses a major group project accounts for 25- 30% of the students’ marks and my interest in this narrative study was to learn about students’ relationships in such projects (see section 2.5.6).

4.5.1.1 Entering the research setting

Although a faculty member at the university, I had to become part of the participants’ world. To do this, I spent time in business classes and with marketing students working in groups. Logistically, this entailed getting support from the Dean of Business and then finding faculty members who would permit me to attend their classes. Six business faculty expressed interest and I arranged to work with someone on the same campus whose teaching schedule fitted with mine. As Connelly and Clandinin note, the relationship with this person had to be “worked at.” In May 2010, I observed, video-taped, and took field notes in three first year business classes. I saw how students were organized into groups of five for their cooperative learning projects which accounted for 25% of the course marks (see Section 2.5.6). I spent time with the instructor learning about the aims of the project, seeing samples of previous project work, and studying the marking criteria.

4.5.2 Participants and sampling criteria

The participants were obtained by a combination of purposive, ease of access, and volunteer sampling (Cohen, et al., 2007). Firstly, the sampling was purposive as I only wanted students who were involved in cooperative learning projects in first year university marketing courses. I also wanted some students who spoke English as an additional language. Secondly, the sampling was informed by ease of access as the students came from classes whose instructors allowed me access. Thirdly, it was volunteer as the students in the classes I had access to were asked if they were willing to help with the project.

In terms of the sample size, I thought that between 12 and 18 participants would provide a range of perspectives on their relationships in group work. According to Squire (2008), the size of the sample in narrative research depends on the purpose. Generally, the sample size in narrative inquiry is quite small since the analysis is very labour intensive (Fraser, 2004).

In addition to the minimum sample size of twelve students, I was also aiming to get representation from both Canadian students as well as international students since most of the studies in this area, as mentioned in chapter 3, have only looked at the perspectives of international students. In the end, I had twenty-two volunteers of whom sixteen came for interviews. However, upon interviewing all of them I found out that four of them had no experience with cooperative learning projects and hence I did not use their stories in my research. Because these students had no direct experience in cooperative learning projects, they could only tell me about how they thought such projects would work. This was not the focus of my research as I wanted to learn about

students' narratives of their experiences in cooperative learning projects.

Fortunately I had four international students and eight Canadian students.

Table 4.1 below gives an overview of the students whom I undertook narrative interviews with. More details about the students' backgrounds and their educational experiences are given in Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. The students are referred to by pseudonyms. For clarity, from this point on, international students will have (I) after their names, Canadian students born in Canada will have (C), and those Canadians born in another country (immigrants) will have (M). A semester is sixteen weeks.

Table 4.1 Overview of students in the study

Name (pseudonym)	Nationality	Length of Time at University
Anisha (I)	Mauritian	3 semesters
Phuc (I)	Vietnamese	3 semesters
Tracey (I)	Chinese	12 semesters
Wahid (I)	Saudi Arabian	2 semesters
Andy (M)	Canadian	3 semesters
Chen (M)	Canadian	6 semesters
Emma (M)	Canadian	6 semesters
Qi (M)	Canadian	12 semesters
Danielle (C)	Canadian	6 semesters
Gavin(C)	Canadian	6 semesters
Harprit (C)	Canadian	6 semesters
Sophie (C)	Canadian	6 semesters

Table 4.2 Backgrounds of the international students

Name	G	Age	Country	First Language(s)	Time in Canada	Educational Background
Anisha	f	26	Mauritius	Creole, English	3 years	High school + 1 year at Canadian university
Phuc	m	25	Viet Nam	Vietnamese	2 years	B. A. Accounting
Tracey	f	24	China	Mandarin	4 years	High school
Wahid	m	27	Saudi Arabia	Arabic	2 years	2 yr. Diploma in Business

Table 4.3 Backgrounds of the Canadian immigrant students

Name	G	Age	Country	First Language(s)	Time in Canada	Educational Background
Andy	m	23	Hong Kong	Cantonese	14 years	High school + 1 year Accounting Diploma
Chen	m	21	Taiwan	Mandarin	7 years	High School
Emma	f	21	China	Mandarin	15 years	High School
Qi	m	25	Taiwan	Mandarin	12 years	Adult High School Diploma*

* equivalent to the high school graduation diploma

Table 4.4 Backgrounds of the Canadian-born students

	G	Age	Ethnic Background	First Language(s)	Educational Background
Danielle	f	20	Filipino	English, Filipino	Other university 1.5 years
Gavin	m	23	Caucasian	English	High school
Harprit	f	18	Punjabi	English, Punjabi	High School
Sophie	f	24	Scottish/Irish	English	B.A. Fine Arts

The ethnic backgrounds are the ones disclosed to me by the participants.

Table 4.5 Previous experience of participants with cooperative learning

Name of Participant	Cooperative learning experience	Details
Anisha (I)	High School in Mauritius	Some but not extensive experience
Phuc (I)	No previous experience	Cooperative learning is not practised much in VietNam
Tracey (I)	High School in China	Experience in extra-curricula activities such as drama
Wahid (I)	High School in Saudi Arabia	A little experience but not extensive
Andy (M)	High School in Canada	No details given
Chen (M)	High School in Canada	Usually got left out due to his poor English
Qi (M)	High School in Canada	No details given
Emma (M)	High School in Canada	Worked with other Chinese immigrant students
Danielle (C)	High School in Canada, another university, at work	Only worked with other Filipino Canadian students at school
Gavin (C)	High School	Extensive experience but only with other Caucasian students
Harprit (C)	High School	Extensive experience but only with Indo-Canadian students
Sophie (C)	At another university	Extensive experience when doing Bachelor of Fine Arts but only with Caucasian students

The next table gives an overview of the 5 students I observed when collecting secondary data (see Section 4.6.1.5)

Table 4.6 Overview of students observed in group project

Name	Gender	Age	First Language	Country of Birth
Amira (M)	F	32	Urdu	Pakistan
Amy (C)	F	20	English	Canada
Jia (M)	M	25	Cantonese	Hong Kong
Sandra (C)	F	21	English	Canada
Tina (I)	F	22	Mandarin	China

4.6 Data Collection and Analysis

Most narrative researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Fraser, 2004; Riessman, 2008; Spector-Mersel, 2010) refer to at least four phases in data collection and analysis: the production of narrative data, the restorying of the data, the interpretation of the data, and the reporting of the narrative analysis. This section will look at each of these phases in detail.

4.6.1 Production of narrative data

Narrative data which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as field texts can take many forms. They range from written material such as diaries, autobiographical writing, and researchers' field notes to spoken materials such as conversations and research interviews through to visual materials such as photographs and cinematic images (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). All of these materials tell stories. Although some narrative researchers use more than one method, the most common way of gathering narrative data is through narrative interviewing (Fraser, 2004; Riessman, 2008; Spector-Mersel, 2010). This is seen as a special type of interviewing where the researcher and the participant jointly construct meaning. The aim is to generate stories. In this research study, this was the primary method of producing data. A secondary method which will be referred to below was observing group meetings.

Another data collection method that I thought would be very useful was student diaries of their experiences as this seemed to work well in some of the literature; for example, Miller (2004). I tried to set this up with the group of five students I observed but they were just too busy. Later, I tried to get another two

students to do this but again it did not happen. When I reflected on this, I realised that it was too much of an imposition to ask students to do this. If it had been part of course work for marks it might have been feasible.

Another method I used was to keep a log book in which I wrote my observations about the group meetings and the individual interviews. I will now describe each of these methods in turn and how these were employed in my study.

4.6.1.1 Narrative Interviewing

Interviews are seen as the most common method of obtaining qualitative research data (De Fina & Perrino, 2011; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Basically, they are conversations between the interviewer and the interviewee, often in an question and answer format. They range from being very structured with a limited number of possible responses such as those used in surveys to semi-structured in which there is some guidance for the interviewee to being completely unstructured as may be the case in life history interviews (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). The type used depends on the epistemological conceptions of the researcher and type of research carried out. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 48) refer to these types of interviewing as either “knowledge collection” or “knowledge construction.” In keeping with my theoretical perspective, I see the role of interviewing in my study as the latter.

Knowledge construction in a narrative interview is seen as a joint accomplishment of the interviewer and the participant in a conversation type interaction. The aim is to encourage the participant to talk in detail (Riessman, 2008) which means that the interviewer must have the flexibility to enable the participant to talk about issues which may seem off topic. As Fraser (2004, p.

185) emphasises, the interviewee should not be rushed and the interviewer must take the time to really listen. Everything that the interviewer does or says can affect how the interviewee responds (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Fraser, 2004). Therefore it is important to make the interviewee feel at ease by establishing a climate of trust. Because of this I tried to have my interviews in small rooms with round tables where the participants could feel comfortable. I made water and other drinks available. I introduced myself as an ESL teacher and for the immigrant and international students this seemed to give a good impression as ESL teachers are usually seen as being friendly and helpful. In the first five or ten minutes of the interviews, I built up rapport and tried to be seen as supportive and non-threatening. In accordance with Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) I first had a briefing and an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions. Correspondingly, at the end of the interview, there was a debriefing.

In interviewing across linguistic and cultural divides there can be added issues to be aware of. Ryen (2003) points out that there can be verbal and non-verbal challenges. There may also be certain cultural norms that are unknown to the interviewer. Likewise, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) highlight the necessity for the interviewer to be careful in language choice and allow more time for interviewees to understand and respond. All this advice draws attention to the importance of being mindful of these various issues.

4.6.1.2 The interview framework

Since interviewing is seen as a craft (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), I decided to practise it prior to the actual data collection. For this I prepared a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 3) with the following themes: cultural

diversity, participation, relationships, communication, problems, feelings about group work, value of group work. This was informed by my research questions (see section 4.2), my conceptual understanding of identity and positioning (see chapter 3.4.4), and my understanding of the research literature (see 3.5).

The interview guide I designed was like a table with the themes on the left and possible topics to ask on the right. My aim was to turn the interview into a conversation that invited detailed responses. As Riessman (2008, p. 25) recommends, I used open-ended question formats that encouraged story types of answers. From my extensive experience as an ESL teacher, I realised that it is sometimes difficult to get students who are not using their first language to talk for sustained periods of time. Thus the reason for prompts in the interview guide.

4.6.1.3 Trialing the narrative interviews

My first trials were in May 2010 with two of the students in the group project I observed. I followed Kvale and Brinkmann's advice that the questions be brief and simple. I learned in this experience that I was not patient enough with digressions at unexpected times (Chase, 2005). My immediate thought was that the question was not being answered. Riessman (2008, p. 24) points out that stories often come at these unexpected times. I also learned that some of the language I used was too ambiguous, particularly for students whose first language was one other than English. For example, instead of saying, "Tell me about the roles you played in that group?" I found that it was clearer to say, "Tell me about the jobs you did in that group?" This experience was useful for alerting me to both my interview techniques and my actual questions.

From this first trial, I made modifications to my interview guide and the way I asked questions. I then attempted to find other students who would volunteer to be interviewed so that I could practise my refinements. I tried to find students in business courses but that proved difficult so in the end I found four students from the highest levels of the ESL classes. These students were also taking first year university courses. This was useful as I had not met these students before. My second experience reinforced my first in that I needed to be patient and let the students answer in the way they wanted. I was conscious that they saw me as a teacher and I felt that they were trying to give me the answers they thought I wanted. For example, one student who had had a lot of difficulties in group work glossed over these and it was only at the end of the interview that perhaps she felt she trusted me enough to tell me the whole story. This reinforced the importance of taking time to build up a rapport with the interviewees. As Fraser emphasises, I had to ensure my interviews were oriented towards the interviewees rather than the interview instrument (2004, p. 185).

4.6.1.4 Conducting the narrative interviews

The narrative interviewing was done between February 3rd and 16th 2011, during the fifth to seventh weeks of the semester. I had learned from the data collection trials that it was important to interview the students early in the semester as they are under a lot of pressure during the second half of the semester and do not generally want to give up their time. This was confirmed by other researchers I talked to within the university. The logistics of arranging the interviews was quite complex as the time had to suit the students and fit the availability of an interview room. Frequently, students cancelled meeting times and requested another time. In the end, six of the original volunteers cancelled due to other commitments.

The interviews generally lasted one to one and a half hours. I tried to create an informal atmosphere and at the beginning, I gave a briefing in accordance with Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). During this, I explained again the purpose of the research, the confidentiality procedures such as using pseudonyms for their names and for the name of the university, and I asked the participants to sign a consent form in line with University Arbutus research ethics (research ethics will be discussed in detail in section 4.8). I also requested permission to digitally record the interview.

At the beginning of the interview, I asked the students to tell me about their backgrounds, their country of origin, their age, how long they had been in Canada, their academic background and their experience learning English or other languages. This gave me some demographic information which can be seen in Table 1 in section 4.5.2 and also in Appendix 15. For students using English as an additional language, this gave them the opportunity to gain confidence in talking to me since they were being asked about familiar personal topics. Next I tried to get the students to tell me about their experiences in cooperative learning projects. Some were able to talk at length on these while others needed prompts. One or two students needed frequent clarification despite my efforts to make the questions really simple. When responding, one student often had to check her electronic Chinese English dictionary to find English words such as tolerance and cooperation. I recognized that both the narrator and the listener are jointly responsible for the narratives produced (Chase, 2005, p. 657).

With the more talkative students, I was able to hear lengthy narratives.

At the end of the interview I had a short debriefing in which I reviewed the confidentiality procedures and asked the students how they felt about the interviews. All the students felt happy to have been given to opportunity to give their opinions. Some students thought it was excellent practice for their English.

One student said the following:

Oh, I really find this session useful. I actually feel that if there's more panels like this, there's more opportunity for students to speak out their minds. It is encouraging the school to improve in efficient ways. Because most of the time when students want to talk to the instructors, they are shy or they are scared or they are just lazy. I don't know, whatever, but I think it is important. (From the end of Qi's interview)

After the interviews were finished, I wrote field notes on observations I had about the interviews as is further discussed below. In the next section, I discuss the collection of secondary data.

4.6.1.5 Collecting secondary data: group observations and field notes

The second way I obtained data was by collecting the interactions of five students (those whose details are provided in table 4.6 above) I observed while they were working on their marketing group project. These interactions could be loosely called "stories." In these, as Spector-Mersel (2010) points out, the stories were not jointly produced between the researcher (myself) and the participants but only between the participants themselves. However, the fact that they were being digitally recorded and that I was observing from the side may have influenced these interactions. The framework, however, was more natural since the students were going about their daily lives. I observed and recorded six hours of interaction (three meetings).

As with the narrative interviews, I employed field notes when conducting the observations. With regard to the interviews, I compiled field notes immediately

after each interview. I recorded my impressions of the interview and commented about the difficulties, emotions, gestures and so on of the participants. I tried to capture in a few words the most salient impressions I had. With my observations of the group projects, I tried to capture all the actions that were taking place. I wrote down if students were looking at the computer, writing, yawning, laughing or whatever was taking place. I also wrote the initial of the person speaking and gist what they said. The frequency of the initials I wrote down was very revealing as it showed visually how two people dominated the meetings I observed. These field notes provided a useful source of data during my analysis since they showed how certain students were frequently not given the space of dialogue (see section 3.4.2) which affected their relationships with the other students in the group. These field notes describing the observed group meetings and the participants' narratives provided the data for the reconstructed group meetings described in chapter 5.

My decision to use observations was influenced by Morita (2004) and Leki (2001) who reported how valuable these were for revealing interactions that would not be revealed in interviews alone (see Section 3.4.1). This type of research is referred to as ethnographic participant observation which Denscombe (2010) recommends for illuminating relationships which are otherwise hidden. He adds that it provides a greater depth of data.

4.6.2 Interpretation of the data

In interpreting the data I followed an iterative process of moving back and forth between the data, my coding, and my interpretation of the data. This process follows the hermeneutic circle (Crotty, 1998, p. 92) in that one starts with what one has understood in order to understand more. I followed this hermeneutic circle reading back and forth and writing down ideas as they emerged. I would leave my ideas for a few days then return to them and start the process again to gain fresh insights.

4.6.2.1 Phase one - first impressions

The first phase for both the interviews and for the group meeting observations was to listen to the narratives as soon as possible afterwards and write down the initial impressions that came into my mind. As Fraser (2004, p. 187) suggests I tried to get a sense of each narrative. I listened, as Riessman (2008, p. 26) recommends, “in an emotionally attentive and engaged way” to see if any major themes stood out. Based on this I wrote brief initial comments for each participant. Examples of these are “racism and rudeness” for Anisha; “extra work of the ESL student” for Harprit; and “frustration” for Tracey. I compared these to the initial comments I made in my field notes immediately after the interview.

4.6.2.2 Phase two - transcription

The second phase was the actual transcription of both the interviews of and the group meetings. These I transcribed by myself and although time-consuming with each interview taking between six and twelve hours to transcribe, it enabled me to become very familiar with the stories told. I was able to identify strong emotion that I had missed in my earlier listening. In the transcription, I

concentrated mainly on what was said rather than paralinguistic features but if there was strong emotion or laughter or other paralinguistic features that I understood and thought relevant, I included these in the transcript. For example, Tracey's frustration really became obvious when she almost shouted "Oh no!" when describing her feelings about group work. In the transcript, I showed this with capital letters and an upward pointing arrow. After transcribing all the interviews, I checked the transcripts for accuracy several times over a three week period by listening to the recordings of the interviews and comparing them to the transcripts I had made. I left space between the listenings so that I could hear the interviews with "fresh ears" and read my transcripts with "new eyes" – a method that I found successful in picking up errors.

In addition to transcribing the individual interviews which were the primary data, I transcribed the recordings of the first group meeting I observed. This was the secondary data. This was an incredibly tedious and lengthy process as there were five people in the group and they often interrupted each other. I also transcribed my trial interviews but this was mainly to practice the process because Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 81) say that the best way to learn about interviewing and transcribing is to do this.

4.6.2.3 Phase three - restorying

The third phase was the restorying of the transcripts of the twelve individual interviews. In this, I looked for the key elements of the story the participants told (Shope & Creswell, 2013). I tried to build in the past, present, and future to show a chronological sequence in the stories. I also tried to show the setting or place where the stories took place. An example of restorying can be seen in Appendix 4.

4.6.2.4 Phase four - thematic interpretation

The fourth phase was the interpretation of the individual stories and for this, I was informed by Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory analysis. I started off by reformatting my stories so that each line was double spaced and numbered. Then I engaged in a formal process of coding (Saldaña, 2009, p. 16). I re-engaged in a process of pre-coding similar to that I had undertaken in my field notes and when listening to the taped interviews and group meetings. This involved writing down the first thoughts that came to mind as I read through my narratives. For example, in Chen's transcript, I wrote "bossy leaders", "first impression", "patience" and similar comments in the margins.

From pre-coding, I moved on to initial coding (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47). In this I tried to do line by line coding although sometimes I found that a code applied to a few lines. As recommended by Charmaz (2006) and Saldaña (2009), I used gerunds as much as possible for this coding. I did the initial coding using Microsoft Word and used the "new comment" feature to show my coding. Although it varied according to the length of the narrative, there were up to 200 initial codes for each participant. An example of my initial coding can be seen in Appendix 5.

From my initial coding, I moved on to second cycle coding and used what Charmaz (2006) and Saldaña (2009) refer to as "focused coding." The purpose of this is to decide which initial codes make the most sense for categorizing the data. To carry out this step I first printed all the numbered codes I had generated for each participant. I followed the hermeneutic circle of reading back and forth. I then colour coded my focused codes so that I could clearly see

which initial codes belonged to which category. In this way I second coded all the narratives so that there were about fifteen codes for each.

From the second cycle codes, I moved on to look for the main themes in each participant's story which following Saldaña (2009, p. 42), I refer to as "focusing the categories." Here I looked for central core categories. Saldaña explains this as finding an axis category around which others revolve. In this stage I wrote notes on how different categories were connected to the axis category.

For each participant I developed about five main themes. An example of second cycle coding and developing the themes for a participant can be seen in

Appendix 6.

4.6.2.5 Phase five - identifying common themes across individual narrative accounts

In this phase I looked for commonalities across the participants' narrative accounts. To do this I compared the different themes that emerged for each participant. These can be seen in Appendix 7. I compiled a table with these themes which shows the total number of participants within each theme. I also showed how the themes were distributed across the three groups of students: international, immigrants, and Canadian born. This chart can be seen in Appendix 8. The most common themes that emerged were relationships, power hierarchies, language and cultural othering, and racial othering.

On a further analysis of these themes, I found that in the relationship theme, the participants tended to have two distinct perspectives which impacted their relationships with other group members. These were whether the participants were primarily individually results oriented with a strong desire for high marks for their group projects or whether they were oriented towards the process of

working with their group members to achieve group results. These distinctions were seen as useful in organising the presentation of the results and are discussed in Section 5.2.2.

4.6.3 Presenting the findings of the analysis

In presenting the findings of the analysis, I was mindful of Riessman (2008) and Trahar's (2011) advice that research reporting should be coherent and persuasive. Riessman suggests that coherence can be achieved by using commonalities of convergence and divergence in the participants stories. For persuasiveness, Riessman suggests that the data and the interpretations must be convincing and there must be interview segments which contain both the words spoken and the context. This was the advice I followed when writing the analysis in chapter 5.

My use of cross-thematic analysis stemmed from my focus on the content of what the participants said rather than how it was said (Riessman, 2008). It also provided the coherence of presentation that I described above. In addition, the cross-thematic analysis proved to be an appropriate way of answering my research questions and making these answers accessible for my audience.

At the beginning of chapter 5, prior to the cross-thematic analysis. I provide a reconstruction of a group meeting in progress which, although textual, gives the reader a visual image of a group meeting. I am informed by Holliday (2004) and Trahar (2011) (see Section 4.4.2), who demonstrate in different ways the effectiveness of a reconstruction for highlighting the complexities of what Holliday calls "hidden or counter-cultures"(p. 276) or as Trahar notes, "research

across cultures” (2011, p. 137). It is particularly useful for capturing what would only be partially captured in other ways (Holliday, 2004, p. 279).

Reconstruction is seen as a new way of presenting thick description and showing the connectedness between data. This interconnection is difficult to achieve otherwise because as Holliday (2004) points out it would require extensive chunks of data extracts and the length would make it difficult for the reader to see the interconnections between the chunks. For the visual image of the group meetings in chapter 5, I have taken my field notes of the group meetings I observed and my recordings of the meetings and re-presented them. The data itself is not fictionalized.

This reconstruction could be seen as a broad form of performance ethnography which is an emerging approach to qualitative studies. For Denzin (2003a, p. 33) “performance ethnography represents and performs rituals from everyday life, using performing as a method of representation and a method of understanding.” Often it is used to reveal issues of power and oppression so it fits my perspective as a critical interpretivist (see Section 4.3.3). The raw material usually comes from participant observation or interviews. This is written as a performance text and sometimes performed before an audience in a dramatic form. Sometimes pictorial images are used. The aim is to show the meaning rather than to tell the meaning. Conrad (2008, p. 610) emphasises that it gives insight into people’s social relations and cultural worlds. As a method of presenting research, performance ethnography is seen as complementary to other methods (Denzin, 2003b; Smith & Gallo, 2007). Although reconstruction is not the same as performance ethnography, it has many parallels with it

especially as the text provides a kind of visual image which can show issues of power.

4.7 My position as researcher

As mentioned in Section 1.4, I have had extensive professional experience working with international students in Canada as both an instructor of English for Academic Purposes and as a programme administrator. Prior to this, I worked in China and in other Asian countries developing programmes for mid-level professionals who were sponsored to go to Canada for advanced professional training or degrees. In addition, as a volunteer in Canada, I started a non-profit organization, the aim of which was to help new immigrants to settle in Canada.

On a personal level, I am part of a bicultural family. I am a white woman married to a visible minority (see Section 2.2) Canadian. In both my professional and personal life, I am very conscious of the inequalities that still exist in society. For example, despite the multi-ethnicity of the local metropolis, I have regularly observed positioning on the basis on skin colour in interactions in shops between my husband, a native speaker of English, and white Caucasians. The typical pattern is that if he asks questions, the answers are directed to me – a white woman – without the interlocutor even looking at him. This seems to echo of the exclusion experienced by international students in some of the studies referred to in the literature.

It is this background that prompted me to investigate relationships in intercultural groups but it is also this which has heightened my awareness of

how positioning could impact the way I approached the data collection and analysis. Because of my awareness of this, I had to give due consideration to positioning at each stage of the research process.

However, despite my awareness of my own positioning, I acknowledge, as a narrative researcher, that I am interpreting other's voices and realities as I produce my own narratives of these (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Within the interactions with those researched, however, there is usually a power imbalance which may impact the relationship and as a result the data (Gair, 2012; Leckie, 2008; Mikecz, 2012). Leckie (2008) advises that researchers reflect carefully on their relationships with those they are researching. As mentioned in section 4.5.1.1 and in chapter 1, I was a faculty member at the institution where the study took place and hence of a higher status than my student participants. Additionally, I was probably seen as a kind of mentor by the students who had taken ESL courses. However, I was not a student at the university and I did not know any of the participants beforehand.

These would give me both insider and outsider status (Gair, 2012; Leckie, 2008; Mikecz, 2012) which "is understood to mean the degree to which a researcher is located either within or outside a group being researched" (Gair, 2012, p. 137). Insider status enables the researcher to have a critical understanding of a situation whereas being an outsider enables a more objective understanding. In my case, although I had an insider status in the university which gave me easy access to the research site and its conventions, I had not had the personal experience of being a member of a team in business courses. Prior to interviewing, following Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) advice as mentioned in

section 4.4.2, I immersed myself as much as possible in the world of the first year business students doing group projects (see section 4.5.1.1). Therefore, on a continuum I would place myself nearer the insider end in terms of status but I agree with Gair's (2012) opinion that the dichotomy between insider and outsider is simplistic and the situation is always more complex or even fluid.

My status as a faculty member conducting research with student participants and my personal positioning made it imperative that I was cognizant that my subjectivity may influence my interpretation of the participants' narratives. I bore this in mind throughout the research process; consequently, I have been very transparent in my analysis by providing a detailed description and many examples of each stage of the analysis as mentioned in section 4.8. Readers can thus see how I sought to ensure I was not biased.

4.8 Trustworthiness

Narrative inquiry is a subjective type of research in which both the participant and researcher are constructing meaning and as Riessman (2008) points out, traditional methods of evaluation that are used for the reliability and validity of experimental research are not appropriate. She elaborates that there is not a common set of criteria for evaluating narrative projects. Frequently, transparency is specified in the literature as the main way of showing the quality of the research (Hiles, 2008; Riessman, 2008; Saumure & Given, 2008). Each step of the research process therefore needs to be as clear as possible starting with the position of the researcher and his/her theoretical perspectives.

In this study I aimed to be transparent through my accounts of each stage of the research process. I clarified my theoretical perspectives in section 4.3 above and set out my position as a researcher in section 4.7 above. In section 4.4, I detailed my understanding of narrative inquiry and my rationale for using this methodology. I then described the research participants (section 4.5) and later in this section, I describe the procedures I followed to ensure these participants were treated ethically. In the analysis of the data, I gave step by step explanations of what I did (section 4.6) and left an audit trail (Saumure & Given, 2008) in the appendix with examples of each stage of the data analysis. In the representation of the data, I gave lengthy extracts of the participants' narratives and included examples of interviews in the appendix. I compared the different cases across the themes that emerged and in my discussion in chapter 6, I compared these to other findings in the literature (Saumure & Given, 2008). In my narratives, I paid attention to coherence by looking at time, place, and social interaction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Throughout I practised reflexivity (Hiles, 2008; Riessman, 2008; Saumure & Given, 2008) by keeping a research diary in which I wrote my thoughts as the project unfolded. Through giving this detailed information, readers can follow the path I have taken and if necessary replicate the process I used.

Related to transparency, I aimed to have rigor in my research. Rigor is defined as the quality of the research process (Saumure & Given, 2008). I did this by becoming familiar with the context, piloting the interviews as described in section 4.6.1.3, and making adjustments to my interview guide and to my interview techniques. In the analysis of the data, I similarly tried to achieve rigor.

For example, I transcribed all the interviews by myself by listening multiple times.

4.9 Ethics

In treating the participants ethically, I followed procedures laid down by the Ethical Research Board at the University of Exeter and at the university where the study was conducted. Prior to commencing the research, I obtained Certificates of Ethical Approval from both universities (see Appendices 9, 10 and 11 for copies). I guaranteed that all the participants would be adults over the age of eighteen. These participants were made fully aware in writing and orally about the purpose of the research, they knew in advance the extent of their commitment and gave free and informed consent in writing (see Appendix 12). They also knew that they could withdraw at any time which several did after volunteering to be in the study. They were informed that their identities would be kept confidential and that they and the university would be referred to by pseudonyms. In addition, I guaranteed that there would be no harm of any kind to the subjects of the research and that interview transcripts and digital recordings would be kept in locked cupboards or filing cabinets and subsequently destroyed at the end of the research.

Particular measures were taken to ensure that the study itself did not adversely affect the participants. Two main types of possible harm to the participants were considered. The first of these was harm related to anonymity and the second was related to physical and mental wellness. These are discussed in turn.

Although the participants were guaranteed anonymity, this sometimes meant that more than their names and their institution had to be concealed. As Drake

(2014, p. 312) emphasizes, anonymity is “the guarantee that the information provided would not be traced back to the participant.” During the interviews and their transcription, I was particularly attentive to the content of the participants’ narratives and asked myself whether there was any possibility of a participant being identified by the information they provided. Often I was privileged to knowledge about other instructors in the institution which I did not use in my research for fear of participant identification and subsequent harm. Similarly a few participants described specific problems they had had with named instructors. These scenarios were not transcribed or used in any way in the research. By the same token, I did not use the specific names of the courses the students were taking so as to avoid any possibility of participants being identified. Furthermore, no instructors in the institution knew which students I had interviewed.

I also took measures to protect the physical and mental wellness of the participants. In addition to those procedures laid down in the Ethical Research Boards of the two universities described above, I took care during the interview to ensure that the participants did not have a fear of participation as I was conscious of my more powerful position. I did my best to build up a good rapport with the participants and establish a feeling of mutual trust at the beginning of the interviews. Throughout, I treated the participants with dignity and respect and listened extremely carefully with empathy to really understand what was being said. I tried to reassure them if they seemed uncomfortable in any way. I provided water, juice, and coffee so that they would feel comfortable. At the end of each interview, I held a debriefing which was not recorded during which we talked about how the participant found the experience and if he/she had any

worries or questions. All participants expressed satisfaction with the process and most said it was a beneficial experience. A letter of participation which can be seen in Appendix 13 was given to all the participants.

I was also conscious of not causing harm by using too much of the participants' time. I ensured that the interviews were held at a time and place convenient to the participants. I was aware of their many time demands and wanted to guarantee that their participation would not interfere with their learning or their work outside university. By following all these procedures, I believe that I ensured that no harm was done to the participants by taking part in my study.

4.9 Limitations

All research studies have limitations and the ones I have identified in this study are related to the methodology and the interpretation. With regard to the first of these, I was only able to interview the students once. As mentioned in section 4.6.1, I had planned to interview students at the beginning, the middle, and the end of their group projects as I found it would indicate how their relationships with their group members changed over the course of a cooperative learning project. I recognize that more than one interview with each student would have added rigour to my study.

A second limitation could be my choice of using narrative inquiry. Other methodologies may have produced different results. However, I was interested in what Riessman (2008, p. 11) describes as "the study of the particular" and narrative inquiry seemed the best choice of methodology as discussed in section 4.4.

A third limitation refers to my interpretations of the data. Another researcher may have interpreted the data differently. I made a thematic analysis but other types of analysis such as dialogic (Riessman, 2008, p. 105) may have been equally revealing. Also it must be remembered that narratives are “socially situated narrative performances” (Chase, 2005, p. 657) and the same participants would have constructed their narratives differently with another researcher.

Despite these limitations, I do believe, as the findings to be reported in the following chapters demonstrate, that this study has enabled a number of interesting insights on relationships and identity construction in group projects in higher education to emerge.

Chapter 5 Student experiences of cooperative learning

This chapter presents the results of this study. As described in section 4.6.3, I first provide a reconstruction of two cooperative learning meetings. This reconstruction focuses only on the processes that are taking place and the interactions of the group members. No dialogue is given as this would obscure the interconnections between the participants. My ontological position outlined in Section 4.3.1, means that the visual picture I am painting here with words is my reality of what is happening. Since it illustrates the complex nature of group meetings, it is placed ahead of the thematic analysis. The visualization particularly answers research question 2 (see 4.2). Following this, I provide a cross-narrative thematic analysis of the 12 participants' accounts of their experiences in cooperative learning projects. Where relevant, the observational data are also referred to. The analysis answers all three research questions, but specifically questions 1 and 3. A discussion of the findings follows in chapter 6.

5.1 Reconstructed narratives

The reconstruction shown below focuses on data obtained from my observation of the group meetings, my secondary source of data. As explained in 4.6.3 above, I used the transcripts of the participants' meetings and my field notes to develop the reconstruction. The participants were different from those interviewed and hence have different pseudonyms (see Table 4.6). As described in Section 2.5.6, the group of students were engaged in developing and marketing a hypothetical product and then reporting on this orally and in writing at the end of the course. They had met each other for the first time in the marketing class and what is reconstructed here are their first two meetings. In the first one, they were mainly brainstorming what their actual product should

be. In the second meeting, they decided on their product – a wind up mobile phone – and started talking about who the target market should be.

This form of presentation shows the interconnectedness of the experiences of the various members of the group and demonstrates their relationships, something that is difficult to capture with only their narratives. Although, these group members were different from the participants I interviewed (see Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 for details of these participants), I believe that the relationships contextualised in the following reconstruction signal some of the visible identity positions which the students took up and which are further interrogated in the themes emerging from the interviews to be discussed below.

5.1.1 Group project meetings in progress

In the recently modernized and expanded open plan library with its brightly lit, extensive spaces, concrete walls and floors and huge south facing windows, five students are gathered around a square black laminate table with a laptop which is plugged into one of the floor sockets. Other students can be seen either sitting in small groups or alone at the identical tables spaced equidistantly across this wide area. There is a hum of conversation in the air in this designated meeting space of the library.

Sandra, a Caucasian girl, is busy searching for information on her laptop. Slightly behind her, to her right, looking over her shoulder is Amy who also appears to be a white Canadian girl. On Sandra's left is Jia who is talking loudly on his cell phone in what sounds like Mandarin or some Chinese dialect. Next to Jia and across from Sandra is Tina who is bending over, head down, looking at her electronic translation dictionary on her lap. Jia and Tina look as if they could be Chinese but then again they could be Canadian born Chinese. Between Tina and Sandra is Amira who is busy reading the handout the professor gave on their Marketing project. Amira,

who is wearing a long dark coat and a headscarf which completely covers her hair, looks older than the other students, perhaps in her early thirties. She could be from the Middle East somewhere but maybe she too is a Canadian born student.

Three minutes pass. Silence. Sandra and Amy are still looking at the laptop. Jia continues to chat on the phone but is now standing near the window. Tina is still bent over, earnestly typing English words into her translation dictionary. Amira has taken out her three inch thick Marketing text book and is flipping through the pages.

Sandra looks up. She looks around at her group. She starts talking. Jia ends his phone call and returns to the table. Sandra keeps talking and reading information from the computer for a few minutes. Amy sits down next to Sandra and makes a comment. Sandra replies and points to the computer screen. Amy looks at it. For the next few minutes Sandra and Amy talk back and forth. Jia sits listening. Tina has her head down but looks up occasionally. Amira is looking at the project handout and is writing something down. Jia asks a question and Sandra answers. He says something else and Sandra continues to talk.

The meeting continues in this way for some time with Sandra and Amy doing most of the talking. Jia tries to butt in with comments or questions. Amira says a few words now and then but Sandra quickly gains control of the discussion. At one point, Tina looks up and says something but her hand is in front of her mouth and it is as if nobody heard her. She turns her attention once again to her electronic translation dictionary this time entering Chinese words.

Sandra appears to be giving out directions to the team members, possibly their homework for next week's meeting. Then they all consult their cell phone calendars to check their availability for the same time next week. With the meeting arranged, Jia, who has already packed all his books, gets up and quickly leaves as he needs to get to his job by 1:00 p.m. Sandra and Amy get up and leave the library together. They seem to be

quite friendly with each other. Tina waits behind a little to ask Amira some questions about the meeting. Amira answers her and now Tina understands a little more about what is going on.

Another “successful” team meeting is over and the group is a step closer to designing the Marketing project.

Meeting Two

It is ten minutes to eleven and Tina is sitting alone at a black laminate table in the library waiting for her team members to arrive. On the table in front of her, lie a pile of print-outs from the websites she consulted regarding the team project. Some of the print-outs are in Mandarin; others in English with Mandarin notes scribbled copiously. She is studying them and checking words in her electronic translation dictionary. It seems that Tina has spent many hours since the last meeting researching the group topic. Beside the window, near the table stands Jia who is talking loudly in Mandarin on his cell phone arranging his work hours for the next week. At two minutes to eleven Sandra and Amy walk in together. Sandra gets out her laptop and plugs it in. Sandra and Amy continue chatting to each other and barely acknowledge the other students. Finally, at 11:10, Amira comes rushing in after having dropped her daughter at daycare. She apologizes to the others and receives a glare from Sandra.

The meeting begins with Sandra reading out information from her computer. Amy, who is sitting next to her, moves nearer to look at the computer screen. The two Caucasian girls talk back and forth for five minutes. Tina is looking down at her electronic translation dictionary and Amira is looking at the directions given by their professor. Amira interrupts and asks a question and Sandra and Amy look at each other with raised eyebrows. Sandra says something but Amira looks at the directions for the project and asks another question. Sandra and Amy look at each other again. Jia makes a comment. In response, Sandra asks the others a

question about what they think they should do in the project. Jia speaks for a couple of minutes. After that Amira speaks again. Sandra and Amy look at each other. Tina tries to talk about the information she has found but her hand is in front of her mouth and the others do not understand her. She passes her website print-outs to Sandra. Sandra gives them a quick glance and returns to talking about what she has on her computer screen in front of her. Jia says something but seems to be ignored. Sandra and Amy continue to talk about what is on the computer screen. In this way the next hour passes.

It is time to end the meeting. Sandra tells the others what to do for the next meeting. Amira is questioning her. Jia has packed up his books and is rushing off to his job. Tina is looking at her electronic dictionary and lingering to see if Amira will be there after the two white girls have left. She wants to find out what is happening. So ends another group meeting. Each student has been allocated work to do alone - work that Sandra and Amy deem appropriate. There is no need for a meeting for several weeks as the project is planned and everybody has been organized, thanks to Sandra's skill as a leader. At the next meeting each student will bring his/her contribution and the leader, Sandra, will piece it together.

The reconstructed narrative points to the complexity of relationships between participants of group projects. Some participants are in more powerful positions than others and seem to control the group processes. The next section which presents the analysis of the individual narrative interviews elaborates on these things.

5.2 Cross-thematic analysis of participants narratives

In this section, I present my cross thematic analysis of the twelve participants' narratives of their experiences in cooperative learning projects. The results answer all the research questions (see section 4.2) of this study.

The two main themes that emerged (referred to in Section 4.6.2.5): relationships in cooperative groups and identity positioning are discussed. Woven through the relationship theme are two main threads which are linked to the orientation of the participants towards their group projects with some participants foregrounding the process itself and others foregrounding their individual results in the group project. In many cases, the sub-themes that emerged cut across the three groups of participants who are identified by the following abbreviation after their names: I = international student; M = Canadian immigrant; and C = Canadian-born. Information about who the twelve participants above worked with in cooperative projects can be seen in tabular form in Appendix 14 and a profile of all the participants in the study can be seen in Appendix 15.

5.2.1 Relationships and relationship expectations in cooperative learning groups

Almost all the students referred to relationships in cooperative learning groups but there was quite a difference in perspectives which seemed to align with whether students foregrounded group learning as a process or whether they were primarily oriented towards the results – their individual mark for the project. These are seen as threads running through the relationship theme. It is acknowledged that this process versus results orientation should be seen more as a continuum rather than a dichotomous approach to group learning, although as will be discussed below, there were a number of participants who were clearly at the results end of this continuum. Figure 5.1 illustrates this continuum and shows how the relationship themes that emerged fit with either the process thread or the results thread.

Under the process thread, the themes connected to relationships were: getting to know group members first and wanting to work with one's own cultural group. The reason expressed for both of these was to have a common understanding and feel comfortable with other group members. Under the results thread, the main themes were wanting to choose group members with strong work ethics, wanting to choose one's own group members so that their strengths are known, or wanting to be leader so as to control the results.

Figure 5.1 Key themes emerging from the process versus results orientated perspectives of relationships in cooperative learning groups

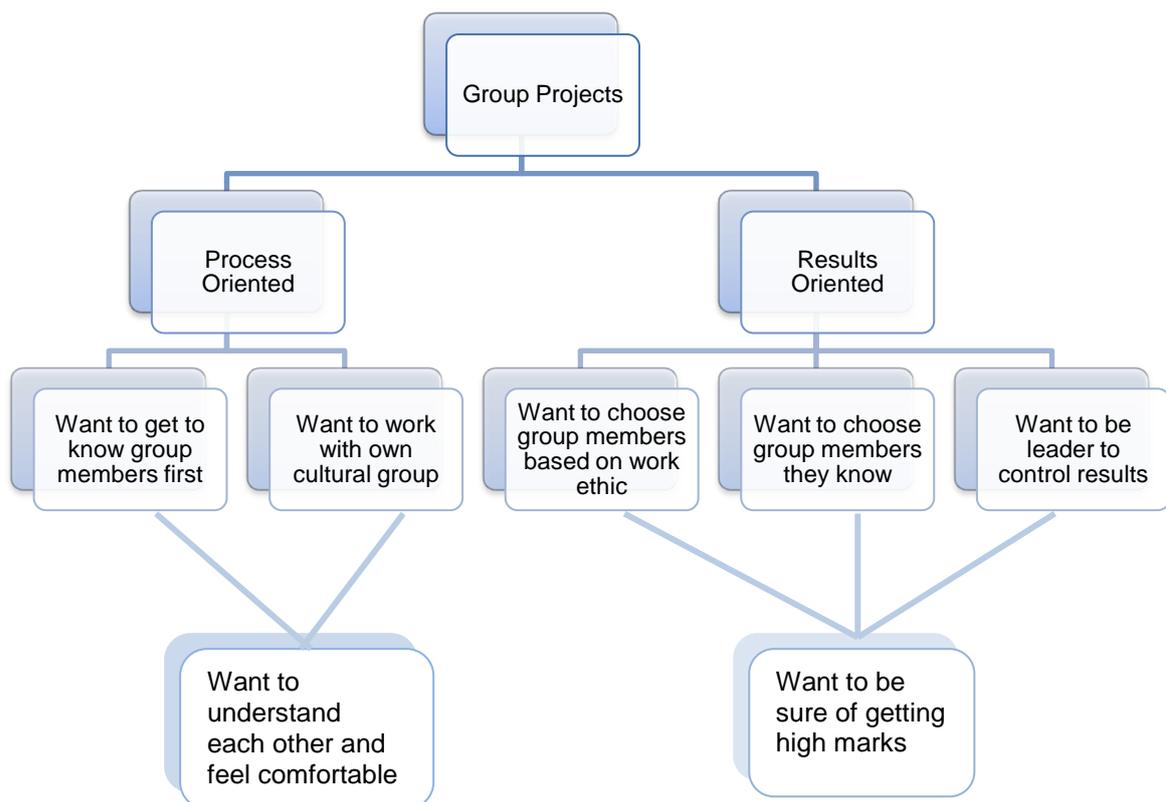


Table 5.1 shows the distribution of the participants within these themes.

Table 5.1 The distribution of participants within the process versus results orientated perspectives of relationships in cooperative learning

Process Orientation		Results Orientation		
Getting to know each other first	Working with own cultural group	Choosing group members who have strong work ethics	Choosing group members They know	Wanting to be leader to as to control the result
Anisha (I)	Anisha (I)			
Phuc (I)				Phuc (I)
Tracey (I)	Tracey (I) with international students only – not Canadians			
Wahid (I)	Wahid (I)			
Andy (M)		Andy (M)	Andy (M)	
Chen (M)				
	Emma (M)			
Qi (M)			Qi (M)	
				Danielle (C)
		Gavin (C)	Gavin (C)	
Harprit (C)	Harprit (C)	Harprit (C)	Harprit (C)	
		Sophie (C)		

As can be seen from the table, the international participants are mainly focused at the process orientation end of the spectrum while the Canadian-born are mainly at the other end. The Canadian immigrant participants are spread over this process versus results spectrum.

5.2.1.1 Process oriented perspectives on relationships

For many participants the aim of having a relationship with other group members was so that they would have an understanding with each other and feel comfortable working together, reflecting an emphasis on the importance of relationships in group processes. As can be seen in Table 5.1, this is achieved in two ways: either by getting to know the other group members prior to starting

the group project or by working with one's own cultural group. These two sub-categories will be analysed in turn in this section.

- The importance of getting to know other group members

All four international students made comments like Anisha's (I), "I think each one of us should introduce herself and then we should get used to each other. Only after that can the group project start." Despite the desirability of relationship building at the start of a project, the international participants found that it was practised infrequently. Phuc (I) describes his experience when randomly assigned to a group:

Actually my idea at the time was that we should hang out together for a couple of days to get to know each other and to understand each other more. However, people were not interested in doing this as they said they did not have free time to do any stuff together.

Anisha (I) found a similar situation in the two group projects she experienced. In her first project, her team members were a local Chinese Canadian female and an international Chinese female. She complains about the lack of a common understanding:

We did not know each other. We did not understand each other's backgrounds. I think understanding is a real factor because if someone doesn't understand the other one, then it is very difficult to work together.

The same thing happened in her second group project when her team members were two Indo-Canadian females, a Chinese Canadian female and an international Chinese female. Similarly, Tracey (I) did not get to know her project team members when she was assigned to work with four Caucasian Canadian females in Business Management or when she had to work with four Chinese Canadian females for a Marketing project.

Wahid (I) whose team members consisted of three Indo-Canadian males and one Chinese Canadian female had a more positive experience as, with time, he was able to get to know his team members quite well although he did not know them at the onset. He too said that the first meeting should be mainly small talk so that the group can begin to have a relationship with each other.

Two of the the Canadian immigrant participants also talked about the necessity of getting to know their group members first. Andy (M), for example, argued that if he is assigned to a group by the instructor, he tries to get to know his team members prior to starting the project. He talks about what he would do:

I would try to get some interaction going on. You want to know a bit about that person. You have to have a certain relationship before you can start working together. At least you need to be able to find out if you can rely on that person. If you don't know that person and you start assigning work to them, it's like, "You do this. You do this." It's not nice.

Similarly, for Chen (M), there seems to be a correlation between group member relationships and the ability to work together:

We usually just get to know each other at the beginning and try to be friends and get comfortable and it will be easier to do the stuff later on. The first impression is very important. If people are too quiet at the beginning or don't seem to get along with each other or if they don't seem to get along with you, it will affect the group work later on.

Chen's (M) comments about first impressions resonate with Harprit (C) who elaborates on how she builds up a relationship with group members she doesn't know:

The first impression makes a big difference. If they are really cold and to themselves and they are not willing to talk and get to know the other person, you're kind of taken aback. You feel you can't relate to them and it feels like when you are working together you can't really get into details because you feel there is a barrier there. So you have to get to know them well, being social and willing to get to know about the person.

Harprit (C) adds that if people do not seem friendly, she feels shy about talking to them and this affects how well she can express her opinions while doing the group project. The bottom line for Harprit (C) is that if she had a choice between a group project or an individual project, she would choose the individual project if she did not know the other students:

If it were strangers in the class and I did not know any of them at all, I'd probably work on my own. But if I did have some understanding with some of the people there, I'd probably choose group work so we could split the work and it could be easier on our workload as well.

- Preference for working with ones' own cultural group

Being comfortable with team members is an important criteria for success for all these participants above. A second way of realising this comfort zone in group projects is to work with one's own cultural group. For Anisha (I) and Wahid (I) this is the preferred way because similarities between people give a common understanding. However, while Tracey (I), too, agrees it would be easier to work with students from China, she indicated that she does not want to do this because of her belief that they think similarly. She would prefer to work with a group of mixed international students as they are more interested in getting to know each other than Canadian-born students; furthermore, she states that their English is easier to understand. Phuc (I), concurred with Tracey in this respect indicating that because he visualizes a future for himself in international business, he wants to experience working with people from as many countries as possible as he sees group work as training in inter-personal and inter-cultural communication.

Emma (M), like the international participants Anisha (I) and Wahid (I), prefers to work with her own cultural group. Here is her rationale:

I would be more comfortable with the same cultural group because we have the same background, the same culture so we would have more things in common and we could talk about more things. In a mixed group, there wouldn't be much to talk about because we have a different background and everything. It depends on the group but for me, I'm more comfortable when I'm with my own culture.

Emma (M) seems to be successful in her desire to work with her own culture because she adds, "Most of the people I've worked with are mostly Asian (Chinese), I haven't really worked with Caucasians." Similarly, Harprit (C), although ambiguous about her preferences for group composition in cooperative projects, puts forward this rationale:

Usually people of the same culture like to be with each other. I don't know why but it's just what happens. The Sikhs go with the Sikhs and the Asians (Chinese) go with the Asians. I don't know why it happens but it just seems that we can relate to each other more because there is a common basis. That's the first visual thing we see so it's like being with a relation and we feel more comfortable.

5.2.1.2 Relationships from a results oriented perspective

For those participants who are oriented towards getting high marks for their group projects three main sub-themes emerged. The first of these is working with people with strong work ethics, the second is choosing group members they know, and the third is assuming leadership of groups.

- Working with people with strong work ethics

Participants with a results oriented perspective generally want to work with people similar aspirations. Participants with this focus were Andy (M), Sophie (C), Gavin (C), and Harprit (C).

Andy (M), although he makes an effort to get to know group members he has not met before, really prefers to work with friends or conscientious people who can help him to achieve higher marks. In Andy's words:

I would definitely prefer choosing my own group. If I were put in a group with someone who doesn't care too much about school, it's hard to rely on that person. I would prefer choosing a smart person so hopefully I would get higher marks.

Similarly, Sophie (C) and Gavin (C) prefer to choose group members who can help them achieve high marks in their group projects. Sophie (C) discusses her rationale for choosing her own group members:

I prefer to choose my own group because that way you know different people's work ethics and you can choose to be in groups with people who have similar work ethics to yourself. If you are put in groups, you can get stuck, so to speak, with people who don't have as dedicated a work ethic as you. That can be difficult.

There is nothing worse for Sophie (C) than being put into a group with people who are not motivated. How she relates to others depends on how motivated they are. She says:

Number one is their work ethic: if they're pulling their weight or if they are not pulling their weight. That majorly influences how I feel about them or what I think of them.

Again, how Gavin (C) relates to others in his group parallels Sophie's (C) opinions. In his words:

Well, in a group setting what would affect me is the attitude people have toward their work. You know, if we're doing a group assignment and somebody's just sitting there and they are not really saying very much and they don't really seem interested and they're not really providing any input at all, I'll have a more negative outlook on them regardless of culture or language or anything like that as opposed to someone who is contributing and is kind of moving things along and just putting their best foot forward.

Another Canadian-born participant Harprit (C), who preferred being with her own cultural group explained this by saying that students select people of their own cultural background whom they know have the strongest skills so that they can get high marks. One of the reasons for many students desiring high marks is that they want to do a Master's degree after their Bachelor's and the entry is competitive which means that students with the highest marks (Grade Point

Average) in their first degree have the best chance of being admitted to their university of choice. Despite this focus on obtaining high marks, Harprit (C) seemed to admit that the random selection process for group members is fairer and more equitable since when students choose their own groups, other students get left out. Being left out is about the worst thing that can happen to any student. Harprit (C) talks about how she feels when this happens:

You feel bad inside because people might be judged because we don't know them and we might not think they have strengths and then if we do know them, it's even worse. So it's not good.

- Choosing group members they know

Several participants talked about two interconnected advantages of knowing group members beforehand. The first is that they can get started the project immediately and the second is that they can choose the best person for the different parts of the project and thus get better results. Andy (M), Qi (M), Gavin (C), and Harprit (C) all referred to choosing people they know.

Andy (M) describes how much easier it is when he knows the group members beforehand:

It makes a huge difference if you know people beforehand. First off, you can just pretty much get down to business right away. If I'm in a group with someone I know we'll end up doing the project right away.

Qi (M) has similar comments about his preferences:

I prefer working with my friends or with people I've been studying with before. I am usually very active on the first day of class and I ask for people's email addresses so that we can help each other and stuff, so usually I tend to make some friends in the first or second weeks of class. I prefer to do projects with people I know because I know if they are responsible or not and I know how they manage their time and their styles.

His strategy if he does not know anyone in the class and he has to find group members could be described as a results oriented one:

I have a tendency to find pretty girls and I try to establish a positive relationship with them because guys like pretty girls. The teacher also wants to have an even mix of genders and personalities and all that so I also grab some guys. My priority is always set with people who'll get the most attention in class because what I've learned is, whether we like it or not, whenever pretty girls or handsome guys are on the stage speaking, they tend to grab more attention, even from instructors too.

Gavin (C), who is also thinking of the success of the project, has similar views:

I guess I would just prefer to choose my own group because depending on the project, you might specifically know someone. We had a group project involving audio visual presentations so I thought to myself, "Oh well, this person I know is very skilled in that sort of thing so it would be kind of nice if we were in the same group because then we would have a real easy time of putting it together" so I would prefer my own choice but I understand the merits of random group selection.

Another advantage being with people he knows is that Gavin (C) would feel comfortable asking them why they are not putting any effort if this were the case. With people he does not know, he would be unlikely to do this.

Despite her thinking that random groups are fairer, Harprit (C) really seems to indicate that she prefers knowing her group members beforehand. When I asked her the following question, "What things help the group to be successful in its project?" she answered, "People that have some relationship with each other." She also comments, "You have to get to know each other; not knowing a person well is a difficulty." She gives an example of the disadvantages a group had because the group members were all strangers to each other. She states:

I didn't know which people had a lot of strengths and in which areas. You kind of knew in high school which people were good at writing and which were good at creativity but here you kind of had to get to know them and do the project at the same time. There was a lot of multi-tasking. And there was a barrier because the roles were confused and numbers were lost and it was hard to get in touch sometimes.

Here she is comparing a group project unfavourably with her experience in high school.

- Assuming leadership of groups

A final way of achieving good results in group projects is to be the group leader. Canadian-born participant, Danielle (C) believes that it is her skills as a leader that is responsible for success in her groups. Danielle (C) sees herself as the one who is better at speaking and controlling the others in the group. As part of this role, she decides which person is best for the different parts of the project and assigns the work accordingly. She also arranges the meetings, the deadlines for submitting work and she is responsible for the final submission of the project. She talks about the process of assuming group leadership, "It is just kind of natural for me to take this role. It is natural for the people in the group to follow." She is quite certain that she prefers random selection of group members.

One other participant who talked about becoming the group leader in the future so that he could control the results of the project was Phuc (I). As a high achiever, he was frustrated when a low group mark pulled down his final mark for the course.

5.2.2 Identity positioning in cooperative groups

The second major theme is identity positioning and within this are the following sub-themes: power hierarchies; language and cultural othering; and racial othering.

5.2.2.1 Power hierarchies

Power hierarchies impacted the construction of identities in many of the group projects described by the participants. Despite desiring to be treated respectfully and to be given equal opportunities for participation, many

participants, especially the international and immigrant students, indicated that they were obstructed from contributing to their group projects by more powerful group members. It seemed that these more powerful members did not see them as students with strong academic identities. This resulted in these participants feeling disempowered and consequently experiencing frustration, anger, and a loss of self-confidence.

Table 5.2 Participants feeling disempowered

Participants feeling disempowered	Reason for disempowerment
Anisha (I)	Controlling Canadian team members
Tracey (I)	Authoritarian Canadian students
Phuc (I)	Group members marginalising his ideas
Andy (M)	High achievers controlling the work
QI (M)	High achievers controlling the work
Chen (M)	Bossy leaders

The left column shows the names of participants who felt disempowered in their groups. The right column gives the reasons for this disempowerment. Two participants, Wahid (I) and Emma (M) did not refer to power hierarchies. In the group observation (see Section 5.1.1), Tina (I) and Amira (M) also appeared to be disempowered. The narratives of the participants' experiences regarding power are presented next.

- Disempowered participants

Three of the international participants generally felt disempowered in their group projects. Even though they wanted to be seen as having strong academic identities, they were often dominated by Canadian-born students who assumed the roles of authority figures and who tended to ignore them. This seemed to be the pattern with Tina in the group that was observed (see Section 5.1.1).

For both Anisha (I) and Tracey (I), Canadian-born students completely controlled their group projects. They controlled all aspects such as the planning and organization, the participation and the timing of meetings. Anisha (I) describes what happened in the first project:

Well, the thing is that the Chinese one who lives here tried to plan everything by herself. She wanted us to do all the work and she wanted us to do whatever she wanted. Things had to go her way.

It was not just the planning and organisation that the local girl controlled. As Anisha continues to explain, she was excluded from the discussions:

We met a bit of problems; communication problems, background problems. I worked with two Chinese students and I was the only one who was not Chinese and it was evident because they were mostly communicating amongst themselves and, even though they were speaking English, I was left out, you know.

When this situation occurs with other students controlling all aspects of the project, Anisha (I) claims that it results in the others not participating:

The problem is that when one student shows he or she is more assertive and more confident than the other members, it prevents the other ones from participating. Also when one student shows that he or she knows the subject better than the others, he or she undermines the other ones.

Although in this instance the learning experience was not meaningful for Anisha (I), the end result was satisfactory because they received a good mark for the project.

Anisha's (I) second project was an extremely negative experience for her because of the disrespectful attitude of a local student who completely controlled everything. In this project, she was with two Indo-Canadian females, a Chinese Canadian female, and an international Chinese female student.

Anisha (I) describes how the Indo-Canadian girl positioned herself as the authoritarian leader:

Most of the time, the one saying bad things about other students is the one who is not doing the work at all. And even though she doesn't do any work, she points the finger at other students; "She's lazy. She hasn't done this. She hasn't done that. She isn't doing the work!" And then when we group and everyone works together, she is the leader, the bossy one who thinks she is doing the work and showing us how to do it. She says, "Well everyone, just group around me, I'll show you how to do it properly, in the proper format." Behind her back, we tend to say, "What is she really showing us; we did the work. We were the ones who were working and she is just taking our work and putting it together."

The team members feel quite resentful of the bossy student's attitude but seem to be powerless to do anything. The bossy girl and her Indo-Canadian friend also controlled the meeting times and did not consider the needs of the other students. Anisha (I) relates how these two girls kept changing the times of meetings at the last minute. On one occasion there was so much confusion and Anisha (I) missed a meeting by mistake. She tells what happened:

At the time there were so many SMS and mobile messages going back and forth that it was completely confusing. I missed one meeting by mistake. At the next class the bossy girl started talking to me very rudely. She told me she had sent an SMS message and went on and on. She accused me of not being interested and that she was going to complain to the instructor about me and that she was going to give me a bad peer review. She went on and on.

Here, because she missed a meeting due to a misunderstanding, Anisha (I) is being given various threats by the self-appointed leader. In this instance, however, Anisha (I) contested this positioning by the bossy leader. She explains what happened:

In the end, I lost my cool and we had a big fight. I don't like to have arguments with other students but that day she was so rude and disrespectful. I was so angry with her. This didn't make me a silent person that day; at that time I was very talkative.

Tracey (I) related similar experiences with Canadian-born students taking over the team projects she was involved in. In her Business Management project, the Canadian-born students divided up the tasks and told her what to do. Tracey (I) then took her completed work to them by the deadline and asked if it was correct. Once she did not finish a task on time. She explains the situation, "One time, I didn't finish a job so they asked me to leave the meeting and to show them the completed job at the next class." Here there seem to be unequal power relations with Tracey (I) being in a subservient position.

As in Anisha's (I) situation, there were also unequal power relations regarding the scheduling of meetings. This turned out to be disastrous for Tracey (I) as it resulted in her failing the project and the course. In her Marketing project, she was with five team mates, mainly Chinese Canadians, who arranged the group meetings when Tracey (I) had to attend another class. Here are Tracey's (I) thoughts about what happened:

Some people were really unfair. My free time was totally different from theirs and I showed them this. I told them that I couldn't meet at that time and showed them when I was free. They told me that they couldn't meet me then as they had another class and that I'd better change to another group. They said that another group might have the same schedule as mine and that would be better.

As a result of the conflict with the meeting schedule Tracey (I) was unable to attend many of the group meetings although she did the work required of her. Then about a month before the end of the project, she had a fever and missed university for a week. When she returned, the team mates had put her out of the group. She talked very excitedly about this event:

When I was sick, they didn't even talk to me. They just talked to the teacher and told him I was out of the group. I didn't even know and we just had a month of our project left. I asked them why they didn't call or email

me. I told them that I couldn't understand why they didn't help me and why they told the teacher to put me out of the group.

Tracey (I) contested the way her group delegitimized her participation when they excluded her from the group. She talked to the instructor but he told her to solve the problem with the ex-team members. After that she tried to complete the project on her own but found it impossible to cope with the amount of work. In the end she failed this course partly because her group members refused to give her a peer group mark. It was a very emotional experience for her. She said, "I never wanted to show up at that class again." With her voice unusually high she summarized her feelings, "It was a really BAD↑ experience."

Tracey (I) adds that it was not just with her that her team members were intolerant. She continues, "One of my classmates had a car accident and he couldn't come to class for two weeks and this group let him go." In other words, they put him out of the group.

Phuc (I) and Wahid (I) did not have such extreme group experiences although Phuc (I) describes his group members delegitimizing his contribution to the project by saying it was wrong. The following excerpt from his interview illustrates this:

After we finished our jobs we gathered them together. I had to send my part to everyone and I got another part from everyone. After three to five weeks we had to give feedback about how the other people were doing. I got some feedback and they told me primarily mine was on the wrong track. After that we had a meeting and we couldn't figure out who was right and who was wrong. Then, finally, we decided we should talk to my professor and ask him to figure out who's right and who's wrong.

Rather than accept his team mates' negative opinions of his work, Phuc (I) consulted his professor. He reports, "He actually liked my idea so I was so happy and I kept working on that."

Unlike the other three international participants, Wahid (I) describes having a generally satisfactory group experience because he had a good relationship with his team members and a kind leader who explained what was happening.

Three of the Immigrant participants also discussed domineering team members.

Andy (M) talks about having high-achievers in groups:

People who are more aggressive about getting good marks want to do everything. If I were the lazy one I would get a really small part and chances are that person is going to end up doing everything and I wouldn't have to do much. At the same time, I'll still get the same mark as them. So I don't really like group work; I'd rather do it individually.

He continues by saying that it is not just over-ambitious students who do this:

I know some people, especially Caucasians; well, it's not just Caucasians, I'm sorry; but people who are very outgoing, I'm sure they don't notice it but their personality is just overpowering everybody else in the group. That's all. And I don't think it is just Canadians, it's personality. Andy (M) is saying that these students are not even aware of the effect they have on others.

Qi (M), too, has worked with students who try to control things so that they can get a really high mark. He says, "Some people have to have an 'A'. If they don't get an 'A', they won't even sleep. Similarly, Chen (M) talks about the effect of overpowering students:

There was one time when one of the leaders was kind of bossy and it turned out that she was not very happy and it made the group unhappy too. It didn't work out well in that case. She wanted everybody to follow her and just keep giving directions but not taking any suggestions. That didn't work out too well.

These immigrant participants recognize that Canadian-born students tend to assume superior academic identities and dominate team projects leaving no space for the voices of others. In the observed group (Section 5.1.1), Amira (M) seemed to get pushed out of the conversation and Jia (M) was sometimes ignored by the domineering students Sandra (C) and Amy (C). This point is acknowledged by the Canadian-born participants and is discussed in the next sub-theme.

- Controlling students

All four Canadian-born participants discussed the tendency of local high achieving students to take over team projects. The Canadian-born participants all admitted that they often take control, particularly if they do not have confidence in their team members. Danielle (C) discussed this in terms of personalities:

If there are people who are a bit more outspoken, they may come up too strong to the other members in the group and some other members may not feel the urge to work with such a person. There are strong personalities out there and they will be in groups. There are also more tender personalities. It is difficult to work with people who have more of a strong personality and vice versa.

From Danielle's (C) conversation, it appeared that she likes to control her groups as she usually assumes the leadership role in groups and decides which person is best for the different parts of the project. She explains the interaction of the leader and the group members:

There has always been exactly one leader and the rest are followers. So the leader would distribute exactly what needs to be done. The leader doesn't exactly dominate the group, it's more like the one who has a lot more of a spoken voice.

Danielle (C) refers to her belief that she has “good soft skills” which enable her to assume the leadership role. She gives an example of how she assigns work to the group members:

I’m thinking of one group in particular. This group consisted of three people; so myself and two others. One of them was shy, quiet, and very intelligent. The other was kind of a little bit louder but, you know, had more of a creativity side; so that’s what I thought. I tried to think of who in my group would be best for each part of the project. That’s what I thought about and it worked.

From this, we see that Danielle (C) is the authority figure in the group. Harprit (C) also admits taking over projects if she has team members who are doing poor work. In her words, “Sometimes you just feel like taking their project over – like a control freak. Just taking over the project and doing it yourself and you are kind of angry that they are not contributing.” She adds that her sister, who is also at university, is a control freak but she does not see this as a problem because she says some students like having such people in their groups as it means less work for them and a good mark at the end.

Gavin (C), from his experience, gives what he thinks are the causes and effects of overpowering people in groups. He says:

I’ve been in groups where people have, maybe they’ve not been bossy, but they’ve been overbearing. They are not trying to be. It’s just that they are almost too enthusiastic and too kind of excited without realizing it. They end up monopolizing the discussion because they’ve so much to say about what’s happening and that, I think, can affect other people in that they may not be as likely to contribute because this person is just almost railroading the process whether they realize they are doing it or not.

From Gavin’s (C) experience, the high-achiever does not realise that he/she is dominating the others.

According to Sophie (C), she herself can be one of the enthusiastic monopolisers that Gavin (C) refers to. She is, however, aware of the effect this might have on non-native speakers of English. In her words:

Non-native speakers of English are just a little more quiet, a little more reserved and then people who speak English or people like me who have a lot to say sometimes take over things by trying to overly contribute. I imagine that they might sometimes feel overwhelmed.

Danielle (C) and Harprit (C) also mentioned this intimidation of second language students. Danielle (C) was the most expressive about this. She states:

Just from my observation, basically it seems that sometimes the people with the strong personalities; just say they're in groups with second language students, you might find the second language students more intimidated. Second language students might find us intimidating. It's just from my observation. I feel I can kind of sense it.

Danielle (C) tries to imagine herself in the position of an international student and how she might feel. She visualizes herself being a student in Germany and working in a group project. She says she would definitely feel intimidated. She cannot really imagine how difficult it must be to use a language other than one's native language. Harprit (C) also senses this intimidation and believes this was the reason why an international student she worked with was silent:

He might have felt a little intimidated by the group so we should just get everyone comfortable with each other because we were all strangers and we didn't know each other. I guess we should have had more team building to get to know each other so he felt comfortable.

Danielle and Harprit, as the children of immigrants to Canada, appear to be more sensitive to the effect that powerful, over-ambitious students may have on others, particularly international students who are using English as an additional language. Even though these participants showed empathy, they did not seem to see that it was their responsibility to be more inclusive.

5.2.2.2 Language and cultural othering and their effects

Language and culture were mentioned frequently by the twelve participants and were generally seen as barriers to the construction of identities in cooperative projects. Rather than seeing these as separate entities, they need to be seen as intertwined with the power hierarchies discussed above and as such language difficulties may be the manifestations of disempowerment due to controlling students. Overall, there was a tendency for the immigrant and Canadian born participants to associate working with international students with increased workload for themselves. Table 5.3 shows how participants were impacted by language and culture as revealed in the cross-thematic analysis.

Table 5.3 The impact of international students' language and culture on the participants of group projects

Name	Being excluded	Having language difficulties	Finding international students have language barriers	Finding international students have cultural barriers	Having increased workload with international students
Anisha (I)	•				
Phuc (I)	•	•			
Tracey (I)	•	•			
Wahid (I)	•				
Andy (M)	•	•		•	•
Chen (M)			•	•	•
Emma (M)					•
Qi (M)				•	
Danielle (C)			•		•
Gavin (C)			•		•
Harprit (C)			•		•
Sophie (C)			•		•

The cross-thematic analysis which follows will expand on this table.

- Being excluded

All four international participants and one Canadian immigrant participant talked about being excluded from the group processes by the prevailing talk culture of Canadians and their seeming inability to listen. Usually the international participants blamed themselves for having language problems despite being deemed linguistically qualified to be in university courses.

Anisha (I), who is fluent in English, described being excluded from group discussions by dominant Canadian students. Because of this, she made a conscious decision to speak only when really necessary. She explains:

In the first group, I met all the deadlines and I spoke only when I needed to which was a good thing, I think. For me, it was a good thing but for them I was a bit like a silent kind of person; not talkative because most of the students I've met, if the one is speaking, the other will tend to speak more than the first one and it goes on, you know. So they didn't see me like a talkative person which for them was a bad thing. The second one was a bit similar but the only thing was because of the two students who were not behaving according to a group, I had some problems and we picked a fight once in the group.

She refers here to the "talk" culture of the Canadian-born students and the fact that her silence was seen as negative.

Tracey (I) also made a conscious decision to be silent because of her experiences with Canadian students. Here is her rationale:

They talk really, really fast all the time. At the group meetings they won't listen to students who have language like me. I don't have a chance to give my opinion. If I do get to talk, they are already thinking about something else and they say, "Oh, I know" and they jump in and take over. They should listen to what I think and not ignore me or say, "No, that's wrong." If they don't agree they should tell me why. I feel nervous and I don't know if they listen to me or if they understand. I think I must only be a listener in the group.

At the same time, she blames her English language difficulties for her problems.

Group projects with native speakers signify loneliness for Tracey (I) because

there is little interaction between her and her fellow students. She is assigned her task and works on this alone for most of the time.

When she could not participate in the group work because of her difficulties in getting the local students to listen, she said, "I want to drop that course." When I asked her how she felt during group meetings, she responded with nervous laughter and then said, "I'm nervous." She continues, "If we can do group work in class, that's better; but if out of class, it's OH NO↑, it's so TRYING↑" Referring to her lack of opportunities to participate, she told me that students in groups should be tolerant and cooperative. She felt quite frustrated at not being listened to. She added "People should listen and not always say 'No.' They should say what they think and not, 'That's wrong'."

Despite her language problems, Tracey (I) does not want to be a silent member of the group and gets very frustrated as she is not able to communicate her ideas. She relates these frustrations:

If your English is really good, you will do presentations or discussions that really match your ability. I think I know a lot but I can't explain. If the research were in Mandarin, I would do much, much better. I have ideas but I don't know how to show people. It is like the Chinese saying, "I'm like a teapot, but inside it's like rice; it's not water." We have things inside but we cannot show them. I have ideas inside my head but I don't know how to let them know my opinions. Language is really, really important.

She continues to explain that it is not just the language that is a barrier for her:

Now in my group, I am the only international student. The others are Caucasians so they talk really, really fast and all the time. I do not have the time to talk to my opinion. Sometimes, the language problems are not because you don't know the words. Sometimes it's because of the cultural background. They talk about something funny, or something about our work and then they'll think of something, maybe a movie, or maybe their life but I don't know what that is so I guess I'm just a little bit nervous in the group work.

For Tracey (I), it is not just a language problem. She identifies many other issues surrounding her communication problems. There seemed to be many parallels between Tracey (I) and Tina (I) who was in the observed group (see Section 5.1.1) and also a Mandarin speaker who appeared weak in her understanding of English.

Unlike Tracey (I), Phuc (I) and Wahid (I) persevere with speaking English even though they realise their English is not perfect. Phuc (I) is reasonably successful at taking an active part in group discussions. However, he recalls an incident in one group project that bothered him a great deal. It was towards the end of the project when he was discussing his final report with his group members. He suddenly had what he thought was a brilliant idea and tried to explain it to the others. In his words:

I got another great idea but I couldn't explain it really well or concisely. I thought that people would understand what I'm talking about so when people that are working with me say something like, "Oh, you can't", like looking down on me or something that I'm talking about, I think they should really say something. They should use their communication skills and say something like, "Could you please say that again?" They should not behave like all my words are not good or something. That makes me feel so bad like my language sucks and I'm not very confident about what I am talking about. They should encourage me and say, "Oh, that's a great idea" or "I like your idea." This is a communication skill.

Frequently throughout my conversation with Phuc (I), he referred to how students' attitudes can discourage other students from sharing their ideas. He elaborates:

You should be encouraging. Even though some people are timid, they may have very good ideas or if they don't have good ideas you can encourage them. If they say something wrong and you just say, "That doesn't make any sense" or if you say something rude to them, they give up. I think it's really, really important. For example, if you have a good idea and they say, "Oh, that's great!" then people feel they are so happy that they just did something that is good for the group.

Here, Phuc (I) appears to be reflecting on his overall experience with impatient people in team projects. He said, “I’ve been in really bad groups.” His experience with team members giving no encouragement seems to echo Tracey’s (I).

Despite Phuc (I) experiencing some setbacks in his group project, he did not seem to have the same kind of anxieties as Tracey (I) and Anisha (I). His initial worries were his abilities to communicate well in English. In his words, “Actually I worried, I really worried about my English but when we got working, it wasn’t actually that much of a big problem.” The real frustration for Phuc (I) was not getting high marks despite all his efforts, “You can’t control the result. You cannot really control what other people do so that is a negative point.”

Wahid (I) is more positive and has found that his English has improved because he has a good relationship with his team members. In particular, Wahid (I) is grateful to his team leader for taking the trouble to ensure he understands. He does remark that he has found some Canadian-born students impatient and they will not ask him to repeat or elaborate if they do not understand him. This limits his participation and the creativity in the group. He makes the following comparison:

Some people, native speakers, just give you your task but other people who have communication skills can show you the idea. They give you some background of the idea, underlying thoughts of the idea and what is going on and then you and the team members can have more discussion.

Wahid (I) makes excuses for the impatient team mates he has come across, “Everyone has his case; at that time they are not in the mood or they have some problems in their lives so we can’t judge.” He adds that most Canadians

he works with are patient and helpful. This view, unfortunately, does not seem to be supported by the experiences of Anisha (I), Tracey (I) and Phuc (I) who all report the pressured talk environments that exist within cooperative learning processes.

It was not just the international participants who commented on the talk culture of Canadians. Andy (M), who arrived in Canada around age nine, finds that he is also silenced by their talk:

I know some people, including myself, are sometimes really self-conscious to talk aloud. It is not just to talk aloud but to talk among the group when some people have better communication skills. I don't want to say anything because I find my communication skill isn't that great. That's why I get really pushed out of the discussion if they are expounding away. I just say, "Okay, Okay", you know, but I understand.

This talk culture also seemed to be true of the two Canadian born participants, Sandra (C) and Amy (C), in the observed group (see Section 5.1.1). The international participants and one immigrant participant generally blamed the Canadian students for excluding and othering them on the basis of language. However, an opposite view was expressed by most of the immigrant and Canadian-born participants who perceive that international students are generally weak in English and this gives them additional work in group projects.

- Experiencing communication difficulties and increased workload with international students

Language barriers which create an increased workload when working with international students in group projects were frequently mentioned by the Canadian-born and some of the immigrant participants.

Andy (M) discussed at length how the passivity of international students make group processes extremely difficult.

I'd say generally international students don't come out in a way, like when we're put in a group, they usually just don't talk. I just had a class in Business Law and we always get put in groups. We have quite a bit of international students and sometimes they just sit there and don't contribute much at all and then usually, I have to be the one who kind of ice-breaks to get people talking.

He goes on to give an example of what he means:

There were always discussions and it just frustrated me because in my group there was me, one other Canadian and the rest of them were international girls, all from China. So you know, when we started our discussion, it was mainly me and the other Canadian. The rest of them just listened and they didn't say anything. I tried and I asked them, "So what do you guys think?" They said, "Mm", "Yeah". They talked amongst themselves in Mandarin. I think they know each other and have their own little group.

I then asked him why he thought they did not contribute. He replies:

One reason, I think, is gender. From my experience, international girls tend not to interact. Not with me. Maybe it's me. I don't know. Maybe it would be better if they had a girl interacting with them. Maybe it would be easier for them.

Danielle (C) made a general comment that most local students dislike being in groups with international students. She hears a lot of people complaining about their group members with comments such as, "Oh my God, I've got this person in my group who can't speak English. It's so hard." She believes it is just the frustration of having to work with students who cannot communicate so well in English that is the reason for this attitude.

One of the main themes running through the narratives is that the Canadian students have to work harder when there are international students in the groups. Danielle (C) comments on her experiences:

It's a bit difficult. It's hard to communicate firstly and it's hard to distribute the work because sometimes a person who is not native to the English language would not understand what I'm trying to communicate and would probably not understand the assignment altogether. It does get a little bit frustrating just because when a certain part is assigned to them, it would not be done correctly and we'd have to ask for them to redo it.

Here, Danielle (C) is commenting from the perspective of a group leader.

Although it is more difficult to work with international students, Danielle (C) acknowledges that they can contribute to the group's success. Here she describes working in a group with two international students:

It was tough but I'm not saying that they completely did not know English at all. They knew some but I'm not trying to say that it hinders the success of the group but sometimes they may be able to bring; they brought some qualities to the group that I wouldn't have thought of. So it's not exactly a negative thing but it can definitely bring a lot of good factors. There's some ups and downs.

Perhaps she does not acknowledge the group members as much as her ability to work with them. She summarizes this group project; "I managed to get through it and I managed to pull some good marks."

Aside from the additional work, another big difference for Danielle (C) between working with Canadian students and working with international students is that the social aspect of working together is missing with international students. It is this social factor that makes the group cohesive in her opinion. She describes the group relationship with second language students:

I would say the relationship is a little bit different. It might be different because if you have two non-native speakers in your group; we're not trying to discriminate at all, it's just sometimes, we get the work done, we work well together but em, we just don't pursue like a friendship or anything after. It's just a group project that's done. But it was done well so we are really happy with it. Yeah.

Like Danielle (C), Harprit (C) finds there is more work when there are international students in the group. Here are her thoughts:

International students have a language barrier. Sometimes their writing is not up to par as it should be and it is difficult because we domestic students have to correct them and edit their work quite a bit. It just seems like we have more work to do and we have a disadvantage.

At the end of this, Harprit (C) does add, “But they have good ideas as well.” She reiterates the problem of the added work when I ask for her final thoughts about group work:

It can be a problem when it is different levels of understanding of the subject and if you’re put with people that don’t understand it as well. It can feel like a burden, like you’re dragging a bunch of people with you but they can’t contribute. There’s just you and you have other responsibilities with people who don’t understand it.

These language problems referred to by Danielle (C) and Harprit (C) result in native speakers having to put extra effort into communicating with international students. Danielle (C) and Harprit (C) both talk about choosing words more carefully, not using slang, speaking more slowly and having patience.

The other two Canadian-born participants, Gavin (C) and Sophie (C) along with Canadian immigrant participant Emma (M) had only worked with their own cultural groups but they talked hypothetically about this topic. Emma (M) explains, “The courses that I’m in, my major and my minor, have mostly domestic people.” She did seem to have a preconceived idea that international students had problems communicating in English. I asked her the following question:

Moira: How do you feel about working in a group with international students?

Emma: I would feel a little, eh... how to say it... because they are not able to....; it would depend on the person if they are willing to communicate, even though they can't really communicate well. I think they could find another way to communicate with us.

It seemed difficult for Emma to phrase her answer to my question. For Gavin (C) and Sophie (C) "being mindful," was the expression they both commonly used when referring to communicating with international students. They both acknowledged that it would be frustrating having to go at a slower pace. In addition to language barriers and increased workload posing extra burdens for the Canadian participants, the immigrant Canadian participants all associated cultural barriers with international students, despite the fact that they themselves arrived in Canada during their childhood or youth.

- Experiencing cultural barriers with international students

The participants who immigrated to Canada during their school years were surprisingly critical of international students and were reluctant to work with them. Andy (M), Chen (M), and Qi (M) felt there were cultural barriers which affected group learning. Andy (M) was very direct in his opinion:

Honestly, I wouldn't prefer choosing overseas students unless they can perform like, how do I say it; because it really depends on the overseas student. If they have adequate English and things like that, it shouldn't be a problem. But some of them, it's just harder to communicate and so on and you don't know how to work with that person. Sometimes they have a different culture so you don't know if you'll upset them if you push a little harder and things like that.

Andy (M) continued to talk extensively about international students stating that cultural differences impact communication:

I know some cultures are more conservative because I'm from Hong Kong and students from China, let's say, some of them are very conservative so when I have to work with them, it's not as easy as working with my own Canadian culture.

I asked him to explain what he meant by this:

Moira: When you say conservative, what do you mean?

Andy: Like they're not open. Say if I have a good idea or if they have a good idea, they tend to like... say if we have a discussion and stuff, I can openly say what I think but they might keep it to themselves a little. They are a bit more conservative, they don't want to offend people and things like that.

Here Andy (M) seems to be distancing himself from his Hong Kong roots.

Working with such students seems to be somewhat of a burden for Andy (M).

He describes the problems he has working with them:

You don't know the boundaries you have. You don't know how much you can push before you offend that person. Like if I end up talking a lot to that person, then that person will think, "Oh, you're so annoying. Why are you still talking?" and things like that. Like, I'm from two cultures. I grew up in Canada but I know my own culture in Hong Kong too and the funny thing is that when I go to Hong Kong and when I interact with Hong Kong people in my age group, honestly, the people I don't get along with are the Hong Kong people. I get along with Filipino, Caucasian; my group is really multicultural.

Again, Andy (M) seems to be separating himself from his Hong Kong background. Of the four immigrant students, he was the most effusive in his discussion of international students.

For Chen (M), the issue was not the international students' abilities in English but their inability to work in teams. He comments, "Most students have a basic level of English; it's not a high school. You need a certain level of English to get into the course." He has found that many students come from countries that do not practise group work in schools and this impacts the behaviour of such students. He recalls that when he lived in Taiwan, there were never group projects in schools. As he says;

The students from those countries are the ones that are silent or they don't know what to do or they have a problem with the language so you have to teach them a little bit. They don't know how to work with others or the peer work or how to share or how to communicate with each other, other than their friends. Those people newly in Canada don't know group work. And I often see that people from the same culture seem to stick together, like Asians with Asians and the Caucasians with the Caucasians.

I then asked him what was wrong with the same groups sticking together and he replied as follows:

It just seems like when you're in Canada, it's better to get more experience with other cultures. If you stick with a bunch of Chinese, what's the point of coming? They always speak NOT English. They go with their own language groups. It's kind of pointless.

Chen (M) gave an example of a group project he was involved in with another Canadian and two Korean students. The two Koreans communicated with each other in Korean and ignored the two Canadian students. In the end, their instructor divided them into two groups.

Like the other two Canadian immigrant students, Qi (M) finds that international students bring with them the learning methods they use at home.

There's [sic] typically two types of international student. One is, eh, let's say they have money and they're not worried about their marks and they are just here to have fun so naturally it is very hard to expect work from them. Their work is usually late or very poor in quality. There's [sic] also the international students who are purely here on an academic basis and they're serious but sometimes the way they think tends to be more stiff [sic]. They bring the methods from their home country here and sometimes when you try to communicate with them, you find them a little bit stubborn.

Despite this, Qi (M) felt that it made no difference whether one worked with Canadian-born students or international students. In his words:

You get a few bad apples with both local and international students. It depends on the people. It is just that there are such extremes of experiences. It is hard to find a consistent characteristic in all these groups.

He compared a very negative experience he had working with two Canadian girls to a very positive experience he had working with international and immigrant students whom he found really cooperative.

Both Chen (M) and Qi (M) recommended that the instructors spend more time getting students, especially those in first and second year, to understand the essence of group work. They commented that many of these students are new immigrants or international students who have not been exposed to this method of learning. Here is Qi's (M) suggestion:

It's important to have patience for the students and also to make sure the students understand. Sometimes the students are scared of the teacher or they're not used to asking anything. So although this is a post-secondary school, in order to get the best possible results, especially for first and second year courses, I strongly encourage teachers to invest more time to allow students to fully understand the true meaning of the project. I believe if every teacher were doing that, we'd have a much better environment or much better results from most of the students.

From a different perspective, the only other participant who talked about cultural barriers was Tracey (I) whose comments are shown above (see sub-theme *Working with one's own cultural group*). She blames the Chinese educational system for giving her a limited single-sided world view and the fact that she has lived in a Chinese enclave in Canada for the last four years probably has not helped much in widening this view.

- Showing empathy

Although three of the immigrant participants were quite negative about working with international students, all four expressed considerable empathy for them. It seemed as if their own experience of arriving in Canada as immigrants during their school years enabled them to relate easily to the different problems that

international students face in Canadian academia. They frequently mentioned that it was important for the students to feel comfortable and to feel they belonged. What follows are their different perspectives on this.

Emma (M) who had very little experience of working with international students felt that it was important for international students to feel comfortable with her in a group situation. She feels that people are often shy in groups like what she was in high school. She talks about altering how she speaks and refers to her mother's experience with English speakers:

I would speak a little slower because I think that's the key thing because sometimes it happens to my Mum. When she's on the phone paying bills or something, they talk really fast. She understands what they are talking about but they are going way too fast for her to take in what they are talking about. Speaking slower would really give them a chance to digest what we are talking about.

Andy (M), who was perhaps the most critical of international students, recommends being patient:

You have to be patient with international students. You've got to be more gentle. You can't push them into working with you too hard. You have to sit back, leave it open, let them come to you.

He also talks of the importance of being supportive, not just with international students but with any group member.

Chen (M), too, talks of the importance of being patient:

You must be patient and helpful. You could explain slowly if they don't understand or show examples or sometimes just point it out and try to help them as much as you can instead of just ignoring them. So, be patient, helpful and make them seem like they belong; be friendly and not let them feel left out.

His high school memories of being left out and ignored seem to be echoing in his mind. He adds that if there is a common first language, it is often easier to

use that to explain something. If students do not understand the project very well, Chen (M) says they often get something easier to do:

If people have problems understanding they'll usually be given an easier task or be helped. We tend to try to help them or give them easier stuff. We don't try to make the person feel uncomfortable or give a load of work that they can't understand well.

While not specifically talking about international students, he adds that if people are trying to do their best then the rest of the group should correct any mistakes such as grammar in their written work. He does not want "to give them a hassle."

Similarly for Qi (M), patience is the most important attribute when working with international students. He expands on this:

I believe patience and putting myself in their shoes are the top two priorities. Because most international students, although they are not really great in listening and talking, if you write them an email they can just take their time to check dictionaries and that's totally fine. When we're in class in group work, I find that when we show enough patience, although it is not obvious, I can feel that they understand that we are respecting them and the whole thing is just so much smoother compared to people rolling their eyes and looking at their watches. The body language sets such a big tone to the whole atmosphere. So I believe patience and understanding is necessary.

He adds that if people misunderstand, that, too, can be cleared up with patience. He says, "We can take ten to twenty minutes to explain slowly and do an email follow up and it's not a big problem. Patience is the key."

So despite their reluctance to work with international students, it appears that these four participants would really make an effort to be supportive and helpful to international students in a group situation.

Although the Canadian-born participants realised they were intimidating for international students, it was only Harprit (H) who seemed to show concern.

Often, as she has observed, local students do not take the time to ensure international students understand and comments on this:

I've seen people not do that [take time] and there's confusion. So if people have an understanding that they [second language students] don't get things at the same level as we do and they need a bit of extra time, we should give that to them. You need to be patient, for sure and understand where they are coming from, how they don't understand you and you need to talk slowly and take a lot of care in how you say things. You need to speak to them in a different way from someone who lives in Canada.

In Harprit's (H) opinion, the local students should endeavour to communicate with international students because she believes that they often bring different ideas to the project. Unfortunately, she has observed that not all local students have the patience to take the extra time that is necessary to do this. Some students just take over the project and do most of it by themselves.

5.3 Racial othering and its effects

A final theme that emerged was racial othering. Table 5.4 shows which students experienced this.

Table 5.4 Participants who experienced or observed racial othering

Participants experiencing racial othering	Participants observing racial othering	Other students being observed experiencing racial othering
Anisha (I)		
Tracey (I)		
	Tracey (I)	Tracey's Chinese friend (I)
Qi (M)		
	Qi (M)	Qi's (M) group member - a Middle Eastern female student (I)
	Danielle (C)	"ESL" students – ESL stigma

Both Anisha (I) and Tracey (I) indicated that they had experienced unfair treatment because of their ethnic backgrounds. For Anisha (I), the lack of respect shown was a big issue. Anisha (I) was very vocal about this when she talked about her second group. She referred to having many misunderstandings in the group because the two Indo-Canadian girls had misconceptions of the others:

They seemed to judge us on our backgrounds; where we came from. They tended to know us from where we came from, our skin colour, and I don't know what - perhaps our communication skills. This was a big problem.

Again when she described the bossy girl telling the others what to do, she refers to how she interpreted this girl's attitude:

It was the way she behaved. It was evident from the way she behaved. It was clear. "Why you're not from my part of the world; you don't know anything. My background: I'm from this country. I know everything from that." At times, it makes us feel quite different. Not just myself but my international Chinese friend and the other Chinese girl from Canada. In fact, that girl was a good person.

Anisha (I) seemed to be saying that her knowledge was of no value because she was not Canadian. At the end of the interview when I asked if she had any final thoughts about group work, Anisha (I) compared her second group project to a work situation in which colleagues and superiors must respect each other. She ends the interview by talking once more about the two Indo-Canadian girls:

I respected each member; each group member is equal for me but for them it wasn't like that. For those two girls, "You're like that. I know you're like that." And when one talks to the other one, talking bad things about the others behind their backs, I hate that. Besides, it is supposed to be everyone on a project: you are supposed to concentrate on the project.

It seemed that Anisha (I) could not stop thinking about the relationship she had had with the Indo-Canadian girls. Not surprisingly, this experience led to much stress, frustration, and nervousness.

Anisha (I) describes her feelings when she was working with the two Indo-Canadian girls:

I felt very stressed. I didn't think I would pass the course because the group mark was actually 30% of the grade. I got discouraged easily and tended to be absent from my classes. I was really quite depressed. I just couldn't face these girls. Whenever there was a group meeting, I thought twice about going. I would say, "If I go there, I'm going to get stressed again and I know that nothing will work out because she has her own way."

It appeared to be a similar situation for Tracey (I). I asked her if there were any difficulties that happen in groups. She instantly replied, "One." After a very long pause she said, "Social discrimination. Like maybe you're Chinese – they don't want to work with you." I asked her to tell me about this and she related the following story about a friend:

My friend was living in home-stay but they don't like Chinese, they just want money. When he got a present from China for his home-stay Mum, she put it in the garbage. So he's really hurt. And when he was doing group work, someone said bad things about Chinese and he was very angry. Because of his earlier experience, he thought they were discriminating.

Tracey's (I) story left me wondering who it really happened to. She goes on to talk about her Business Management course where her group mates are all Caucasian Canadians. She has this to say, "I don't want to be there. I feel invisible." She talks about the loneliness of university classes because she has no friends.

Tracey (I) adds her thoughts about her early experiences in Canada when she called Taiwanese people Chinese and they became very angry with her. "Now", she says, "I can't talk to them about the country things." She continues to expand on her thoughts about discrimination and says:

Sometimes, if people discriminate, they think, "I just don't like you because you're that country's people." For me, that's fine. It's more times about

jobs, not about people. Actually I have some friends who are Taiwanese but we don't talk about politics. We know they'll be angry.

There are many complexities for Tracey (I) as she studies in Canada.

It was not only these international participants who talked about discrimination.

Qi (M) described in detail an experience that he found extremely disturbing. He was working in a group with a Korean male international student, a Middle Eastern female international student, a Chinese Canadian female student, and a Caucasian Canadian female student. The whole project was very difficult to execute because the Caucasian Canadian, supported by the Chinese Canadian, would not cooperate with Qi (M) and the two international students in achieving the agreed objectives. Qi (M) comments:

I felt like there was discrimination, or there were little sub-groups, little subdivisions or power struggles going on. I feel this is very unfair. Sometimes I do feel my accent is giving people ideas that I'm like the typical Asian student. You know, the ones you see that are skipping classes, partying all the time or something like that. I feel she's having that kind of ideas about me but I never bothered to confront her because at that time the situation was so awkward. It was very hard to communicate with her.

The situation became worse when the group met to rehearse their final presentation. Here is Qi's (M) description of what happened:

When we were doing the practice rehearsal the girl from community W [Caucasian Canadian] was texting on the phone to the other girl [Chinese Canadian]. They were speaking to each other, sighing, and eyeing whoever was presenting. It was just at a table like this and when one person was trying to practise they would just huh and huh and huh (repeated sighing sounds). I found that very disturbing because when they were talking and practising, everybody was quiet and listened to them. When other people were practising, they were eyeing and judging. It leaves so much room for negative energy. It's just not good. This was in Business Management and I also had it in Canadian Business Management.

He provides further details:

These girls own like stereotypes and set ideas and made it so uncomfortable for me and the other girl who I think is Middle Eastern, she

has a turban and is slightly older. She lacks information about Canadian culture so sometimes when she is talking about certain ideas, it seems uncool; you know what I mean. Like the youngsters, they think the way she talks about things is embarrassing or weird or something like that. I feel it's more on a personal basis and that's why it disturbed me so much.

Qi (M) then explains that it is mainly students from small towns who behave in this way:

Believe it or not, throughout my time here at UA, I've ran into a few cases like that and they are usually from the smaller towns and well as community W, less in community M, but some in community R. If they are in a smaller community away from the big cities, they tend to have their own mind set and try as hard as you can to prove them wrong, you will never change their minds and I find it frustrating. It's just so hard to communicate.

Qi (M) talked about this incident a great deal and it was obvious that the way he and the Middle Eastern girl were treated was very upsetting for him.

Qi (M) recalled another negative incident; this time with an instructor. Although he did not describe it as discrimination, it seemed to have vestiges of racial othering. He describes two different groups asking the instructor to explain something they did not understand. On this occasion Qi (M) was with a group of Chinese students. Here is his story:

I remember our group was mostly Asians and we were the not so popular group because the girls were not as pretty and the guys were either quieter, more to themselves or they seemed like new immigrants. The other group had all the pretty girls and Canadian-born students. I remember that me and the other group asked the teacher the same thing. The other group went first. They went to the teacher's office and asked, "Oh, we don't really understand this and that." The pretty girl asked the question and the instructor seemed so happy. He explained things in detail and laughed and had a good time and all that. When it was our turn to ask the teacher, it seemed like he had run out of patience. Like, "What are you asking?" Like, I've explained this in the past before." Like "How come you guys, you're never paying attention, are you?" In fact, we were asking the same question as the pretty girl because when they were talking we were waiting just outside his office. That was a pretty negative experience. Because of that, I realised that to make things go more smoothly, I need to find someone who has the advantage of appearance or a more open personality to grab opportunities. It's unfortunate, but I guess that's how it is.

The other students did not refer to incidents of this kind although Chen (M) mentioned that there were racial problems in his high school with the small percentage of black students being picked on and given icy looks by mainly newcomers from China. At UA, he had not experienced such behaviour.

The only other person who referred to discrimination was Danielle (C) when she was considering the reasons why Canadian students dislike working with international students. In her words:

I, for sure, personally don't, but there may be people who discriminate against people who don't speak the same language. I really don't think the whole racism thing is a huge part anymore and I haven't really experienced that before in groups. It may just be discrimination but I find that still there may be a lot of stigma as well for people who don't speak the language and I don't know exactly why. Like I said, I haven't personally experienced this but it could be a possibility and maybe it's something that we're not conscious of.

Here, Danielle (C) is suggesting that there may be a stigma for people who are not fluent in English. As a "visible minority" student in Canada, Danielle (C) herself has not experienced discrimination because of her ethnic background.

5.4 Summary

These twelve narrative accounts; four from international participants, four from Canadian immigrant participants, and four from Canadian-born participants, reveal the difficulties that exist in achieving positive interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 2005a) leading to cohesion and learning for group members of cooperative projects. These narratives point to the centrality of the role of relationships. Without forming relationships, it appears that group members cannot negotiate satisfactory academic identities and these in turn negatively impact their experiences in group projects. These relationships are very complex and seem related to how focused students are on achieving high

marks for their cooperative learning projects. The strong emotions which result from unsatisfactory relationships further constrain relationship building in cooperative groups.

Some of these complexities have been reported in the literature as shown in chapter 3. However, the narratives of the three groups of participants in this study show that there are further complexities that result when international students participate with local ethnically diverse students such as Canadian immigrants in cooperative learning projects. There are also complexities arising from the mix of immigrant and Canadian born students. These complexities are also illustrated in the observed group (Section 5.1.1). A broader discussion of the findings will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Discussion of findings

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the results that are presented in chapter 5, the impact of these on learning in linguistically and diverse groups, and the implications that arise for cooperative learning.

The discussion of the results is arranged around the research questions which are presented in chapter 4. Firstly I will focus on research question 1 which examines the kinds of relationships ethnically and linguistically diverse students can negotiate with each other in their learning groups. From there I will move on to reflect on what constrains and promotes the establishment of relationships which is the focus of research question 2. Following that, I will appraise how the types of identities participants were able to construct in their relationships with their group members impacted their learning experiences (focus of question 3). Having reflected on my research questions, I then evaluate the success of cooperative learning with these participants. I end the chapter by considering the implications of the findings for cooperative learning theory and practice.

6.2 Relationships in cooperative learning groups

All participants viewed relationships as an important factor in group learning projects but the perspectives on having such relationships, however, differed amongst participants. What was significant was that the relationships participants desired were connected to their orientations to the group project with some desiring emotional connectedness so that they would feel comfortable working together while others desired academic advantages from

their relationships so that they would achieve high grades. I have named these perspectives process oriented and results oriented.

6.2.1 Process oriented perspectives on relationships

All participants except three of the Canadian-born expressed a desire for emotional connectedness with group members so that the process of working together would be easier. For some, this involved spending time with each other so as to get to know each other prior to starting the project while for others, it meant working with students from their own ethnic groups as they would have a common understanding and hence common interests to talk about. As in Rich's (2011, p. 225) study, there were explicit links made between learning and being emotionally connected, something Rich adds, has been little researched. One researcher who has found a link between emotional connectedness and learning in groups is Purvanova (2013) (see section 3.2.6.2) who developed the concept *the sense of feeling known* and found that when group members experience this emotional connectedness near the beginning of their project, they have much better learning and project satisfaction than those who do not. This view is supported by Greenman et al. (Greenman, Schneider, & Tomada, 2009) who, in a longitudinal study of elementary school children, found that children who had emotional connectedness with peers had greater learning achievements than children who had no relationships. These researchers suggest that children's relationship with peers are pivotal to their academic development. Other studies, while not of peer relationships, show that when teachers have emotional connectedness with their low-income African American students, there is superior learning (Bondy, Ross, Hambacher, & Acosta, 2013; Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, &

Wright, 2012). Emotional connectedness would seem to play a critical role in the construction of relationships and identities and hence learning.

Despite the desire of the international and immigrant participants to form relationships with their group members, there was little evidence of this happening in the group projects they recounted. There was no connectedness or even understanding between group members. The international participants mainly worked with Canadian-born students who were perhaps like the Canadian participants in this study in that they had no desire for emotional connectedness. This lack of emotional connectedness caused students, especially international ones, to feel inhibited when working with Canadian-born students. Van den Bossche et al. (2006) refer to the necessity of psychological safety in groups, which may result from the sense of feeling known (Purvanova, 2013) referred to above. If the students do not know each other, there is no psychological safety.

6.2.2 Results oriented perspectives on relationships

The second reason for having relationships with group members is to achieve high marks. For three of the Canadian-born participants, this entailed working with people they already knew who had high work ethics and for the fourth Canadian-born participant, it meant being the group leader so that she could control the results. For two of the Canadian immigrant participants, working with conscientious friends whose strengths they know is a way to expedite a project quickly as they can allocate tasks according to the personal skills of the group members. The Canadian participants generally expressed reluctance to work

with international students as they felt it entailed much more work for them with a risk of lower marks.

It was revealed that the Canadian participants, both Canadian-born and immigrant, were used to working with their own ethnic groups. Several of the participants (Emma (M), Harprit (C), and Danielle (C)) referred to this practice as starting in high school. The two Caucasian Canadian participants, Sophie (C) and Gavin (C), had only worked with other Caucasian students, Harprit (C), a Punjabi Canadian, had mainly worked with other Punjabi Canadians and Emma (M), a Chinese Canadian, had only worked with Chinese Canadians. This seems quite incredible given the multicultural nature of the cities they grew up in. However, it is reported, for example, by Kimmel and Volet (2012) and Turner (2009), that students in group projects have a predilection for sticking to their own ethnic groups and the propensity to do this increases with their experiences of group work.

This tendency of students to stick to their own ethnic groups may be connected to their desire to achieve high marks since a common reason given for in-group bias is that there is a threat of marks being pulled down if students work in diverse groups; see, for example, Henderson (2009), Kimmel and Volet, (2012), and Peacock and Harrison (2009). In her study of grade 6 student groups, Barron (2003) found that the competitive nature of schooling and the importance of grades resulted in students foregrounding their own expertise at the expense of mutual learning (see Section 3.2.7.2). These results oriented perspectives of the participants reported here may be a result of the system of education as Barron (2003) indicates.

An alternative reason that has been given for local students' results oriented perspectives and disinterest in forming relationships is the lack of time. In a study of the relationships between group work and the hours students worked off campus, D'Alessandro and Volet (2012, p. 101) found that students who worked more than 16 hours were not tolerant of working in culturally diverse groups. Dooley (2010) similarly comments on the lack of time local students have due to their work commitments. In the widening participation literature, Munro (2011) and Testa and Egan (2014) described how non-traditional students generally have work commitments which may take precedence over their studies. It is not known whether the Canadian-born participants in this instance were working but a high percentage (63%) of the Canadian students at University Arbutus work in paid employment as is shown in Table 2.4. Time was not mentioned by the participants in this study but it may be a factor worth further investigation. The next section will examine recurrent themes in the participants' accounts which offer some explanations for the lack of emotional connectedness and relationship building in their groups.

6.3 Practices constraining relationship building

The main theme in the participants' accounts was the unequal opportunities for speech. What also emerged was the interconnectedness of the experiences of immigrant and international participants.

6.3.1 Privileged knowledge and speech

The international and immigrant participants reported relationships of domination and subordination with a corresponding lack of interest in knowing their opinions. In accordance with what Koehne (2006, p. 247) found, the

participants expected to be engaged in reciprocal dialogues but instead were met with overpowering voices. Three of the four international participants talked about how their Canadian group members imposed their views on how the project should be conducted. Three of the immigrant participants recalled similar difficulties. The four Canadian-born participants acknowledged their own domination of projects due to their ambitions to be successful. As Quinn observed from her studies, “Without relations of mutuality with others, knowledge became blocked by hierarchies” (2010, p. 137).

In addition to these relationships of domination in projects, one Canadian-born participant attributed the success she has had when working with international students to her own abilities rather than to the abilities of the group members. Ippolito (2007), Koehne (2006), and Faez (2012) describe this as the privileging of local knowledge and the positioning of others as incompetent. There were many examples of this happening in Morita’s (2004) and Leki’s (Leki, 2001) studies with, for instance, Leki reporting that a Chinese medical doctor taking a nursing programme in the US was denied opportunities to use her medical knowledge in a group project. In Turner’s (2009) study, too, local students assumed a superior status and viewed the international students as requiring help and guidance (see section 3.4.2). Harré & van Langenhove (1999) would describe these actions as positioning in which the local students are positioning the others as less competent types of people. This may be because they do not recognise other ways of seeing the world. As Anthias (2011) contends the practices of the dominant group are taken for granted by being seen as universal which means that other practices are not recognised.

Bourdieu's views on symbolic violence discussed in 3.3.3 may offer a way of understanding what is happening. The local students are imposing their ways of seeing the world on the others and because they have symbolic power by virtue of being born in Canada. They may not even realise they are imposing their views as Andy (M), for example, observed with controlling students. In addition, having grown up and been educated in Canada, these local students have linguistic habitus from their internalisation of the local ways of speaking English. International students and perhaps some immigrant students, by virtue of speaking a different form of English, may not be recognised as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991).

The international and immigrant participants also mentioned the endless talk of the Canadian-born students. This endless speaking of the West has been reported by Koehne (2006), Turner (2009), and Gabriel and Griffiths (2008) who agree that the local students talk non-stop, taking the role of experts and showing no interest in the views of other students. The other participants certainly wanted their views to be known as illustrated by Phuc (I) when he refused to accept his views were wrong. As with one of the participants in Morita's (2004) study, Phuc (I) used the resources he had built up in his life to challenge this marginalised position. Hermans and Dimaggio (2007, p. 50) when discussing the self, the local, and the global, propose that social dominance occurs when individuals experience a high level of uncertainty which occurs more frequently with heterogeneous populations. It results in one's own group being seen as superior with other groups being seen as inferior. They continue by saying that if the social dominance is strong, then the voices of the others can be stifled or restrained.

This explanation could apply to the situation in cooperative learning with ethnically and linguistically diverse students. The local students may experience a high level of uncertainty when working with international students and this results in their monopolizing the projects by shutting out the voices of the others. In my study, as in Gabriel and Griffiths' (2008), this stifling of voices caused much frustration, anger, and stress. Gabriel and Griffiths found that female Asian students suffered the most (see section 3.4.2) which was true in my study too.

6.3.2 Interconnected experiences of immigrant and international students

It emerged that there were many parallels between the experiences of the immigrant and international students. The immigrant participants see themselves as Canadian but Canadian-born students positioned them as being different. In turn, the immigrant participants positioned the international students as being different. Much of this positioning is connected to language proficiency or the perceived motivation of the others.

6.3.2.1 Positioning due to language

The immigrant participants in this study felt they were perceived as having an accent or as speaking sub-standard English and this seemed to impede their communication with Canadian-born students. This finding is supported by Ippolito (2007, p. 259) who, in her study related to widening the participation of non-traditional students in the UK, found that many students who are native speakers of English negatively judge immigrant students whose first language is not English. She found this a barrier to intercultural communication. In my study, for example, Qi (M) reported the judgmental attitudes of the Canadian-born students when he and two of his group members were practising their

presentation. Other studies have made similar findings. For example, Faez (2012) found that non-white immigrant students had difficulty in being accepted as local students and Talmy (2009) found that immigrant students who had studied ESL continued to be positioned as “FOB” – *Fresh off the Boat* - long after they had achieved fluency in English. Using Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005, p. 599) tactics of intersubjectivity (see Section 3.3.5), this would be called the tactic of distinction in which people distance themselves from others that they do not want to be associated with.

In a similar vein, it has been reported in the literature that sounding the same as the locally-born students is important (Dooley, 2010; Miller, 2004) and those who do not sound the same tend to be excluded. Anisha (I), a fluent English speaker who did not need to pass any ESL international tests such as IELTS to enter University Arbutus, was completely excluded from her groups. Andy (M), an immigrant student who arrived in Canada at nine years old also complained of being excluded because of his accent. Weedon (1997) and McKinney and Norton (2007) advise that discourse is always produced within realms of power and that the process of constructing relationship and identities is complex and difficult.

In addition to the deliberate exclusion by other students, international students are sometimes excluded inadvertently. Tracey (I), one of the international participants, found it was not primarily the talk about the project that confused her but jokes or other humorous asides the Canadian students made. This view is supported by Sears (2012) who found in her study of an international high school, that the students who could not engage in rapid humorous talk got

excluded. In a study of the attitudes of Irish students towards international students, Dunne (2008) found that the inability of international students to understand the local humour and slang was a barrier for interaction while in Gabriel and Griffiths' (2008) study, students who did not tell stories or jokes, or who did not interrupt others were seen as poor communicators.

6.3.2.2 Positioning due to motivation

Another type of positioning that emerged was related to how motivated students are perceived to be. There seems to be a common understanding (or misunderstanding) at University Arbutus that Asian (Chinese) immigrant students are not serious about their studies but are more interested in having a good time socially. When reflecting on the difficulties he had with two Canadian-born students in a group project, Qi (M) suggested that perhaps they thought he was a typical Asian student who skips classes and goes to parties all the time. In city A, where Qi lives, there is a very large percentage of Chinese immigrants (see Section 2.5.4 and Appendix 1) who mainly entered Canada as economic class immigrants and are generally regarded as rich by other Canadians living in the area so this might be why this stereotypical view of Chinese students arose.

6.3.2.3 Immigrant students positioning international students

Despite being positioned themselves by Canadian-born students, the immigrant participants similarly positioned international students and three of them expressed reluctance to work with them. They divided international students into two over-generalised categories. The first was the younger students whose parents pay their fees and consequently, most of these students are in Canada to enjoy themselves and do the minimum of studying. The second category are

slightly older, very serious students but they bring the traditional methods of studying from their home countries and they are usually not used to working in groups.

Andy (M), Chen (M), and Qi (M) complained about international students being silent, sticking together, and speaking their own language all the time. This resonates with Turner (2009) and Gabriel and Griffiths' (2008) findings that international students, especially Chinese, are seen as silent. Andy (M), especially, was vociferous about Chinese female students who would not contribute to the group discussion despite Andy's (M) best efforts to encourage them to contribute. In his discussion of the incident, Andy (M) seemed to be distancing himself from his Hong Kong roots and claiming Canadian multicultural status. Chen(M) too distanced himself from his Taiwanese roots when he described Taiwanese international students sticking together all the time and speaking only Mandarin. Again using Bucholtz and Hall's (2005, p. 599) tactics of intersubjectivity (see Section 3.3.5), the immigrant participants are authenticating their own position as university students but distancing themselves from international students by tactics of distinction. In other words, Canadian immigrant participants position themselves as being superior to international students from the countries that they themselves came from. At the same time the immigrant students seem to be positioned as inferior to the Canadian-born students. This leads me to suggest that, in general, there are hierarchical identities in Canadian higher education with Canadian-born students at the higher end of the spectrum, immigrant students somewhere in the middle and international students at the lower end of this spectrum.

6.3.2.4 Empathy for international students

Although the immigrant participants positioned international students negatively, they displayed empathy for them. From their own experiences, they could understand the challenges these students face. They talked about showing respect, being patient, making them feel comfortable, being friendly, helping them with their English and so on. It was clear that they could relate to their struggles. This finding is corroborated by Ippolito (2007) who found that local students from minority communities displayed more empathy for newcomers.

6.3.2.5 Experiencing discrimination

More severe than the actual positioning so far discussed, was what students described as discrimination based on their appearance or ethnic backgrounds. The two international participants, Anisha (I) and Tracey (I) specifically discussed discrimination. Anisha (I) felt strongly that she was discriminated against by two Indo-Canadian female students whom worked with. She thought they judged her as inferior because of her ethnic background. Similarly, Tracey (I) stated that local students do not want to work with Chinese students and even outside the university there is racism. In several studies (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2008; Montgomery, 2009; Y. Turner, 2009), it was found that there were negative stereotypes of Chinese students which resulted in local students being disinterested in working with them. One of the immigrant participants Qi (M), was visibly upset about how he and a female Muslim student had been treated by two Canadian-born students and went on to say that he has found racism amongst students who come from small communities or cities that have predominantly white populations. Other studies such as those by Brown (2009) and Rich and Troudi (2006) report racism and Islamophobia. The only other participant who discussed racism was Danielle (C), a “visible-minority”

Canadian, who felt that there is not much racism in Canada any more.

However, she did point out that there is a stigma attached to people who do not speak English well; perhaps this is a more concealed form of racism.

These practices impacted the abilities of participants to construct meaningful relationships in their groups. The next section will discuss these practices in relation to the literature on equality, diversity, and widening participation in higher education.

6.3.3 Relationship between results and literature on widening participation

As noted in Chapter 1, one significant aspect of this study is that it included diverse local students who are being increasingly attracted to higher education through measures taken to promote access for minority students. In the UK, the term “widening participation” is used to describe such policies and processes. University Arbutus, the site of the study reported in this thesis, has many parallels with the post-1992 universities involved with widening participation in the UK (see Section 2.5.1), in that it attracts students who do not have the necessary qualifications to gain entrance into older established research universities. It is relevant, therefore, to discuss the findings described above in relation to the literature on equality, diversity, and widening participation.

Widening participation is more than just increasing participation and as Thomas (2005, p. 6) points out it means increasing the numbers of non-traditional or diverse students undertaking university education. Diversity here is defined as socio-economic class, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, and entry qualifications.

According to Thomas, this impetus to widen the diversity of higher education students has been a priority in many countries over the last two decades.

Widening participation policy is seen to have social justice underpinnings in that its aim is to make higher education available to all people who have the potential to participate regardless of their socio-economic background (Archer, 2007; Burke, 2013). Education is therefore a vehicle for ameliorating inequalities between people. While this aim is laudable, there is much criticism that widening participation does not address the underlying causes of exclusion in society such as social class or race. As Burke (2013) points out, academic achievement is often related to the complex social realities of people's lives and with entry to higher education being based on merit, certain groups in society are favoured while others are disadvantaged. This meritocracy in higher education has led to the stratification of universities with privileged groups in society obtaining higher education in world-class or Ivy League universities (Archer, 2007; Burke, 2013; Kimura, 2014; Testa & Egan, 2014). The participants in my study were unable to access such high class universities.

A second criticism of widening participation which is relevant to my findings described above is that it fails to consider the pervasiveness of power in all social interactions (Archer, 2007; Burke, 2013; Morrison, 2014). The universities themselves are far from being welcoming places where all students can feel a sense of belonging (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012; Kimura, 2014; Leathwood, 2006; Quinn, 2010). Diversity on campus, while seen as synonymous with excellence and inclusiveness and frequently quoted in mission statements marketing universities, is often little more than an audit (Burke, 2013) of certain

types of students. It is frequently at the policy or structural level that universities promote diversity and equality but in reality this does not translate to the academic culture of the university (Haslerig et al., 2013; P. Martin, 2009; Shaw, 2009; C. S. Turner, 2013).

One recurrent theme is that academic culture tends to favour the privileged groups in society and alienates working class or other diverse students (Archer, 2007; Burke, 2013; Leathwood, 2006; Thomas, 2005). Zotzmann and Hernández-Zamora (2013, p. 364) explain that “Institutional systems and structures are usually endowed with the values of the dominant groups and advance their interests by defining what is regarded as normal.” In this view what is normal gets equated with being superior. These dominant paradigms of knowledge that are common negatively impact student learning (Ippolito, 2007; Kimura, 2014; Testa & Egan, 2014). This resonates with my findings that the international and most of the immigrant participants were unable to share their knowledge with their mainstream colleagues in their learning groups. Martin (2009, p. 17) explains that “education, in particular, higher education, is wasteful of the plethora of cultural and linguistic resources owned by its increasingly diverse population.” Certain ways of seeing the world are deemed more valuable in higher education (Burke, 2013; Quinn, 2010) and these tend to result in those with differing ontological views of the world being positioned as deficit.

Positioning resulting from the ways in which certain people are positioned vis a vis dominant educational discourses on account of their linguistic and other ‘culturally’ informed dispositions occurred in my study. This was frequently

connected to the English language use of the immigrant and international students. The widening participation literature describes how there has been a reluctance to value and embrace other languages. Martin (2009, p. 12) states that there is a “general monolingualizing ideology” in the United Kingdom which I believe seems to exist in many universities in different settings where English is the language used for teaching.

As mentioned in Section 1.4, some faculty members attribute the use of English as an additional language to a lowering of standards. Indeed, ideas of meritocracy prevail in universities and any changes to the status quo are seen as “dumbing down” (Burke, 2013; Ippolito, 2007; Shaw, 2009). When there is a need for additional academic support for students, for example with academic writing, it is frequently done as a separate add-on decontextualized component which results in such widening participation students being regarded as Other (Burke, 2013; French, 2013; Marshall, Zhou, Gervan, & Wiebe, 2012; Testa & Egan, 2014). Generally, students who are perceived as “ESL” are regarded as lacking the authenticity of native-born mono-lingual English speaking students. Previously, it was mainly international students who were perceived this way but with the move to widening participation in many universities and with more local linguistic minority students entering higher education, both of these groups are frequently perceived as what Martin (2009, p. 13) calls “remedial language users.” Although little researched to date, it is perhaps this commonality that enables immigrant students to be more empathetic towards their international counterparts while at the same claiming more elite positions for themselves (see Ippolito, Section 3.4.2).

While there is much discussion of the marginalization of non-traditional students in the WP literature, there is little reference to discrimination. One exception is Kimura (2014) who refers to racial equality policies in the UK in her work and stresses the role of universities in combating racism in their institutions. While all universities have racial equality policies, Kimura contends that few see racial equality as core issues. Her explanation is that as the levels of participation by non-traditional students in universities continue to grow, this seems to give a semblance of greater equality in access. With reference to Ahmed (2007), Kimura explains “the claim of successful diversity is often made on the basis of the mere ‘presence’ of students from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds in the institutions and not on the basis of their equality” (Kimura, 2014, p. 528).

In Kimura’s research, despite experiences incidents of racism, there was a reluctance on the part of the victims to use terms like “discrimination” and “racism.” As Kimura notes “those students preferred phrasing their comments ‘as being treated differently because of their ethnicity’ or ‘being stereotyped’ when they referred to their experiences of discrimination or harassment on the basis of ethnicity.” (Kimura, 2014, p. 534). Participants in my study, on the contrary, did refer to racism but they tended to discuss the issues using the terms Kimura describes. However, in both studies, participants who were victims of racism preferred to find their own ways of dealing with their problems without involving the university. Findings of studies such as mine which considers a body of students who are a manifestation of widening participation and internationalization initiatives can stimulate new research agendas into issues of equality and diversity in universities and may in the longer term help to change the academic culture.

In Section 6.7 I will refer to these widening participation issues when I discuss the implications of my study.

6.4 Practices promoting relationship building

There were three main practices that promoted relationship building in groups. These were the willingness of the group members to get to know each other, the participants' time availability for the project, and the instructor's structuring of the project.

6.4.1 Willingness to get to know each other

The most frequently mentioned affordance for relationship building was the willingness of the group members to get acquainted with each other. By getting to know each other, they can develop a mutual understanding and feel comfortable working together. The international and immigrant participants and one of the Canadian-born participants stressed the importance of such emotional connectedness. This connectedness with others is fundamental to what is known as emotional literacy, a term first used by Steiner in 1979 (Steiner, 2003). Steiner maintains that when people are emotionally literate they are able to understand and manage their emotions and show empathy for others. He emphasises that emotional literacy "improves relationships, creates loving possibilities between people, makes cooperative work possible, and facilitates the feeling of community" (Steiner, 2003, p. 2). This view is reiterated by Killick (2006), Matthews (2005), and Spendlove (2009) who stress that mutual respect and rapport between individuals lie at the heart of emotional literacy.

Studies by Barron (2003) and Purvanova (2013) confirm the importance of mutual respect and rapport on the performance of individuals in groups. In her study of grade 6 triads, Barron (2003) found that triads who were friends were far more productive in their groups than the students who were not friends. She draws the conclusion that it is the quality of interaction that develops in groups that is key to their success. Similarly, Purvanova (2013), in her research, concluded that when people in groups know each other (*have a sense of feeling known*), they develop relationships of trust which enable them to participate more in group projects. It appears then that students who are emotionally literate are more successful in interacting in their groups.

It is this realisation that emotional literacy is key to learning that has spurred governments in many countries to include social and emotional learning programmes in their schools. These are often modeled on U.S. psychologist Daniel Goleman's (Goleman, 1995) five aspects of emotional intelligence and are described by Killick as "the Fourth R – Relationships" (Killick, 2006, p. 13). They help students to develop "people skills" and reflect on their feelings before acting. The immigrant participants in the study reported in this thesis seemed to have developed such emotional literacy skills, perhaps partly through their own personal experiences at school, since they advocated showing respect and making international students feel as if they belonged by being patient, supportive and friendly. In Gabriel and Griffiths' (2008) study, too, the local students who worked successfully with international students found ways of communicating and acknowledging their counterparts' expertise thus enabling them to move forward in learning as equal partners.

Despite these positive aspects, emotional literacy and the teaching of it are widely criticised. One main criticism is that emotional literacy ignores the influence of power differentials, social hierarchies, culture, and gender. (Boler, 1999; Burman, 2009; Matthews, 2005; McWilliam & Hatcher, 2004). Another criticism by Park (1999) and Gillies (2011) is that the teaching focuses on individuals but the social context and the learning environment remain unchanged.

As reported in Section 6.3.1, power differentials were found to play a role in the experiences of the participants in this study. If the more powerful do not listen, then students who are strangers to each other as in this study find it difficult to get to know each other and have the emotional connectedness that is necessary for productive cooperative work. As Quinn points out, “to speak requires a listener willing to demonstrate understanding” (2010, p. 42).

I would sum up by saying that I see emotional literacy as closely linked to the ability of students to construct successful academic identities within their groups. If students are perceived to have an identity which is authenticated (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 601), then they are perceived to be genuine students by the others and hence listened to.

6.4.2 Participants' time availability

Building relationships also needs time. The international participants complained that the Canadian students did not take time to listen to them which resulted in their not being able to negotiate meanings or identities. The

immigrant participants also said that native speakers do not give international students time. Even one of the Canadian-born participants, Harpit (C), who was ambivalent about working with international students, pointed to the importance of giving extra time. Academic and time pressure was one of the barriers for relationship building that Ippolito (2007) found in her study. This is exacerbated by the limited time many local students are able to spend on their studies as reported in Section 6.2.2. With regard to group discussions, the diary reflections in Turner's (2009, p. 251) study revealed "the limitations of continuous discussion unsupported by thinking time." In her study, the group meetings took place during class time unlike most practices in universities. In Kimmel and Volet's study, where group meetings were outside of class time, the tendency was for the local Australian students to divide up the group work during the first meeting so that the students would not have to meet again until nearly the end of the course. One international student commented that group meetings only lasted 15 minutes. The Australian students in the study commented about juggling their work, their lives, and university and having little time to spare. In the group I observed at University Arbutus, this pattern of dividing up the work and spending the minimum time together prevailed. The students met twice during the first few weeks of the fourteen week semester, allocated the tasks and although they had planned to meet throughout the semester, they did not meet again until week 12 when it was time to assemble the work. This was also the pattern that most of the twelve participants referred to. These patterns of work suggest that sufficient class time needs to be set aside for student groups to meet and discuss their projects.

6.4.3 The instructor's structuring of the project

Another affordance for relationship building is the actual way the instructor sets up the project. In my study, one international participant, Wahid (I), who reported a successful group experience, described how the lecturer had allocated group roles (for example; a chairperson, minute-taker, time-keeper) and had given strict rules regarding participation. In addition, this lecturer met the group on a regular basis to get progress reports. This structured type of group seemed to be more successful. Montgomery's (2009) findings support this view since in her study, compared to many other cooperative learning studies, there was more teacher support, more emphasis on incremental tasks with a corresponding decrease in focus on the assessment of a large end project, and on the allocation of types of projects which did not discriminate unfairly on any particular group of students.

In summary, this study indicates that relationship building in groups appears to depend on several factors. Firstly, the group members must be willing to get to know each other and be patient, supportive and friendly. Next, students must be willing to take time to interact with each other and not try to do the work in the fastest way possible. Finally, the way the lecturer structures the group has an impact on the relationships students are able to construct.

6.5 Identity construction and learning experiences

In this section the learning experiences of the three groups of participants will be discussed sequentially.

6.5.1 International participants

In accordance with Koehne's (2006) findings that academic discourses are a struggle for international students, the international participants in this study made great efforts to retain a sense of valued selves despite the deficit identities imposed on them. In Bucholtz and Hall's (2005, p. 599) terms, the local students tended to suppress any similarities between themselves and the international students using "tactics of distinction." For Anisha (I), Tracey (I), and Phuc (I) this meant marginalization. Wahid (I), however, had a more satisfactory experience with the local students using "tactics of adequation" which meant he was deemed sufficiently similar to participate in the group project.

Anisha (I) resisted the positioning she received and attempted to make herself heard in the groups but the disrespectful attitudes of her group members caused her much stress so she made the agentic decision just to talk when necessary. It was only when she was threatened with punitive measures such as being reported to the instructor or being given a low peer mark that she defended her position. She recalled being extremely depressed by her group experiences and missing classes so as to avoid the the Indo-Canadian girls. Anisha's (I) life trajectory has been one of success with high school graduation, several years of work experience, and admittance to a well known Canadian university which she subsequently transferred from due to the large class sizes. She was not willing to endure the lack of respect she received and kept comparing it to a work situation. The impact of the learning conditions was that she completed the tasks she was given by the deadlines but she had no actual input into the decision making of the groups.

The situation for Tracey (I) was somewhat worse since she had difficulties expressing herself quickly in English. She too, resisted the positioning she received but rather unsuccessfully, and hence she resorted to silence while subserviently, in isolation, doing the tasks requested of her by the other students. Although she tends to blame her English for her problems, she also feels that the local students should be much more tolerant and cooperative. As mentioned above, Kimmel and Volet (2012), in their study, also found that tasks were divided in this manner so that international students worked in isolation which was a source of great frustration for them. The outcome for Tracey (I), is that the learning context severely constrains her learning.

Phuc (I) who has had a trajectory of success in life (excellent marks at school, attended best university, selected to work at best bank in Viet Nam) refuses to accept a deficit identity and contests his group's opinion. He sees native speakers as being deficit in that they should be communicating better with international students instead of being disparaging. He has experienced some success in participating in group projects but he admits he has experienced some really bad groups which he is reluctant to talk about. However, using imagined social capital (Bourdieu, 1991), he sees group work as a training for himself in his imagined future (Norton & Toohey, 2011) as an international business-person. This agrees with Montgomery (2009, p. 268) who concludes, "Students in the study carried out in 2008 viewed cross-cultural group work as part of their learning experience that was potentially preparing them for work in international contexts."

Wahid (I) was the only international student who was able to construct satisfactory identities in his group. He worked mainly with Indo-Canadian male students so there may have been more similarity in their appearances. He was able to participate because the leader made sure he understood. However, he described other groups in which he was just handed a task to complete and denied participation. This seems to be the pattern the local students follow when they have international students in their groups.

6.5.2 Canadian immigrant participants

The situation with the immigrant participants is somewhat similar to the international students with their having to struggle for participation. The three male participants, originally from HK and Taiwan, were regularly given deficit identities. Benesch (2008) describes a biased view of immigrant students in the US in which they are given inferior linguistic and academic identities. This perception was also reported in the literature in widening participation (see Section 6.3.3). This view seemed to apply to such students in Canada. The female immigrant student who has only worked with other mainly immigrant Chinese students did not report any negative experiences.

Andy (M), who prefers individual work to group work, frequently gets pushed out of conversation by people with more voice. Similarly, Qi (M) and Chen (M) describe working with students who left no space of dialogue for others. The learning conditions in these cases are unsatisfactory. One difference between the immigrant participants and the international participants was that the immigrants seemed used to the situation and did not show such strong emotions about their experiences.

6.5.3 Canadian-born participants

The Canadian-born participants seemed to have a taken for granted view of their superior status. They were the ones who were the leaders and hence had the decision-making roles in groups. There was a perception of people not born in Canada as having inferior language skills which seemed to get equated with inferior abilities and knowledge as Kimmel and Volet (2012) found in their study. In spite of this negative positioning, the Canadian participants did have some empathy and recognised that they could be intimidating for “second-language” students.

To sum up, as mentioned in Section 6.3.2.3, it seems that students appraise each other along a continuum from authorized identities to illegitimate identities according to Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) tactics of intersubjectivity. The Canadian-born students seem to be at the authorized end of the spectrum with the immigrant students generally somewhere in the middle and the international students towards the illegitimate end of the spectrum. This, of course, changes with each learning group because as Anthias (2011, p. 214) points out, “subordination and hierarchy are multifarious depending on different constellations of power in different time/space frameworks.” In keeping with this, it was seen that sometimes immigrant students were subordinate, while at other times they were superior in status. When there are students at all levels of the spectrum within a cooperative group, it seems to make cooperative learning difficult.

6.6 Evaluation of learning in ethnically and linguistically diverse groups

Looking at cooperative learning from the lens of identity has illustrated that in most of the group experiences, social interdependence (see chapter 3) did not create positive interdependence or mutual benefits for group members. Group members did not become one entity. Group cohesion did not seem to occur in most of the groups the participants described. The question is also raised whether cohesion is what is really needed. Anthias (2011, p. 209) contends that it is social inclusion and belonging that is important rather than cohesion since these provide the comfort zone that the students desire which was discussed in 6.2 and supported by Purvanova's (2013) *sense of feeling known*. This comfort zone would provide a safe environment for participation.

This safe environment was absent since Canadian-born students claimed authoritarian positions within the groups and monopolised the content of projects. This meant that the desirable creative thinking which arises from diverse membership was stifled. The perspectives of the Other, if listened to, were rarely acknowledged. Often dialogue was impossible due to the dominance of the Canadian-born students. In line with Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) ideas, the students positioned each other as certain kinds of people.

This positioning was not accepted by all the students; for example, Anisha (I) and Phuc (I) exercised reflexive positioning or agency with varying degrees of success. It seemed that peoples' life trajectories and imagined futures played a big role in how they were able to negotiate new identity positions. Tracey (I),

with a trajectory of failure, seemed to be destined to accept a deficit identity. This positioning impacted learning as it created strong emotional reactions which could destroy any possibility of building relationships with group members.

Cooperative learning as delineated by Johnson and Johnson (2005a, 2009) appears to be failing as a method of mutual learning for ethnically and linguistically diverse groups of students. The hierarchical structure of the Canadian-born, immigrant, and international students create unequal identities and thus unequal opportunities for dialogue. The highest on the pecking order controls. Johnson and Johnson's boundaries between individuals (see 3.2.2) appeared to operate within groups rather than between groups with the "outside enemy" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 367) being within. There is also a complexity of relationships that exist in societies with high immigrant populations that has not been explored. In this study, there were surprisingly more similarities between the immigrant students and international students in group projects than there were between the Canadian-born and Canadian immigrant students. Delanty (2006) emphasises that these relationships between people must be seen from the broader world context. It is impossible to isolate what happens in university group projects from the wider societal issues.

In this study, the end result was that cooperative learning projects with ethnically and linguistically diverse students were often little more than students doing individual tasks alone with "more knowledgeable" peers controlling their work and the marks they receive. The benefits claimed by cooperative learning

were not apparent. Cooperative learning seems to work better with international students working together, immigrant students working together, and Canadian born students working together since there are fewer issues of power impeding the establishment of satisfactory identities. However, there is a lost opportunity for learning, something that the internationalisation and widening participation agendas have not yet come to terms with. Interaction will never be equal with any group of 'similar' students but the fields need to be leveled so that all students can benefit from working together (Bourdieu, 1991). Taking all of the above into consideration, the results of this study add weight to my statement in section 3.2.6 that the theory of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2002, 2005a, 2009) is over simplistic and does not consider the relational aspects of learning.

6.7 Implications of the study

On the surface, cooperative learning appears to be an effective learning method since the results, that is the projects that are submitted to the lecturers, are satisfactory. Little is actually known about the processes that take place within the groups and how much each student is able to learn, especially within ethnically and linguistically diverse groups. By looking through lens of identity some of those processes have been revealed. What has been highlighted are the unequal opportunities for the participation of all students due to the hierarchical nature of the identities that are formed within the groups and the impact of results oriented perspectives on group projects.

Emotional connectedness which is the most important criteria for inclusion and belonging is frequently absent in groups. It is seen as crucial if students are to work together on an respectful basis, as was desired by all international and

immigrant students (see chapter 5). The Canadian-born students seemed only to be concerned about the end result and not the process of learning through interaction. Through their years of experience of participating in group projects, they appear to have primarily learned the techniques of getting the highest marks possible with the least interaction and effort.

While the emotional aspects of learning are not deemed important in the theories (Johnson & Johnson, 2002, 2005a, 2009) of cooperative learning, this study has showed that these underlie the success of such projects and there can be no “shared cognition” (see section 3.2.3) without emotional connectedness.

More concerning, was the lack of respect in the intercultural encounters. This caused the students (Anisha (I), Tracey (I), Phuc (I), Andy (M), Qi (M)) to be nervous, depressed and angry. As Rich’s (2011) study of Master’s degree students in the UK showed, students expect ethical treatment of each other and a willingness for dialogue. Moreover, as Rich found, if there is no ethical treatment students withdraw from dialogue as Anisha (I) and Tracey (I) did in this study. This adds to the claim that cooperative learning must consider the emotional aspects of learning if it is to be successful.

The emotional aspects of learning are complex because, as was pointed out in Section 6.4.1 in the discussion of emotional literacy, learning occurs within universities where issues of power prevail. The hierarchical identities referred to above are indicative of the social inequality that exists. An examination of the widening participation literature (see Section 6.3.3) reveals that inequality is

endemic at most universities. As Holdsworth and Quinn (2012, p. 391) highlight “a sense of belonging is mediated by class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and locality.” This draws attention to the fact that it is not just group learning but the whole university that needs a new *modus operandi*. In a critique of higher education in British Columbia, Canada, in which the present study is situated, Finlay (2004) acknowledges that universities are still organised in traditional ways and much needs to be done to make them more inclusive. Our educational institutions, even those post-1992 institutions, are legacies from the past with the structures and ways of thinking that catered for a privileged class of students (Shaw, 2009).

There is no easy way for institutions to become inclusive, but I believe it begins with raising an awareness of the inequalities that exist. The policies of equality and diversity that most universities espouse must translate into classroom practices, both curricular and pedagogical. Too often, non-traditional students are seen as deficit (Archer, 2007; Burke, 2013; Shaw, 2009; Testa & Egan, 2014; Thomas & Quinn, 2006) where they, as individuals, are blamed for any problems they may have rather than their problems being seen as structural. What is required is what Thomas and Quinn (2006, p. 105) refer to as a “transformative approach” to educational change so that difference and diversity are at the heart of everything that is done in a university.

It is against this backdrop, that I consider cooperative learning as a pedagogical method and within which its potential should be critically scrutinized. It is clear that it must meet the needs of all students, not just the privileged traditional students who are mainly native born, and often white. Cooperative learning is

an embodied relational activity which means that the relationships and hence identities that students can construct with each other are the core to learning. It would be idealistic to suggest that it is possible to develop an ideal model within the current power structures. However, in the next chapter, I will make recommendations which may improve students' experiences of group learning so that they can begin to learn from their differences.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to report on the experiences of ethnically and linguistically diverse students when interacting in cooperative learning projects in business studies in university. As mentioned in chapter 1, my aim was to show that the situated and relational nature of learning, which has been neglected in cooperative learning theory, is key to the success of such group learning projects. By using an approach which sees the construction of relationships and identities intricately linked with learning, I have been able to identify issues of power which impact the success of cooperative learning projects. Through narrative inquiry, I was able to learn how the participants reflected on their group experiences. I discovered that in a complex multicultural environment, with Canadian-born, immigrant, and international students, there is a hierarchical structure or “pecking order” that seems to exist when these students interact in groups. This structure impacts the identities that students are able to construct and these in turn enable or constrain the learning that takes place within the group.

In this concluding chapter, I will firstly point out the contributions that I see this study making to knowledge. Secondly, I will provide suggestions for improving cooperative learning. Thirdly, I will reflect critically on the research study and make recommendations for future research.

7.1 Contributions to knowledge

This study, by not accepting the main assumptions inherent in cooperative learning theory (see Section 3.2.1) but by using a relational approach to learning, has been able to fill some gaps in knowledge into what actually happens in cooperative projects. The most important insight is that the

relationships and identities that students are able to construct with each other strongly impact the learning that takes place in cooperative group projects.

By looking through the lens of identity, I have been able to examine how, in general, Canadian-born students adopt superior academic identities while at the same time the immigrant students try to emulate those identities. At a lower level of this hierarchical identities ranking are the international students. The higher up the identities ranking a student is, the more control he or she appears to have over group projects. This impacts on the types of interactions students are able to have within their groups since the voices of the more powerful students dominate leaving little space for other voices. The power relations that exist within groups seem to replicate the wider socio-cultural relations that exist within the university (see Section 6.3.3). As outlined in Section 6.7 a systematic and comprehensive process of transformation of the higher educational sector is needed to ensure it is more equitable and meaningful for all students and that without this, the sorts of power differentials between participants in cooperative learning observed in my study may remain intractable.

The study also made a useful contribution to understanding the ways students in cooperative groups perceive the role of their relationships with other group members. These perspectives of relationships were seen to run on a spectrum ranging from what I termed results oriented to process oriented. Students with results oriented perspectives towards relationships were primarily concerned about getting high marks on their group project and as a result selected as group members other students whom they knew had high work ethics. When grouped with unfamiliar people, they seemed to have little interest in getting to

know them. The students with process oriented perspectives on relationships, on the other hand, wanted to get to know their team members prior to beginning the project so that they would feel comfortable working with them. They wanted to have emotional connectedness with each other.

A third contribution is the finding that immigrant students treated the international students more ethically and respectfully than their Canadian-born counterparts. They were more patient with students with poor English and found ways to overcome communication problems. This may indicate that as the population of non-traditional immigrant students increases in the future, there will be greater possibilities of students working respectfully together in cooperative learning. This seems to support Montgomery's (2009) findings that as the local population diversifies, students will be more open to working with multicultural groups than they were ten years ago.

With respect to cooperative learning, these findings show that the principles it is based on do not help the situation of unequal power but serve to exacerbate it. The students are not united by their joint task or by being part of a group. Instead, the students assuming superior academic identities control the task and the way it is done. With ethnically and linguistically diverse students there seems to be little of the positive interdependence that is supposed to make group members encourage and facilitate each other. Often the interdependence is negative rather than positive.

The inability of cooperative learning to function as an enabling method of learning for all students, has been largely disregarded in the literature until

recently. On the surface, cooperative learning appears to be successful because it is only the outcome that is judged. Little is known about how groups operate and the processes they go through to achieve the outcome. This study has revealed some of these processes and this is an important contribution it makes to knowledge about cooperative learning.

7.2 Suggestions for improvements to cooperative learning

This study indicates that putting diverse students together in cooperative groups is not providing the intellectual and cultural enrichment that is expected from such interaction. Although as observed above, institutional level changes are needed to address this problem, there are some possible classroom level practices that might help encourage a more equal relationship between group members. One recommendation is that cooperative learning groups should adopt the North American Aboriginal practice of using the talking circle and the talking stick (Baskin, Koleszar-Green, Hendry, Lavallée, & Murrin, 2008; First Nations Pedagogy, 2009; Wolf & Rickard, 2003) to create respectful spaces for speaking and listening. In this approach, students sit in a circle and the person speaking holds a special *talking stick* until he/she is finished speaking upon which point, he/she passes the stick to the next person in the circle. The others sit and listen respectfully. The method is being used successfully in Aboriginal education in Canada and increasingly in multicultural classrooms in the kindergarten to grade 12 school system. It could be introduced as a pilot study and researched. Although it does not change the overriding issues of power, it may help students to work more respectfully together. Other changes include modifications to the teaching methods, the timing of group projects, the nature of the projects, the types of assessment, and the supervision. These are discussed below.

Once important pedagogical action that instructors can take is to ensure the students in their courses have time to get to know each other. With courses such as marketing usually meeting only once a week, getting the students to know each other is commonly not seen as a priority. Yet, Purvanova (2013) recommends that face-to-face and virtual groups first meet and share personal information and stories. Short diversity training group work conducted during the first two weeks of class may also increase students' understanding of each other. Although Turner (2009) found that the semester-long intercultural training module she conducted was a failure, other researchers have had some success with very short interventions. Wilson (2010), for example, who has been conducting diversity exercises connected to student introductions at Middlesex University Business School since 2006, reports that since their inception, students have developed an increased understanding of and respect for their diverse group members.

In addition, instead of the group projects starting on the first day of class, there could be several weeks in which students carry out formative group work in class so that by the time they begin their summative group projects, they are familiar with each other. Barron (2003), for example, suggests that this may help in establishing mutual engagement. Allocating part of class time to the group project would also encourage the group members to work together.

The type of project assigned is also critical. Too often the cooperative project lends itself to what Barron (2003, p. 354) refers to as "divide and conquer strategies" which result in group members working in isolation. Furthermore, the task should be one which is not ethnocentric which was the case in some of the

group tasks reported in Morita's (2004) and Leki's (2001) studies. There is a need to educate students about the legitimacy of the knowledge and practices of different cultural groups. As Montgomery (2009) observed, incremental assessment, as opposed to one large final assessment for the project, would encourage more equal participation. Removing peer assessment for individual member contributions to group projects would encourage more supportive relationships. As one of the immigrant participants in this study observed, giving peers marks for how well they worked destroys relationships.

Finally, more structured group projects with regular lecturer involvement such as the one Wahid (I) experienced (see section 6.4) would encourage mutual learning. If the group had to function more as a business meeting with rules of order and minute taking, then the actual contributions of individual members could be easily seen by the instructor. This would help to ensure that a process rather than a results orientation is being followed by the students.

For all these recommendations to actually occur, there needs to be support from the administrators of such programmes because in today's compartmentalised universities, instructors tend to see their roles as only teaching their subject matter. This is why Leki (2001, p. 39) refers to higher education as a "narrow thinking system."

7.3 Critical reflections on the study and recommendations for further research

This study originated from my work as an administrator and instructor of immigrant and international students taking ESL classes. I wanted to be better able to prepare the students for the rigours of university, especially group learning projects, which, anecdotally, seemed to cause them great trepidation.

On reflecting on the study, I, as an instructor, would change some of my teaching practices so as to better prepare my students for cooperative learning projects in university. I would develop a teaching module on cooperative learning which would show examples of successful and unsuccessful processes in cooperative projects. Following on from this, there would be a videotape component enabling students to receive feedback on their own projects. In addition, I would provide opportunities for students to interact and have discussions with students in university classes such as sociology. My aim would be to build up their confidence so that they might not feel as marginalised in cooperative projects as Tracey (I) was. However, even with the best of preparation for university, I recognise that without cooperative learning having the structures and supports that I have recommended above, diverse students will have difficulty in constructing the relationships and identities necessary for learning.

When I embarked on this research project, I saw cooperative learning as a rather benign and unproblematic form of learning. I was led to believe by instructors in other disciplines that it was the ESL students who needed “fixing”, not the method of learning. Now I realise I have a role to play in educating these instructors about the pitfalls of cooperative projects since usually they only see the end results. Not only this, but across campus, I have a role to play in contesting the portrayal of ESL students as deficit. With other like-minded colleagues, I can also raise awareness of exclusive institutional practices.

Additionally, by considering the literature on widening participation, I now see that the way ESL is structured in my institution essentialises students as being

deficit and less able. Informed by studies in Australia (French, 2013; Rose, Rose, Farrington, & Page, 2008; Testa & Egan, 2014), South Africa (Jacobs, 2005), the UK (Wingate & Tribble, 2012), and Canada (Marshall, et al., 2012), I plan to investigate possibilities of embedding academic literacy and emotional literacy into subject disciplines.

Avenues for future research indicated by my findings are into the relationship between emotional connectedness and learning as this may lead to a better understanding of how diverse groups interact and learn together. Another area for research is to learn more about why some students tend to be results oriented and approach cooperative learning from an individualistic perspective. The reasons for this are not really known but could be related to the many hours some students work and not just the desire for high marks. On a personal, professional level, I would like to pursue my idea of using the Aboriginal talking circles and talking stick approach with a group of business students doing cooperative learning projects and conduct exploratory research on their experiences.

In hindsight, there are aspects of the study I could have done differently such as interviewing the students over the duration of their projects. However, in their narratives, the participants were reflecting on their experiences in their recent projects. It would have been useful to have found out how many hours students were working as this might have impacted their involvement in their projects. The narrative inquiry itself could have had a different focus, as discussed in chapter 4. Despite these possibilities, this study has begun to unravel some of the complexities in the relationships between the ethnically and linguistically

diverse students that make up the international, immigrant and locally-born populations in most global universities today. Using identity as a lens through which to study learning has revealed much about relationships and it is an approach through which other researchers can learn about hidden aspects of power. It is hoped that other researchers will be able to build upon what has been learned in this thesis.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Demographic information of the university area

Table A-1 Demographic information of catchment areas A and B

	Catchment Area A	Catchment Area B
Total population in 2011	190,473	468,251
Percentage increase in population 2001 - 2006	6.2	13.6
Percentage increase in population 2007 - 2011	9.2	18.6
Percentage of immigrants born overseas	55	37
Percentage of Canadian-born citizens with parents born overseas	14	16.5
Percentage of visible minority	65	46
Percentage with non English/French mother tongue	61	44.5
Percentage 19 years or younger	22.5	27.5

With the exception of the total population, the numbers are given in percentages.

Table A-2 Main ethnic groups included in the visible minority category

	Catchment Area A	Catchment Area B
Percentage of Chinese in visible minority	67	11
Percentage of South Asian in visible minority	12	59
Percentage of Filipino in visible minority	8.5	9

The numbers are given in percentages.

South Asian is defined by Statistics Canada as “East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.” (Statistics Canada, 2007b) although the majority in area B are of Punjabi ethnicity as reported by the 2011 census (Statistics Canada, 2012b).

Table A-3 Educational background of inhabitants over nineteen years in catchment areas A and B – percentage of people

	Catchment Area A	Catchment Area B
No educational certificates	17	24
High school certificate or equivalent	31	33
Trades certificate	7	11
College or equivalent	16	15
University degree	29	17
Median household annual income	\$53,489	\$60,168

The median taxable income for two parents with two children in Canada was \$75,600 in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Appendix 2 Selected key literature on cooperative learning

Studies into Cooperative Learning	Referenced in:
Theoretical Perspectives	David W. Johnson & Johnson (2005a, 2005b);(2006);(2009);Gudykunst (2004); Hogg (1992, 2004, 2005); Hogg & Tindale (2001); Abrams & Hogg (1999, 2004); Abrams, Frings, & de Moura (2005); Turner & Reynolds (2004); Hornsey (2008); Michaelsen (2004); Tajfel (1982); Slavin (1980)
Social Interdependence and Culture	Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen (1993); Triandis (1995);Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Jiao (2009); Popov, Brinkman, Biemans, Mulder, Kuznetsov, & Noroozi (2012); Volet & Mansfield (2006); Volet & Ang (1998); Paulus, Bichelmeyer, Malopinsky, Pereira, & Rastogi (2005); Gabriel & Griffiths (2008); Curry (2007); King, Hebl, & Beal (2009); Ledwith & Seymour(2001); Mannix & Neale (2005)
Student Attitudes towards Cooperative Learning	Kimmel & Volet (2012); Turner (2009); Montgomery (2009); Li & Campbell (2008); Summers & Volet (2008); Peacock & Harrison (2009); Hillyard, Gillespie, & Littig (2010); Gottschall & Garcia-Bayonas (2008); Phillips (2005); Baker & Clark (2010)
Group Composition	Van den Bossche, Gijsselaers, Segers, & Kirschner (2006); Bennett & Allyson (1989); Sweeney, Weaven, & Herington (2008); Hughes (2010); Seethamraju & Borman (2009)
Communications within groups	Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida (1996); Taras & Rowney (2007); Henderson (2009); Wright & Lander (2003); Parks & Raymond (2004)
Teambuilding Activities	Sweet & Michaelsen (2007); Schmuck & Schmuck (2001); Kapp (2009); Hansen (2006); Kagan (1989); Hughes & Jones (2011); Reisenwitz & Eastman (2006)
Assessment	Strauss & U (2007); De Vita (2002); Gatfield (1999); Barnes, Hollenbeck, Jundt, DeRue, & Harmon (2011); Hughes & Jones (2011); Hassanien (2007); Kagan (1995)
Group Learning	Ward (2001); Postholm (2008);Wilson (2010); Freeman & Greenacre (2011); Ryan & Vieta (2009); Leki (2001); Ledwith & Seymour (2001)
Social Aspects	Purvanova (2013); Van den Bossche, Gijsselaers, Segers, & Kirschner (2006); Barron (2003); Cameron, Morgan, Williams, & Kostecky (2009)

Appendix 3 Interview guide for individual interviews

Themes	Questions
Personal Background	Name Age Cultural Background First Language International*/Canadian Student (NNES/NES) Time in Canada*
Academic/Professional Background	School/College/University Time at University Arbutus Program of Study
Learning English* For NNES	Home Country Canada University Arbutus
Group Work Experience	Previous experience (Describe) Training/ intercultural training Present/recent experiences (Describe)
Group work –cultural diversity	Selection procedure for group Preferences – same cultural background/mixed Why/why not Impact of cultural mix on project
Group work - roles	Leadership Division of work Decision making Writing final submission Feelings about roles If NNES students were working in first language – what differences in roles and why*? (NNES)
Group Work - Relationships	What affects how you relate to others What affects how others relate to you How are relationships different in mixed cultural group? Easier or more difficult than relationships with your cultural group – Why? What is your experience of relationships in group work?
Perceptions	Of others in team Others' perception of you (respect) Concerns regarding perceptions
Communication	Comments/ Problems (NES) Changes in way you speak – impact Feelings about this Comments on communication and role in team project

	Ability to be open with group Relationship between language and ability (NES) Do NES listen* (for NNES) (Silent members)
Participation	How much – why Contributions/competence of others
Constraints	Difficulties arising from group composition Other difficulties in group work (Time, Attitude, Missed meetings, peer assessment, etc.)
Affordances	Which things help the group to be successful in its project What is necessary for successful teamwork
Feelings about group work	Positive/Negative Group topics - appropriate
Value of Group Work	Impressions of value of team projects/ lasting friendships

NNES = Non-native speakers of English
 NES = Native speakers of English

Appendix 4 Example of student narratives

Tracey's Story "I'm like a teapot filled with rice, not water."

Looking at the Past

Tracey contrasts her happiness at her high school in Beijing with the loneliness she feels in university classes in Canada. At her high school, like most Chinese schools, the students were boarders for six days of the week and only spent Saturday nights at home. After six years of living with the same students, they became like family members to each other. In group activities in school, Tracey was often the leader and loved working with the other students.

When she did not get a high enough mark in the Gao Kao, the Chinese university entrance exam, Tracey's only opportunity of getting a university education was to go abroad. She knew little about Canada other than maple leaves and cold weather but she had heard that Vancouver was a beautiful city and a friend at UA encouraged her to join her, first to study English and then to take university courses.

At University Arbutus

Tracey started learning English at a low intermediate level and took almost four years to complete English courses that can be completed in less than two years. Despite having finished the ESL courses, she is not very confident about speaking English and frequently makes excuses for her lack of ability. She blames the environment. She lives in a community where 55% of the population speak Mandarin and the necessity to speak English is minimal. This was also reflected in her ESL courses. As Tracey explains:

There's too much [sic] Chinese people in Community X. In the ESL courses there's too much [sic] Chinese people. In a class of thirteen people only about three students are not Chinese and they are almost Chinese; maybe Taiwanese. So we speak Mandarin out of class. Only in class we speak English so we learn very slowly. Maybe in reading we're better but speaking is really so difficult.

Finally after completing ESL courses, Tracey has reached her goal of studying for a degree in business. Getting her English qualification to enter business studies may have been a long and difficult road but the road to the B.A. in Business does not seem to be any easier for her. An integral part of working toward a business degree is participating in group or team projects for marks; usually 25% to 30% of the course marks are allocated to such project work. As Tracey has learned, most of the group meetings have to occur outside of class time, sometimes a monumental task to arrange with five or six group members, who are each studying five subjects.

Exclusion

Tracey's first group experience was a real disaster for her as she ended up failing the course because of the group project. In her Marketing class, she was in a group with five other students. She was denied opportunities to participate in most of the group meetings as the team members arranged them when she had to attend other classes. She explains,

Some people were really unfair. My free time was totally different from theirs and I showed them this. I told them that I couldn't meet at that time and showed them when I was free. They told me that they couldn't meet me then as they had another class and that I'd better change to another group. I couldn't do this as the instructor had arranged all the groups.

Tracey complains that this group was really intolerant. It was not just with her. One of the group members had a car accident and was absent for two weeks so they put him out of the group. Although Tracey tried to go to some of the group meetings, she missed some due to her course schedule. She told the students to email her with any work she had to do. Five weeks before the end of semester, Tracey developed a fever and missed class for one week. When she returned, she found that the group members had put her out of the group too.

She was really exasperated as she had already done all of the first part of the group work; whatever she had been asked to do. She recalls her astonishment at their behaviour:

When I was sick, they didn't even talk to me. They just talked to the teacher and told him I was out of the group. I didn't even know and we just had a month of our project left. I asked them why they didn't call or email me. I told them that I couldn't understand why they didn't help me and why they told the teacher to put me out of the group.

Agency

When this situation occurred, Tracey first talked to her instructor, hoping that he could help her. All he said was that she should have told him earlier about the problems she was having. Tracey then thought that perhaps she could do part two of the project on her own since she had already finished part one. She tried to do this but found it impossible, "It was really hard! Six people's work I should do by myself!"

Inequality

When the end of the semester arrived, the students had to peer mark each other's contributions to the project. They told Tracey that it was not fair that she get the same mark as the rest of the group since she had only done part one of the project. Tracey agreed and told them to give her a lower mark because she had not done as much of the project. The students did not give her any marks. Tracey still feels the pain as she talks about it,
"I just got one mark."

"I did not get an individual mark."

"I did not pass."

“I never wanted to show up at that class again.”

With her voice unusually raised she exclaims, “It was a really bad experience!” She contrasts this with another group experience in which all the students got the same individual peer mark, even the student who did not do anything. “The peer marking is really unfair!”

Curious about who her team-mates were, I asked her if they came from different countries. She replied that they came from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Canada but the Canadians were Canadian born Chinese (CBCs).

Language Frustrations

Tracey got off to a bad start in another course that is proving equally frustrating for different reasons. On the first day of class, her confidence was completely eroded when the Business Management instructor advised students to quit the course if they found more than two words they did not understand on any page of the course text-book. Tracey found many more than two words that she did not understand; however, she did not quit the course on the recommendation of the instructor. She persevered. She describes the English language requirements for this course:

It’s really hard. It is so hard that I can’t believe it. I have to check so many words in the dictionary. It’s not like Mandarin where I can read a textbook and take notes. Then I remember everything. If I read a novel, I can finish it in one day. But in English I can only read ten pages in a whole day!

It is not just the reading that Tracey is having difficulty with in this course. In her group project, she is the only international student with four Caucasians who are native speakers of English. She said,

They talk really, really fast all the time. At the group meetings they won’t listen to students who have language like me. I don’t have a chance to give my opinion. If I do get to talk, they are already thinking about something else and they say, “Oh, I know” and they jump in and take over. They should listen to what I think and not ignore me or say, “No, that’s wrong.” If they don’t agree they should tell me why. I feel nervous and I don’t know if they listen to me or if they understand. I think I must only be a listener in the group.

Tracey does not really want to be a silent member of the group. She believes that she has good ideas that she would like the others to know. She continues to explain her frustrations at not being able to communicate her ideas to native speakers.

I think I know a lot but I can’t explain. If the research were in Mandarin, I would do much, much better. I have ideas but I don’t know how to show people. It is like the Chinese saying, “I’m like a teapot, but inside it’s like rice; it’s not water.” We have things inside but we cannot show them. I have ideas inside my head but I don’t know how to let them know my opinions. Language is really, really important.

In her management behaviour project, Tracey is clearly subservient to the Caucasian students. They tell her what to do, she does it and then she takes it to them and asks if it is correct. She believes the group leader is considerate as he sends her emails after meetings if he thinks she does not understand what to do.

Limited World Knowledge

Tracey analyses some of her problems communicating and says it is not just the language but the culture that gives her problems. She describes her teammates talking about something funny, their work, a movie or their lives but even though she may understand the words they are saying, she does not know what they are talking about.

In China, Tracey explains, students do not learn much about other countries. They may hear about natural disasters but they have no idea about how people live in other countries or what the countries are like. Even though there is internet in China now, she says that it is strictly controlled. Chinese students, she says, get only one single idea of everything. They only learn the Chinese government's viewpoint.

She continues to give an example of how she thinks China is one country that includes Taiwan. She recalls getting to know Taiwanese students and unknowingly making them angry with her viewpoints about Taiwan. Now she has Taiwanese friends but she deliberately avoids talking about Taiwan and China as she knows her friends will get angry with her.

Similarly, she says that Canadian students ask her if she believes in God but she knows nothing about God. She does not know about many of the things that Canadian students discuss. Unfortunately, Tracey has lived in a Chinese enclave for her four years in Canada and it seems that she has not broadened her knowledge base very much.

Repeatedly, Tracey talks about how nervous she feels in such groups. She is so uncomfortable in the Business Management course that she wants to drop it. She says that she does not want to be there because she feels she is invisible.

Loneliness

The university life for an international student with weak English language skills is a lonely one. Tracey complains about having to do all the work on her own. She explains that the reading is on one's own and in class one listens, takes notes and leaves. Even in groups, the tasks are divided up and students work alone on their particular task most of the time. There is little interaction amongst students. She compares university classes unfavourably to ESL where the teachers were very supportive and the students were friends. So far in her university classes Tracey has made no friends.

She also adds that there is discrimination in university classes. "Sometimes, because you're Chinese, people don't want to work with you." She has found that Canadians often do not want to work with people who are not from Canada. Tracey appeared reluctant to say too much about discrimination to me, a white Canadian teacher. Instead she told a story about her friend who experienced a

racist attitude in a home-stay situation. The friend believed that the home-stay family only wanted the money for looking after him as they showed complete disrespect when he presented them with a gift from China. The gift was thrown in the garbage so her friend was really hurt. Later, when he experienced discrimination in group work, he became really angry. Was this story her friend's or was it really Tracey's?

Working in a group with only Caucasian native speakers of English has clearly been very trying for Tracey. She said that she would feel much better if she were working with a mixed group of students such as one Japanese, one Korean, one Indian and so on as they speak more slowly in more simple English. Despite her language problems, she does not want to work with only Chinese students because she believes their thinking is too similar and she would like to learn more about the opinions of people from different countries.

Looking Ahead

Tracey is determined to get her BA in Business and she plans to repeat the Marketing course she failed. She is optimistic that she will be able to do group projects with people who are more tolerant and cooperative than what she has experienced so far.

In spite of her problems with group work, she believes it is a good way to learn since people can generate a lot of different ideas when they discuss topics together. She is remembering her high school and her ESL days when group work was really enjoyable. In a functional group, she thinks the members can also help each other with their course work by discussing lectures, readings, and tests. In this way they can make friends. It is also an exercise, she states, for when students enter the workforce and have to relate to coworkers. The imagined future she projects is one with fewer language difficulties.

This positive imagined future, notwithstanding; she still has anxiety when she contemplates group work that has to be done outside class time: "Out of class, it's OH NO! It's so trying."

Appendix 5 Example of initial coding

Note: This initial coding which follows is a copy of the original which was done using the “new comment” feature of Microsoft Word which uses a mark up area in the right margin. The original could not be used as the mark up margin, by default, appears in the whole thesis.

Phuc's Narrative	Coding
<p>Phuc's Story "They make me feel like my language sucks!"</p> <p>Looking at the Past From the time he was a little boy Phuc's dream was to go to the United States of America. He was so excited, when at twenty-three years old, he found a way to realise his dream. However, his dream of America did not come into fruition as the USA, with incidents of suicide bombings and shootings, became a dangerous place in his parents' eyes - too dangerous for their son to go to. Phuc, being a determined person, looked at the map and decided that Vancouver, Canada was quite close by and that he would easily be able to enter the USA from there. Thus, Phuc came to Canada to study.</p> <p>Phuc grew up in Hanoi in North Viet Nam. From a privileged background, he excelled at school and achieved the outstanding grades necessary for him to enter the best university in the country. Once there, he studied for a Bachelor's degree in Accounting as he thought this would be useful in the world of business. With an excellent degree in hand, he was immediately offered a plum job at a well known Vietnamese bank. It was a great job with a wonderful work environment and a good salary. Still, Phuc was not satisfied. He wanted to work for himself and he still had his dream of America.</p> <p>He decided he would go overseas and do another degree. He realized first he would need to learn more English. With America, being put out of bounds for him, he started applying to English language schools in the Vancouver region. At the same time, he started studying English intensively in Viet Nam. Although he had started learning English in grade 5, he paid little attention to it and instead focused on the exam subjects of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.</p> <p>Phuc selected a language school in downtown Vancouver which had a partnership with a local university. He studied at this school for a year and then decided it was time to move on as his English was at a high enough level for university studies. He could have had direct admission into university courses at the partner university but this made no sense to him any longer as he was living on the</p>	<p>M1 Demonstrating he is a mature student</p> <p>M2 Finding America dangerous for foreign students</p> <p>M3 Following parental guidance</p> <p>M4 Showing determination</p> <p>M5 Finding a way to get close to America</p> <p>M6 Saying Vancouver second best – near USA</p> <p>M99 having a privileged background</p> <p>M7 Illustrating the difficulty in getting admission to university in V.N.</p> <p>M8 Showing that only students with very high marks can go to university of choice</p> <p>M9 Illustrating that he is very able academically</p> <p>M10 Showing he has good qualifications from university</p> <p>M11 Emphasising the bank only chooses the best</p> <p>M12 Emphasising that he wanted the best</p> <p>M13 Showing agency</p> <p>M14 Emphasising desire to go overseas</p> <p>M15 Learning English in elementary school</p> <p>M16 Focusing on exams</p> <p>M17 Explaining the importance of Math and Science</p> <p>M18 Starting to learn English before coming to Canada</p> <p>M19 Studying at a private language school</p> <p>M20 School having a relationship with a distant university</p>

doorstep of UA and the partner university was a long distance away.

At University Arbutus

Despite the language school telling him that his English was fine for university, Phuc took a language test to enter UA and was placed at the highest level of ESL for one semester. After that he was able to begin his Bachelor of Business Entrepreneurship degree.

For Phuc, group project work was a completely new experience as Vietnamese universities do not focus on this type of learning. With his typical enthusiasm, he threw himself into his group project for Business Management. He was really excited at this new type of learning experience. He was in a group with four Canadian native English speaking students; three male and one female.

Agency

The first thing that Phuc did on realising that he was the only international student in his group was to email his team-mates and tell them a little bit about himself and explain that English was his second language. He asked them to help him if he had any problems understanding them or if he had other problems with his English. He was happy that they all emailed back saying they would help him. He said that this made him feel much more confident about his speaking and that he recommends that all international students do this. This was a good start to his group work.

Phuc was also encouraged by his professor and the way he handled the group work. At their first group meeting the members had to work out rules for their behaviour; for example, what they would do with students who did not do their work or attend meetings. They also had to choose a leader for the project. The rules and the leader's name had to be submitted to the professor within the first two weeks.

From that point on, Phuc's group experience seemed to take a downward turn. Firstly, it was problematic choosing a leader when the team-mates were all strangers to each other. Phuc's idea of the process of choosing a leader was quite contrary to the others. He explains:

Actually my idea at the time was that we should hang out together for a couple of days

M21 Living near UA so chose UA

M22 Having to take an English test to get in

M23 Finding language qualifications not good enough

M24 Having to take academic ESL courses

M25 Taking entrepreneurship course

M26 Having no group work experience in V.N.

M27 Showing excitement about first group

M28 Showing agency

M29 Feeling self-conscious about his English

M30 Becoming more confident

M31 Feeling excited about group work

M32 Getting instructions from professor

M33 Having difficulty choosing a leader

M34 Wanting to get to know the others first

to get to know each other and to understand each other more. However, people were not interested in doing this as they said they did not have free time to do any stuff together. We just had to choose a leader at random so we chose the oldest guy in the group. He was maybe about thirty-five and he was working full-time.

This was a decision that Phuc almost immediately regretted once he found out that the leader was far too busy working to do any of the tasks associated with group leadership. The leader was barely able to show up at the group meetings. He adds,

It was a huge disadvantage having the leader we had but it was difficult to know at the time. I would have liked to have been leader but I'm from another country and at the time I did not feel confident about what I could do for my group so that's why I decided not to be leader. It is difficult to vote for the capabilities of each person in the group without knowing what they can do. Next time, I will probably change my mind and want to be leader.

Conflicting Work Ethics

The group project got underway and the group had to figure out a problem with a company and how to fix it. Phuc was highly motivated to do well and put all his effort into the project. He was extremely disappointed that his team-mates did not do likewise. He describes his experience:

I put a lot of effort into it. But my team-mates, how can I say – maybe they were too busy with their work. Two of them were kept super busy at their jobs at that time and were also married. Then another guy didn't really care about school that much. He told me, "I don't care if I pass or not." And the girl – she was so smart but she never came for any meetings. It was so depressing.

It was not just the girl who did not attend meetings. Two of the male students who lived in community Y, far away from community X, seldom showed up. They would send text messages to Phuc saying they were stuck in traffic or held up by road construction or something similar. Phuc complained that the Canadian students seemed to have so many other things to do of greater priority than the group work.

M35 Explaining other students not interested

M36 Explaining other students too busy

M37 Selecting oldest person for leader

M38 Regretting choice of leader

M39 Finding leader was too busy working

M40 Finding leader did not attend meetings

M41 Being really frustrated with leader

M42 Regretting way leader was chosen

M43 Explaining why he did not want to be leader

M44 Deciding that next time he would like to be leader

M45 Putting a lot of effort into project

M46 Expressing disappointment with work ethics of team members

M47 Complaining that team members very busy working

M48 Complaining that team members busy with families

M49 Complaining that one team member not interested

M50 Complaining that the girl never came to meetings

M51 Feeling really depressed

M52 Complaining about two male students not turning up at meetings

M53 Saying that Canadian students disinterested

He elaborates that there is a different mindset in Western cultures and Eastern cultures about free time. He said that the Canadians in his group would never do their university work on the weekends; they only wanted to relax whereas in his culture, students would complete all their work and then relax. In his words:

A couple of guys in my group are always really busy on the weekends but doing what? They are busy going to parties or clubs. People from Western countries make free time to relax after the weekdays even though they have lots of things still to do. For me, the weekend is a time when I can stay at home, do my school work and my group work and then relax a little. I think in Asian cultures, people finish the project first. Only after that do they have free time and relax. It's totally different, I think.

Phuc's attempts to get his Canadian team-mates to work on their project at the weekends met with solid resistance.

The way the group tackled the assignment was fairly typical. After one or two initial meetings, they divided the project into components and each person was responsible for his or her own part. Phuc found this contradictory to the goals of group work. The team members made decisions on their own about what they would do in their sections. As Phuc said, "We have to work on a lot of the things by ourselves at home and we don't meet when we need to."

Anxiety

Towards the end of the project they sent their individual pieces of work to each other as they had to give the professor feedback. Phuc was quite distressed because he had been extremely conscientious and done a lot of work but the rest of the group told him his ideas were wrong. The group held a meeting to discuss Phuc's work but they could not come to an agreement and Phuc was reluctant to accept that his ideas were wrong. In the end, they asked their professor whether Phuc was right or wrong. Phuc was overjoyed when his professor said that he liked his ideas. He was able to continue and prepare his work for the final presentation. Strangely, the ideas of the other students were not questioned in this manner.

M54 Comparing attitudes towards studying and free time

M55 Finding Canadians refused to do project work at weekends

M56 Saying that Asian people want to finish work then relax

M57 Wanting to do project work at weekends

M58 Describing different mindsets

M59 Being unable to convince Canadians to do project work on weekends

M60 Dividing the project into individual components

M61 Not following principles of group work

M62 Not meeting when they needed to

M62 Compiling individual sections

M63 Being extremely conscientious

M64 Being distressed by team mates' comments

M65 Being told his ideas were wrong

M66 No accepting his team mates' opinion

M67 Asking professor

M68 Professor telling him his ideas were good

M69 Being overjoyed

Humiliation

Throughout the group process, Phuc was really worried about his English. At first, the promises of his team-mates to help rang true and he had few problems when he was communicating his ideas. At that stage, they were only concerned about generating ideas and not the quality of English. Phuc, with his academic background and working experience, had lots of ideas that he was not shy to share unlike many other international students. It was only nearer the end of the project that Phuc's worries about his language were realised. When he was discussing his final report with the group, another great idea occurred to him but he was not able to discuss it well in concise language. He used clumsy and rambling language to describe his idea. He thought that his team-mates would understand what he was talking about but they just categorically dismissed his idea, making him feel really inferior. He felt they were looking down on him.

Since his team-mates were all native speakers of English, Phuc felt that they should have used their communication skills to talk to him:

They should use their communication skills and say something like, "Could you please say that again?" They should not behave like all my words are not good or something. That makes me feel so bad like my language sucks and I'm not very confident about what I am talking about. They should encourage me and say, "Oh, that's a great idea" or "I like your idea." This is a communication skill.

Several times while talking to me, Phuc emphasised the importance of encouraging group members. He discussed the impact of receiving negative comments such as, "That does not make any sense." He had experienced native speakers sometimes being rude when they did not understand international students in their groups. These appeared to be reflective moments of similar bad experiences in other groups.

Despite all his efforts with the group project, but perhaps not surprisingly given the lack of interest of the other group members, the mark that Phuc and his team-mates received was only 64%. He was really frustrated about this since he got 89% in the final exam and the low group mark pulled his final

M70 Worrying about his English

M71 Finding he had no problems sharing ideas at first

M72 Having a brilliant idea

M73 Trying to share his brilliant idea

M74 Using rambling language

M75 Feeling humiliated by team members' comments

M76 Saying students should have used their communication skills

M77 Making him lose confidence

M78 Saying that team members should be encouraging

M79 Emphasising that native speakers should be encouraging

M80 Experiencing rude native speakers

M81 Reflecting on other similar experiences

M82 Receiving low marks for project

M83 Blaming other students for their lack of interest

M84 Experiencing frustration with low marks

M85 Deciding to be leader and control group next time

mark down to 79%. For a high achiever like Phuc, this was dissatisfactory. He commented, "Next time, I will be the person to control the group and I can control this situation better."

Looking Ahead

"The best thing you learn from group work is the way to deal with other people and that is so necessary in modern society."

This summarises Phuc's views on group work. He sees it as an essential preparation for his future role in international business. Even the negative experiences he sees as positive learning. He believes that if he had not encountered lazy people, he would not know how to deal with them and he says, "That kind of person always exists." For him, group work is not as much about learning about the project but is more about learning for his future career. Having good inter-personal relations is essential in today's economic environment.

Finally, his boyhood dream of going to America is still alive and will be realised when Phuc has done all his studies and has free time to play.

M86 Seeing group work as a way of learning how to handle other people

M87 Seeing group work as a preparation for international business

M88 Using negative experiences as learning experiences

M89 Saying that group work is not about the project but is about interpersonal relationships

M90 Being too busy with studies to visit America

Appendix 6 Example of second cycle coding and developing themes

PHUC – International student

Category 1: Demonstrating his excellent academic background

- M7** Illustrating the difficulty in getting admission to university in V.N.
- M8** Showing that only students with very high marks can go to university of choice
- M9** Illustrating that he is very able academically
- M10** Showing he has good qualifications from university
- M11** Emphasising the bank only chooses the best
- M17** Explaining the importance of Math and Science

Category 2: Illustrating his high status

- M99** Talking about privileged background
- M12** Emphasising that he wanted the best

Category 3: Demonstrating autonomy

- M4** Showing determination
- M5** Finding a way to get close to America
- M13** Showing agency
- M14** Emphasising desire to go overseas
- M16** Focusing on exams
- M18** Starting to learn English before coming to Canada
- M25** Taking entrepreneurship course
- M28** Showing agency
- M44** Deciding that next time he would like to be leader
- M66** Not accepting his team mates' opinion
- M67** Asking professor
- M90** Being too busy with studies to visit America

Category 4: Being frustrated at work ethic of teammates

- M46** Expressing disappointment with work ethics of team members
- M47** Complaining that team members very busy working
- M48** Complaining that team members busy with families
- M49** Complaining that one team member not interested
- M50** Complaining that the girl never came to meetings
- M51** Feeling really depressed
- M52** Complaining about two male students not turning up at meetings
- M53** Saying that Canadian students disinterested
- M54** Comparing attitudes towards studying and free time
- M55** Finding Canadians refused to do project work at weekends
- M58** Describing different mindsets
- M76** Saying students should have used their communication skills
- M78** Saying that team members should be encouraging
- M79** Emphasising that native speakers should be encouraging
- M56** Saying that Asian people want to finish work then relax

Category 5: Suffering humiliation

- M64** Being distressed by team mates' comments
- M65** Being told his ideas were wrong
- M75** Feeling humiliated by team members' comments
- M77** Making him lose confidence
- M80** Experiencing rude native speakers
- M81** Reflecting on other similar experiences

Category 6: Wanting to get to know group members first

- M34** Wanting to get to know the others first
- M35** Explaining other students not interested
- M36** Explaining other students too busy

Category 7: Giving reasons for group work

- M86** Seeing group work as a way of learning how to handle other people
- M87** Seeing group work as a preparation for international business
- M88** Using negative experiences as learning experiences
- M89** Saying that group work is not about the project but is about interpersonal relationships

Category 8: Expressing a lack of confidence regarding his English

- M23** Finding language qualifications not good enough
- M24** Having to take academic ESL courses
- M29** Feeling self-conscious about his English
- M30** Becoming more confident
- M70** Worrying about his English
- M73** Trying to share his brilliant idea
- M74** Using rambling language

Category 9: Being excited about group work

- M26** Having no group work experience in V.N.
- M27** Showing excitement about first group
- M31** Feeling excited about group work
- M45** Putting a lot of effort into project
- M57** Wanting to do project work at weekends
- M63** Being extremely conscientious
- M69** Being overjoyed
- M72** Having a brilliant idea

Category 10: Regretting choice of group leader

- M33** Having difficulty choosing a leader
- M37** Selecting oldest person for leader
- M38** Regretting choice of leader
- M39** Finding leader was too busy working
- M40** Finding leader did not attend meetings
- M41** Being really frustrated with leader

- M42** Regretting way leader was chosen
- M43** Explaining why he did not want to be leader

Category 11: Expressing frustrations with poor mark

- M82** Receiving low marks for project
- M83** Blaming other students for their lack of interest
- M84** Experiencing frustration with low marks
- M85** Deciding to be leader and control group next time

Category 12: Expressing satisfaction with professor

- M32** Getting instructions from professor
- M68** Professor telling him his ideas were good

Category 13: Describing problems

- M59** Being unable to convince Canadians to do project work on weekends
- M60** Dividing the project into individual components
- M61** Not following principles of group work
- M62** Not meeting when they needed to
- M62** Compiling individual sections

Summary of Categories

Category 1: Demonstrating his excellent academic background

Category 2: Illustrating his high status

Category 3: Demonstrating autonomy

Category 4: Being frustrated at work ethic of teammates

Category 5: Suffering humiliation

Category 6: Wanting to get to know group members first

Category 7: Giving reasons for group work

Category 8: Expressing a lack of confidence regarding his English

Category 9: Being excited about group work

Category 10: Regretting choice of group leader

Category 11: Expressing frustrations with poor mark

Category 12: Expressing satisfaction with professor

Category 13: Describing problems

Focusing the Categories

Theme 1

Categories 1 and 2 are connected with social status. In Category 1, Phuc is clearly demonstrating his high achievements. He really emphasises that he was admitted into the best university because his high school marks were excellent. This probably means that he attended one of the gifted high schools that have been set up in the country. He mentioned that there was strong emphasis on maths, physics and chemistry. From the way he talks, one gets the impression that he is from a rich, high status family. Upon completion of university, he got a job with the best bank in the country, one which he says only accepts the cream of the university graduates. He highlights the excellent working conditions at the bank but he is ambitious and wants to have his own business in the future.

He is very confident about his status and his abilities. This is also shown in the ways he describes his ideas in group work. He says he has excellent ideas. Even though his confidence in using English is eroded by the attitudes of his team members, he does not blame himself. On the contrary, he blames the native speakers for not using their superior communication skills to communicate with him. His confidence and organizational skills are clearly shown in the ways he tries to organize the group members. Several times, he mentions that he will be the leader in the next group so that he can control the results.

He is clearly very ambitious and this is shown throughout. He does not see the disappointing group experience he had as something negative but instead sees it as a positive learning experience as it is teaching him how to deal with lazy people who are strangers to him. This is a skill that he deems necessary in his future career.

Properties of high status

High Status	Low Status
Being valued in society	Being seen as unimportant
Being successful	Not being very successful
Being confident	Lacking in confidence
Seeing oneself as a leader	Seeing oneself as a follower
Having high achievements	Having low achievements
Having achievements recognized	Not having achievements recognized

Category 3, **Demonstrating Autonomy**, is linked with Category 1, **Demonstrating excellent academic background** and Category 2, **Illustrating his high status**.

What emerges is that Phuc is very ambitious and is a high achiever.

Theme 1: Being a high achiever (second cycle categories 1, 2 & 3)

- Demonstrating his excellent academic background
- Illustrating his high status
- Demonstrating autonomy

Focusing the categories Theme 2

Category 4, **Being frustrated with work ethic of Canadians**, is related to the first theme of Phuc being a high achiever. Because of his classmates' work ethics, he is unable to achieve what he wanted in the group project. The poor work ethic leads to category 11, **Expressing frustrations with poor mark**. Phuc shows that his individual course marks were excellent but the group project mark was low and pulled his marks down.

He blames the lack of motivation of the Canadian students in his group. Frequently they did not attend meetings for various reasons. Some of them were juggling work and studies. Phuc found the lack of participation of his group mates disabling. He complains about them partying or clubbing on weekends when there was still group work to be done. He refers to them as lazy students. He talks about students not doing their share of the work.

The person appointed to be group leader did not perform the duties of the leader and this affected the coordination of the project (**Category 10: Regretting choice of group leader**). Phuc said that the group members should have socialized a little at the beginning to get to know each other but the Canadian students were not interested. As a result, the leader was selected simply because he was older. Not knowing the students in the group was also seen as a disadvantage as the strengths and weaknesses of each person were unknown beforehand (**Category 6: Wanting to get to know group members first**).

There were also some other general problems (**Category 13: Describing problems**) in the way the project was executed with people working on individual pieces and not meeting when they needed to..

All these problems seem to stem from the lack of motivation of the Canadian students in the group.

Theme 2: Experiencing frustration with the lack of motivation of Canadian students (second cycle categories 4, 11, 10, 6 & 13)

- Being frustrated with work ethic of Canadians
- Expressing frustrations with poor mark
- Regretting choice of group leader
- Wanting to get to know group members first
- Describing problems

Focusing the Categories Theme 3

Category 5, **Finding Canadians superior**, resulted from Phuc experiencing rude behaviour when the Canadians in his group could not follow him when he was explaining a good idea. He said that the team members looked down on him and made him feel that his English was terrible even though he did not think it was a big problem. This was made worse by the team members refusing to accept his idea and **saying he was wrong**. In the end they had to ask the professor's opinion as they were insistent that Phuc was wrong. Phuc did not back down to their opinions and when the professor heard his idea, he thought it was good. This experience seemed to bother Phuc greatly as he referred to it several times.

Phuc's sense of confidence in himself prevented him from being discouraged and silenced by his teammates. However, he was clearly disturbed by the experience and described how it eroded his confidence in English. (**Category 8: Expressing a lack of confidence regarding English**).

Phuc did not blame himself for this problem but said that the students he was working with were native speakers of English and, as such, should have used their communication skills to encourage him rather than belittle him the way they did.

There seems to be an association here between fluency in English and the ability to carry out the course work. The Canadian students are acting as if **they are superior**. They were not interested in hearing Phuc's ideas and when they did hear them, they insisted that they are wrong. They tried to silence him by their behaviour. Many international students would be silenced by this by Phuc, because of his background, refused to accept this.

Theme 3: Superiority of Canadians (second cycle categories 5 & 8)

- Suffering humiliation
- Expressing a lack of confidence regarding English

Focusing the Categories Theme 4

Despite the negative experiences Phuc has, he remains very positive about group work and sees it as a way of developing the interpersonal, intercultural communication skills which he says are necessary in international business today. He believes that dealing with unfamiliar, difficult people is a learning situation (**Category 7: Giving reasons for group work**.) The purpose of group projects is to learn to work with other people. He says that one does not really learn much about the subject matter.

Phuc is excited about group work and believes that multicultural group work has the advantages of creating rich and varied ideas (**Category 9: Being excited about group work**). He is taking what he has learned from his first group experience into his next. This is one aspect of his international education that he feels is beneficial as he has not had the opportunity to work in groups in VietNam.

Phuc expresses satisfaction with the way his professor handled the group work. There was guidance at first with the group having to write rules of behaviour
(Category 12: Expressing satisfaction with professor).

Theme 4: Seeing group work as training for an intercultural workplace
(second cycle categories 7, 9, 12,)

- Giving reasons for group work
- Being excited about group work
- Expressing satisfaction with professor

Theme 1: Being a high achiever

- Demonstrating his excellent academic background
- Illustrating his high status
- Demonstrating autonomy

Theme 2: Experiencing frustration with the lack of motivation of Canadian students

- Being frustrated with work ethic of Canadians
- Expressing frustrations with poor mark
- Regretting Choice of group leader
- Wanting to get to know group members first
- Describing problems

Theme 3: Finding Canadians superior

- Suffering humiliation
- Expressing a lack of confidence regarding English

Theme 4: Seeing group work as training for an intercultural workplace

- Giving reasons for group work
- Being excited about group work
- Expressing satisfaction with professor

Appendix 7 Summary of all themes

Anisha

International - Mauritius

Theme 1: Being self-assured about her qualifications and experience

- Proving academic skills
- Demonstrating proficiency in English
- Showing agency

Theme 2: Experiencing Discrimination

- Indicating Canadian attitude of superiority
- Experiencing bossy students
- Feeling alienated
- Experiencing inequality
- Indicating lack of respect
- Experiencing rude behaviour

Theme 3: Finding group work extremely stressful

- Experiencing extreme stress
- Lacking confidence

Theme 4: Stressing the importance of having a good relationship first

- Stating the importance of having a good relationship first
- Showing struggles due to lack of common background

Theme 5 – Expressing a strong dislike of group work

- Expressing strong dislike of group work
- Describing group misunderstandings
- Suggesting action for instructor

Theme 1: Being a high achiever

- Demonstrating his excellent academic background
- Illustrating his high status
- Demonstrating autonomy

Theme 2: Experiencing frustration with the lack of motivation of Canadian students

- Being frustrated with work ethic of Canadians
- Expressing frustrations with poor mark
- Regretting Choice of group leader
- Wanting to get to know group members first
- Describing problems

Theme 3: Suffering humiliation due to Canadian attitudes

- Suffering humiliation
- Expressing a lack of confidence regarding English

Theme 4: Seeing group work as training for an intercultural workplace

- Giving reasons for group work
- Being excited about group work
- Expressing satisfaction with professor

Theme 1: Experiencing extreme anxiety due to prejudice

- Being denied opportunities to participate
- Experiencing discrimination
- Experiencing unjust treatment
- Being nervous

Theme 2: Attempting to cope with language frustrations

- Blaming her poor English for her problems
- Expressing frustration
- Showing agency

Theme 3: Experiencing loneliness with Canadian classmates

- Only knowing the Chinese World view
- Expressing the importance of knowing the cultural background of Canadians
- Experiencing loneliness

Theme 4: Finding Canadians classmates in positions of power

- Relating to Canadians
- Being supportive in group-work

Theme 5: Finding a lack of support in university courses

- Expressing lack of support in university courses

Theme 1: Seeing good interpersonal relationships as the key to team success

- Stressing the importance of building relationships
- Emphasising the importance of having a good group leader
- Describing how to make group work successful
- Having positive views of Canadians

Theme 2: Having exposure to diverse viewpoints

- Appreciating the equality in Canada
- Giving the advantages of a mixed cultural group

Theme 3: Finding it easier to work with people from own culture

- Expressing communication problems
- Working with shy people in groups
- Having some negative experiences with Canadians
- Giving advantages of working with same culture

Theme 4: Facing challenges within groups

- Describing difficulties in group work
- Finding people not doing their group work

Theme 1: Feeling inferior with overpowering students

- Experiencing overpowering students
- Expressing feeling of inferiority with overpowering students
- Demonstrating lack of confidence

Theme 2: Identifying as a Canadian multicultural student

- Giving negative opinions of international students
- Distancing himself from ESL
- Trying to encourage quiet students
- Describing personal qualities needed for team work
- Comparing international students at previous college he attended

Theme 3: Equating group success to team member relationships

- Preferring to choose own group
- Stating the importance of having a good group leader

Theme 4: Finding team projects an unfair way of learning

- Experiencing frustration with tardy or non-participating students
- Saying participation marks are ineffective
- Finding difficulties with group meetings

Theme 5: Finding that learning in groups depends on luck

- Explaining the purpose of group work
- Giving his opinions on group work

Theme 1: Having empathy for international students

- Working with international students
- Experiencing people (L2 students) often being left out
- Commenting on discrimination

Theme 2: Finding that international students do not have the necessary experience to work successfully in multicultural groups

- Making negative comments about international students
- Experiencing silent people
- Having negative experiences in group work

Theme 3: Emphasising the importance of having good relationships in groups

- Emphasising the importance of having a good relationship

Theme 4: Expressing frustration with different aspects of group work

- Finding that learning in groups depends on luck
- Being frustrated with marking system
- Stating experience with group leaders
- Experiencing problems with meeting times

Theme 5: Acknowledging the benefits of group work

- Stating the benefits of group work

Theme 1: Preferring to work with her own cultural group

- Hating group work in high school
- Preferring to work with own cultural group
- Having group work experience mainly with own cultural group
- Feeling hesitant about working with international students

Theme 2: Outlining critical components for group success

- Stating that good leader is critical
- Stating that having regular meetings is critical for success
- Dealing with lazy people

Theme 3: Showing empathy with international students

- Having empathy with L2 students

Theme 4: Seeing group work as a good way of learning

- Seeing group work as a good way of learning

Theme 1: Suffering extreme emotional and mental anguish to obtain a high school certificate as a mature student

- Father trying to control his future
- Dropping out of high school
- Hating adult basic education classes

Theme 2: Becoming a mature motivated university student

- Having a turning point in his life
- Showing how he helps others
- Showing maturity

Theme 3: Experiencing and observing discrimination

- Experiencing and observing discrimination
- Showing a lack of confidence

Theme 4: Expressing frustration with group dysfunctioning

- Describing barriers which prevent success in group work
- Expressing problems with leadership of groups
- Evaluating teaching styles
- Describing International Students
- Expressing concern regarding the rules for group projects & marks

Theme 5: Equating group success to team member relationships

- Preferring to work with people he knows
- Finding a solution to obtaining success in group work

Theme 1: Seeing herself as a leader

- Discussing her own skills
- Discussing the role of leader
- Reacting to L2 students
- Experiencing different relationship with L2 students

Theme 2: Finding working with L2 students a more negative than positive experience

- Expressing difficulties with L2 students
- Finding some positive aspects of working with L2 students

Theme 3: Understanding the intimidation felt by L2 students

- Discussing strong personalities and L2 students
- Imagining herself being a student in another country
- Discussing discrimination

Theme 4: Hating the pain and frustration of group work

- Believing that luck plays a big part in groups
- Having problems with people not participating in group project
- Taking action with non-contributors
- Expressing her feelings about problem group members
- Discussing the peer marking system
- Having a love-hate relationship with group work

Theme 5: Appreciating the benefits of group work

- Acknowledging the benefits of group work
- Discussing her own skills (also in Theme 1)
- Stating that working well together results in friendship
- Preferring group members to be selected randomly by teacher

Theme 1: Stressing the importance of group members having a good relationship

- Preferring to work with people he knows
- Expressing views on group leader
- Stating criteria for successful group work
- Stating advantages of group work
- Describing a positive experience

Theme 2: The silencing impact of overbearing people

- Describing problems of overbearing people

Theme 3: Overcoming frustration to develop successful relationships withal students

- Talking about cultural composition of groups
- Working with L2 students
- Commenting on role of faculty

Theme 4: Expressing trepidation about working in large groups

- Stating disadvantages of group work
- Giving reasons for people not being interested
- Experiencing deadweight in cohort class
- Explaining impact of lack of common time to meet

Theme 1: Emphasising the importance of feeling comfortable with one's group

- Feeling more comfortable with own cultural background
- Stressing the importance of group members having a good relationship
- Describing how to get along with others
- Stating the importance of team building
- Describing the problems of not knowing the other students
- Describing problems if groups self-select

Theme 2: Finding working with L2 students a burden

- Finding international students have communication problems
- Giving disadvantages of group work
- Explaining the critical role of English in Business courses
- Relating to L2 students
- Acknowledging positive aspects of L2 students

Theme 3: Feeling angry with problems that interfere with group project outcomes

- Expressing feelings about poor work
- Expressing opinions about peer marking
- Describing the impact of control freaks
- Describing experiences with group leader

Theme 4: Finding group work beneficial when working within her comfort zone

- Giving advantages of group work

Theme 1: Choosing own group members with strong work ethic

- Emphasising the importance of high results
- Stressing the need for a strong work ethic
- Preferring to choose own groups

Theme 2: Admitting that native speakers would likely overwhelm L2 students

- Stating experience is very Caucasian
- Expressing her thoughts on working with L2 students
- Reacting to L2 students

Theme 3: Finding group work an intensely frustrating experience

- Experiencing frustration with people with poor work ethic
- Finding group work more challenging than individual work
- Finding group work extremely frustrating

Theme 4: Seeing group work as a preparation for the future

- Seeing group work as learning about people
- Finding some group work rewarding
- Making other observations about group work

Appendix 8 Chart showing common themes

Theme	Total	I	M	C
1. Good group relationship/own group with good work ethics	11	4	4	3
2. Indicating Canadians superior	11	4	3	4
3. Experiencing frustration at dysfunctional groups	11	4	3	4
4. Seeing group work as preparation for future	6	1	2	3
5. Saying luck plays a big part in group work	4	0	2	2
6. Being negative about working with L2 students	6	-	3	3
7. Experiencing discrimination	6	3	3	0
8. Understanding L2 students intimidated by native speakers	3	0	0	3
9. Having empathy for L2 students	3	-	3	0
10. Seeing herself as a leader	1	0	0	1
11. Suffering anxiety getting adult grade 12 certificate	1	0	1	0
12. Demonstrating good background	2	2	0	0
13. Saying a lack of support by university	2	2	0	0
14. Appreciating exposure to diverse viewpoints	1	1	0	0
15. Suffering loneliness with Canadian group mates	1	1	0	0

I = International students

M = Immigrant students

C = Canadian-born students

Appendix 9 Ethical approval form - University of Exeter

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Moira E.M. de Silva

Your student no: 570036651

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Sarah Rich

Your email address: memd201@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 01392 877 367 (until November 24). After November 26th 001 604 541 1457 (Canada)

Title of your project: The interaction of multilingual (L2) students in small group work in undergraduate business courses.

Brief description of your research project:

In this project I want to answer the following two research questions:

1. How do L2 students interact with native speakers of English in small groups?
2. Can their participation be accounted for in terms of the following?:
 - Previous experience with group work
 - Specific training for group work
 - English language education in EAP classes
 - Attitudes towards and perceptions of group work

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

- Contextual constraints and affordances

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

The main participants in this research will be eight international and/or local students who speak English as an additional language. All the students will be over the age of eighteen. Other students who are native speakers of English would also be involved in the groups observed. The students would be taking first year university courses in Business Studies. Two faculty members from the School of Business at [REDACTED] would also be involved.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

1. All participants in the research will give free and informed consent in writing using the [REDACTED] Consent Form. As most participants use English as an additional language, extreme care will be taken to ensure that the participants fully understand the purpose of the research, and what their participation involves.
2. The participants in the project will be volunteers. All anonymity procedures will be followed. The university will not be identified and the participants will be given pseudonyms. Their identity will be kept strictly confidential and individual participants will not be able to be traced.
3. The prospective participants will be informed of the procedures to be followed and the content and purposes of the research. They will be advised about the approximate time they will have to spend completing questionnaires and being interviewed. They will also be advised that they can discontinue participation after having given consent to be in the project.
4. The Research Ethics Board at [REDACTED] will be given the details of this project in this form entitled *Certificate of Ethical Research Approval Form* and also in the [REDACTED] form, *Application for Exemption from Ethics Review*.
5. The administrators at [REDACTED] the Dean of the School of Business and the faculty members will be informed of the nature of my research project and the possible benefits to the institution.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

I plan to use an ethnographic multiple case study. I will observe two business classes which use extensive small group work for several class periods to get an understanding of the approaches to group work. Then, in each of the two classes, I will use non-intrusive systematic observation of one small group for four to six class periods. I will take field notes and if possible make audio recordings of the student interactions.

In each of the two classes, I will have four cases. These students will be asked to submit semi-structured reports of their experiences in group work on a weekly basis for four weeks. The students will be interviewed individually about their experiences using a semi-structured approach. The two faculty members will also be interviewed.

All efforts will be made to make the students feel at ease with the researcher.

The research being carried out is not ethically sensitive and the measures described above (anonymity and confidentiality) would ensure that the methods used do not cause any harm,

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

detriment or unreasonable stress. There is no risk to the participants through this research. All precautions would be taken to ensure that the participants do not suffer stress or any other condition which would cause them mental harm.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

The completed questionnaires will be stored in a password protected computer that is not part of a network. The transcribed interviews will be similarly stored. The printed copies of the questionnaires and the digital audio tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

There are no exceptional factors that would pose danger or harm to the participants.

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my EED D009 Research Assignment to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: M. Mendes Silva date: November 05/09

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: January 2010 **until:** ~~December 2010~~

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): S. Rich date: 5/11/09 Saleh Dahi

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference: D/09/10/14

Signed: Saleh Dahi date: 5/11/2009
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

new date - 16/11/2010

Saleh Dahi

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

**Appendix 10 Ethical approval form – University Arbutus
(pseudonym) 2010**

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

Certificate of Approval

Researcher Maira de Silva	Department English Language Studies	Number 2009-037
Institution where Research will be carried out:		
Co-investigators:		
Sponsoring Agencies:		
Title: The interaction of multilingual (L2) students in small group work in undergraduate business courses.		
Approval Date: November 25, 2009	Documents Included in the Approval: Application for Ethics Review Cover Page	
Term (Years): One Year		
Certification: The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.  Dr. Nathalie Gagnon Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.		

**Appendix 11 Ethical approval form – University Arbutus
(pseudonym) 2011**

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

Certificate of Approval

Researcher Maira de Silva	Department English Language Studies	Number 2009-037 extended
Institution where Research will be carried out:		
Co-Investigators:		
Sponsoring Agencies:		
Title: The interaction of multilingual (L2) students in small group work in undergraduate business courses.		
Approval Date: November 1, 2010	Documents Included in the Approval: Application for Ethics Review Cover Page	
Term (Years): November 30, 2011		
Certification: The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.		
 Dr. Kyle Matsuba Chair, Research Ethics Board		
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the research protocol.		

Appendix 12 Consent form for participants – University Arbutus (pseudonym)

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD Consent Form for Students

Title of Research Project: The interaction of students in small group work in undergraduate business courses

Principal Investigator: Moira de Silva

Application # _____

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time. Even if you do not want to join the study or if you withdraw from the study, you will still receive the same quality of instruction. Your decision also will not jeopardize your grades or studies.

You should ask the principal investigator listed below any questions you may have about this research study. You may ask him/her questions in the future if you do not understand something that is being done. The investigators will share with you any new findings that may develop while you are participating in this study.

This consent form explains the research study you are being asked to join. Please review this form carefully and ask any questions about the study before you agree to join. You may also ask questions at any time after joining the study. See below for persons to contact.

Purpose of Research Project: To find out how students interact in small intercultural groups in undergraduate business courses and to find out why students participate in the ways they do.

Procedures: 1. Business classes will be observed to find out about the approaches to group work within the particular course. 2. The Business instructors will be interviewed about how they do group work in their classes. 3. Several small groups of students will be observed while working in groups. If they have given permission, they will be tape recorded. If not, the researcher will take notes of what is happening and what is being said. 4. About

eight students will be asked to complete a journal about their group participation over a four to six week period. These students will be interviewed about their experience with group work at the beginning and end of the project.

Risks of harm/Discomforts/Inconvenience: The risks of harm are minimal. The students in the class will not know who has volunteered to participate in the case studies.

Benefits: The information gathered about how students interact in groups will be useful for faculty at [REDACTED]. It will help the faculty to maintain an exceptional learning environment so that all students can benefit.

Confidentiality: The identity of the participants will be kept anonymous. Names of the participants will not be used in any document about the research findings. Instead each participant will be referred to by a code such as P1, P2, P3 etc. In this way the data collected cannot be linked to any particular person.

All data collected will be stored on a password protected laptop kept in the researcher's home. Audio tapes and written data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Tapes of student interactions will be listed to and transcribed in complete privacy so that no other person has access to this data. The data will be kept for up to four years at which time it will be destroyed.

Persons to Contact:

If you want to talk to anyone about this research study because you think you have not been treated fairly or think you have been hurt by joining the study, or you have any other questions about the study, you should call the principal investigator, Moira de Silva:

Student Consent Form for Interviews

Study: Moira de Silva, ELST Instructor, is conducting a research project into group dynamics for her degree of Doctor of Education. **Email:** moira.desilva@

Confidentiality: The identity of all participants and the name of the institution will be kept anonymous.

Purpose: All digitally recorded materials will be used solely by Moira de Silva to support her study into group dynamics. They will be kept securely and destroyed after a period of four years.

Risk: There are no risks of harm to the students. Students can withdraw at any time.

Approval: This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of XXX University.

Procedures: Moira de Silva will interview students about their experiences in group work in university classes. The interview will last about 60 minutes.

Print Name: _____ **Student Number:** _____

E-mail address: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

I am an international student: _____ NO or _____ YES

My native language is: _____

I am usually available for an interview at the following times (please give times):

Day	Times
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

The best time for an interview is: _____

I consent to the above

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 13 Letter of participation for participants

March 30, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

RE:

This is to certify that the above-named student at _____ volunteered and participated in a research project on group dynamics between February and March 2011.

This student showed initiative, maturity, and responsibility by volunteering, particularly as the time commitment was in addition to the normal university classes. The research conducted will benefit future students engaged in team projects at _____

Sincerely,



Moira E. M. de Silva, EdD Candidate (Univ. of Exeter), M.Ad.Ed., M.A.
Faculty Member
English Language Studies

Appendix 14 Composition of participant cooperative groups

International participants

Participants	International Students	Immigrant Students	Canadian-born students
Anisha			
Group 1	Anisha 1 Chinese female		1 Chinese Canadian female
Group 2	Anisha 1 Chinese female		2 Indo-Canadian females 1 Chinese Canadian female
Phuc			
	Phuc		2 Caucasian Canadian males 1 Indo-Canadian male 1 Caucasian Canadian female
Tracey			
Group 1	Tracey	1 Hong Kong female 1 Taiwan female	2 Chinese Canadian females
Group 2	Tracey		4 Caucasian Canadian females
Wahid			
	Wahid		3 Indo-Canadian males 1 Chinese-Canadian female

The columns show who the international research participants in the left column worked with in their group projects.

Canadian immigrant participants

Participants	International Students	Immigrant Participants	Canadian-born students
Andy			
Group 1	4 Chinese females	Andy	1 Caucasian Canadian male
Other Groups			Choose own team members from Canadian-born students
Chen			
Group 1	2 Korean male students	Chen	1 Caucasian Canadian male
Refers to a variety of other groups			
Emma			
Group 1		Emma	4 Chinese Canadian females 2 Indo-Canadian females
Group 2		Emma	3 Chinese Canadian females
Qi			
	1 Korean male 1 Middle Eastern female	Qi	1 Caucasian Canadian female 1 Chinese Canadian female
Refers to a variety of other groups			

The columns show who the Canadian immigrant research participants in the left column worked with in their group projects.

Canadian-born participants

Participants	International Students	Immigrant Students	Canadian-born students
Danielle			
Group 1	2 Chinese females		Danielle
Other groups were varied			
Gavin			
			Has only worked with Caucasian Canadians
Harprit			
Group 1	2 Chinese males		Harprit 1 Indo-Canadian male 1 Indo-Canadian female
Other groups not specified			Most experience with Indo-Canadian females
Sophie			
			Has only worked with Caucasian Canadians

The columns show who the Canadian-born research participants in the left column worked with in their group projects.

Appendix 15 Profile of the participants in the study

International participants

Anisha (I)

Educational background

Anisha came to Canada with her high school qualification from Mauritius. She obtained passes in English literature, mathematics and sociology. Prior to coming to Canada, she worked for a few years. Before attending UA, she had spent one year studying at a well-known Canadian university and was able to transfer credits for some of her courses to UA.

English background

For Anisha, English was the medium of instruction from elementary school onwards. This meant that she gained admission to a Canadian university without having to take further English classes or an international English test such as IELTS or TOEFL.

Cooperative learning experience

Anisha indicated some experience with group projects in high school. She talks about how much easier it is for students to understand each other if they have a common background and a common culture.

At UA

Anisha had two group experiences. Her first was with one international female student from China and one Canadian Chinese female student. Her second group experience was with one female international student from China, two Indo-Canadian females and a Chinese Canadian female.

Phuc (I)

Educational background

Phuc obtained a B.A. in Accounting from one of the best universities in Vietnam and then worked for one of the country's banks. He is quite proud of his educational achievements and explains, "I got pretty high grades in the national university entrance exam so I wanted to get into a university with high requirements. My university had the highest requirements for grades so that's why I got in." Similarly, he is proud of getting a position in one of the best banks. He describes how this bank "creams off" the best students.

English background

Phuc began learning English around grade 5; however, the university entrance exam dictated the amount of English he studied. The priority was Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry so he paid little attention to English. While still in Vietnam, once he had decided to come to Canada for studies, he threw himself into learning English. Then he enrolled in a Vancouver ESL school for one year. When he thought his English was good enough for university studies, he applied to UA since he was living nearby. Unfortunately, he had to take another semester of advanced English for Academic Purposes before he qualified. He does not regret this and is happy to be following his dream of getting a foreign degree.

Cooperative learning experience

Phuc did not have any experience of working in group projects prior to coming to Canada. As he explains, "Unfortunately, I have to say that Vietnamese universities don't practice group work very much. We have very, very few group projects."

At UA

Although Phuc had had several group experiences at UA, he only talked in detail about one. In this, he was the only international student and worked with two Caucasian Canadian males, one Indo-Canadian male and one Caucasian Canadian female.

Tracey (I)

Educational background

Tracey finished high school in China and came directly to Canada because she had failed to gain entry to a Chinese university. She really enjoyed her high school years as her classmates became like family members since they lived together at the school for six years. Despite this, Tracey is highly critical of the limited world knowledge she gained in the Chinese educational system. She states, "All Chinese people think similarly." She explains that information is controlled by the government and that they learn very little about different countries. She continues, "Before I came to Canada, I learned about it but after I came I realised I didn't know anything, didn't know anything about Canada."

English background

Tracey began learning English around grade 5. For her, the focus of English in school was memorising the grammar rules and the intensive reading required by the university entrance exam. Because of her low level of English she had to study it in Canada prior to taking university studies. She was placed in a low intermediate course at UA and struggled through five different levels, often repeating two or three times before she was eligible for university studies. It took her almost four years to complete courses that can be done in less than

two years. She makes excuses for her lack of progress. Firstly, she blames the community where she lives:

There's too much [sic] Chinese people in Community X. In the ESL courses there's too much [sic] Chinese people. In a class of thirteen people only about three students are not Chinese and they are almost Chinese; maybe Taiwanese. So we speak Mandarin out of class. Only in class we speak English so we learn very slowly. Maybe in reading we're better but speaking is really so difficult.

Secondly, she says that her friends have told her that the courses at UA are more difficult than similar courses at other institutions. For Tracey, English is still a struggle and she believes that she has not been well prepared for university studies. She manages to survive in an English academic environment by making frequent use of her electronic translation dictionary. Despite her difficulties in learning English, she has fond memories of her ESL classes and says, "ESL was the time we met friends."

Cooperative learning experience

In China, Tracey sometimes worked in groups when the students were involved in extra-curricular activities such as putting on shows. She really enjoyed such activities because her classmates were like her family members. She was not shy to take the leader's role.

At UA

Tracey described two groups at UA. In the first, she worked with one Hong Kong immigrant female student, one Taiwanese immigrant female student and two Chinese Canadian females. In the second group, she worked with four Caucasian Canadian female students.

Wahid (I)

Educational background

Wahid finished high school and spent one semester at university in his home country of Saudi Arabia. After that, he got a job as an administrative clerk and had the opportunity to complete a two year business diploma at his company's expense.

English background

Wahid was not very motivated to continue to tertiary education; therefore, English was not a big priority for him in school. He was able to speak some English upon graduation from high school but later his employer sent him on a business course in which he spent one year studying English. When he came to Canada, he enrolled at a downtown Vancouver ESL school where he studied for about a year prior to doing one semester of Academic English at UA. He really enjoyed the atmosphere in the private ESL school as most of the students were there for enjoyable short-term courses. The atmosphere in UA's ESL courses was quite different with students having to work hard to learn how to write research papers.

Cooperative learning experience

Wahid also participated in some group projects in high school when friends worked together. He said they would never make a team member feel uncomfortable. If a person did not feel like contributing to the work, he would then provide some snacks or do something else instead. This was acceptable to all.

At UA

Although Wahid had worked in several group projects, he only described one. In this he worked with three Indo-Canadian male students and one Chinese-Canadian female student.

Canadian immigrant participants

Andy (M)

Educational background

Andy arrived from Hong Kong when he was nine years old but said very little about his high school education other than the fact that he worked for a few years prior to starting tertiary education.

English background

Andy learned English in high school in Canada but gave no details.

Cooperative learning experience

Andy referred to doing group projects in high school but gave no details.

At UA

Andy described one group in particular and several other groups in general. He described working with four Chinese international female students and one Caucasian Canadian male student. In the other groups, he said he had usually chosen his own team members who were Canadian born students or immigrants but not international students.

Chen (M)

Educational background

Chen came to Canada from Taiwan when he was around twelve or thirteen. He said little about graduating from high school but seemed to have taken an extra year as he was twenty years old when he graduated and entered UA.

English background

Chen learned English in high school in Canada but gave no details.

Cooperative learning experience

For Chen, memories of group projects in school seem to be painful as he talks about being left out:

Group work wasn't really good for me because I couldn't understand. Nobody's giving you work or anything so you just sit there. It seems kind of useless. When people start work, they don't really let you do anything in case you mess it up so you feel pretty bad.

He continues to say that usually the teacher selected the groups so that students like him would not be left out but this did not have any effect as he got left out anyway.

At UA

Chen referred to working in a variety of groups but only described one in detail.

In this he worked with two international Korean male students and one Caucasian Canadian male student.

Emma (M)

Educational background

Emma came to Canada from China when she was six years old and successfully completed high school when she was eighteen years old.

English background

Emma learned English when she went to primary school in Canada.

Cooperative learning experience

Emma said she hated group projects in high school as she was shy and found it difficult to express her ideas in front of others. Often in her high school the Chinese students would work together and the Caucasians would work together. She explains what happened:

There were some people who didn't want to work with Chinese people because they thought they lowered the marks. In the mixed groups, the Caucasians were dominant. They were more active in doing the project; in talking and everything so the Chinese people didn't get a chance to say anything. The Caucasians came up with the ideas and the rest of the group just followed.

At UA

Emma described two groups she had worked in at UA. In the first, she worked with four Chinese Canadian female students and two Indo-Canadian female students. In the second, she worked with three Chinese Canadian female students.

Qi (M)

Educational background

Qi came from Taiwan when he was twelve. His high school years were quite traumatic as his father was pushing him towards studying medicine but Qi had no interest in this and was struggling with his English. He dropped out of school in his final year and enrolled in adult basic education classes with people twice his age. It took him three more years to obtain his high school certificate. He recalls this period in his life:

It was self-paced and I was surrounded by people who were twenty years older than me so I found it very difficult to motivate myself. My eyes were just wandering. I would look at all the girls passing by or all the guys talking about sports. I have been through a lot of night schools and adult learning centres and at that time I was working at the Asian supermarket and I would say it was the darkest moment in my life.

English background

Qi learned English in Canada but he was unable to pass his high school English until he was in his early twenties.

Cooperative learning experience

Qi referred to doing group projects in high school but gave no details.

At UA

Qi refers to a variety of group projects but only described one in detail. In this one, he worked with one Korean male international student, one Middle Eastern female international student (country unknown) , one Caucasian Canadian female student and one Chinese Canadian female student.

Canadian-born participants

Danielle (C)

Educational background

Danielle, a second generation Canadian of Filipino origin, attended a challenge programme for gifted students at a high school in an immigrant neighbourhood in Vancouver. She was also actively involved in various sports. When she graduated from high school at age eighteen, Danielle immediately enrolled at one of the better known local universities and studied there for a year and a half. She took a variety of arts and business courses while trying to make up her mind about what to study. While doing this, she worked part-time.

Language background

Danielle's first language is English but she also understands Filipino.

Cooperative learning experience

For Danielle, there were many group projects in school where she says students of the same cultural group always worked together. These were followed by group projects in the first university she attended. She also has to work in a team setting in her work place.

At UA

Although Danielle referred to several group projects, she only described one in detail. In this, she worked with two Chinese female international students.

Gavin (C)

Educational background

Gavin graduated from high school in Ontario in 2006 and worked at various jobs before enrolling at UA in 2010.

Language background

English is Gavin's first language and it is the only language he knows.

Cooperative learning experience

Gavin gained extensive experience working in groups as a volunteer in an anti-smoking campaign while in high school. He tells how valuable this experience was:

Because it was a government programme there was a lot of teamwork training and team building exercises involved which was a positive experience for me and I felt that that probably helped me both in the work world and in education since then.

At UA

Gavin has only worked with Canadian born, mainly Caucasian students.

Harprit (C)

Educational background

Harprit, a second generation Punjabi Canadian, entered UA directly after graduating from high school in 2010. Her school was located in a poorer neighbourhood of Vancouver populated mainly by immigrants and at school, most of Harprit's friends were Punjabi Canadians like herself.

Language background

Harprit says her first language is English but she also speaks Punjabi.

Cooperative learning background

For Harprit, group work in school was enjoyable. She describes her experiences:

They were mostly positive. I was shyer in school so I didn't really take the lead role but we worked well together because we'd known each other for a long time so the chemistry was there and the understanding and trust. So it worked well.

At UA

Sophie said that most of her experience in groups has been with Indo-Canadian female students like herself. She did describe one group in which she worked with two Chinese male international students, one Indo-Canadian male and one Indo-Canadian female student.

Sophie (C)

Educational background

Sophie, a Canadian of Scottish-Irish descent, graduated from high school in Vancouver and then attended a university in Ontario and obtained a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts.

Language background

Sophie's first language is English and it is the only language she speaks.

Cooperative learning background

Sophie has had extensive experience in group projects. Most of the work she did for her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree was organized in groups. She describes this:

I've had a lot of experience with team-based work. My previous university experience was majorly group projects. I was in the dance performance team so everything was working together in teams to create different dance pieces as well as our academic courses.

At UA

At UA, Sophie, has only worked with Caucasian Canadian students. This is similar to her team work in her previous B.A. programme.

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