An exploration of the dynamics of culture and personal acculturation in a culturally complex situation:

Learning from university students' experiences of group work

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I sincerely dedicate this Ph.D. thesis to my beloved grandparents and parents

Mr Bohua XU, Mrs Lianying FAN, Mr Bailang XU,

Mrs Yanqun LÜ, Mr Bingxi LÜ, Mrs Hongzhu JIN

I love you as I know everywhere I am there you will be.

谨以此博士论文献给我爱的家人：

徐伯华 先生，范莲英 女士，徐白浪 先生，

吕燕群 女士，吕炳喜 先生，金宏珠 女士

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The only true voyage of discovery, the only really rejuvenating experience, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is.

- Marcel Proust

Abstract

In this thesis, I adopt the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm to explore the complexity within the processes of both cultural-making and personal acculturation that may occur in an interweaving way within a local *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013).

More precisely, I contextualise this study in student group work as the specific *cultural arena* to investigate the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness and individual group member's acculturation process. A conceptual framework is suggested after synthesising both the debates between the essentialist and the anti-essentialist cultural paradigms in the field of intercultural communication and the discussions on acculturation in the existing literature.

I conceptually argue that culture is constituted by various salient aspects vis-à-vis cohesive thinking and behaviours that are always forming and re-forming. Personal acculturation can be explored through tracing the changes of an individual's *cultural realities* (Holliday, 2011; 2013). Both of them occur in parallel in a *cultural arena* (in this case, student group work).

Through analysing in-depth, narrative data from 15 participants about their group work experiences, I fine-tune and enrich this conceptual framework with empirical evidence (i.e. the findings) to demonstrate complexity (i.e. uncertainty and fluidity) in the cultural-making process as well as the dynamics and unpredictability of personal acculturation (i.e. an individual presents different trends of the key aspects of acculturation). Furthermore, I also identify four types of personal acculturation trajectories by comparing all the participants' acculturation trajectories.

Using this fine-tuned conceptual framework, the author of the thesis strengthens the potential links between the two separate, in parallel, but interrelated processes (e.g. cultural-making process and personal acculturation), which seem not to have been paid enough attention in the existing literature vis-à-vis the study of culture and (personal) acculturation. More importantly, the author argues that the links can be interpreted as an *interplay* in student group work as the specific *cultural arena*.

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1. Introduction

This opening chapter sets out the context and an overview of the study that provided the basis for this thesis. It begins with a narrative about how I located this study in the conceptual domain of culture and its interlink with individuals' experiences through my own academic sojourning journeys in different countries. From this, I explain the genesis of the research focus, and how it developed into the research aim and research questions that guided this study. The last part of this chapter presents the structure of the following chapters in this thesis, providing an outline of how the study unfolded towards a conceptual framework for unpacking cultural complexities based on a narrative exploration of the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness and personal acculturation experiences through the lens of students' group work.

2. The Genesis of This Study

The interest of conducting this doctoral study is closely related to my academic sojourning life both in China and the UK, which is briefly narrated in the following paragraphs.

In 2006, I physically travelled thousands of miles away from my hometown in the south-eastern part of China to a university located in the north-eastern part of the same country in order to complete my first degree. Culture had not been caught much attention until my academic sojourning life began. After being an undergraduate at that university, I realised that I became a migrant in the eyes of the local people who widely commented on the cultural difference between the south and the north. For instance, in the induction week, tutors greatly emphasised the cultural difference, such as eating habits, ways of communication and living styles, between the southern citizens (myself and a few others) and northern citizens (the majority of my classmates). In the following four years, I frequently heard my classmates and roommates discuss the different aspects of cultural difference between me and themselves. Besides, having seen me as an undergraduate from the south by default, the tutors occasionally reminded me that I needed to learn how to adapt to the

northern way of living as I would spend at least four years there. Therefore, a culturally non-monolithic campus life as the result of student mobility encouraged me to start thinking about culture, which ignited the interest in exploring culture as well as understanding what impact cultural difference might bring to people who are engaged with it.

In addition to that, understanding culture by means of drawing boundaries between two regions was further expanded to the national level in my degree course. As an English major undergraduate, I was taught different cultures regarding the main English-speaking countries, such as British culture, American culture. In the meantime, the cultural difference between China and those English-speaking countries was discussed and highlighted in class. For example, British people are normally able to talk about the weather at length and American people prefer to maintain their personal space around two feet. Differently, Chinese people seldom talk about the weather as a way of greeting and do not mind getting close to each other when they chat. Furthermore, the lecturers emphasised the importance of understanding cultural difference under a contemporary globalised world that intensifies the relations connecting distant localities (Beck, 2015; Hettne, 1999; Pieterse, 1994; Steger, 2010). Globalisation fosters the interchange of people's different worldviews and ideas through communications and interactions (Albrow and King, 1990). Under such circumstances, the method of 'do as the Romans do' was suggested by the lecturers to communicate with people from those English-speaking countries. In this sense, the degree course provided me with many chances to develop the interest in exploring culture as I was taught that culture could be nationally different.

Five years ago, the interest and idea of experiencing 'new or different cultures' became part of the motive for me to go abroad and started a new academic sojourning life in the UK to complete a master's degree. However, after rounds of discussions in a compulsory module for the master's degree course, I began to realise that the concept of culture could be a notoriously difficult term to define (Spencer-Oatey, 2012) and, in the case of English, one of the two or three most complicated words (Williams, 1982). For example, in the middle of 20th century, Kroeberand Kluckhohn (1952) summarised more than 160 definitions of culture before they suggested their own definition of culture. More

recently, Jahoda (2012) argued that there can be no generally agreed definition of culture. In a sense, the definition of culture varies from one scholar to another, which is always blur and under debate in academia. The fuzziness in the meaning of culture could be linked to the current ethos of postmodernism that seems to be gradually recognised by more and more scholars, which foregrounds the fragmentation, multiplicity, plurality, complexity and indeterminacy in the context where the definition of culture is situated (Best, Kellner and Rogers, 1991; Ward, 2010).

More importantly, in that module, different cultural paradigms in the field of intercultural communication (i.e. the essentialist cultural paradigm and an anti-essentialist cultural paradigm) (Hofstede, 2001; Holliday, 1999) were introduced. With reference to these cultural paradigms, I then developed the competence to analyse the approach I had adopted during the four-year undergraduate study in terms of understanding culture (described in previous paragraphs). To a great extent, the academic sojourning life in the UK conceptually and methodologically enlightened me because I began to question myself what the interpretations would be like if an alternative approach was available to understand culture. Such an approach claims to downplay what I had taken for granted for a long time, such as regional or national boundaries. From this perspective, my interest in exploring the meaning of culture not only remained but also strengthened due to the insightful discussions I had in the master's degree course.

It was also during the master's course that I had several chances to do group work with classmates who were from different countries. The experiential learning regarding doing group work also provided me with first-hand data to start questioning the 'do as the Romans do' method that I used to believe and practise in the course of communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds. For example, among the group work I had participated in, even though it emerged as my own initial expectation as an academic sojourner 'based in the UK' that we should seek guidance about a 'British (university) group work style', I then realised that we were not expected to, nor were we able to, rely on a 'group work style' as such. The university presented itself as an 'international' rather than 'British' institution and, specifically, no one in our group could act as a 'cultural guide' as none of us was 'local'/'British' by

passport, or by place of 'origin'. The ways of collaboration were always under negotiation and kept changing as the group work progressed. I did not find a 'standard or golden rule' that could be applied to all the group work I participated in. However, at some moments, I did sense that the group members' cultural backgrounds played a role in the interactions and communications in our group work (Du Gay *et al.*, 2013), for instance, some group members insisted that having a clear, discernible fair, task division is an important 'principle' they learnt in their home countries.

Apart from that, the occurrence of many scenarios during my group work seemed not to echo what I had been taught in terms of the cultural difference between the eastern and the western. For instance, I was amazed when a group member originally from Africa said what I suggested with respect to the restructuring of our group presentation matched his ideas. He further commented that working with me was like working with people from his country. I was also surprised when some group members from Western Europe engaged in the free chats and gossiped during the breaks of our group discussions. To me, the gossips somehow 'interfered with' each other's privacy, which they seemed not to mind at all.

In this sense, the first year of academic sojourning life in the UK offered me a theoretical understanding of culture as well as an opportunity to experience intercultural learning through real-life group-based scenarios, from which I sensed both coherence and contrast between theory and practice. The contrast led me to become increasingly critical of what I had always taken for granted in terms of both culture and what people might experience in a culturally different setting. I started to be no longer satisfied with the original interest regarding exploring 'the British culture' that might be different from 'the Chinese culture' or about understanding people by seeing how they learn or adapt to the British way of learning and living.

What I experienced and observed within group work suggested that the meaning of culture in a group setting could be more complicated than a simple combination of elements of different national cultures. I did see some group members beginning to develop new/different attitudes or thoughts during the group work processes, and the latter seemed to play a role in such changes.

This is how I decided to carry out this study by interpreting the mechanisms in student group work from a cultural perspective, to understand how these mechanisms emerge and operate and how they interact with individual group members' experiences when they are exposed to a group environment for collaborative learning.

3. The Research Aim, Research Questions, and Structure of the Thesis

My initial academic interest in the cultural-making process in group-based settings led me to focus my conceptual development of this study on a number of areas.

In Chapter 2, I discuss insights drawn from the literature surrounding student group work in the context of higher education. The insights suggest that interpersonal dynamics and interactions within student group work seem not to have been paid enough attention yet, which encourages me to consider student group work from other research areas, such as the field of intercultural communication and acculturation studies, in order to highlight the dynamics within student group work.

Chapter 3 presents a critical review of the debate in the field of intercultural communication on conceptualising culture, based on which I frame my understanding of the cultural-making process in the context of student group work in relation to a conceptual model as an attempt to synthesise anti-essentialist thoughts, in particular, Holliday's (2011; 2013) *Grammar of Culture*.

In Chapter 4, I proceed to discuss and problematise the concept of acculturation, which addresses the changes occurring in personal experiences vis-à-vis cultural difference. Here, I conceive students' group work as a specific site of *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013), which affords the potential for such changes to happen. In parallel with the conceptual model presented in Chapter 3 on culture, I conceive an additional model in an attempt to delineate acculturation as a process whereby an individual's *cultural realities* (Holliday, 2011; 2013) are continually (re-)modified. I conclude Chapter 4 with an analytical framework by drawing on the two conceptual models (e.g. cultural-making process and personal acculturation in student group work) I have conceived before.

Through this literature exploration, my two-fold research aim (on culture and acculturation) have sharpened, particularly in relation to a more nuanced terminology of the key concepts, with *cultural arena* and *cultural realities* being the key ones (Holliday, 2011; 2013). To explore the mechanisms underpinning the processes of cultural-making towards cohesiveness in student groups, those underpinning students' individual acculturation experiences, and the interconnection between these, I decided on the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What patterns can be identified about the trajectory with respect to the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness in the course of students' group projects?

Research Question 2: What patterns can be identified about students' individual acculturation trajectories, especially in terms of any changes occurring to their *cultural realities* concerning group work?

Research Question 3: Are there any discernible links between the students' individual acculturation trajectories and the developmental patterns regarding the process of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness?

Holding a postmodernist position on research philosophies, I am inclined to do research qualitatively and selected narrative inquiry as the methodology for this study. Following this methodology, I generated data by adopting the narrative interview (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000; Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000) and analysed them by using the categorical-content method (Lieblich *et al.,* 1998), which are discussed in the 5th Methodology Chapter.

Chapter 6 presents the patterns with respect to the cultural-making process in each of the five student groups. The findings support the anti-essentialist argument that the meaning or features of culture cannot be reduced to pre-existing elements associated with national cultural categories. These findings are then integrated into the conceptual model developed in Chapter 3 for a fuller presentation of the complexities involved in the process of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness.

Chapter 7 reports on the findings with regard to student's individual acculturation processes at a granular level, showing how these processes were constituted by multiple aspects and how each aspect followed its own way of development (termed a *trend*), which can be broadly patterned into a replacing

trend, an enriching trend and a maintaining trend. Based on an interpretation of the dominant trends across the key aspects constituting each participant's acculturation experience, I present four patterns of acculturation *trajectories* emerging from all participants' data, namely, replacing, enriching, maintaining, and blending. I further forward the argument that an individual's acculturation trajectory should be conceived in relation to the interdependence between, and the unique development of, various key aspects, which render the direction of acculturation less than predictable. This chapter concludes with a modified conceptual model of acculturation on the basis of the conceptual model regarding personal acculturation presented in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 8, I draw on the findings to further discuss the *interplay* between the process of cultural-making in student group and personal acculturation occurring there – a perspective on understanding student group work experiences that was scarcely adopted in extant literature in this topic area. Here I respond to the research questions raised earlier in this study, and draw together the conceptual models developed through this study on culture and acculturation to show their interconnections. In doing so, I hope that this study will add useful empirical and theoretical insights into the dialectic between culture and individuals' engagement with culture, which – despite prevalent scholarly discussions and debates surrounding structure and agency, fixity and fluidity – are largely studied in separate domains of inquiry.

In the final Conclusions Chapter, I summarise the main arguments raised in this study and foreground the theoretical contributions and practical implications of this study. Speaking of the theoretical contributions, this study (a) reveals how a process of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness, from an anti-essentialist perspective, emerges and develops in the context of student group work as the specific site of *cultural arena*; and (b) how each individual student acculturates when s/he is engaged with that cultural-making process. Furthermore, as the modified conceptual framework indicates in Chapter 8, (c) these two processes (cultural-making towards group cohesiveness and personal acculturation) are both complex, fluid as well as interdependent (termed *interplay*). In terms of the practical implications, this study calls for educational practitioners to acknowledge and highlight the cultural-making process and personal acculturation in student group work when they need to

understand and evaluate students' performances. These processes might provide educational practitioners with some insights in relation to group collaboration and personal development.

Chapter Two

Evaluation of Studies on Student Group Work

1. Introduction

In the previous opening chapter, I presented a brief personal history of my experiences and thinking concerning group work in university settings, which not only provided the impetus for this study, but also led me to engage with academic studies surrounding the topic of student group work. In this chapter, I discuss how I came to theorise student group work in relation to these studies, which are drawn from a number of disciplines.

It begins with a broad context of higher education where group work is currently recognised as one of the popular learning activities/assessments for students to participate in. Nevertheless, two terms, namely, group work and teamwork, are used interchangeably by lecturers and tutors in that context, I clarify the terminology (it is student group work) I adopt throughout this study and define its meaning.

I then discuss how student group work has been scholarly studied in a number of research areas, such as management psychologies, intercultural relations and educational psychology.

The discussions indicate that the mechanisms in student group work (i.e. interpersonal dynamics and interactions and dynamics occurring within an individual) can be further investigated, which encourages me to extend the inquiry of these two levels of dynamics in student group work into other research domains, such as intercultural communication and acculturation.

2. Contextualising and Defining Student Group Work in Higher Education

Lecturers who engage students in group work activities take the demands of the contemporary workplace into account (Gevers and Peeters, 2009; Guzzo and Shea, 1992; Thompson, 2004; Popov *et al.*, 2012). Nowadays, most workplaces are becoming culturally diverse (Chan and Goto, 2003; Parvis, 2013; Podsiadlowski *et al.*, 2013; Sharma, 2016) and working effectively with culturally

different others in groups is increasingly recognised as an integral part of employees' competence, such as pooling ideas, seeing problems from different perspectives and synthesising outcomes of discussion and feedback (Harvey *et al.*, 1997; 1998; 2002; Sweeney *et al.*, 2008). To put it another way, the popularity of doing group work at university is associated with the fact that group work is always indispensable to the employees' daily duties in their workplaces. Indeed, there is some evidence showing that group work is highly recognised and acknowledged in organisations for its efficiency and high productivity of task-completion (Baker *et al.*, 2006; Fay, 2015; Griffin *et al.,* 2001).

Therefore, using student group work as a learning activity at university settings could be seen as one of the ways to enhance students' skills for employability and prepare them for the workplace after graduation (Dawson, 2010; Johnston and Miles 2004; Lejk and Wyvill, 1997; Livingstone and Lynch 2000; McCorkle *et al.*, 1999; Mutch 1998; Pfaff and Huddlestone, 2003; Summers and Volet, 2008).

In the context of higher education, two synonymous terms – student group work and student teamwork - are frequently used by researchers to describe collaborative tasks undertaken by university students (either as a form of learning or assessment). Given this, group work and teamwork are often considered interchangeable (Ku *et al.*, 2013; Mutch, 1998; Smith, 1996; Takeda and Homberg, 2014; Vik, 2001; Willcoxson, 2006), although some (e.g. Connor, 2014) argue that the term 'student group work' is more suitable to emphasise cooperative learning and students' knowledge, attitude and generic skills development, and communication and critical thinking.

In this study, I employ the term student group work and define it as:

> *a collaboration between more than two individuals who have been assigned academic tasks and are jointly responsible for the final results, during which process they see themselves and are seen by others as a collective unit* (Cohen and Bailey, 1997; Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Popov et al., 2012).

Having now contextualised this study in student group work at university and pinpointed its meaning, in the following section, I discuss how student group

work has been studied from different scholarly perspectives, mainly in the fields of management psychologies and intercultural relations.

3. An Overview of Studies on Student Group Work

There is a rich body of literature on group work with different focuses. I explicitly confine the group work of this study into university student context and I am interested in investigating the mechanisms in student group work. Thus, I selectively review studies and theories/models that address such aspects of student group work, which emerged to me as clustering around four main themes: group formation, group developmental stages, group member performance, and the benefits and challenges of doing student group work perceived by various stakeholders. This section details the main insights I drew from these lines of inquiry.

3.1 The Formation of Student Group Work

To start with, I focus on how researchers and educators have debated about how a student group should be formed. Their opinions can be broadly divided into two camps. One camp believe that student group should be allocated by the lecturers, either randomly or deliberately (Chapman *et al*., 2006; Huxham and Land, 2000; Wang and Lin, 2007). Researchers who are in favour of this approach argue that lecturers with a good knowledge of their entire students are in an informed position to combine students into groups. It may also give group members an impression that they are equally treated in the process of group formation (Strauss and Young, 2011). More importantly, this approach is similar to how groups are formed in the workplace where employees normally have no chance to choose which colleagues they intend to work with (Chapman *et al*., 2006). Therefore, this approach is endorsed by those who emphasise the transferability of skills to be developed through group work against workplace realities.

Researchers in the other camp argue that group members should be self-selected (Bacon *et al*, 2001; Ledwith and Lee, 1998). They believe that this approach would create fewer chances for some group members to be 'used' to help less-competent others. As Waite *et al.* (2004) argued, students may resist the idea of group work and present a number of reasons, such as perceptions

of the assignment, working efficiency, peer-supporting and interpersonal respect. Hence, this approach might reduce or even possibly diminish resentment amongst the group members. This approach is argued to facilitate group performance, as it provides an opportunity for students to mix and work with people they know well and are willing to collaborate with (Mason, 2006; Van Der Laan Smith and Spindle, 2007).

However, the self-select approach to group formation seems to be particularly problematic in multinational learning contexts, as some researchers note that local students or domestic students do not tend to form groups with international students (Volet and Ang, 2012). While some found that international students tend to be more willing to join groups constituted of students from different countries (Summers and Volet, 2008), others put forward a counter argument that international students may be inclined to work with peers from the same cultural background and form culturally homogenous groups, especially when they become used to the way of learning in the host universities (Strauss and Young, 2011).

3.2 The Developmental Stages of Student Group Work

Research on the developmental stages of student groups has been heavily influenced by Tuckman's and Jensen's model (Hartley, 1997). Initially, Tuckman (1965) proposed four stages regarding the development of a group.

- Forming stage: group members are getting to know each other. In this stage, group members are uncertain and anxious. They do not have a clear clue about what is going to happen and what roles they are playing in this group.

- Storming stage: conflicts start to appear among group members and they also 'test the water' to see the boundaries of acceptable behaviours in this group. Some group members start to challenge the leadership and attempt to gain power. It is also at this stage that divisions might happen, which leads to the shape of 'sub-groups'.

- Norming stage: group members develop consensual norms in terms of behaviours and performance.

- Performing stage: group members accept differences and aim for the task completion to achieve goals.

A fifth stage, 'adjourning', was added by Tuckman and Jensen (1977) later to describe that, even if the group members have completed the task and achieved their goals, they might have to deal with issues of parting and loss before it is dismissed.

Tuckman and Jensen (1977) argued that every group goes through all these stages without exception. However, depending on the length of the group work, a certain stage might last longer than the others, for instance, when a student group works together over a long period (e.g. a trimester or an academic year), then the conflict stage probably takes longer time to go through (UOIT, 2015).

Nevertheless, some scholars contend that adopting this model in the context of current student group work may be somewhat outdated and less applicable. As a result, they develop alternative models to describe the developmental stages (Hartley, 1997). For example, Miller *et al.* (1994) suggested a two-phase model, explaining how a group develops from the independence of each other to interdependence with each other. According to Napier and Gershenfeld (2004), a student group work may experience four stages. Initially, the group enters into a *latent* phase where group members are eager to agree with each other and do not raise issues of conflict. This phase is followed by an *adaptation* where group members allocate roles in order to complete the task. Through the collaboration, group members may need to compromise and re-evaluate each other's role, which leads the group to the third phase *integration* where a greater level of flexibility is required. Finally, the group focuses on task again to achieve the goal, which is called the *goal attainment* phase. Heron (1999) proposes a Four-season Model to discuss the initial (winter) phase (lack of trust) which is followed by a (spring) phase (trust and culture building). Then the group develops into a (summer) phase (authentic behaviour and growth encouraged) and eventually, the group moves into an (autumn) phase (a review of progress).

These staged models differ in detail but are all based on the assumption that a group should go through all the stages in a cyclical path rather than a linear process, which means a group might visit different stages at different times, depending on the interactions between the group members.

Gersick (1991) took her 'punctuated equilibrium' model to challenge that assumption shared by the majority scholars at that time by saying that group

work can 'jump in progress'. According to her study, after assigning the group task, the group members may be suddenly concerned about the deadline as well as their progress and then they might settle into a productive phase where group members again work together to complete their tasks.

3.3 The Performance of Student Group Work

Research on the performance of group work usually focuses on the role(s) each member plays in the group and the implications of these roles for the effectiveness of group performance (Bacon *et al.*, 1998; De Vita, 2002). For example, Bacon *et al.* (1998) contend that the group's performance depends on the group member who performs best, worst or averagely. This viewpoint is defended by De Vita (2002) who argues that the group's performance is decided neither by the least competent group member nor by the average ability of all the members in a group; instead, it is likely to reflect the ability of the most competent member. Gevers and Peeters (2009) found that the overall dissimilarity of group work negatively affected each member's satisfaction and group work performance while the dissimilarity between two members only negatively affected those members' satisfaction. Livingstone and Lynch (2000) contend that a group can moderate the personal collisions and downplay the individual contrasts when each group member plays a clear role in a group. They further argue that group members are likely to marginalise the contributions or valuable input from the person whose role is not identified or unclear.

Under the influence of this assumption, many models are developed and applied to the understanding of student group work performance among which two popular ones are briefly discussed as below. The first one was conceived by Belbin (1993; 2011). According to his model (see: Table 2.1), each group member should play one of the nine roles that he has identified.

Belbin's Nine Role Model

The role in a group	Function of the role	Characteristics
The Co-ordinator	To organise and control the team; To guide the team by clarifying the situation; To encourage the members to achieve the set objectives; To summarise the situation for the team	The Coordinator is self-controlled, a good communicator, commands respect and inspires enthusiasm.
The Shaper	To encourage the team to action; To make things happen and unite disparate ideas; To use enthusiasm to persuade others to follow	The Shaper is dynamic and dominant, intolerant, impulsive and arrogant.
The Implementer	He/she tends to like clear objectives but can be inflexible and does not like unproven ideas.	The implementer is practical and hardworking, efficient and good at organising because of a disciplined approach.
The Monitor Evaluator	To evaluate ideas and suggestions; To bring critical thinking and objective analysis which prevents the group; behaving hastily; To prevent the team from taking excessive risks	The Monitor Evaluator is rather tactless, but displays good judgement and is rarely wrong.
The Plant	To generate ideas that are left for others to nourish	The Plant is an imaginative and innovative individual who may be impractical and can make careless mistakes, so s/he needs careful handling by the team.
The Resource Investigator	To develop contacts and negotiates with outsiders	The Resource Investigator is likeable, enthusiastic and brings in new ideas from elsewhere. The resource investigator can seem to be over-enthusiastic to others and sometimes does not deliver on promises made but escapes criticism by using charm and good communication skills.
The Team Worker	To foster team spirit	The Team Worker is perceptive and trusting, promoting harmony, but not contributing much to the team task. The team worker can appear to be indecisive and is missed more than any other team member if s/he is absent.

	To ensure that deadlines are met	The Completer is orderly and conscientious and worries about the successful completion of the task.
The Completer		The completer is a perfectionist who dislikes casualness and can lower the morale of some of the team members.
The Specialist	To contribute technical skills on a narrow front, providing expertise	The Specialist is self-motivated and professional in outlook.

Table 2.1 (Source: Belbin 1993, 2011)

As Belbin (1993; 2011) pointed out, successful group performance would be affected (e.g. less effective or non-effective) when some roles are missed in a group or too many group members play the same role. Likewise, Margerison and McCann (1990) developed a similar model called the team management wheel to distinguish the function of each group member in a group into eight different types.

- Reporter-Adviser: dislike being rude, flexible and knowledgeable;
- Creator-Innovator: imaginative, future-oriented, enjoys complexity, creative, likes research work;
- Explorer-Promoter: persuader, "seller", likes varied, exciting, stimulating work, easily bored, influential and outgoing;
- Assessor-Developer: analytical and objective, developer of ideas, enjoys prototype or project work, experimenter;
- Thruster-Organizer: organizes and implements, quick to decide, results-oriented, sets up systems, analytical;
- Concluder-Producer: practical, production-oriented, likes schedules and plans, pride in reproducing goods and services, values effectiveness and efficiency;
- Controller-Inspector: strong on control, detail-oriented, low need for people contact, an inspector of standards and procedures;
- Upholder-Maintainer: conservative, loyal, supportive, personal values important, strong sense of right and wrong, work motivation based on purpose.

Despite the fact that the two models are widely applied and discussed to understand student group work performance, they are also critiqued in different ways (Furnham *et al*, 1993). In these models, group members are associated with distinctive roles that are presented as stable categories. It can be argued that individuals may actually choose to adopt different roles as the group work proceeds and their sense-makings of the group dynamics change.

Some other researchers have examined the role of cultural diversity in the group performance and their findings are varied. Cultural diversity is a very broad umbrella concept which encompasses categories such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, sexual identity and so forth (Alderfer and Smith, 1982; Cox, 1994; Pfeffer, 1985). In the literature on university students' group work, two types of cultural diversity are usually foregrounded: the group members' nationality or ethnicity diversity, and the gender issue/balance in the group. Many researchers claim that a multicultural group is likely to perform better than a monocultural group in terms of identifying problems, generating alternatives and solutions (Bacon *et al.*,1998; De Vita, 2002; Kirchmeyer, 1993; Pineda *et al.*, 2009; So *et al.*, 2011; Watson *et al*, 1993). Watson *et al.*, (2002) clearly point out that groups formed by mixed national group members perform better in terms of leadership and group process than mono-ethnic groups. However, some researchers presented counter-evidence, arguing that mixed nationalities may actually reduce the efficiency of group performance (Popov *et al.*, 2012; Umans, 2011).

With regard to gender issues, it is agreed by many researchers that gender diversity is a strength to group performance (Byrne *et al.*, 2001; Hamlyn-Harris *et al.*, 2006; Umans, 2011; Wood, 1987; Zeitun, 2013), for instance, in a student group where the number of female members exceeds the number of male members (or both genders are in an equal number), this group seems to have more creative ideas and group members are more likely to make contributions (Dess and Beard, 1984; Fenwick and Neal, 2001).

3.4 The Benefits and Challenges of Student Group Work

The benefits and challenges of group work for university students have been frequently discussed in the literature. Some of the researchers discuss them in culturally homogeneous student groups while others particularly explore the

benefits or challenges for the students in the groups formed by nationally or ethnically different individuals.

3.4.1 Benefits

According to many researchers, the benefits of group work for students are mostly related to the development of students' learning approaches and skills, knowledge constructions and personal growths. Some scholars point out that group work may encourage students to switch from surface learning to deep learning, from passive learning to active learning (Entwistle and Waterson, 1988; Kremer and McGuiness, 1998; Ruel *et al.*, 2003) as well as experiential, collaborative and cooperative learning through sharing views (Ackermann and Plummer, 1994; Lee *et al.*, 1997; Mahenthiran and Rouse 2000; McGraw and Tidwell, 2001; Nance and Mackey-Kallis, 1997). At the same time, researchers argue that the group work provides students with chances to construct knowledge and enhance problem-solving skills, social skills and civic values (Dolmans *et al.*, 2001; Hendry *et al.*, 1999), which reflect an authentic form of collaboration in the workplace (Ackermann and Plummer, 1994; Bourner *et al.*, 2001; Maguire and Edmondson, 2001; Mutch 1998; Ravenscroft, 1997). Group work also promotes personal growth and builds connections and friendship (Williams and Johnson, 2011).

Different benefits seem to be addressed and emphasised by some scholars whose studies focused on mixed national or ethnic student groups. For instance, there is some research evidence that students developed ethnorelative views and intercultural competence when they have chances to work with culturally different group members (De Vita, 2005; Liu and Alba, 2012; Popov *et al.*, 2012; Turner, 2009). Wang (2012) notes that gradual changes in some Chinese students' forms of discourse, socialisation and face system after conducting group work with non-Chinese in the UK learning environment. Montgomery (2009) also reported positive changes in students' attitudes (e.g. developing an awareness of the complexity of culture, perceiving diversity within their own nationalities and within the nationalities of others) as a possible result of working with culturally different others. Volet and Ang (2012) note that both the domestic and international students in their study start to reflect and revise the initial assumptions they had had about their counterparts after they worked together. Sweeney *et al.* (2008) and Montgomery (2009) provide a summary of

the benefits of working in a multicultural group (see: Table 2.2), many of which can be related to personhood development in the areas of values, mindsets, intercultural awareness and competence.

The Benefits of Working in a Multicultural Group

Self-awareness	• Awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses • Personal growth • Learning about self and ability to lead a group
New ideas and learning practices	• Unique perspectives on issues • Deep content learning • Better learning practices (e.g. time management, critical evaluation and involvement) • Different perspectives essential for some subjects (e.g. international business)
Interaction skills	• How to compromise • Adept at working with strangers, people with a different mindset • More confident and comfortable, especially in presenting own view
Attitudes	• Change in attitudes towards others • Reduction in prejudices
Friendships	• Opportunity to make great friends

Table 2.2 (Source: Montgomery, 2009; Sweeney *et al.* 2008)

However, Kimmel and Volet (2010) contend that students' intercultural experiences and attitudes in a multicultural group are influenced by the contextual aspects of the specific learning environment (i.e. organisational structure and instructional features), which resonates with the argument raised by Harrison and Peacock (2007) that students' intercultural awareness and attitudes are rather paradoxical as their perceptions towards intercultural interactions in group work are complex. These studies call into question whether multicultural group work 'automatically' guarantees students' development of intercultural competence, self-awareness or open-mindedness.

3.4.2 Challenges

The challenges associated with student group work have been widely discussed in educational and pedagogical research. 'Free-rider' is a frequently addressed challenge (e.g. Burdett, 2003; Jones, 1984; Kerr and Bruun, 1983; Latane *et al.*, 1979; Morgan, 2002; Ruel *et al.*, 2003; Strong and Anderson, 1990; Watkins, 2004). Morris and Hayes (1997) define 'free-riding' as a phenomenon that some group members have made little or no contribution to the outcome of the group

projects but benefit from the work (e.g. grades) accomplished by the other group members. Watkins (2004) further distinguishes 'free-riding' from the phenomenon of 'social loafing', although they are used interchangeably by some researchers (e.g. Brooks and Ammons, 2003; Strong and Anderson, 1990). According to Watkins (2004), social loafing means that some group members feel that they are not given enough notice or lack of identification during the group work and therefore intentionally reduce their efforts to contribute (thus leading to free-riding) (Aggarwal and O'Brien, 2008; Teng and Luo, 2015; Voyles, 2015).

Some argue that the phenomenon of free-riding causes the 'sucker'-effect in student group work (Kerr, 1983; Mulvey and Klein, 1998). When some group members are perceived to be free-riders, those who are initially motivated to contribute may have a sense of unfairness and therefore avoid being the 'suckers'. This could result in their choice to free-ride themselves by deliberately reducing their efforts or contributions (Kerr, 1983).

Social-loafing, free-riding and sucker-effect could happen in any student group, which means that multicultural groups are not immune to these challenges. Apart from these challenges, language and communication issues are also frequently noted as a challenge for multicultural group work, such as English proficiency and communication style (Popov *et al.*, 2012; Spencer-Oatey and Dauber, 2016; Turner, 2009; Volet and Ang, 2012).

4. Evaluating Studies on Student Group Work

In the preceding sections, I discussed existing research developments concerning student group work around several themes. I now evaluate these developments towards the sharpening of a research aim for this study.

First of all, this literature alerted me to two trends in the studies and theories/models concerning student group work. The first trend is to conceptualise cultural difference reductively. It is not difficult to notice that when researchers discuss the multicultural student groups, they always refer the groups that are constituted by students with different national or ethnic backgrounds. For instance, 'mixed national groups', 'ethnically-mixed groups', and 'groups formed by international and domestic students' (e.g. Davies, 2009;

De Vita, 2002; 2005; Popov *et al.,* 2012; Strauss and Young, 2011; Summers and Volet, 2008; Sweeney *et al.*2008; Turner, 2009; Volet and Ang, 2012). Here, cultural difference seems equated with national or ethnic difference presented by each group member.

Furthermore, when researchers equate cultural difference with the national or ethnic difference, they seem to attribute most of the challenges happening in a mixed-national/ethnic group to the national or ethnic difference presented by its group members. I would agree that, when nationally or ethnically different students work in a group, there could be additional challenges (e.g. language issue, different communication style) added to the collaborative learning in a group (Andrade, 2006; Medved *et al.,* 2013; Popov *et al.,* 2012).

Nevertheless, this difference is not necessarily always the reason for the barriers or challenges that a group need to face. Based upon my own group work experiences, the misunderstandings among a mixed-national/ethnic group could occur because of many possibilities (e.g. no adequate background knowledge, uncertain about the group task etc. rather than the communicative language (e.g. English) *per se* they use to exchange ideas. In this sense, it seems inappropriate for researchers to simplify the mechanisms within a mixed-national/ethnic group and conclude that national or ethnic difference necessarily serves as the primary reason to account for the barriers or challenges. In fact, many challenges (e.g. free-riding, sucker-effect) could happen in any student group regardless whether it is formed by mixed-national/ethnic students or not (Watkins, 2004). In the same way, the benefits that a mixed-national/ethnic group receives may not necessarily be a result of the national/ethnic diversity in that group.

Hence, I consider, to some extent, that current research on student group work is limiting in terms of reducing the cultural complexity in student group work largely to mixed-nationalities or ethnicities.

The second trend is to study student group work structurally and functionally. In theories/models that discuss the group development or performance, many researchers tend to interpret group work by normalising the 'typical' cycle a group should go through and/or the functional role to be adopted by each group member for the completion of a given task. This research orientation implies a

conceptualisation of group work as a 'system' and its group members as the 'components' that constitute the system.

This conceptual orientation has prompted researchers to scrutinise the structure of the group work 'system' and diagnose the role of its group members ('components') so that, in problematic cases, they could seek an explanation from identifying 'dysfunctional' stage(s) or individual members. As a result, desired developmental stages (e.g. Hartley, 1997; Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) or functional roles (e.g. Belbin 1993, 2011) are proposed as to what 'functioning' student group work should be like in the sense that they can achieve expected outcomes.

From this perspective, student group work has been frequently studied with a strong task-driven or goal-driven direction, centred on the facilitation of 'smooth completion' of the group tasks through the minimisation of (potential) obstacles.

I would argue that this functional orientation largely neglects the mechanisms (e.g. interpersonal interactions) among students. As Archer (2007) argues, each student is an active agent who possesses and may utilise, the power to negotiate both with other individuals (e.g. group members, tutors etc.) and with the structure (e.g. group task requirement), and this may constantly happen throughout the process of group work.

This discussion in relation to the two trends in the theories/models concerning student group work suggests a necessity for me to explore other research domains, apart from the fields of management psychologies and intercultural relations, in order to further gain some insights with respect to the mechanisms in student group work.

The educational psychology literature is particularly relevant to this research aim, for its dedicated contribution to understanding individual differences exhibited or constructed through their dynamic learning processes (Snowman, 1997). In this body of literature, many scholars research what students say or do to identify relationships between students' specific actions and the immediate precursors and consequences of their actions (e.g. Alberto and Troutman, 2009; Ferster and Skinner, 1957; Mazur, 2015).

I decided to focus on the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky's work because his most outstanding work – the Model of the Zone of Proximal Development

(hereinafter 'ZPD') – reveals how human beings develop their advanced human activities (e.g. voluntary attention, logical thought, planning and problem-solving) through (interactive) learning and education (Davydov, 1995; Turuk, 2008). In my case, arguably, these advanced activities can be manifested in as well as counted as part of the process of student group work. Give this, in the following section, I mainly discuss Vygotsky's ZPD model.

5. Vygotsky's ZPD Conceptual Model of Student Group Work

Lev Vygotsky (1978) formulated a theory of cognitive development that is based on the interactions a child has with his/her peers or with adults who socialise the child into their world. As Vygotsky (1978) pointed out, children first develop lower mental functions (e.g. simple perceptions, associative learning and involuntary attention) and then they develop higher mental functions (e.g. language, logic, problem-solving skills, moral reasoning and memory schemas).

Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the process of *internalisation* within an individual's cognitive development, which means that, a student or a child first experiences something, for instance, an idea or attitude, some behaviours in a social site and then the individual internalises this experience and makes it a part of his/her mental functioning. As Vygotsky said: "the internalisation of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology, the basis of the qualitative leap from animal to human psychology" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57).

As other researchers discussed (Cole, 1985; Davydov; 1995; Doolittle, 1996; 1997), the construct of the ZPD model is central to Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development (see: Diagram 2.1).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
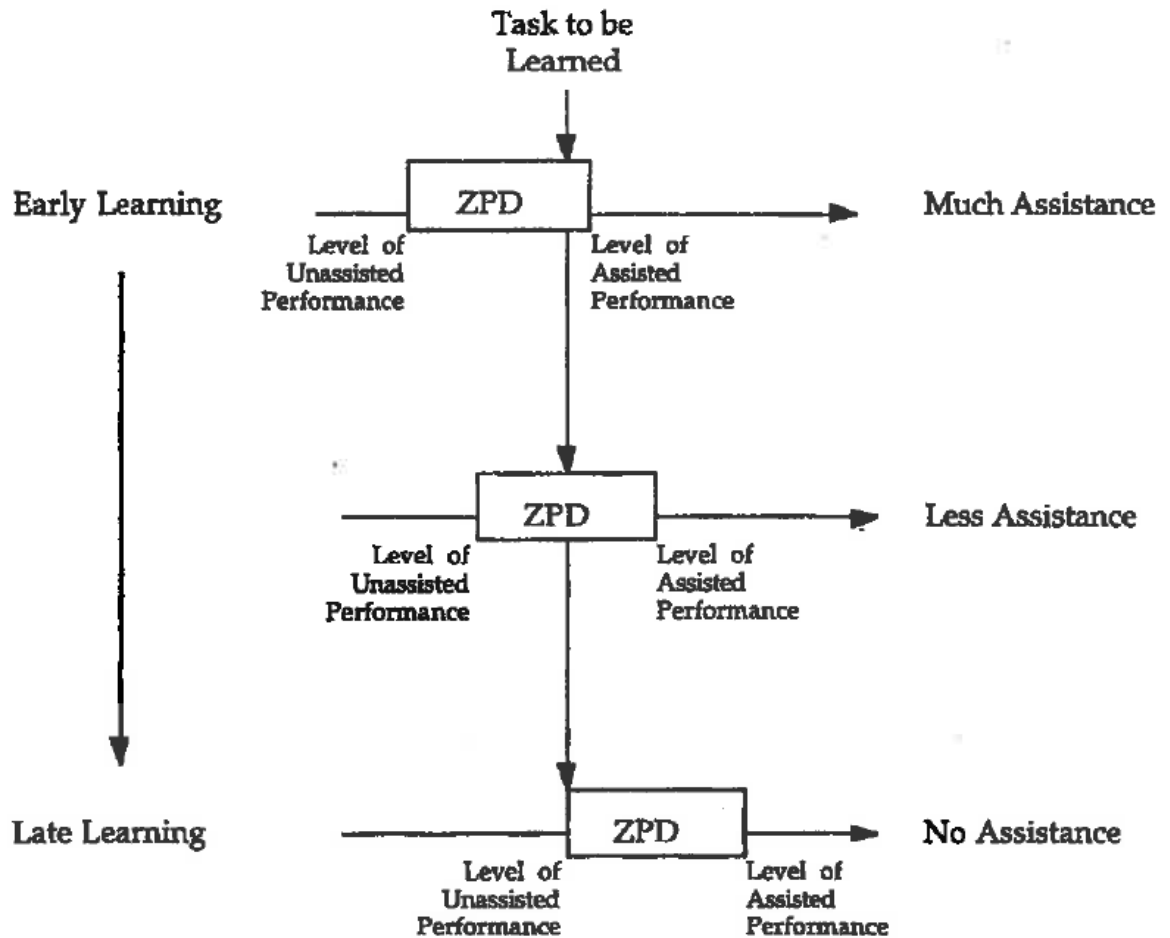
Diagram 2.1 (Source: Doolittle, 1996, p.35)

The ZPD model refers to an individual's (a student's) cognitive growth from the upper to the lower limits. According to Vygotsky (1978), a student's immediate potential for cognitive development is limited on the Upper End, which means s/he can accomplish learning process (Early Learning shown in Diagram 2.1) with the help of a more knowledgeable other, such as a peer, a tutor or a teacher. At the same time, the same individual's immediate potential for cognitive development is also limited on the Lower End, which means s/he can accomplish learning process (Late Learning shown in Diagram 2.1) independently. The region of immediate potential for cognitive growth from the early, assistant learning (the upper) to the late, independent learning (the lower), is the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

By conceptualising this model, Vygotsky (1987, p.211) claimed that "what lies in the zone of proximal development at one stage is realised and moves to the level of actual development at a second. In other words, what the child is able to

do in collaboration today, [s/he] will be able to do independently tomorrow". Furthermore, Moll (1992) argued that a full appreciation of Vygotsky's ZPD model and its educational implications requires an understanding of three aspects of the ZPD:

- The Use of Whole, Authentic Activities: Educators need to study activities that "involve applying learned knowledge and skills in the completion of a real-world task within a meaningful cultural context, as opposed to activities that reduce mental functioning to a decontextualised component skill" (Doolittle, 1997, p. 85).
- The Need for Social Interaction: "Students internalise the knowledge and skills first experienced during these interactions and eventually use this knowledge and these skills to guide and direct their own behaviours. Thus, social interaction between those who are less experienced and those who are more experienced is an essential component of the zone of proximal development" (Doolittle, 1997, p. 87).
- The Process of Individual Change: "As a student learns and develops, his/her collaborative interactions with others (e.g. fellow students or tutors) lead to the development of culturally relevant behaviours" (Doolittle, 1997, p. 88). This indicates that an individual is always undergoing change.

Vygotsky's ZPD model offers a possible theoretical basis for understanding the learning phenomena in student group work at university settings. More precisely, student group work at university provides a real-world-like setting where a certain number of (culturally) different individuals are required to collaborate in order to exchange ideas, to negotiate different thoughts, to solve problems and eventually to produce the expected outcomes. This experience bears a certain degree of resemblance to what happens in the workplace or daily life, thus demonstrating the first aspect (whole and authentic activities) of the ZPD.

Secondly, by definition, student group work would necessarily encompass an element of social interaction, which differentiates the task from independent learning activities. Such interaction is purposely created, or expected to happen, so that students can develop learning in one way or another through such

processes. This resonates with the second aspect (the need for social interactions) of the ZPD.

Thirdly, the last aspect (individual change) of the ZPD indicates that one of the possible changes that occurs to individuals who are engaged in student group work can be learnt at the group members' behavioural levels.

In a word, Vygotsky's ZPD model suggests that each individual student is likely going through an *internalisation* process as long as s/he participates in the interactive and authentic activity, in this case, student group work at university. This *internalisation* process can be demonstrated in the manner of a student's cognitive development and changes of his/her culturally relevant behaviours. Vygotsky's ZPD model, therefore, recognises the importance of the conditions, here, the interpersonal dynamics and interactions in student group work because these dynamics function as a premise for the occurrence of an individual student's cognitive development and (cultural) behavioural changes. From this perspective, Vygotsky's ZPD model helped me to understand the mechanisms in student group work through two important dynamic processes, which are interpersonal dynamics and interactions as well as the dynamics occurring within each individual group member.

However, considering student group work through the lens of Vygotsky's ZPD model does not provide me with a rich understanding regarding what role of the interpersonal dynamics and interactions within a group work plays in its individual group member's personal changes. In addition, this model does not suggest what dynamics would happen to each individual when s/he moves from the Upper End to the Lower End as a trajectory with respect to the personal changes.

In this sense, I would argue these processes (e.g. the dynamics among students at group level as well as the dynamics occurring within each individual student) warrant more attention in research on student group work, especially in the light of interpersonal communication, which gives rise to the dynamic possibilities of synergy, conflict, agreement, and (successful and failed) group decision.

This study was therefore anchored to an interest in such processes. More specifically, I was interested not only in the processes among individual

students at a group level, but also in the dynamics occurring within each individual member, such as the changes (if any) in their perceptions, attitude, behaviours etc. about group work. In the next two chapters, I extend my discussion of these two levels of dynamics through the theoretical lens of intercultural communication and acculturation.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have contextualised student group work in higher education to emphasise its popularity in the eyes of educational practitioners, which shows that a good understanding of student group work is important.

Flowing the contextualisation, I theorised the understanding of student group work by first discussing the studies in the fields of management psychologies and intercultural relations. This discussion suggests two issues: (1) The understanding of cultural difference in student group work has been largely equated with their national or ethnic differences; (2) The studies of student group work imply a strong task-or goal-driven orientation. These two issues reveal that the mechanisms (i.e. interpersonal dynamics and interactions) in student group work seem to have been downplayed.

I then shifted to the discipline of educational psychology and chose Vygotsky's ZPD conceptual model to further theorise my understanding of student group work. Through the theoretical lens of the ZPD model, I am able to concretise the broad sense of mechanisms in student group work into two levels of dynamics (i.e. interpersonal dynamics and interactions at group level and dynamics occurring within each individual student). Although the ZPD model recognises the importance of these two levels of dynamics, it does not provide a rich understanding of them.

Therefore, I have decided to further investigate these two levels of dynamics by drawing on other research domains. More specifically, in Chapter 3, I discuss how the interpersonal dynamics in the field of intercultural communication and, in Chapter 4, I discuss the dynamics occurring within each individual student by drawing on the studies in the research area of acculturation.

Chapter Three

Culture as Emergent, Hybrid and Fluid Processes

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I theorised student group work in the context of higher education, which indicates that the two levels of dynamics in student group work (the dynamics among students at a group level and the dynamics occurring within each individual member) seem to have been under-researched so far. In this chapter, the former level of dynamics is examined through the discussion in relation to how the concept of culture has been ontologically and epistemologically conceived and investigated in the field of intercultural communication.

This chapter begins with an inquiry into the definition of culture and points out a current shift from the essentialist to the anti-essentialist in terms of the cultural paradigm. From this, I elaborate and discuss the two cultural paradigms before comparing their distinct cultural ideologies and corresponding methodological possibilities.

This comparison provides me with insights to argue that, in this study, student group work can be investigated from the anti-essentialist cultural perspective of seeing its cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness. In the last part of this chapter, I define culture in this study and conceive a conceptual model in order to investigate the process of cultural-making in student group work.

2. Attempts to Define Culture

In the previous chapter, I have argued that, for a significant number of studies on student group work, the interpersonal dynamics and interactions have been simply ignored whey the researchers emphasise the importance of task completion or goal achievement as the expecting result of students' collaborations. Although, some studies do pay attention to the interpersonal dynamics and interactions among students, the researchers of these studies have conceptually equated cultural difference to students' different nationalities or ethnic differences, which turns the discussions in these studies to be

comparisons and/or contrasts of student group members' national cultures (see: Section 3 in Chapter 2).

Such a reductive conceptualisation of culture – a problematic issue – manifested in the studies of student group work provided an impetus for the focus I chose for this study. Given that the phenomena of interpersonal dynamics and interactions in student group at university are communicative in nature, I, therefore, position the theorising of these phenomena through the lens of intercultural communication. More precisely, I consider the conceptualisation of culture in the field of intercultural communication – an important perspective of understanding interpersonal dynamics and interactions in student group work.

In fact, the conceptualisation of culture has been contested in the scholarship of social sciences over the centuries, hence, I first discuss scholars' attempts in relation to the definitions of culture in the remaining part of this section. After that, in the following sections of this chapter, I discuss how the concept of culture has been contested so far, in the current scholarship of intercultural communication, to further place the theoretical grounding adopted in this study.

Academic inquiry into culture can perhaps be traced back to the work of anthropologists in the 19th century (Biernatzki, 1991). Tylor (1871), one of the first scholars who attempted to provide a definition of culture, referred to it as "a complex whole consisting of knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (p.1). Subsequent research in culture tends to classify these elements into two main categories in relation to the concept of culture: (A) the realm of observable phenomena, of things and events 'out there' (Goodenough, 1961) and (B) the realm of ideas, which refers to "the organised system of knowledge and belief whereby people structure their experience and perceptions, formulate acts, and choose between alternatives" (Keesing, 1981, p.68). The first category was concluded by the critic Raymond Williams (1982) as the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. Williams (1982) further differentiated the second category into two usages in terms of the concept of culture: (a) it describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development; (b) whether culture is used in general or specifically, it indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general.

Regardless of the divergent concepts of culture proposed by different scholars, Keesing (1981, p.68) constrained the concept of culture to the realm of ideas and highlighted that "culture comprises systems of shared ideas, concepts, rules and meanings that underline and are expressed in the ways that humans live". This conceptualisation, e.g. culture as an ideational system, has been the bedrock of cultural theorising and prompted the generation of many resonant definitions, e.g. "the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 357); "[culture is] what is learned, the things one needs to know in order to meet the standards of others" (Goodenough, 1981, p. 19); "[culture] denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz, 1973, p.89).

However, ontological positions regarding culture as an ideational system are as divided as attempts to define this concept. In the last four decades, scholars across disciplines have a particular interest in culture (e.g. English Language Teaching, Applied Linguistics, Intercultural Communication and Education).

In the field of intercultural communication, the contested definitions of culture currently discussed by scholars came out under particular historical circumstances (Moon, 1996). The majority of contemporary interculturalists would agree the historical circumstance can be traced to the research conducted by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall at the Foreign Service Institute (USA) around the 1950s (Baldwin, 2017).

At that time, Edward T. Hall started theorising interpersonal dynamics by focusing on cultural difference between different nations while teaching intercultural communication skills. Intercultural communication then was established as an academic area of study (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; Rogers *et al.*, 2002).

It was not until the 1980s that scholars started to be keen on constructing theories to explain cultural difference at the national level (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1989; Hofstede, 1980; Kim and Gudykunst, 1988). In particular, in the last two decades of 20th century, intercultural communication scholarship mainly focused on comparison and investigation of dyadic interaction between

individuals of different nations – in other words, comparison of national cultures – in various contexts, such as business/organisation, sojourner adjustment, therapy/counselling and immigrant acculturation (Kim, 1984; Moon, 1996). Moreover, under the influence of this static and nationality-driven cultural conceptualisation, different cultural value models (e.g. Hofstede's cultural dimensions) were developed and became dominant explanatory models concerning interpersonal dynamics.

Nevertheless, around the mid-1990s, when humanistic, interpretive and critical research approaches were introduced into intercultural communication, scholarship in this field has demonstrated a trend to critique the national-driven conceptualisation of culture that tends to place an emphasis on sets of definite and abstract attributes in an entity (Cartwright, 1968).

As many scholars have argued, researchers should acknowledge the multiple layers of complexity characterising (especially contemporary) cultural phenomena and should bring these to the fore in their studies. Hence, the thinking of adopting cultural value models as an explanation of the transformational or performative nature of interpersonal dynamics started to be challenged and refuted in intercultural communication scholarship.

Along with the critiques, more and more scholars (e.g. Dervin, 2011; Fay, 1996; Holliday, 1999; Keesing and Strathern, 1998) have begun to suggest alternative conceptualisations in relation to culture, which are against the view that all cultural variations appearing in interpersonal dynamics can be categorised through the lens of cultural value models (Dutta and Martin, 2017).

This brief account I have summarised above suggests that the conceptualisation of culture in the field of intercultural communication can be chronologically categorised into two broad strands of thoughts. One is academically termed an essentialist cultural paradigm whilst the other is an anti-essentialist cultural paradigm. These two cultural paradigms are further discussed in the following two sections of this chapter.

3. The Essentialist Cultural Paradigm in Intercultural Communication

Scholars in support of the essentialist cultural paradigm tend to believe that culture is closely associated with a physical entity and can be measured and

described through relatively objective categories (Hall and Hall, 1987; 1990; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993; Hofstede, 2001; 2010; Nathan, 2015). In this section, I detail the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this view and discuss how it is usually operated in intercultural communication research.

3.1 Value Orientation

Around the 19th century, scholarly efforts to define the concept of culture were made under the influence of rationalisation, socio-economic differentiation, urbanisation and industrialisation, which were associated with the spirit of Enlightenment Movement that stressed the principle of an allegedly universal rationality (Coombe, 1991). Culture was presented as "a repository of meanings and values, divorced from, but giving significance to economic and political life" (Coombe, 1991, p.189). In order to consolidate and legitimate the social power of the bourgeoisie, culture was understood, on the one hand, as a realm of transcendent, universal and timeless values and, on the other hand, Emphasis was placed on both its internal homogeneity and discrepancies from other cultures (Coombe, 1991). Therefore, historically, scholars attempted to understand culture in terms of its value-orientations (Nathan, 2015). They held a fundamental assumption that there are a limited number of commonalities in the human world, which can be categorised into five value-orientation concepts relating to all societies: (a) the character of human nature; (b) man's relationship to nature; (c) the focus of time; (d) the modality of human activity and (e) the relationship of man-to-man (Nathan, 2015, p.7).

Having taken the heritage of these value-orientation concepts, many cultural theorists started to quantify various aspects of culture since the mid-20th century (England, 1967; Haire *et al.*, 1966; Kluchhohn and Strodtbeck 1961; Kuhn and McPartland 1954; Rokeach 1973) in order to assess the different facets of culture. In fact, more than 100 instruments have already been discussed so far by a number of contemporary cultural theorists regarding the different systems of cultural dimensions for the purpose of capturing the 'essence' of cultures (Taras and Rowney, 2006). The most influential ones are perhaps Hall's (1959; 1983; 1987; 1990) concepts of high/low context and monochronic/polychronic time, and Hofstede's (1980; 2001; 2010) concepts of high/low power distance, individualism versus collectivism, high/low uncertainty avoidance, masculinity

versus femininity, long/short-term orientation and indulgence versus self-restraint.

Following the popularity of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions and his survey method (Hofstede, 2001), in the late 1990s, hundreds of sets with respect to the alternative cultural dimensions and their corresponding instruments were developed and published by other essentialist scholars in order to summarise the common values of people within a particular society, country or ethnic group as well as to highlight the differences of these common values between any two societies, countries or ethnic groups (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993; Hills, 2002; House *et al.*, 2004; Inglehart, 1997; Maznevski and DiStefano; 1995; Schwartz, 1994). They seemed to be popular and recognised as well. For instance, the GLOBE team (House *et al.*, 2004) reported nine cultural dimensions, which are performance orientation, uncertainty avoidance, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, assertiveness, gender egalitarianism, future orientation and power distance.

For decades, the cultural dimensions have been very influential for researchers investigating different aspects of cultural phenomena. The concepts have been applied to understand societies' ethical decision-making process in business (e.g. Alas *et al.* 2015; Vitell *et al.*, 1993), business advertising appeals in various countries (e.g. Albers-Miller *et al.*, 1996; Murphy and Khan, 2014), differences in employee expectations and working preferences in international projects (e.g. Sui and Yuquan, 2002), the gender issue regarding hiring the female managers in three Islamic-culture-dominated countries (Metcalfe, 2006), public relations practitioners' perceptions of corporate social responsibility in South Korea (Kim and Kim, 2010). In addition to those business-related studies, cultural dimensions have also been applied to educational research. Rienties and Tempelaar (2013) discussed the academic performances and social integrations of international students from 52 countries in the host country – Netherlands. Likewise, Morrow *et al.*, (2013) adopted the cultural dimensions to understand the overseas medical graduates who work in the UK workplaces.

Researchers who attempt to further the theorising of cultural dimensions or apply them to empirical studies tend to view culture as a bounded thing that coincides (usually) with geo-political entities, such as countries and ethnicities. The 'essence' of culture is considered to be relatively fixed, which suggests that

both the quantity and quality of the values shared by the people associated with that entity tend to remain stable over time. From the epistemological perspective, these scholars' cultural view has been regarded as the descriptive essentialist view (Dahl, 2014), which is explained by Holiday (1999; 2000) who contended that the essentialists associate the concept of culture closely with physical entities, e.g. nations, ethnic communities, which are concrete, separate, visible and touchable with material permanence and clear boundaries.

A further premise underpinning this thinking is that individuals' thoughts and actions are, to a considerable extent, governed by their cultural values, and therefore attempts to understand their thoughts and behaviour, especially in intercultural contexts, can be conducted through an inquiry into the 'patterns' of their cultural groups. For example, Hofstede (2010) argued that British people who live in the UK (as an entity), always present as low power distance, lower uncertainty avoidance, and valuing individualism and masculinity. The same idea underpins all the rest sets of cultural dimensions generated by different scholars.

The focus on 'cultural patterns' associated with social groups has led to the popularity of a comparative approach to investigating culture, which seeks to generate empirical evidence in the description of cultural difference, through the conceptual lens of cultural dimensions. Rienties and Tempelaar's (2013) study is used again here as an example. In the conclusions, they argue that European students are close to local Dutch students on academic performance, which means the students might share similar content of these cultural dimensions. Among other international students (outside Europe), those from Latin America and Middle East students are more similar to local students than the international students from Southern Asia. Particularly, Confucian Asian students score significantly low on academic performance and social adjustment. This part of the findings in Rienties' and Tempelaar's (2013) study indicates that there exist substantial differences regarding the context of cultural dimensions between Asia (teacher-centred approach, strong uncertainty avoidance) and Europe (learner-centred approach, weak uncertainty avoidance). Thus, international students from Asia have to overcome and adapt to these differences when studying in the Netherlands.

As mentioned earlier, such an essentialist perspective tends to focus on the idea of an overarching framework that is believed to influence human thoughts and behaviours within it. Variations noted within this overarching framework are treated as its 'sub-cultural' characteristics, which are believed to still maintain the major features of that entity (Holliday, 2000).

3.2 Binarism

When the essentialist scholars believe culture is a set of value-oriented dimensions that are closely associated with physical entities, their interpretations of culture in a specific entity as well as the comparison between different cultures demonstrate a binary cultural view (Fang, 2012). This binary view is manifest in the bipolar attributes of the cultural dimensions. For instance, Chinese are usually described as being respectful to their employers due to high power distance (Hofstede, 2010). This is often juxtaposed with Westerners' expectation of equality in the workplace as a result of low power distance (Pooley, 2005). Such bipolar constructions of 'cultural difference' naturally entails that cultural difference is a source of 'conflict' (a commonly studied theme in the field of intercultural communication).

The lasting popularity of binarism reflects a structuralist point of view, which sees binary oppositions as a fundamental organiser of culture (Deleuze, 1953). Conceptual opposites are carefully defined but against one another (Smith, 1996).

3.3 A 'Solid Approach' to Comparing (National) Cultures

Driven by the standpoint that culture is constituted by a set of value-oriented concepts that are relatively stable, binary and attached to large entities, the essentialist approach to culture can be seen as operated through several steps (see: Diagram 3.1). It tends to begin with an assumption that culture is fixed to a somewhat 'visible' entity (national-/ethnic-/institutional-related) and, based upon selected methods of inquiry (survey or questionnaires etc.), gathers evidence that can be fit into categories of the value-orientations. Such evidence is then employed to explain phenomena noted from that culture, which in turn reinforces, naturalises or institutionalises the pre-conceived categories. Holliday (1999) argued that such an approach is likely to exaggerate cultural difference and runs the risk of otherisation.

The Essentialist Approach to Understanding Culture
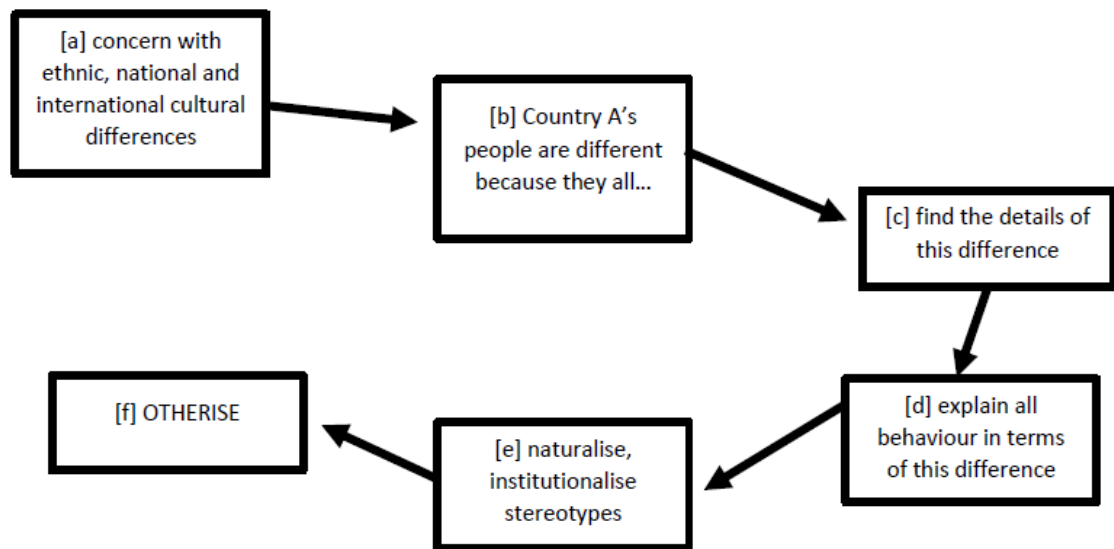
Diagram 3.1 (Source: Holliday, 1999, p.246)

The essentialist approach to understanding culture summarised by Holliday (1999) is interpreted as a 'solid approach' that "does not take into account the complexity of individuals who interact with each other and reduces them to cultural facts or gives the impression of 'encounters of cultures' rather than individuals" (Dervin, 2011, p. 38). As Laplantine (1999, p.46) argued, this approach "believes strongly that there are resolutely distinct human essences". These essences are 'static and solid' for a particular group of individuals. That is to say, a group of individuals, normally divided by nations, are seen as essentially homogenous and possessing certain 'unchanged and solid' core characteristics regarding their communicative practices (Martin, Nakayama and Carbaugh, 2012; Piler, 2011). These core characteristics would be different from those indicated by another group of individuals, say, people from another country. As a consequence, different cultures are comparable by interpreting the differences of individuals' core characteristics. Arguably, this 'solid approach' explains the reason why the majority of studies on student group work at university (see: Chapter 2) eventually reduced the complexity of dynamics and interactions among students into encounters between different national cultures.

4. The Anti-Essentialist Turn in Intercultural Communication Studies

The turn to postmodernism across many disciplines in the social sciences (Lyotard, Bennington and Massumi, 1984) challenges the basic modernist assumptions of human conditions that developed at the time of the Reformation around the 17th century (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Modernist thinking promotes the quest for 'knowledge' and 'truth' by testing hypotheses or statistical analyses of a large number of subjects (Faigley, 1992; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Webster and Mertova, 2007), such as surveys, experiments, and manipulative or verification of hypotheses, chiefly quantitative methods. Modernists believe that reasoning can help human being to 'discover' all the 'truths' which are independent of human beings' consciousness and these 'truths' are timeless (Faigley, 1992).

Postmodernists assert that 'knowledge' and 'truth' are contextual and constructed as the products of certain social, historical and political discourses. They question the existence of the absolute truth or objective reality (Duignan, 2014) and suggest that humans' sense-making processes are largely related to their experiences that happen through the interactions between each other (Glasersfeld, 1996; McKinley, 2015). Reasoning and science, therefore, are considered as ideologies that are created by human beings. 'Knowledge' and judgments of 'truth' are culturally context-dependent, rather than context-free (Faigley, 1992).

In fact, before the trend of postmodernism in the social sciences, scholars had already started to inquire into the overextension of universalising the value-orientations in the studies of culture under the impact of modernist thought. For instance, the sociologist Stonequist (1937) discussed that cultures are not static but changing as they come into contact with each other. Brower (1980) contended that 'cultural difference' in a context can be much more in terms of the differences between or within societies than between societies *per se*. It is thus, "'both impracticable and unprofitable' to attempt to define these differences in terms of national cultures" (Brower, 1980, p. 113). This conceptualisation of culture resonated with Murphy's (1986, p.25) argument that "cultures are not rooted in absolutes". They are the products of human activity and thinking and, as such, are people-made. The elements of culture are constructed, contrived and changeable.

Under the influence of postmodernism, at the beginning of the 21st century, more and more interculturalists believe that the essentialisation of national traits and cultural characteristics seems too reductionist (Kramsch 2001). "Such a view of intercultural communication research does not reflect the complexities of a post-colonial, global age in which people live in multiple, shifting spaces and partake of multiple identities often in conflict with one another" (Kramsch 2001, p. 205). That is to say, as a response to this post-colonial and global age, the study of intercultural communication cannot leave the focus on autonomous individuals as if they were located in stable and homogeneous national cultures. Hence, scholars started to explicitly critique the adequacy of the essentialist cultural paradigm that claims a set of cultural dimensions can be used to measure all cultures (e.g. Dervin, 2011; Holliday, 1999; 2011; 2013).

In contrast to the essentialist cultural paradigm whose orientations, namely, cultural determinism, reductivism, and otherisation (Holliday *et al*, 2004; Nathan, 2015), tend to disregard the complexities of culture and project the image of a positive self onto that of a negative other (Holiday *et al.,* 2004), the anti-essentialist critics, on the other hand, celebrate the marginal, peripheral and local and restore the primacy of context and the concrete when carrying out the exploration of culture (Young, 1996). Culture is then seen as a part of knowledge that is context-laden. It is socially constructed and emergent, rather than defined as *a priori* or as a certain 'truth' that can be widely applicable as well as travelling across different historical contexts.

4.1 Incomplete Anti-Essentialism

Despite the anti-essentialist cultural perspective mentioned previously, much of current research in intercultural communication still exhibits (traces of) an essentialist tradition. For example, a recent study conducted by Qiu *et al.* (2013) examines individuals' social interactions with different online cultures through the media of Facebook and Renren (a Chinese social medium). The researchers recognise their participants' active roles in different cultures and note that they could flexibly switch between different cultural environments in response to meaningful cultural cues. However, the researchers still include as (part of the) conclusions that the Renren culture is perceived as more collectivistic than the Facebook culture.

In another study, Szilagyi (2014) explores how students from Nigeria constructed their experiences of online learning. She argues that the historical and cultural circumstances may contribute to students' meaning constructions of plagiarism, which may vary from person to person. In her findings, she points out that ideologies concerning particular academic issues, such as integrity and plagiarism, are largely the 'products' of the western academic world which might not be familiar to the students who are 'non-westerners'.

Researchers who endorse such a self-contradictory position have come to recognise the diversities of contemporary societies (e.g. co-existence of both ends of a given cultural dimension). However, despite a brief note in their research papers in acknowledge of this, their studies are still much devoted to generating evidence in relation to cultural generalisations about large entities. This is well noted in Holliday's (2011) analysis of a neo-essentialist trend or Dervin's (2011) analysis of a Janusian discourse in intercultural communication studies. On the one hand, these scholars claim a belief in the multiplicity and plurality of culture against the essentialist view. On the other hand, they still rely on national cultures as the basic units to account for cultural difference. Where the collected evidence runs counter to what is already 'known' about national cultures, such evidence is often explained away as an 'exception' rather than a reality in its own right (Holliday, 2011; 2012).

4.2 'Purer' Forms of Anti-Essentialism

Seeing the limits of incomplete rejection of the essentialist cultural paradigm, many scholars endeavoured to liberate the understanding of culture from the essentialist cultural paradigm. Both Nagel (1986) and Kuhn (1996) argued that culture should be conceived as sets of meaning that arise from individuals' interactions and interpretations, rather than an object independently existing 'out there'. Scholars conceived different concepts around the late 20th century, such as third place (e.g. Kramsch, 1993; 2009; 2013); third culture (e.g. Pollock and Van Reken, 1999; 2001; Useem, 1963; 1993; 1996; Kramsch, 1993; 2009), third space (e.g. Bhabha, 1990; 2004) to delineate their interpretations regarding the concept of culture, which are elaborated in Section 4.2.1 to Section 4.2.3.

4.2.1 The Concept of 'Third Culture'

Useem (1963) seems to be one of the earliest scholars who proposed the concept of 'third culture' in his research about the British expatriates living in India. As Useem (1963) denoted, the 'first culture' is the home culture from which the adults come while 'the second culture' is about 'the host culture' where the adults are living at that time (e.g. expatriates in India). Then, the 'third culture' is where the two cultures meet and "bridge between societies" (p. 170), which was defined by Useem (1963) as follows:

> *"The third culture signifies the patterns generic to a community of men (sic) which spans two or more societies. It consists of more than the mere accommodation or fusion of two separate, juxtaposed cultures, for as groups of men belonging to different societies associate together and interact with each other, they incorporate into their common social life a mutually acknowledged set of expectations […] Each third culture generates a composite of values, role-related norms, and social structures which distinguishes its patterns from any of the societies it spans"* (p. 484).

At the time, Useem's definition of 'third culture' was limited to those who were highly mobile professionals and elite nationals. This indicates that other groups, such as immigrants, tourists, or refugees are all excluded from his concept of 'third culture'.

In 1993, Useem and Useem shifted their research interest to the children (of those highly mobile professionals) who are growing up in highly mobile expatriate communities. These children are academically termed as third culture kids (hereinafter TCKs). TCKs is defined as a child who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years (birth to age 18) outside the parents' culture(s) (Espinetti, 2011; Moore and Barker, 2011). The recent increased visibility of TCKs was studied by Pollock and Van Reken (1999; 2001) who argued that "The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any" (2001, pp. 26). Sometimes, 'third culture' is also extended to the perspectives of 'adult third culture kids' (ATCKs), adults who move globally with their parents but have spent a significant portion of their formative years in a culture other than their parents' own (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001).

From what Useem contended in his studies as well as others (e.g. Dewaele and Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Hayden; 2012; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003) who researched on TKCs, the 'third culture' then can be understood as an idea that 'the first culture' plus 'the second culture' produces more than a simple combination of 'the two cultures'. Something new, different or non-existent within either 'the first culture' or 'the second culture' could be generated in that 'third culture'. As Akram (2012) points out the values, attitudes and practices pertaining to 'the third culture' is owned by neither their 'home/the first culture' nor 'host/the second culture'. To put it another way, 'the third culture' is a hybrid culture that is similar to neither the 'first' nor the 'second' culture'. In addition, those people in 'the third culture' are considered as cultural middlemen who are able to build the pathways to link different cultures (Useem, 1963).

Casnir (1978) also used the term 'third culture' to posit that individuals from different cultures can optimise their relationship in a third culture which "[…] conjoin[s] of their separate cultures" into a culture "[…] that is not merely the result of a fusion of two or more separate entities, but also the product of the harmonisation of composite parts into a coherent whole" (Casnir and Asuncion-Lande, 1989, p.294). Casnir (1999) further argued that 'third culture' is a "construction of a mutually beneficial interactive environment in which individuals from two different cultures can function in a way beneficial to all involved […] it is communication-cantered […] long-term building process" (p.92).

Unlike Useem and Casnir, in the late 20th century, from the perspective of language education, Kramsch proposed the concept of 'third culture' as a metaphor for eschewing some dualities on which language education is commonly based and discussed, such as, C1 (culture of a leaner's first language) vs.C2 (culture of the target language that a learner is studying), US vs. Them, or Self vs. Other (Kramsch, 2009). A 'third culture' is meant to capture the experience of the boundary between native speakers and non-native speakers by emphasising the following three characteristics within the 'third culture'.

(1) A popular culture: it presents an individual with potentials for establishing 'the dialectic of meaning production'. This dialectic arises from the tension between the transmitted knowledge and skills (through an educational

institution) and the capacity of that individual to make this knowledge and skills his/her own.

(2) A critical culture: it means an individual is not merely expected to learn a 'target culture' through practising a foreign language in interactions with the native speakers of that foreign language. It encourages the individual to "make connections to dominant attitudes and world-views as expressed through the textbook, the grammar exercises, the reading" (Kramsch, 2009, p.238), which enables an individual to question not only the immediate situational context (e.g. a foreign language learning classroom) but also the wider global context (e.g. the historical resonances of words and their combinations).

(3) An ecological culture: it is highly context-sensitive and adapted to the demands of the environment. In addition, it also preserves "the diversity of styles, purposes and interests among leaners and the variety of local education cultures" (Kramsch, 1993, p.247).

This overview regarding the concept of 'third culture' provides two interrelated aspects in terms of the conceptualisation of culture for intercultural communication study. Firstly, each individual could have multiple cultural identities, which rejects the fallacy of the essentialist cultural paradigm that claims one nation corresponds to one culture. Secondly, an individual who is engaged in the 'third culture', potentially speaking, could distance him/herself from both 'home/native culture' or 'culture' of the learner's first language and the 'target culture' or 'culture' of the learner's foreign language. As a result, s/he is exposed to a hybrid culture – the 'third culture'. This 'third culture' suggests that culture should go beyond the usual binarism in two senses: 1) culture is not necessarily understood in a dichotomised manner by using cultural value models (e.g. individualism vs. collectivism); 2) culture can be interpreted beyond the confines of another dichotomised convention, e.g. 'home/native culture' vs. 'guest/target culture'.

Although the 'third culture' concept, to a certain extent, liberates people's understanding of culture from the binarism that is underpinned by the essentialist cultural paradigm (discussed in Section 3.2 of this chapter), this concept still implies a presumption that human's world can be divided into many separate 'cultures' and each 'culture' contains its own unique as well as defining characteristics.

A 'third culture', as the scholars suggest, is a consequence of the fusion of, at least, two 'parental cultures' (e.g. home/native C1 and host/target C2). Once a 'third culture' comes into being, like either side of its 'parental cultures', it also can be described by pinning down its defining characteristics. In this sense, what makes a 'third culture' different from its 'parental cultures' mainly consists in its defining characteristics. The defining characteristics of a 'third culture', apart from not necessarily associated with any existing physical entities (e.g. a country, an institution), are richer or different from those of its 'parental cultures'.

That is to say, while the 'third culture' concept alerts researchers the problems of associating a culture with any physical entity, itself actually becomes a virtual entity for researchers to use if a culture is not appropriately categorised into any existing commonly-known entity. For instance, researchers can be wary and not to simplify the culture within a TCK community into a particular national culture, then they may reify that 'third culture' *per se* and entail it as a kind of entity for future reference in terms of the characteristics of 'third culture'.

Nevertheless, Kramsch's 'third culture' should be distinguished from either Useem's or Casnir's 'third culture' concept because she argued that her concept of 'third culture' is a "symbolic place that is by no means unitary, stable, permanent and homogeneous. Rather, it is multiple and always subject to change and to the tension and even conflicts that come from being 'in-between'" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 238). I further discuss Kramsch's 'third culture' in Section 4.2.2 by drawing on the insights of Kramsch's another concept 'third place'.

4.2.2 The Concept of 'Third Place'

'Third place' was conceived by Kramsch (1993) as a concept to describe an intercultural approach to teaching/learning (foreign) languages. According to Kramsch (1993), 'third place', first of all, is a sphere. More accurately, it is an intercultural sphere that combines the culture(s) of the language being taught and the social characteristics of the learner's environment. Speaking of culture, the culture (aka, Kramsch's 'third culture') in the 'third place' is expected to be neither the learner's 'home culture(s)' nor the 'culture(s) of the language(s) they are learning'. The 'third culture' in the 'third place' is a hybrid one, which should not be reduced to national traits (*contra* essentialist arguments) but includes other cultural aspects, such as, age, gender, and ethnicity etc.

This kind of hybrid culture in the 'third place' should not be seen as an *object* for all the individuals who are involved in that 'third place' to apprehend but needs to be viewed as an interpersonal *process* for understanding cultural difference as well as being aware of their own values and perspectives (Gil, 2016). Furthermore, in order to make this interpersonal *process* work, according to Kramsch (2013, p.62), an individual needs to have the attitude of openness and curiosity and when opening up, the individual can begin a journey that is called 'transgradience' (Bakhtin, 1981) which means "[…] the ability of speakers to see themselves from the outside".

Kramsch's 'third culture' highlights the status of a culture should be a process instead of a product, which means that a 'third culture' cannot be simply described by examining some defining characteristics that are different or new from either the 'home/native culture' or 'host/target culture' after a combination or fusion. In this sense, Kramsch's 'third culture' is not similar to the 'third culture' concept developed by Useem or Casnir.

In addition, the fluid attribute foregrounded by Kramsch in her 'third culture' suggests that culture should be dynamic and evolving. That is to say, a 'third culture' is developing all the time through which its characteristics are continuously changing and being richer.

In addition, Kramsch also recognises the interconnection between an individual's subjectivity (e.g. attitude of openness and curiosity) and the formation of a 'third culture', which further reveals that the process of a 'third culture' development is actually a process of negotiation among individuals' subjectivities. Hence, a 'third culture' can be considered as an emergent process or development that cannot be a neutral domain but occurs in the discursive practices of a group of individuals.

Regarding the idea of the location of culture, apart from the 'third place' discussed by Kramsch, another influential post-colonial cultural critic Homi Bhabha has shared his thoughts thoroughly, which is discussed in the next part of this section.

4.2.3 The Concept of 'Third Space'

Around 1994, Homi Bhabha (1990; 2004) developed the concept of 'third space' in order to explore the location of culture. According to Bhabha's idea, every

individual (e.g. as a speaker or writer) him/herself becomes a 'subject of enunciation' when s/he refers to events in the outside world. As long as people are involved in a 'highly contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation' (Bhabha, 2004, p.37),

> *"The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the YOU designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires […] both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious"* (Bhabha, 2004, p.36).

That is to say, people always say more than they think because part of the meaning of what people say is already given by their *position* in the social structure, by their *relative power*, and by the *subject position* they occupy in social encounters (Kramsch, 2009).

In this sense, people cannot be conscious of their interpretative strategies, at the same time, they practise those strategies (Bhabha, 2004). Bhabha (2004) defined such a contradictory and ambivalent space which is carved out by people's discursive practices, as a 'third space'.

Different from Kramsch's 'third place' that is considered as a space to accommodate the 'third culture' she defined, Bhabha's 'third space', arguably, itself is a hybridity and process, through which other positions (e.g. new structures of authority, new political initiatives) emerge (Soja, 1998). This 'third space' then gives rise to "something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and presentation" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211).

More importantly, Bhabha argued cultural difference is built into such a hybrid 'third space'. In Bhabha's (2006) view, cultural difference is "a process of signification through which statement of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorise the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity" (p.155). The enunciation of culture is knowledgeable, authoritative and adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification through cultural difference in the 'third space' (Bhabha, 2006). As Bhabha (1990) argued:

"With the notion of cultural difference, I try to place myself in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness […] all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (p. 211). *"We should remember that it is the 'inter''-the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture"* (Bhabha, 2004, pp.38-39).

Bhabha's 'third space' indicates that individuals continuously exert efforts to translate and understand others in the manner of cultural difference that is engendered by individuals' discursive practices in a hybrid process. Culture does not exist until such a hybrid process of individuals' discursive practices happens. In this sense, what constitutes culture depends on the process of (individuals') translation or negotiation of cultural difference.

4.2.4 A Summary of 'Thirdness' Conceptualisations of Culture

So far, three main conceptualisations regarding the concept of culture have been overviewed respectively where I discuss the nuances between them. Regardless of the variation in terminology used by these anti-essentialist scholars, their conceptualisations of culture seem to have some convergences in terms of understanding culture by addressing an idea of 'thirdness'.

In the first place, these anti-essentialist scholars emphasise that culture does not come from the large entities (e.g. nations) but rather that the association of a nation with a (national) culture is imagined. Instead of claiming certain cultural features a large entity may demonstrate, they have shifted the unit of analysis to cohesive sites of any possible size (if size is relevant at all). For example, not only could culture be explored from a neighbourhood that is constituted by several families who are from different countries, but it could also be identified from several families who are all 'locals'.

Although this site has been termed into different academic concepts, e.g. 'third place', 'third culture' or 'third space', an important message from these terms is that the focus of cultural inquiry has turned from the cultural 'background' (e.g. where you come from) to individual interactions (e.g. what you say, do and produce at a particular moment) within a site of communication.

Secondly, these anti-essentialists put a great emphasis on the synergy of individual interactions in a particular site, for instance, the idea of hybridity is foregrounded by Kramsch (1993), Useem (1963; 1993) and Bhabha (1990; 2004) throughout their conceptualisations of culture. Understanding culture via the lens of individual interactions promotes a more dynamic view on culture as a process constructed through interpersonal relations (Dahl, 2014), rather than a stable system of form and substance (Soderberg and Holden, 2002). In other words, increasing attention is paid to the emergent meanings when individuals interact. This emergent meaning is brought to light due to the mutable and fluid features of culture.

As Baumann (1996) said, "culture is conceived not as a real thing, but as an abstract and purely analytical notion" (p.11). Culture does not cause behaviour but summarises an abstraction from it, and it is neither normative nor predictive. Culture is thus seen to be neither universal nor timeless because its meaning is explored through individuals' subjective experiences (Goulding, 2005). At one point, some aspects of a culture might temporarily become prominent while, at other times, other aspects might present themselves with greater saliency (Fang, 2012).

Like Kramsch and Bhabha, Holliday also intends to investigate culture and cultural practices as an emergent, negotiable, dynamic, contestable, socially constructed, and never neutral process. As Holliday (2011; 2016a) contends, culture reflects an uncertain, intangible and floating nature.

However, he has also raised critics in relation to these 'thirdness' conceptualisations of culture by labelling them as the 'innocent' cultural discourses. Holliday (2013) names them a kind of 'innocence' because these 'thirdness' concepts of culture imply that cultural values cannot really be totally shared (e.g. the cultural difference in the 'third space), which denies "cultural travellers the possibility of being part of and innovating within new *cultural realities*, instead making them segmented and in-between" (Kumaravadivelu, p.5). Therefore, the 'innocence' lies in these 'thirdness' discourses' acceptance of an uncrossable intercultural line as objective reality.

While critiquing the uncrossable intercultural line, Holliday argues that every individual is able to engage creatively with and take ownership of culture

wherever they find it (Holliday, 2013). Hence, culture should be associated with the unmarked experience of everyday life and bottom-up globalisation.

4.3 'Small Cultures': Another Form of Anti-Essentialism

In response to his own understandings of culture, Holliday developed the concept of 'small cultures' and suggests a corresponding theoretical and methodological framework to explore culture – The *Grammar of Culture*. They are discussed in Section 4.3.1 and Section 4.3.2 respectively.

4.3.1 The Concept of 'Small Cultures'

Holliday (1999, p. 248) contended that "culture can form within cohesive social groupings as a dynamic, on-going process, which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense of, and operate meaningfully within, those circumstances" and suggested the idea of 'small cultures' to foreground that culture could be emergent and develop from the cohesive thinking and behaviours through a group of individuals' interactions and negotiations in a particular setting (Holliday, 2011).

In order to do so, and avoid the solidifying tendency in the essentialist cultural paradigm, Holliday (2011) proposes the concepts of *cultural reality* and *cultural arena* to describe what happens in a particular setting.

Cultural reality refers to what is going on around the individual which carries broad cultural meanings. 'Reality' implies that a person's concerns and what s/he perceives as real and relevant but may not be shared by other people. It is a psychological entity (Holliday, 2011). *Cultural reality* can be classified into 'external *cultural reality*', such as traditionally defined social groupings ranging from nation to region, ethnicity or other particular institutions that individuals formally identify with; and 'personal *cultural reality*', which is closely tied with individuals' personal experiences or particular concerns that they draw on and present to others in communication settings (Holliday, 2011; 2013). *Cultural realities* can form around, and be carried with by individuals as they move from one setting to another. "Being part of certain *cultural realities* does not close off membership or ownership of other *cultural realities*. Individuals are considered to have the capacity to feel a belonging to several different *cultural realities* simultaneously" (Holliday, 2011, p.55).

The setting where *cultural realities* are situated is termed *cultural arena*, which can be either physical or virtual, such as a country, region, religion, ideology, language or a community, institution, discourse etc. (Holliday, 2011).

The ideas of *cultural reality* and *cultural arena* suggested by Holliday (2011; 2013) foreground the multiplicity and plurality of culture. At the same time, they do not exclude or ignore the potential impacts of national, regional or ethnic differences on the formation of culture. However, in contrast to the essentialist scholars who see physical entities (e.g. nation, region, ethnicity or particular institutions) as the only or most important factor to explain what a culture is or contains, from the perspective of 'small cultures', these physical entities have been considered as one of the many *cultural realities* that individuals might draw on in a particular *cultural arena*. In other words, physical entities do not constrain what culture in a particular group could be like.

Moreover, to me, the concept of *cultural arena* resonates with Kramsch's 'third place' or Bhabha's 'third space' in a sense that, speaking of culture, they all emphasise it is a process of hybridity instead of a product out of combination. However, Holliday's *cultural arena* is in contrast to Bhabha's 'third space' because the concept of *cultural arena* foregrounds the crossable intercultural lines between individuals by recognising every individual's sense-making competence to take ownership of culture in the process of engaging creatively with various *cultural realities* that are either brought by him/herself or presented by others.

Therefore, the concept of *cultural arena* emphasises the individuals' sharedness – the emergence of culture – through a process of negotiation and co-construction of their *cultural realities* rather than the cultural difference engendered in that process, which is highlighted in Bhabha's 'third space'.

4.3.2 A *Grammar of Culture* for Interpreting Culture in a *Cultural Arena*

In contrast to the essentialist cultural paradigm that is usually binary and whose approach is 'solid' as it investigates culture through abstract categories (discussed in Section 3.3), Holliday (2011; 2013) delve into the interactional dynamics of communication and introduced the *Grammar of Culture* (see an illustration in Diagram 3.2) as a theoretical and methodological framework to address the multifaceted complexities of intercultural communication.

The Grammar of Culture
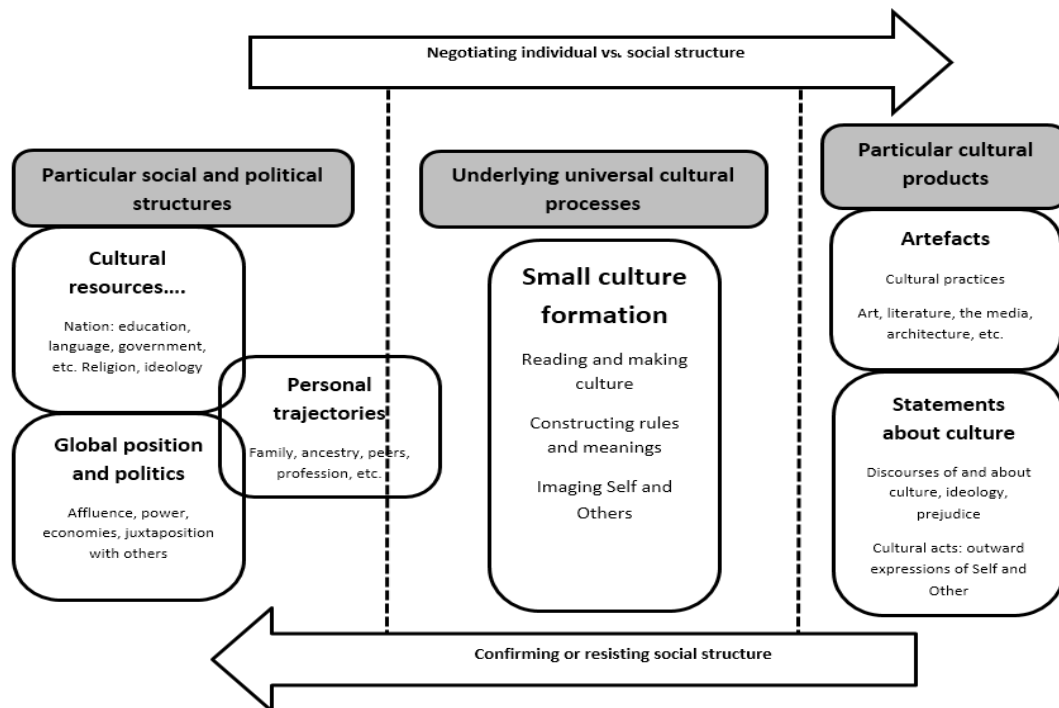
Diagram 3.2 (Source: Holliday, 2011; 2013)

This *Grammar of Culture* represents a process of how a small culture potentially forms in a *cultural arena.* More precisely, on the left side of the framework, three elements constitute the particular social and political structure.

- Cultural resources mainly refer to the society or place where we were born and brought up (Holliday, 2011). It relates to the national, ethnic or institutional cultures. "We draw on them, but they do not necessarily confine everything we do and think" (Holliday, 2013, p. 2). This argument helps demonstrate how the relationship between nation and culture is interpreted in an anti-essentialist way. They do not have to be bounded together. However, anti-essentialists do not ignore or deny the possible influence of the national or ethnic background of individuals on the formation of culture because each individual can decide to what extent they would like the role of their national or ethnic backgrounds to play in the formation of culture.

- Global position and politics refers to how we perceive ourselves and others in the world, for example, westerners view Easterners, insiders view outsiders, etc.

- Personal trajectories refer to the personal life experiences that may have an influence on their dialogues with but not confined by social structures (Holliday, 2011).

All these three elements could be manifested in one form or another via the *cultural realities* that an individual may bring and present in a *cultural arena*. On the right side of the framework, there are two elements under the title of particular cultural products. Both of them are about the results of the negotiation within a group of individuals (Holliday, 2011).

- Artefacts include day-to-day things a certain group do, which may strange to the people out of that group, and the 'Big-C' cultural artefacts (Holliday, 2013).
- Statements about culture: how we present ourselves and what we choose to call 'our cultures' (Holliday, 2013).

In the middle of the *Grammar of Culture* is the underlying universal cultural processes: formation of small culture, which refers to the emergent culture that forms in a particular *cultural arena* where individuals participate in and negotiate (Holliday, 2011; 2013). This underlying universal cultural process acknowledges the uncertain and constructed nature of culture (Holliday, 2016a).

5. Situating This Study in the Anti-Essentialist Cultural Paradigm

In the preceding sections, I presented and discussed two contrasting paradigms in which culture is explored in the field of intercultural communication. Informed by the discussions of those conceptualisations of culture, I consider the research orientation of this study regarding the complexity of dynamics and interactions in student group work can be framed as one about the processes of student group work through which culture emerges.

Furthermore, the review of the different cultural ideologies and corresponding approaches (as presented in the earlier sections of this chapter) had led me to position this study in the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm because it would help me open up to the complexity regarding individual interactions in student group work for its rejection of reducing or simplifying the impact of every student's subjective experience.

In particular, I decide to investigate culture in student group work by adopting Holliday's 'small cultures' approach as its concept and the corresponding *Grammar of Culture* not only acknowledge culture is a negotiable, socially constructed *process* through interpersonal communication but also offer a methodological possibility to prompt me to delve deeply into students' interactional dynamics and treat them as a 'driving force' for the emergence of small cultures as fluid and hybrid processes (e.g. the *cultural realities* a student could bring and present) on their interactions in student group work (as a particular *cultural arena*).

In Table 3.1 below, I summarise the main differences and the methodological possibilities provided by these two cultural paradigms.

Comparison between Two Cultural Paradigms

If I follow the essentialist cultural paradigm…	I have decided to adopt the Anti-essentialist cultural paradigm in this study…
I tend to believe that culture is something people *have* and it is fixed and delimited. People are governed by it (Dahl, 2014). I need to generalise what the participants have in terms of culture in a site and explain how their performances are governed by those cultures.	I tend to believe that culture is something people *do*. People negotiate culture through interactions (Dahl, 2014). I would interpret what culture is based on what they have done in a *cultural arena*.
Cultures are predetermined in a site and I thus need to 'discover' what national/regional cultures are brought by the participants and what institutional culture works.	Culture emerges and continually takes shape and I, therefore, cannot predict the characteristics of culture until I scrutinise the interactions of participants in a given *cultural arena*.
The 'solid approach', (e.g. Hofstedian-like value-oriented cultural frameworks) can be a choice, and I would focus on participants' nationalities or ethnicities and explain how they combine together to shape a 'multicultural group', with reference to relevant data to support my arguments.	I would consider the *Grammar of Culture* framework, which attaches importance to individuals' *cultural realities* in a *cultural arena* in order to interpret whether (and how) cohesive thinking and behaviours emerge from there. I still consider the possible influence of the participants' wider sociocultural backgrounds, such as nationality or ethnicity, but I would not rely on these as the sole source of explanation.

I would describe culture from a binary perspective and seek 'either-or' interpretations by drawing on existing bipolar cultural dimensions. In addition, I would compare and contrast the 'home/first culture(s)' (where individuals come from) with the 'host/second culture (the country where these individuals are currently living).	I could interpret culture by seeing how the aspects of culture evolve in relation to the meanings emerge from a group of people in a particular setting (e.g. a *cultural arena*) where culture can be a process of hybridity (e.g. interactions of individuals' *cultural realities*).

Table 3.1

However, I acknowledge that my interpretation of the dynamics and interactions in student group work (as a complex intercultural phenomenon) was inevitably reductive and could not fully capture the complexities, e.g. through the generation of categories for describing the participants' experiences. However, the research aim of this study is to drive understandings towards the complex end as far as possible. Additionally, while focusing on the micro-level dynamics, I tried to locate my interpretations within larger social institutions and forces.

6. Conceptualising Culture in This Study

In this section, I begin with a working definition of culture as the primary analytical concept upon which this study rests. This definition, informed by the theoretical debates reviewed earlier in this chapter, serves to underpin a conceptual model I developed for investigating the cultural processes in student group work (see the following section of this chapter). In this study, culture is used to refer to:

> ***The cohesive thinking and behaviours that are continuously and dynamically constructed within a group of members who conduct activities together in a particular cultural arena, where circumstances can be ever-changing.***

The cohesive thinking and behaviours are achieved from the composite or hybridity of diverse *cultural realities* brought to that particular *cultural arena* by the members of that group. This study, therefore, does not attempt to discover culture as a thing or object, but to explore it, interpretively, as a process. As suggested by Street (1993), "the job of studying culture is not of finding and

then accepting its definitions but of discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstance and for what reasons" (p.24).

I would argue that, the complex, or sometimes problematic, connotations (e.g. essentialist-oriented concepts of culture) associated with the word 'culture' are not inherent in the word itself, but linked more to the *usages* of the word. Therefore, I agree with the argument that culture could be retained as a convenient term for designating the cluster of emotions and practices that arise when people interact regularly (Brumann, 1999). However, as set out in the working definition above, I use this term to denote an active process of making and contesting meaning, not bounded by the concepts of nation or ethnicity as commonly found in many existing studies on intercultural communication.

7. A Conceptual Model for Interpreting Culture in Student Group Work

Based on my working definition of culture and insights drawn from Holliday's (2011, 2013) *Grammar of Culture*, I conceive student group work as a particular *cultural arena*, where individual members interact with cultural others, negotiate their *cultural realities* concerning the group work practicalities, and engage in the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness of some kind, at least for 'surviving' or 'succeeding in' their common task. The model in Diagram 3.3 (on the next page) presents my conceptualisation in further detail.

The Cultural-Making Process in Student Group Work

What a group member might bring into a cultural arena...	Negotiation process vis-à-vis the various cultural realities	Culture in student group work

External cultural realities:

Cultural resources (Holliday, 2011; 2013):

Personal cultural realities:
The elements derive from either the global position and politics or the personal trajectory.

External cultural realities

Group member X's personal cultural realities

Group member Y's personal cultural realities

Group member Z's personal cultural realities

... ...

Cohesive behaviours

A

B Cohesive thinking

C

... ...

a

b

c

... ...

Student group work as a particular *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013)

Diagram 3.3

55

In this conceptual model illustrated above, the left side represents the *cultural realities* – personal concerns, interests and past experiences – group members may bring into group work. Specifically speaking, a group member might draw on cultural resources (for example, university's policies and lecturer's instructions in which their current group projects are situated) which can be considered as his/her external *cultural realities*. In the meantime, that group member could also draw on some ideas vis-à-vis the global position and politics or take his/her personal experiences (for instance, similar experiences or lessons/skills learnt from other group work or situations) into consideration. These *cultural realities* can be viewed as his/her personal *cultural realities*.

From this perspective, the three aspects under the particular social and political structures in the *Grammar of Culture* (see: Section 4.3.2) have been transformed into the two types of *cultural realities* that students may bring into group work.

The small culture formation in the middle of the *Grammar of Culture* (see: Section 4.3.2) can be understood as group members' negotiation process vis-à-vis the various *cultural realities* (both external or personal ones), which I present in the middle of this conceptual model (see: Diagram 3.3). Given that the external cultural realities are associated with the national, regional or institutional cultures, they function as 'background processes', available for group members to draw on if they choose to.

Regarding the particular cultural products in the *Grammar of Culture* (see: Section 4.3.2), in the context of student group work at university, I argue they are, most frequently, the cohesive behaviours and thinking after the process of negotiation vis-à-vis group members' different *cultural realities*. To put it another way, the particular cultural products are represented in the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness.

The irregular circle in a solid line represents a *cultural arena*, where the negotiation of the *cultural realities* takes place. In this study, this *cultural arena* refers to a metaphorical site – the group work *per se* – where group members' *cultural realities* meet and intermingle.

This conceptual model served as a basis for me to explore the *cultural realities* each group member may bring and draw on during their group work negotiation,

and to examine the process of cultural making towards group cohesiveness in student group where group members' *cultural realities* interact.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have positioned the interpersonal dynamics and interactions in student group work in the conceptual realm of culture, and discussed how culture has been conceived differently at ontological and epistemological levels. The discussion foregrounds the debate, particularly in the intercultural communication field, between essentialism and anti-essentialism.

The conceptual and explanatory limits of the former, which pins culture down into value-oriented structures often associated with large physical entities (e.g. nation), have driven many scholars towards a postmodernist paradigm, promoting a dynamic view of culture as a hybrid product out of interactions in particular sites of communication.

Following this postmodernist 'turn', I have detailed the key thoughts developed by writers endorsing the anti-essentialist position, with particular reference to works related to what is widely known as the 'third culture', 'third place', 'third space' and 'small cultures'. All these conceptualisations delineate a central idea that culture as emergent, hybrid and fluid processes that are under negotiation through individuals' interactions (i.e. discursive practices).

Locating this study in the anti-essentialist paradigm, which coheres well with my interest in exploring the complexity of interpersonal interactions in student group work, I synthesised the key arguments drawn from anti-essentialist theories into a working definition of culture, focusing on the cohesive behaviours and thinking emerging among individuals when they work in a group as a *cultural arena*. This working definition enabled me to develop a conceptual model for guiding my later interpretation of the cultural-making process towards choosiness in student group work.

Chapter Four

Unfolding Complexities of Personal Acculturation
in Student Group Work

1. Introduction

In Chapter 3, the dynamics among students at group level have been investigated from the theoretical perspective of seeing its cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness. In the meantime, the dynamics within each individual student (e.g. cognitive development, behavioral changes) may occur as a response to the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in student group work, which I argued in Chapter 2 after being informed by some theories (e.g. Vygotsky's ZPD model). The dynamics occurring within each individual student forms the focus of the discussion in this chapter, which I position in the conceptual domain of *acculturation.*

This chapter begins with a consideration of the specific *cultural arena* – student group work – as an acculturating site, which is followed by a nuanced understanding of acculturation where I provide a deconstruction of some of its popular definitions across different disciplines, and then review current developments or uses of this concept.

In the light of the contrasting paradigms on *culture* (see: Chapter 3). This review shall take me to the argument that existing acculturation research mainly falls into the essentialist camp favouring a binary approach. I then consider the possibility of (re-)conceptualising acculturation from an anti-essentialist cultural perspective with particular insights drawn from Holliday's (2011; 2013) concept of *cultural reality* and the liminality literature. Based on this, I present a model to describe acculturation processes taking place at an individual level.

Following a summary of the differences between essentialist and anti-essentialist conceptualisations of acculturation, in the last part of this chapter, I present a framework synthesising the conceptual models I developed respectively on the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness (see: Section 7 in Chapter 3) and personal acculturation as informed by anti-essentialist thinking. The ideas are largely derived from Holliday's (2011; 2013) *Grammar of Culture*. However, they have rarely been subject to interpretations

of the dialectical relation between culture and acculturation, or in other words, between what happens to the group and to the individual in the site of group work. This framework therefore served as an analytical guide for my subsequent research, which is exactly an attempt to explore the interconnection between group and individual during a liminal state.

2. Considering Student Group Work as An Acculturating Site

In Chapter 3, I laid the foundation for conceptualising group work as an emergent, hybrid and fluid cultural-making process in which group members' *cultural realities* intermingle and are negotiated, thus generating the conditions for group cohesiveness. In this sense, every student group can be considered to be culturally unique, with cultural difference manifested through and beyond the members' nationalities or ethnicities. Thus, from the perspective of culture, as I argued in Chapter 3, student group work can be conceptually treated as a specific *cultural arena.*

Once such a *cultural arena* is formed by several students, arguably, these students are expected to engage in a collaborative relationship for an extended period of time because the academic instructions (e.g. marking criteria) given by the educational institution (e.g. university) require them to complete the task(s) through collaborations as a group. Under such circumstances, each group member, in theory, needs to develop and maintain a sense of 'membership'. 'Membership', here, means a personal sense of belonging to other individuals who have different capacities to work together towards an agreed-upon academic task at university (Gardner and Jewler, 1992; Hassanien, 2006).

Arguably, this experiencing of being a 'member' in a student group can be both positive and negative, which leads to student progression or retention (Cartney and Rouse, 2006; Gardner and Jewler, 1992). Ideally, each individual group member will proactively experience creative agreement, excitement and enthusiasm through constructive negotiations of their shared task(s). However, equally, each individual group member can also feel antagonistic, excluded, blocked, unable to make their voice heard, and some cannot contribute as they would like through the negotiations (Cartney and Rouse, 2006).

Such kind of student progression or retention is possibly manifested by an individual student's changes through his or her participation in group work, which, I argued in Chapter 2, can be considered as the dynamics occurring within each individual student.

That is to say, in student group work, along with the process of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness, simultaneously, personal changes perhaps occur to individual group member. Personal changes under the context of 'cultural difference' is researched in the conceptual domain of acculturation. From this perspective, I would argue, student group work is not only a *cultural arena* (through the lens of culture formation) but also an acculturating site (through the lens of occurrence of individual changes) for each individual group member.

Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter, I discuss individuals' engagement with their group work through the theoretical lens of acculturation, which centres on the process where individuals interact with 'cultural difference'.

3. Existing Acculturation Studies

In this section, I start with a deconstruction of acculturation, a concept initially conceptualised in anthropology before it was extended to other disciplines and research fields. Following this, in the second part of this section, I review existing acculturation studies through the lens of the contrasting cultural paradigms discussed in the previous chapter and discuss how the majority of them are associated with an essentialist position, therefore pointing to a fertile ground for exploring this subject from an anti-essentialist perspective.

3.1 The Concept of Acculturation

The idea of acculturation could be dated back to 1882, John Wesley Powell (1882) coined the term 'acculturation' to define people's changes as a consequence of cross-cultural experience. Anthropologists and sociologists were among the first social scientists who carried out academic inquiry into acculturation. In the last a few decades, acculturation research has later extended to a wider range of disciplines, such as psychology and intercultural communication studies. In Table 4.1 below, I list some representative definitions of acculturation developed by scholars in these fields.

The Representative Definitions of Acculturation

Research Domain	The Representative Definition of Acculturation
Anthropology	A phenomenon occurs to a group of individuals when they have different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Redfield *et al.*, 1936). A two-step process whereby the individual must first understand new and unfamiliar cultural values and customs encountered within a new host society, and then assimilates into that new society via involvement in social gatherings, clubs, or institutions (Gordon, 1978).
Sociology	The changes individuals undergo as they move from their society of origin to a society of settlement (Skuza, 2007). The change process that takes place when groups or individuals from different socio-historical contexts come into continuous contact affecting the original culture patterns and creating new power dynamics for all and between groups and individuals involved (Da Costa, 2008, p.12).
Psychology	The dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005).
Intercultural Communication Studies	An interactive and continuous process that evolves in and through the communication of an immigrant with the new sociocultural environment. The acquired communication competence, in turn, reflects the degree of that immigrant's acculturation (Kim, 1982, p. 380). A process of adaptation to another culture that involves learning, development and competence in adjusting to the new culture and facing new challenges (Berry, 2006; Furnham, 1997; Tadmor, Tetlock, and Peng, 2009). In other words, it is a modification of a culture as a result of contact with other cultures (Berry, 1994; Gibson, 2001; Sandhu, Portes and McPhee, 1996; Schwartz *et al.*, 2010).

Table 4.1

Existing definitions of acculturation, such as those quoted above, words such as 'new culture', 'different cultures or social historical contexts' or 'the new sociocultural environment', have an emphasis on a condition of difference in relation to two or more cultures. These definitions, thus, entail the concept of cultural otherness and the role it plays in acculturation as a social phenomenon. Otherness is an idea initially developed in anthropology, where a condition of

difference is emphasised between us/self and them/others, which means a quality of not being alike. It is used to describe those who are distinct or different from an 'in-group of us' who are familiar and known (Mullin-Jackson, 2010; Said, 1985; Todorov, 2000; Wood, 1997). When this idea is brought into the consideration of culture, people may describe and distinguish a culture that is unfamiliar, new or different from a culture that they are born into, familiar with and know well.

Furthermore, these definitions seem to suggest that people who are continuously exposed to cultural otherness are likely to experience acculturation. Cultural otherness is therefore considered to be a trigger, if not a prerequisite, for acculturation. A further emphasis is placed on the changes occurring to individuals when they are exposed to cultural otherness. Some researchers believe that such changes not only occur to individuals, but also at an inter-group level.

In this sense, the concept of acculturation is different from the concept of enculturation which is defined by anthropologists as a process of socialisation into the maintenance of one's 'first' culture. This process is about the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable them to become functioning members of their society (Grunlan and Mayers, 1988; Herskovists, 1948; Walker, 2007).

Argued by Derrida (1983), cultural otherness is at once an object of desire and derision. It is an articulation of cultural difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity, which indicates the cultural boundaries. Therefore, acculturation can be broadly considered as the changes occurring to individuals – as a result of their contact of cultural difference that is distinguished from the 'first culture' they are born into and have acquired in the process of socialisation. In this study, I adopt this broad meaning of acculturation. Through the lens of the previously discussed anti-essentialist cultural paradigm shift (See: Chapter 3) concerning culture, I elaborate on existing studies on acculturation in the remaining part of this section.

3.2 Problematisation of Existing Acculturation Studies

The majority of existing acculturation studies tend to present cultural difference in terms of cultural distance (Demes and Geeraert, 2014), which suggests a

somewhat measurable 'gap' between cultures and is often employed to explain the level of difficulty experienced by individuals going through acculturation (Dunbar, 1994; Furnham and Bochner,1982). Some scholars associate individuals' behaviour with physical places of 'origin' and believe that the physical distance between individuals' places of 'origin' also gives an indication of the cultural distance between them (Fox *et al.*, 2013; Geeraert and Demoulin, 2013; Hui *et al.*, 2015; López-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2014; Nguyen and Benet-Martínez, 2012; Rojas *et al.*, 2014; Ward and Kennedy,1996). Moreover, such physical places of 'origin' are often tied to a country or region. Based on this assumption, acculturation is usually considered to be an experience exclusive to individuals who make a physical movement from one country or region to another. It is clear that such acculturation research is influenced by the essentialist cultural paradigm. The context in which acculturation takes place, and the individuals involved in the acculturation process, are predominantly explored in binary terms.

3.2.1 A Binary Discourse in Acculturation Research

As pointed out above, acculturation research is usually conducted with an imagined concept of cultural distance, which associates acculturating individuals with two 'places': their 'culture of origin' (i.e. home country or original society/ethnic group) and their 'culture of settlement' (i.e. host country or guest society/ethnic group). This binary view not only concerns the 'places', but also individuals involved in acculturation. The acculturation process is interpreted through a relationship between 'new comers'/ 'guests' who arrive in a country or region that is different from where they were originally born or grow up, and 'locals'/ 'hosts' living as natives in that country or region. The former is often discussed as 'culture receivers' (Barnett, 1954; Birman,1994; Hirano, 2010; Sharma and Atri, 2011), holding a marginal position in the culture of settlement and having the responsibility to (learn to) follow 'local' practices. The 'locals'/ 'hosts' are usually conceived as 'cultural providers' (Hirano, 2010; Sharma and Atri, 2011), who have the authority to claim the 'norms' of behaviour.

3.2.1.1 Cultural Receiver: the 'Guest'

Most of the existing acculturation studies focus on cultural receivers, who are considered to be the protagonists in the narrative of acculturation. Researchers further categorise them into several types, according to their main purposes of

staying in the host places. Some popular categories are international students, working expatriates and refugees.

In the research literature on international students' acculturation, some (e.g. Fu, 2015; Smith and Khawaja; 2014) examine the students' preferred strategies or orientations in relation to Berry's (1994; 1997; 2005) acculturation fourfold model which indicates that a cultural receiver might take one of the four orientations (e.g. separation, integration, marginalisation or assimilation) when they live in the cultural of settlement (introduced in the Section 3.2.2.2). Others investigate the factors that impact on international students' acculturation and explore methods to facilitate such experiences in their host places. For example, Kashima and Loh (2006) explored the impact on international students' acculturation of their closeness with co-nationals, inter-nationals and locals, arguing that close relationships with these three types of individuals are positively correlated to the participants' acculturation experience in the host university. Tan and Liu (2014) contend that it is the ethnic discrimination rather than the cultural distance that largely affects international students' acculturation orientations. Smith and Khawaja (2014) talk about the help provided by the STAR (which stands for strengths, transitions, adjustments, and resilience) programme as a psychological invention for increasing international students' coping self-efficacy and psychotically adaptation.

In the body of research that focuses on working expatriates' acculturation, popular themes include intercultural adjustment or strategies that working expatiates adopt in order to maintain the job and adapt to the culture of settlement. For instance, Gullberg and Watts (2014) argue that the work locus of control affects the working expatriates' acculturation. They suggest that expatriates who take an *assimilation* orientation (introduced in the Section 3.2.2.2), or an internal work locus of control, adapt more easily than others. Bentley *et al.* (2015) point out that, dealing with the political context in the workplace situated in the culture of settlement, expatriates who adopt *integration* or *marginalization* strategies (introduced in the Section 3.2.2.2) experience less stress than others.

Research on the acculturation experiences of refugees has a particular concern for the available support that refugees could access when they have no choice but to move from their culture of origin to a culture of settlement (Johnson-

Agbakwu *et al.*, 2016; Marlowe *et al.*, 2014; Oppedal and Idsoe, 2015). For instance, Birman *et al.* (2014) explore the former USSR refugees' acculturation in the US and state that their occupational adjustment and co-ethnic social support helped attribute to their successful psychological changes in the USA.

Although acculturation studies can be broadly divided into these categories on the basis of cultural receivers' identities, these studies all demonstrate a key concern in 'change'. Some researchers (Berno and Ward, 1998; Cross, 1995; Masuda *et al.*, 1982; Neto, 1995; Pernice and Brook, 1994; Tran, 1993; Ward and Chang, 1997; Wong-Rieger *et al.*, 1987) believe that stress is inevitable for cultural receivers whilst living in the culture of settlement, and thus stress-coping and adjustment become the focus of their research. Berry (1997) developed a stress-and-coping model to highlight cultural receivers' changes during cross-cultural transitions as well as to present coping strategies to deal with them. This model (see: Diagram 4.1) considers group variables at the macro-level first, which are the characteristics of both the society of origin and the society of settlement. Then, it moved on to consider individual variables at micro-level where Berry distinguishes between factors arising prior to and during the acculturation (Ward, 2001; Ward *et al.,* 2001).

The Stress-and-Coping Model
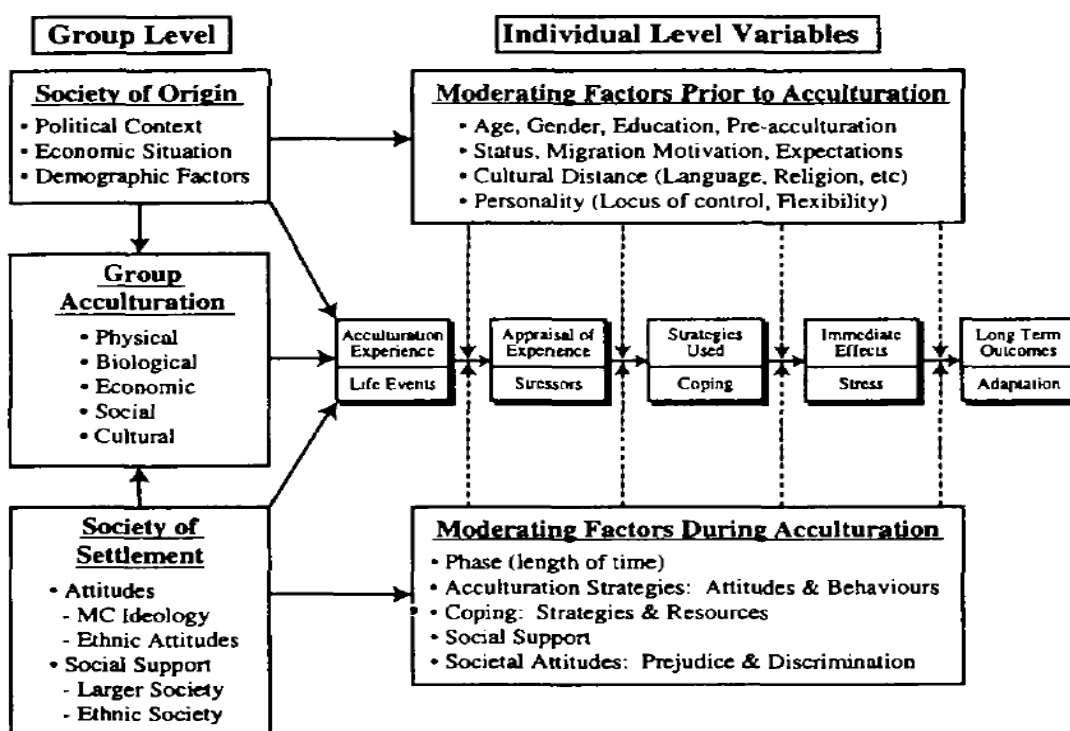
Diagram 4.1 (Source: Berry, 1997)

Some scholars (Argyle and Kendon, 1967; Deshpande and Viswesvaran, 1992; Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Harrison, 1992; Kuo, 2014; Landis *et al.*, 1985) emphasise that cultural receivers need to learn and acquire social knowledge and cultural-specific skills when living in the culture of settlement. What they have acquired in the culture of origin might not be helpful and relevant to deal with the challenges they come across in the culture of settlement that presents an unfamiliar cultural and social environment (Ward, 2001). Kim (1977; 1978; 2005) developed an integrative communication theory to suggest the cross-cultural adaptation of the cultural receivers. She argued that a cultural receiver's acculturation process takes an assimilative path and an individual experiences conformity after s/he settles down in the culture of settlement where s/he 'unlearns' who s/he originally is. This process occurs to a cultural receiver through his/her personal communication process (e.g. decoding and process the information as well as encoding and executing mental plans to respond to the information) and participation in the mass communication activities (e.g. media, radio, television) within the culture of settlement.

Other scholars (Berry, 1997; La Fromnoise *et al.,* 1993; Phinney, 1996; Ryder, Alden and Paulhus, 2000; Schildkraut, 2007) argue that new comers change their perceptions of self and other after being continuously exposed to the culture of settlement (Ward, 2001). Their developing perceptions of self and others are reflected in the acculturation orientations which has been discussed in Section 3.2.2.

The perspectives on 'change' taken by acculturation researchers are generally related to one or more of the following: affect, behaviour, and cognition (Ward, 2001; Ward *et al.*, 2001). Some (e.g. the stress-coping strand) scrutinise changes occurring at an affective level by placing a focus on emotions, such as confusion, anxiety and disorientation, suspicion, bewilderment, perplexity and an intense desire to be elsewhere etc. Some focus on the acquisition of cognitive and behavioural cues/skills associated with the rules and conventions that regulate interpersonal verbal and non-verbal communications. Others examine meta-cognitive changes in terms of how self and other are perceived and how this perception changes as acculturating individuals interpret material, interpersonal, institutional, existential and spiritual events as cultural

manifestations. In Section 3.2.2, I elaborate on theoretical developments that address affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of acculturation.

3.2.1.2 Cultural Provider: the 'Host'

Although the majority of acculturation studies focus on cultural receivers as the 'guests', some researchers (e.g. Berry, 2005; 2008; Bourhis *et al.*, 1887; Dinh and Bond, 2008; López-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2014; Van Acker and Vanbeselaere, 2011; 2012) also argue that cultural receivers' acculturation can affect 'locals'/'cultural providers'' strategies as the 'hosts', which in turn may further affect the cultural receivers' acculturation experiences. They argue that, in a culturally plural society, the consequence of contact between dominant and non-dominant groups could be interconnected (Berry,1997; Piontkowski *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, some researchers shifted their attention to the perceptions and strategies of cultural providers vis-à-vis cultural receivers' acculturation. Berry (2005, 2008) proposed a taxonomy to summarise such perceptions and strategies (see: Diagram 4.2). This taxonomy mirrors his model concerning cultural receivers (introduced in the Section 3.2.2.2) and classifies cultural providers' strategies into the following:

- Integrationist: cultural providers accept that members of the cultural receivers wish to maintain their heritage culture and allow them to become an integral part of the society by engaging in relationships with them.

- Assimilationist: cultural providers do not accept the cultural receivers' maintenance of their own culture, but they support social contact.

- Segregationist: cultural providers accept that cultural receivers want to maintain its original or indigenous culture but do not wish to have any relationships with their members.

- Exclusionist: cultural providers do not accept that cultural receivers want to maintain their culture and do not wish to have any relationships with them.

Acculturation Strategic Taxonomy (Cultural Provider: 'Host')

To respect the cultural receivers' decision to maintain their own culture – **High**	**Segregationist**	**Integrationist**
To respect the cultural receivers' decision to maintain their own culture – **Low**	**Exclusionist**	**Assimilationist**
	To be willing to contact with the cultural receivers – **Low**	To be willing to contact with the cultural receivers – **High**

Diagram 4.2 (Source: Berry, 2005; 2008)

As the summary shows, these four strategies indicate that the cultural providers as the dominant group (compared to the cultural receivers who are in marginal position, a non-dominant group) have the authority to either accept or reject the strategies adopted by the cultural receivers. In this sense, Berry divided the people broadly into two groups according to the relationship between an individual and the 'place' where they settle down after the enculturation.

3.2.2 Theorising Acculturation

As I mentioned before, acculturation study focuses on exploring the influences of the culture of settlement on people who have already been enculturated into a 'first culture'. Researchers developed different theories to predict the orientations of people's acculturation, which could also be regarded as the strategies adopted by people to help themselves survive after living in the culture of settlement for an extended period of time. Some of those researchers suggest that people's acculturation orientation mainly present a unidimensional or linear process from the culture of origin to the culture of settlement (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Gullahorn and Gullahorn,1963; Kaye and Taylor, 1997; Nguyen, 1985; Oberg, 1960; Pantelidou and Craig, 2006; Phinney, 1996; Ryder, Alden and Paulhus, 2000; Schildkraut, 2007; Xia, 2009). The rest researchers considered the orientation of people's acculturation may be bi-dimensional as they believe that the cultural receivers always deal with both the culture of origin and culture of settlement (Berry, 1994; 1997; 2005; Espinetti, 2011; La Fromboise *et al.*, 1993; Moore and Barker, 2011) and then the acculturation orientation is not universally a uni-dimensional process for every

individual. As mentioned in Section 3.2.1.1, these studies tend to examine acculturation by focusing on affect, cognition and/or behaviour. In this section, I discuss the major theories developed from these perspectives.

In addition to that, some scholars conceptualised the concept of acculturation differently from the broad meaning of acculturation that I adopt in this study (see: Section 3.1). They seemed to consider acculturation in a very narrow sense, for instance La Fromboise *et al.* (1993) took acculturation as one of the five specific orientations individuals may experience when they are living in the culture of settlement (see: Section 3.2.2.2).

3.2.2.1 A Uni-dimensional or Linear Orientation/Strategy

For decades, a uni-dimensional orientation to acculturation (Parks and Miller, 1921) has remained the standard perspective in acculturation research. Individuals begin with total attachment to their indigenous culture and gradually move towards total attachment to the culture of settlement (Parks and Miller, 1921). Different theories are developed by many scholars to interpret individuals' uni-dimensional or linear acculturation orientation.

3.2.2.1.1 Culture Shock

A popular theory that describes individuals' uni-dimensional orientation is culture shock. Culture shock is a term coined by Kalervo Oberg (1960) to (mainly) refer to acculturating individuals' emotional experience. He posits that individuals experience psychological disturbance as a result of losing familiar signs and symbols when immersed in a different culture. He developed a staged framework to describe the likely trajectory (U-curve) of such experiences (also see Diagram 4.3):

- Stage 1: Honeymoon: it happens to people when they just arrive in the culture of settlement where everything might be fresh, interesting and exciting to them. People would be fascinated with what they come across, such as signs, food, sound, symbols etc., and they are likely to minimise and romanticise the cultural differences while ignoring the negativities. The honeymoon period usually is short and lasts a couple of days or a few weeks.

- Stage 2: Crisis: people start to realise the differences of the culture of settlement from their own culture through the continuous interactions with

local people. During their interactions, difficulties may appear, such as language issues or misunderstandings, which contribute to their negative feelings, for instance, anxiety, frustration, stress and hostility. The duration of the crisis depends on people's ability and their motivation to integrate with the culture of settlement. A motivated person may experience the crisis shorter.

- Stage 3: Adjustment: after experiencing the crisis, people learnt to function in the culture of settlement and they know what others expect from them, develop problem-solving skills and the culture of settlement is no long all that new. In this stage, people may become independent and re-build their confidences to live in the culture of settlement.

- Stage 4: Adaptation: people are able to accept what comes to them in the culture of settlement. Their anxieties fade away and feel comfortable to build social relationships with locals. They start to fully participate in the culture of settlement. In this stage, people bring themselves satisfactions and accomplishments.

Culture Shock – "U-curve" Framework
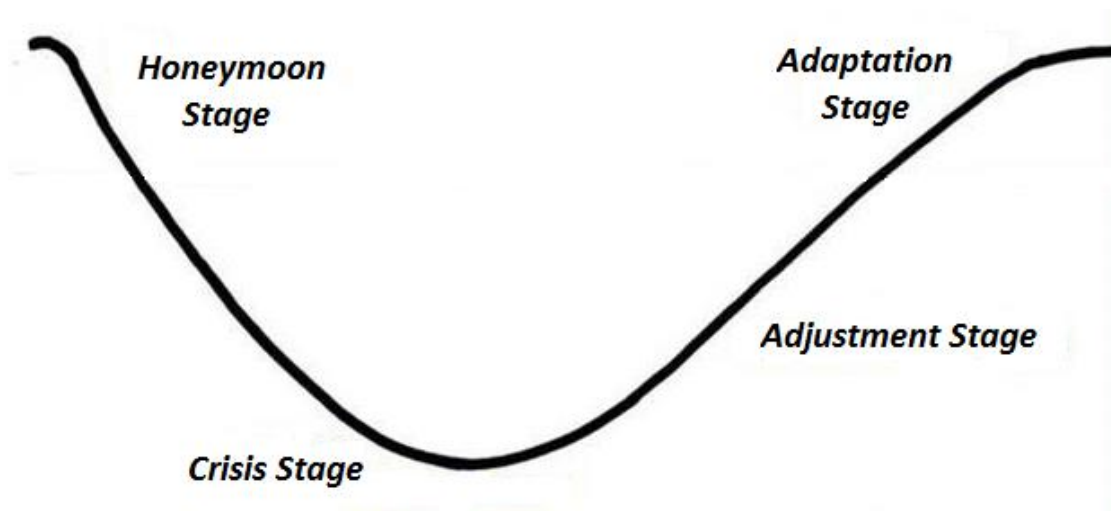
Diagram 4.3

This 'U-curve' framework was extended by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) into a 'W-curve' model with a more nuanced rendering of the last two stages. According to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), after individuals have experienced the crisis stage, they might be able to make some initial adjustment, but such adjustment may only stay at the behaviour level, but less

easily to their thoughts. Even if individuals have acquired new behavioural skills in keeping with the expectations in their cultures of settlement, they may remain psychologically isolated and feel that their original values are challenged by different ones in the cultures of settlement. It is possible that individuals will move from an 'isolation' stage to an 'integration/acceptance' stage both behaviourally and psychologically when they are able to reconcile the values of their cultures of origin with the values of the cultures of settlement. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) suggested that this may not be a simple one-off process and therefore extended the 'U-curve' model of culture shock into a 'W-curve' to emphasise the sequence of behavioural and mental adjustment in the culture of settlement (see: Diagram 4.4).

Culture Shock – "W-curve" Framework
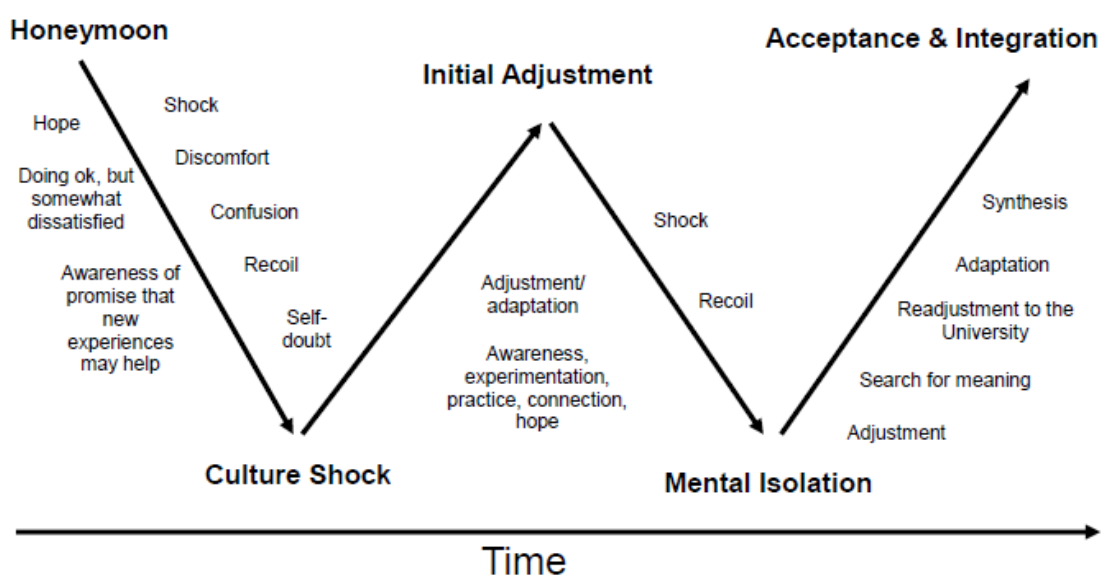
Diagram 4.4 (Source: Hoffenburger *et al.*,1999)

When Oberg (1960) first put forward the concept of culture shock, he presented it as an occupational disease to be treated or resolved. The negative connotations of culture shock as an undesirable experience can be noted from many subsequent studies on this topic. For example, Nguyen (1985) discussed Americans physicians' culture shock who were in contact with Vietnamese through a 'health and disease' discourse. Kaye and Taylor (1997) investigated the factors that caused expatriate managers' culture shock when they worked in a joint-venture hotel in Beijing and provided suggestions to alleviate it. Pantelidou and Craig (2006) examined the possibility of providing social support for Greek students to overcome culture shock while studying in the UK. There

are other studies (e.g. Furnham and Bochner 1986; Furnham, 1993; Xia, 2009) that explore culture shock in more general terms, but still demonstrate a concern for the causes, consequences and 'cures' of culture shock.

Adler (1975) disagreed with this etiological approach to studying culture shock. He argued that culture shock has the potential to offer something good and positive, and thus represents a transitional period towards learning, self-development and personal growth at higher levels. Like Alder, some following researchers started to question this clinically-oriented and negative-related thinking of culture shock which implies an assumption that cultural receivers normally experience stress and thus it is necessary for them to adjust or having (medical) treatment in the culture of settlement (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Ward *et al.*, 2001). Since the 1980s, researchers have begun to consider the experiences of cultural receivers in the culture of settlement as a learning experience rather than a medical nuisance (Zhou *et al.,* 2008). Culture shock is then conceptualised as an experience that individuals may have when they live in a place other than their cultures of origin (Macionis and Gerber, 2010), which seems to be a relatively neutral perspective of thinking culture shock.

3.2.2.1.2 Other Uni-dimensional or Linear Orientations

Apart from the theory of culture shock, many other researchers also argue that individuals relinquish their identification with the culture of origin and assimilate to the identification with the culture of settlement (Olmedo, 1979). From the proponents of the uni-dimensional acculturation orientation (Phinney, 1996; Ryder, Alden and Paulhus, 2000; Schildkraut, 2007), the culture of origin and the culture of settlement cannot co-exist in harmony in acculturating individuals' experiences. Contact with the culture of settlement necessarily leads to a process of losing bonds with one's original culture. Diagram 4.5 represents the simple form of this uni-dimensional view.

Simple Version of the Uni-dimensional Acculturation Process

Traditional

Assimilated
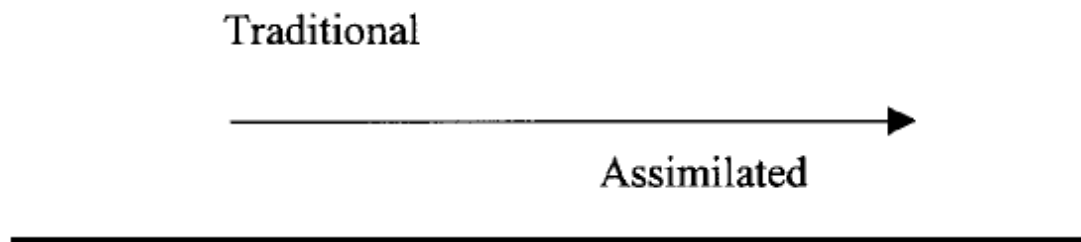
Diagram 4.5 (Source: Flannery *et al.*, 2001)

Later, Gan (1979) and Gordon (1964) contended that acculturation is a linear process in terms of its direction and outcome. However, within this general linear process, it may contain different layers, such as linguistic, social, economic, legislative, etc. Therefore, the uni-dimensional orientation could be more sophisticated than what people used to think (see: Diagram 4.6).

Sophisticated Version of the Uni-dimensional Acculturation Process

civic

economic

social

linguistic

Steps of Assimilation
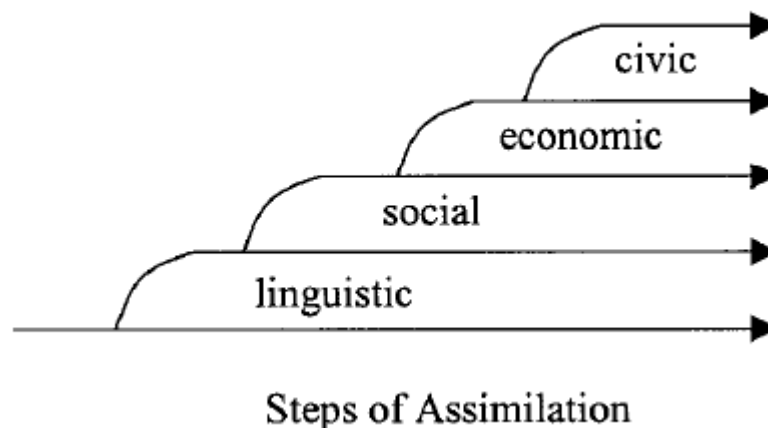
Diagram 4.6 (Source: Flannery *et al.*, 2001)

This uni-dimensional orientation of acculturation is reflected in a number of self-report measurements, for instance, (Yang and Fox 1979) investigated the food habits of Chinese persons living in America and concluded that a continuous process of food-habit changing was occurring among the Chinese who incorporated American food into their breakfast and lunch patterns. An acculturation scale was designed by Ghuman (1994) to investigate the acculturation attitudes of Indo-Canadian young people and the findings showed that the 100 participants scored very high in terms of their willingness to take up the norms and values of the Canadian society.

3.2.2.2 A Bi-dimensional Orientations/Strategies

In the last three decades, a bi-dimensional perspective emerged as a conceptual alternative to tackle the inadequacy of the uni-dimensional model. Researchers argue that individuals' acculturation orientations vary from person to person and not every individual presents a uni-dimensional process. In other words, the bi-dimensional view extends the uni-dimensional view by adding other possible orientations, apart from the linear orientation which indicates individuals assimilate from their cultures of origin to the cultures of settlement.

La Fromboise *et al.*, (1993) hypothesised five orientations regarding people's acculturation based upon the possible ways for people to manage the culture of origin and the culture of settlement during their own sojourning life.

- Assimilation: Individuals allow the values, beliefs and behaviours acquired from the culture of settlement to gradually replace those they carry over from the culture of origin. Thus, they engage in a process of gaining full membership to the culture of settlement.

- Acculturation[1]: Individuals relinquish some aspects of the culture of origin and gain partial membership to the culture of settlement.

- Alternation: individuals develop the basic skills to function in the culture of settlement but retain their original values, beliefs and behaviours, thus maintaining membership to the culture of origin.

- Multiculturalism/integration/pluralism: Individuals allow the culture of origin and the culture of settlement to co-exist harmoniously in their sojourning life, with equal attention and importance attached to both sides.

- Fusion: Individuals attempt to fuse the culture of origin and adaptive responses in the culture of settlement together in order to develop a new set of reactions that can be used in the culture of settlement.

Building upon La Fromoise *et al.*'s (1993) work, Coleman (1995) added separation as another orientation to indicate the state that individuals resist

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[1] Here, the term of acculturation was used in a narrow sense by La Fromboise *et al.* who referred the meaning to a specific orientation that some individuals might experience in their general 'acculturation' processes. As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, I use this term in a broader sense.

contact with the culture of settlement despite their physical exposure to it, and they would rather stay in fully membership with the culture of origin.

Nearly around the same time, Berry (1994; 1997; 2005) suggested an acculturation strategic taxonomy to describe people's acculturation orientation by mainly focusing on two issues: (i) a relative preference for maintaining one's heritage, culture and identity, and (ii) a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups (Berry, 2005, p. 705). Depending on the extent to which people manage themselves with these two issues, people could result in one of the four different outcomes (Berry, 2005; 2008), which are represented in Diagram 4.7.

- Integration: individuals want to keep their original cultural identity meanwhile being willing to interact with other culture groups;

- Assimilation: individuals seek daily interactions with other culture groups rather than keeping their original cultural identity;

- Separation: individuals place a value on holding on to their original cultural identity by avoiding interaction with other culture groups;

- Marginalisation: individuals neither want to keep their original cultural identity nor willing to interact with other culture groups.

Acculturation Strategic Taxonomy (Cultural Receiver: 'Guest')

To maintain the culture of origin – **High**	**Segregation**	**Integration**
To maintain the culture of origin – **Low**	**Marginalisation**	**Assimilation**
	To contact with the culture of settlement – **Low**	To contact with the culture of settlement – **High**

Diagram 4.7 (Source: Berry, 2005; 2008)

Some researchers are particularly interested in the fusion orientation and develop their acculturation studies on the creation of a 'third culture'. They argue that people might gradually create a 'third culture' as a result of combining both the culture of origin and the culture of settlement. Some call this ethnogenesis, i.e. emergence of a new ethnicity. Such as the Chicanos in Los Angeles, Irish Americans (Southies) in Boston and Chinese Americans in San Francisco (Flannery *et al.*, 2001).

The models discussed above differ in detail, but they are all developed based on the idea that an individual's acculturation orientation involves a decision made between one's culture of origin and culture of settlement, which are believed to be mutually exclusive and cannot co-exist.

3.2.3 Factors Influencing Acculturation

With regard to what may influence acculturation, age, gender, education and socioeconomic status are the most frequently examined factors in existing acculturation studies.

3.2.3.1 Age or Developmental Status

Many studies have shown a negative correlation between age and the efforts the individuals need to exert for their assimilation or integration orientation in the culture of settlement (Beiser, 2005; Faragallah, *et al.*, 1997; Kwak and Berry, 2001; Sam, 1995). The younger age people are when they move to the culture of settlement, the easier and fewer efforts they need to make for their adaptation or assimilation to the culture of settlement. People may experience more pressure and have increased risk of mental health when they acculturate in their later life (Organista *et al.*, 2003).

When acculturation takes place in one's early age (e.g. young adults), they are more likely to embrace and fit into the culture of settlement (e.g. assimilation) while losing the culture of origin (e.g. values and practices etc.) (Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2005; Schwartz *et al.*, 2010). For those who acculturate in their adolescence, there is a greater chance for them to experience conflicts between the culture of origin and the culture of settlement, compared to those who are in other developmental status, e.g. adults (Berry, 1997).

In contrast, more senior adults (e.g. grandparents) may prefer to contact with people from similar cultures of origin in their local communities in the host places rather than contact with the wider society in the culture of settlement (Bornstein, 2013), thus they likely to adopt different acculturation strategies compared to the other age groups.

3.2.3.2 Gender Difference

Gender is also considered to play a role in individuals' acculturation (Berry *et al.*, 2006; Dion and Dion, 1996; Güngör and Bornstein, 2009). Dion and Dion

(2001) note that female immigrants in the US would re-renegotiate with their husbands in terms of sharing household work which is used to be mainly taken by the wives in their cultures of origin. Some suggest that women are more likely to change than men in the culture of settlement due to their greater sensitivity and adaptability to social networking (Berry *et al.*, 2006).

3.2.3.3 Level of Education and Socioeconomic Status

Some studies have shown a positive correlation between education level and socioeconomic status and their acculturation (Beiser, 2005; Berry,1997; Colic-Peisker and Walker, 2003; Dow, 2011). Berry (1997) argues that people who are well-educated with a good socioeconomic status are likely to adopt an integrative orientation for their acculturation, an argument supported by some other researchers' findings (e.g. Colic-Peisker and Walker, 2003; Dow, 2011). Berry (1997) explains that a good level of education prepares people to be more knowledgeable and skillful at problem-analysis or problem-solving, which is normally interrelated with higher income and better occupations. Hence, compared with those who are less-well-educated, they potentially demonstrate better competence and have more resources to adapt to the culture of settlement.

3.3 A Summary of Existing Acculturation Studies: Essentialism-oriented

Based upon the discussions on existing acculturation studies, I can sense that the majority of the researchers assume the division between cultural receivers ('guests') and cultural providers ('hosts') is there, which leads them to develop various theories (e.g. culture shock, Barry's fourfold model) to describe the 'transitions' for the cultural receivers to 'survive' in the cultural of settlement. This division implies that the researchers associate the cultural difference largely with the national boundaries or ethnic differences. As I discussed in Chapter 3, such a view represents an essentialist cultural paradigm. This finding encourages me to discuss and suggest an anti-essentialist approach that perhaps can be considered to interpret individual's acculturation process. This anti-essentialist approach to exploring individual acculturation is explained in detail in the next section.

4. An Anti-Essentialist Possibility for Researching Acculturation

In Section 3, I have discussed how current acculturation research tends to operate with an essentialist assumption, where acculturation individuals, their experiences of otherness, and the places associated with their acculturative experiences are fixed to binary entities. In this section, I place these elements in an anti-essentialist perspective (see details in Chapter 3) and propose alternative possibilities to conceptualise acculturation.

Viewed from an anti-essentialist perspective, culture as emergent, hybrid and dynamic processes of meaning construction. It is freed from definitions bound to geopolitical entities and can be associated with cohesive behaviour and thinking emerging, through interactions, from any groups. Therefore, individuals may perceive cultural difference so long as they encounter different sets of meaning, an experience that is not restrained to geographical movements, but can happen in individuals' familiar surroundings. This view renders the conventional binary concepts of 'culture of origin' and 'culture of settlement' rather problematic.

Additionally, the anti-essentialist argument on individuals' multiple cultural memberships suggests that such experience is likely to happen even on a frequent and daily basis, as no two individuals share exactly the same cultural memberships and it can be argued that there is always an intercultural aspect to their communication (Singer, 1998). This view calls into question the conventional binary identities assigned to individuals involved in acculturation, e.g. 'cultural receivers' and 'cultural providers'.

4.1 Acculturation Occurring against *Cultural Realities*

When the agents and sites of acculturation are no longer viewed as fixed to large entities, the processes of acculturation become rather fluid, which cannot be easily interpreted through the binary lens concerning a stable 'culture of origin' and a stable 'culture of settlement'. For instance, with regard to acculturation taking place at a micro level, the members of a multinational work team need to develop the values and practices suited to a perceived form of culture that works towards group cohesiveness. In such cases, it is not always straightforward to identify the 'host' and the 'guest', the 'culture of origin' and 'the culture of settlement'. All members may be exposed to cultural difference

and need to engage in meaning-making processes as a form of acculturation into their 'culture'. This 'culture', may, in turn, be shaped and reshaped as the members negotiate meanings with each other. This renders their acculturation a rather ambivalent, hybrid and fluid process rather than a linear one.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the anti-essentialist emphasis is on the (inter)subjectivity (Benson, 2002; Chirkov, 2009), hybridity (Kramsch, 1993; 2009; 2013; Bhabha, 1990; 2004), fluidity and instability (Dervin, 201; Holliday, 1999) of culture. This view of culture has led Holliday (2011) to propose the concepts of *cultural arena* and *cultural reality*, which I consider to be useful alternatives for reconceptualising acculturation. *Cultural realities* in this context can be conceived as a complex whole that carries broad cultural meanings for acculturating individuals. The individuals draw on certain *cultural realities* when responding to the dynamics of a *cultural arena*, where their acculturation takes place through interactions with cultural others. In the meantime, new *cultural realities* emerge as the individuals interact with cultural others and develop cohesive behaviour with them in the *cultural arena*. From this perspective, acculturation can be explored through tracing the changes of an individual's *cultural realities* that occur in a fluid *cultural arena*. The trajectory of changing *cultural realities* can be highly personal and uncertain, thus making it difficult, if not impossible, to predict the acculturation 'orientation' (see the uni-dimensional and bi-dimensional models discussed in Section 3)

4.2 Liminality in Personal Acculturation

If personal acculturation can be understood dynamically through tracing the changes of an individual's *cultural realities*, arguably, personal acculturation also reflects a liminal feature.

Liminality was initially proposed as an anthropological concept by Arnold Van Gennep in his research on rites of passage in pre-industrial societies. Such rites refer to ceremonial acts with symbolic religious meaning that accompany an individual transcending from one state to another, an 'in-between' state connected to two different phases of his/her life (Van Gennep, 2011). Liminality, therefore, emphasises the transitional, 'in-between' period that a person undergoes, for example, from adolescence to adulthood. "A liminal stage is characterised by ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy" (Sharma, 2013, p.111). Victor Turner took this concept beyond religious acts in small-scale

societies and considered it in larger social, cultural and political systems (Turner, 1995), where qualities of ambiguity, disorientation and uncertainty occur in the transitional period between two 'clear stages', e.g. a society's transition from feudalism to capitalism. There has been some level of transformation of the meaning of liminality when it travelled from one thinker to another and was applied by researchers in various disciplines to understand their central research problems (Thomassen, 2014), and yet, the idea of transition, where an 'old state of order' breaks down whilst a 'new order' has not been fully established, is generally retained in subsequent usage of liminality.

Associating this idea with the changes of an individual's *cultural realities* in a *cultural arena* (e.g. student group work), I would argue that, throughout the entire process of conducting group work, an individual's existing set of *cultural realities* vis-à-vis student group work (e.g. an assumed way of responding to other group members, a specific assumption about how to conduct group work) can be suspended and give way to uncertainty (Shortt, 2015).

This uncertainty means that an existing set of *cultural realities* stored in an individual's mind, potentially speaking, can be continuously 'questioned' as well as 'modified' by means of interacting with culturally others during group work. Before the completion of group work, it is difficult to predict what these *cultural realities* would turn to be.

In this sense, an individual group member perhaps undergoes an 'in-between' stage in terms of the changes of his/her *cultural realities*. More precisely, an individual's existing set of *cultural realities* vis-à-vis student group work (an 'old state of order') has been broken down whilst another set of *cultural realities* vis-à-vis student group work (a 'new order') has not been fully established yet.

Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that, once an individual is engaged with a particular *cultural arena* (e.g. student group work), his or her "normal limits of thoughts, self-understanding and behaviours are relaxed, opening the way to something new" (Sharma, 2013, p.111). This can be considered as a transitional period where an individual group member "examines one's own self in comparison to others and thus provides the opportunity to see the potentiality of an ego which can remain hidden otherwise" (Sharma, 2013, p.111). In other words, an individual's acculturation – changes of his/her *cultural realities* – in a particular *cultural arena* can be argued as a stage of liminality.

5. Reconceptualising Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

Based on the arguments developed in the preceding section, in this study, I define acculturation as follows:

> *It refers to a dynamic and on-going personal trajectory through which an individual's cultural realities are maintained, developed or enriched as s/he continuously conducts activities with others in a particular cultural arena in order to gain and/or retain a membership of a certain group, where circumstances are characterised by uncertainty and always negotiated between all participants in the cultural arena.*

This definition highlights the *inter* aspect of acculturation, a phenomenon happening through intercultural communication. It coheres with the anti-essentialist perspective and differs from traditional definitions of acculturation driven by an essentialist interest in cross-cultural comparisons.

As the cultural reality is subjectively constructed and highly personal (Holliday, 2011; 2013), it is only relatively 'real' to the individual concerned, which is reflected in the ways s/he responds to his/her experiences of cultural difference. Therefore, in this study, I decided to explore each student's *cultural realities* through such responses, particularly in relation to the affect-behaviour-cognition triad commonly employed in the acculturation literature (see: Section 3). Below, I synthesise the points developed so far and propose a conceptual model for (re-)conceptualising acculturation from an anti-essentialist perspective (see: Diagram 4.8 on the next page).

Personal Acculturation Taking Place in Student Group Work
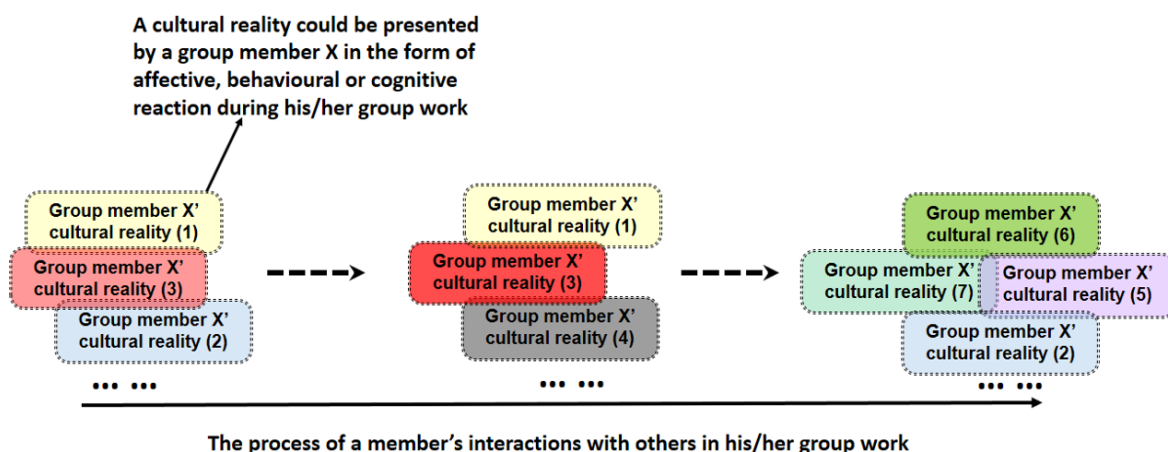
Diagram 4.8

In Diagram 4.8, each box represents a specific cultural reality that can be interpreted from an individual's (group member X) reactions at an affective, behavioural, and/or cognitive level. The arrows show the dynamic movement of the individual's *cultural realities* over time. The colours (and numbers) give an indication of what the changes may look like, e.g. some *cultural realities* may remain active, others may disappear, and new ones may emerge. In this study, I decided to trace these changes as a way of interpreting the group members' acculturation processes.

6. Summarising Two Contrasting Lens of Conceptualising Acculturation

In the preceding sections, I have discussed existing acculturation research through the lens of the debate between essentialism and anti-essentialism. I have examined past and current developments that address acculturation from affective, cognitive and behavioural perspectives, and came to the conclusion that these studies are mostly influenced by an essentialist tradition, which conceptualises the agents and contexts of acculturation in fixed and binary terms. Following anti-essentialist principles, I proposed a definition and a conceptual model to (re-)conceptualise acculturation, which highlights the multifaceted complexities of acculturation (see a summary in Table 4.2).

Acculturation Studies Conducted in Two Cultural Paradigms

	Acculturation explored from an essentialist perspective	Acculturation can be explored from an anti-essentialist perspective
Acculturation condition (trigger)	Cultural difference is interpreted from the perspective of the cultural distance. A culture of origin is different from a culture of settlement. Contact of cultural difference depends on the chances of having geographical movement.	Cultural difference could be sensed in an emergent and dynamic culture. Contact of the cultural difference happens to people in their daily life as long as they are members of a group where interactions exist.
Acculturation Outcomes	Stress Coping; Acquisition of the cultural-specific skills; Perception of the cultural identity.	The changes of a person's *cultural realities* which could be affective-, behavioural- or cognitive-related.
Agents (who are involved in acculturation)	Culture receivers (guests/non-dominants) learn from the culture providers (hosts/dominants).	There is not necessarily or possible to distinguish the hosts from the guests or the dominants from the non-dominants.
Acculturation process	Cultural shock; Uni-dimensional; Bi-dimensional;	An uncertain and dynamic trajectory of a person's changes in terms of his/her *cultural realities*.
Researchers' belief	Influenced by the essentialist cultural paradigm to explain how people can or cannot 'survive' in the culture of settlement. It is cross-culturally-oriented.	Inspired by the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm to understand what changes an individual may have when s/he is surrounded by an emergent culture. It is interculturally-oriented.
Relation between culture and acculturation	Culture is 'out there' and associated with regions or nations. People need to adapt to or assimilate into a new culture when they settle down in a different place.	People might change when they are exposed to a culture that is developing all the time.

Table 4.2

7. An Anti-Essentialist Conceptual Framework to Interpret Student Group Work

Having examined student group work at university from the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm, I have contended that an emergent, hybrid and fluid cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness can be interpreted through students' interactions regarding their *cultural realities* in group work as a specific *cultural arena* (see: Chapter 3). In the meantime, as a result of the intermingling of various *cultural realities* within that *cultural arena*, an individual group member possibly experiences changes in terms of his/her own *cultural realities*, which has been conceptualised as his/her personal acculturation from the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm (Section 5 in Chapter 4).

Drawing on the arguments I developed in these two chapters of literature review, I present a synthesised version of the conceptual framework developed for this study (see: Diagram 4.9 on the next page). This framework integrates the models previously explained on the cultural-making process and personal acculturation (see: Section 7 in Chapter 3 and Section 5 in Chapter 4) and locates them in the specific *cultural arena* of student group work.

Cultural-Making Process and Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

Student group work as a particular *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013) and acculturating site

Cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness

External cultural realities:

Cultural resources (Holliday, 2011; 2013)

Personal cultural realities:
The elements derive from either the global position and politics or the personal trajectory.

Group members interact with one another in group work where their cultural realities intermingle and bind together.

Cohesive behaviours

Component (A), Component (B), Component (C) … …

Cohesive thinking

Component (a), Component (b), Component (c)… …

In Parallel

Group member X's | cultural | realities

Group member Y's | cultural | realities

Group member Z's | cultural | realities

… … | … … | … …

A group member's acculturation process

Diagram 4.9

85

In this conceptual framework, the two boxes on the left-hand side represent the *cultural realities* that individual members may bring to the *cultural arena* of their group work. The *cultural arena* is represented by the large irregular circle. A process of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness may emerge and evolve as the members' *cultural realities* intermingle (right top), and each member's acculturation process occurs simultaneously (right bottom) while their *cultural realities* interact within that cultural-making process.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have positioned the dynamics occurring within each individual student during their group work in the conceptual domain of acculturation, and discussed how acculturation has been conceived and studied across different research fields and disciplines. This discussion highlights a problematic issue: binarism, which indicates that the majority of existing acculturation studies drawn from an essentialist cultural paradigm.

Having realised this problematic issue, I discussed the possibility of (re)considering acculturation from the anti-essentialist perspective and argued that personal acculturation can be reconceptualised with particular reference to Holiday's *cultural* reality and *cultural arena*. Associating acculturation with these two concepts enables me to further argue the liminal features in personal acculturation process.

An anti-essentialist working definition of acculturation is then suggested, focusing on tracking the changes of an individual's *cultural realities* in a particular *cultural arena* (e.g. student group work). This working definition has provided me with insights to develop a conceptual model for guiding my later interpretation of personal acculturation process in student group work.

To conclude this chapter, I further developed an anti-essentialist theoretical framework by drawing on the two conceptual models (e.g. cultural-making process and acculturation in student group work) I conceived respectively in Chapter 3 and this chapter. I adopt this theoretical framework as an analytical guide to understand the two levels of dynamics – the process of cultural-making and personal acculturation – in student group work.

I return to this analytical conceptual framework in the next few chapters and explain how it guided the relevant steps in this study.

Research Aim and Questions

The literature review (see: chapters 2-4) has led me to understand acculturation as a dynamic personal learning process occurring in relation to a *cultural arena*, in which a hybrid cultural-making process emerges among interacting individuals.

Informed by this understanding, I refined the two-fold research aim for this study. Focusing on students' experiences of conducting group work, I would explore how students individually acculturate within group work – the specific *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013) – where the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness can be investigated as the group members constantly negotiate their *cultural realities*. More specifically, I aim to generate understandings in relation to three research questions:

Research Question 1: What patterns can be identified about the trajectory with respect to the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness in the course of students' group projects?

Research Question 2: What patterns can be identified about students' individual acculturation trajectories, especially in terms of any changes occurring to their *cultural realities* concerning group work?

Research Question 3: Are there any discernible links between the group members' individual acculturation trajectories and the developmental patterns regarding the processes of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness?

Chapter Five Methodology

1. Introduction

The discussions with respect to student group work, culture and acculturation I carried out in the last three chapters (see: Chapters 2-4) provided a theoretical foundation for the two-fold research aim in this study, that is, to explore, through the anti-essentialist lens, how students acculturate in the *cultural arena* of group work, whereby dynamic cultural processes would also unfold at a group level. These reflect a postmodernist position on understanding sociocultural phenomena and a social constructivist approach to making sense of 'realities'.

This chapter, therefore, details the epistemological underpinnings and methodological considerations in this study. It begins with an overview of major research philosophies influencing intercultural communication scholarship (as a branch within the social sciences). Next, I discuss how I locate the methodology within the qualitative paradigm and, specifically, within narrative inquiry. I then present the research design, including the methods employed for sampling, data generation, and data analysis. This is followed by a reflection on how I made efforts to ensure rigour throughout the methodological steps.

2. Research Philosophies

Postmodernism is understood by many to be a reaction against the philosophical assumptions and values developed in the modern period of Western history – a period from the 16th and 17th centuries (scientific revolution) to the mid-20th century (Duignan, 2014). Table 5.1 below provides a summary of the key differences between the two research philosophies.

A Brief Comparison of Modernism and Postmodernism

Assumption/Value	Modernists	Postmodernists
About objective reality	The existence and properties of a reality are logically independent of human beings, of their minds, their societies, their social practices, or their investigative techniques.	Realty is a conceptual construct, an artefact of scientific practice and language (i.e. investigation of the past events by historians or description of social

		practices by social scientists).
About the metanarrative	Modernists attempt to provide metanarratives and apply them to everyone in all places (e.g. Marxism, Christianity). Metanarratives thus can be universal and objective because they are based on the idea of progress through reason, science and technological development.	Postmodernists argue that metanarratives should be viewed with suspicion as human experience is very disparate and varied, which makes it impossible to generate metanarratives to account for things in a way that can be relevant to everyone in every place.
About the absolute truth	Modernists believe there is an absolute Truth (capital T is deliberate) that can be achieved or understood by using reason and avoiding subjectivity.	Postmodernists question whether it is actually possible to obtain such a 'Truth', which means they reject foundationalism that emphasises knowledge can be built via firm foundations, e.g. reason or experience. Abandoning the idea of existence of an absolute Truth leads the postmodernists to embrace plurality, multicity and flows rather than uniformity, system or unities.
About the rational and unchanging self	Modernists hold the idea of a rational self that could exercise pure reason and rise above emotional desires.	Postmodernists challenge this idea by saying humans exist as a bundle of experiences that change throughout life. Thus, it is pointless trying to identify a fixed, unchanging self.

Table 5.1

(Source: Duignan, 2014; Gunton, Holmes and Rae, 2001; Hummel, 2007; Lyotard, 1984)

As shown in Table 5.1, the flourish of postmodernism can be seen as a philosophical movement from 'solid or stable times' to 'liquid times'. Change is not seen as a linear progression but a series of flows, (re)connections and (re)forming (Bauman, 2013). There is a loss of faith in the idea that humans are

gradually heading along the one true pathway towards certain universal goals. Instead, more and more scholars who are influenced by postmodernism tend to foreground the multiple pathways, plurality, diversity and difference. Those scholars tend to acknowledge that humans can only have an incomplete picture of knowledge and all knowledge is biased (Lyotard, 1984).

2.1 Postmodernist Critiques of Modernism and Intercultural Communication Research

Earlier intercultural communication research that mainly focused on nation states, or national cultures as the 'default signifier' to investigate, interpret or explain cultural difference in terms of humans' behaviours and thinking demonstrates a theoretical affinity with Modernist thinking (Holliday, 2011). Culture thus is conceptualised as a 'solid' place and individuals are understood as largely fixed to essential characteristics of that 'solid' place. This modernist thinking can be traced to the structural-functional sociology which defines society as an organism, a system constituted by different parts. The social system needs its parts to work together in order to promote solidarity and stability (Durkheim, 1984). Culture, therefore, can be a describable working part that mirrors the characteristics of a whole society and is essentially different to that which belongs to a different society (Holliday, 2013).

However, the postmodern paradigm maintains that "cultures as objectively bounded and describable domains of behaviour are socially and politically constructed" (Holliday, 2016b, p.1) and the purpose of intercultural communication research should thus focus on subjective exploration of the Self and Other, the politics of how difference is constructed, and how such constructions can be managed (Holliday, 2016b). This idea, in contrast to modernism, can be traced to the social action theory (Weber, 1968) and ideology in Marxist sociology (Mills, 2000).

Here, scholars posit that the precise nature of human behaviour can never be determined and people's coherent ideas about societies should be regarded as 'ideal types' that might be used to imagine what society might be like, but which should never be taken as descriptions of how things actually are (Weber, 1968). Therefore, social scientists should not aim to discover universal laws of society, but should instead attempt to understand individual events and explain them

through the meanings that the individuals attach to their actions (Benton, 2001; Giddens, 1984; Weber, 1949).

From this perspective, the use of modern paradigm in intercultural communication produces discourses that prescribe culture in one way or another in order to present ideological positions about how the world is aligned (Hall, 1992). For instance, Japanese students are commonly depicted as being 'collectivist' and thus keeping silent in class, as opposed to a 'Western individualist culture' (Piller, 2011). Some argue that such thinking tends to romanticise the West as an idealised promotor to facilitate intercultural communication between the Western and the non-western (Holliday, 2013), with likely neo-racist consequences where cultural difference becomes a euphemism for race (Holliday, 2016b). In doing so, many vibrant cultures, other than the dominant ones, can be marginalised or diminished and then become difficult to claim or be recognised in the world (Delanty, Wodak and Jones, 2008; Hall, 1991).

Therefore, postmodernists find problems with the modernist paradigm for "producing superficial evidence that fails to get behind socially constructed statements about culture" (Holliday, 2016b, p.2) on the one hand, and inhibiting the recognition of marginalised *cultural realities* by submerging them into dominant imaginations of what/who they are (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) on the other hand.

2.2 Postmodernist Position on Ontology

The doctrines of postmodernism constitute or imply relativism in terms of ontology. Postmodernists attempt to explore social phenomena through focusing on the meanings people attach to it. Therefore, to a great degree, social phenomena are socially constructed instead of independently existing. In other words, there would hardly be a 'real world' that is independent of people's knowledge (Marsh and Furlong 2002) and the world is built through social and discursive construction under a particular time and historical context (Marsh and Furlong 2002). "Knowledge is theoretically or discursively laden" (Marsh and Furlong 2002, p. 26). This view of being is ontologically defined as relativism which is opposite to a positivist's foundationalism that develops from the empiricist tradition of natural science or belief that an absolutely objective world is out there (BonJour, 1985) and that universal laws and causal statements

about social phenomena can be observable and discoverable through empirical generalisation (Marsh and Stoker, 2010).

Relativism advocates multiple local realities constructed by human beings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) who are able to reflect on themselves, their situations and their relationships (Benton, 2001) and whose life is full of meanings, reflective thoughts and communications (Giddens, 1984).

Unlike the foundationalist ontology, relativists do not believe the world presents itself 'ready-made' to us and emphasises that human mind plays an active role in constructing reality in different ways. Observation is always affected by the social constructions of 'reality' (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015). Thus, the world does not objectively exist, in contrast, it is relatively constructed by people in different ways which depends on the metaphysical, theoretical frame, or the context in which people are situated.

2.3 Postmodernist Position on Epistemology

The relativist ontology suggests that human behaviours are not passive, controlled and determined by external environment. Nor is reality independent of social construction (Henning, *et al.*, 2004). This puts in question the positivist claims that the purpose of acquiring knowledge is to find the 'common laws' or 'rules' that govern 'reality' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Marsh *et al.*, 2002).

If the world is constructed by people in terms of 'reality', what people learn (the knowledge we know about the world) is not about the 'laws' or 'rules' from an absolute 'reality' which is independent of or the same to all of us. Instead, people's knowledge about the world is always affected by the different constructions made by themselves as active agents not by sheer existence (Marsh and Furlong 2002). In other words, people access 'reality' (the external world) mainly through subjective interpretation of the meanings from their experience of interactions between self and others in everyday life (Andrews, 2012; Myers, 2009).

This epistemological view is defined as constructionism that claim each individual brings his/her own 'baggage', or past life experiences to a situation. There is no objective truth (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Carson, 2011; Hammersley, 2013). Instead, truth or knowledge is a constructed reality and

needs to be interpreted through an in-depth exploration of the phenomena to which people assign their meanings (Denzin, 1970).

Constructionism can be seen as part of the movement in the trend of postmodernism because this epistemology tries to critique positivism by stressing that all realities (as productions of human mind) are concerned and inextricably linked to each other as a set of lenses in which people perceive and experience the world (Hoffman, 1990). Moreover, this epistemology has influenced many disciplines in the social sciences, including intercultural communication. Guba and Lincoln (1994) argued that each individual's construction of reality should be the driving force to be investigated whilst any external reality is relatively unimportant. Galbin (2014, p. 89) contends that "its concept of socially constructed reality stresses the ongoing mass-building of worldviews by individuals in dialectical interaction with society at a time".

In fact, current discussions on the constructionist epistemology in the social sciences present two forms: social constructivism and social constructionism (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997; Young and Collin, 2004), which represent different meanings. Social constructivism foregrounds that subjective knowledge and reality are constructed as a result of human beings' interactions with each other and with the objects in the environment (Derry, 1999; Kim, 2001; McMahon, 1997). In other words, social constructivists believe that knowledge and reality are constructed within individuals. Thus, it focuses on what is happening within the minds or brains of individuals (Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan, 2015).

Slightly different, in terms of social constructionism, it emphasises the subjective knowledge and reality arise through the interactions between human beings (e.g. conversations) (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). Put it another way, social constructionists believe that knowledge and reality emerge from ongoing discourses or conversations between individuals, Thus, it focuses on what is happening between individuals as they jointly create knowledge and reality (Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan, 2015).

Guterman (2006) distinguished them by arguing that: "[social constructivism] emphasises individuals' biological and cognitive processes, whereas [social constructionism] places knowledge in the domain of social interchange" (p.13).

In this study, the anti-essentialist theoretical foundation I laid out lent itself coherently to a philosophical stance towards postmodernist thinking. Therefore, I de-emphasise distinctions between social constructivism and social constructionism and lump them together under the generic term constructionism because both hold firmly to the postmodern ethos that knowledge and reality are subjective (Charmaz, 2014).

Based on the postmodernist position on epistemology I have discussed so far, in this study, fixed views of individuals and their intercultural experiences are rejected in favour of a constructionist epistemology. It is the dynamics of individuals' subjective experiences in an equally subjectively constructed *cultural arena* that are under scrutiny.

In the following, I proceed with methodological considerations based on the research philosophies discussed here.

3. Qualitative Researcher Position on Methodology

Speaking of research methodology, two main branches are available. Research can be conducted quantitatively or qualitatively. Quantitative research methodology uses measurable statistics to formulate facts, uncover universal laws or to generalise results from a large sample. Therefore, this methodology aims to prove or test hypotheses through quantifying or calculating numerical data (Creswell, 2013). In contrast, qualitative research methodology takes interviews, field notes, reflections, pictures and other materials to gain an understanding of reasons, opinions, and motivations and provide insights into various social phenomena and problems (Creswell, 2013).

As I explained, given that my research aim is to explore some cultural phenomena in student group work, I decided to conduct this research project qualitatively. This decision is due to the nature of my research aim as well as to the theoretical stance I have explained so far.

In particular, my research aim is to explore the two processes (cultural-making process and personal acculturation) in student group work. The exploratory purpose of this research aim requires me to value the participants' sense-making processes because both processes could be learnt from the *cultural realities* brought by the participants during their group work. In other words, it is

through my interpretations of the meanings attributed by the participants in the data that I can understand culture and acculturation. Thus, participants' own voices and sense-making process in their student group work become critical, which, I believe, can be better foregrounded by adopting the qualitative methodology because the fundamental strength of the qualitative methodology lies in its ability to "explore meanings and, in particular, meaning ascribed to events and circumstances by actors rather than observers" (Sofaer, 1999, p. 1108). Qualitative methodology enables me to understand why the 'same events' are experienced differently by different participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Sofaer, 1999).

Considering that a variety of approaches are available under the umbrella of the qualitative research methodology, for instance, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative inquiry and discourse analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Guest, *et al.*, 2013), I focused on narrative inquiry and ethnography as two methodological possibilities for this study.

What distinguishes narrative inquiry from other research methodologies is the focus on accounts that are given by the participants themselves at a specific moment (Ospina and Dodge, 2005) with respect to a research topic, in this case, the various stages (e.g. group meetings, group presentation) participants are engaged with to complete their group work.

These accounts contain character(s) and sequential event(s) occurring over time (with a beginning, a middle, and an end), which are 'selected' by the participants during their story-telling. That is to say, the construction of accounts (e.g. what characters or events are selected and what sequential order is used to narrate) indicate participants' retrospective interpretations of their experiences from a certain point of view. These retrospective interpretations then suggest participants' intentions, actions and constructions of relationship between self and others (Ospina and Dodge, 2005), which, in this study, have been argued as participants' *cultural realities* presented during group work.

In this study, participants' *cultural realities* and the temporality of these *cultural realities* are central in terms of achieving the two-fold research aim: understanding personal acculturation occurring in the cultural-making process during student group work. It means that I need to interpret what *cultural realities* have been drawn on or developed by each individual participant at a

specific moment as well as to understand how an individual's cultural realties change over time.

From this perspective, generating data through narrative inquiry (e.g. narratives about participants' group work experience), on the one hand, would minimise the influence from external constraints led by the researcher's agenda, and empower participants to illuminate on various *cultural realities* from their own standpoints through the form of story-telling. As Atkinson (1998, p.7) said, "story makes the implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear". On the other hand, this methodology leads the participants to sequentially order their *cultural realities* in a way that makes sense to themselves. This sequential order, or temporality, can help me to pay close attention to the intricacy of specific phenomena that attribute to the change of their *cultural realities* across different stages of group work (Lemley and Mitchell, 2012).

Apart from narrative inquiry, I also considered ethnography as an additional methodology for data generation, as it foregrounds an emic perspective to observe particular social phenomena (Hoey, 2011) and takes observation as its primary source of information (Gobo and Marciniak, 2016). The emic perspective can be argued as the main added value of this methodology compared to others. This emic perspective means generating data through the presence of researchers in the field to gain a better understanding of the conceptual categories of the participants, their point of view and the meanings of their actions and behaviour.

This study is contextualised in student group work where group members interact in a certain way and the interactions perhaps generate influences on each individual group member. Given this, I consider adopting ethnography because its emic perspective of observation could enable me to generate data regarding the interactions among participants at first sight through becoming part of the participants' world that is under study (Boyle, 1994). Consequently, the generated data would provide additional insights in terms of interpreting the participants' *cultural realities* in their narratives.

Unfortunately, I was not able to proceed with ethnographical observation in this study due to ethical reasons (see details in Section 4.2.2).

In the following section, I focus on the main methodology selected for this study, i.e. narrative inquiry, and specify the meaning of related concepts used in this study.

3.1 Narrative Inquiry

Within broad qualitative research methodology, narrative inquiry emerged in the early 20th century (Riessman, 1993) and is prevalent in the fields of sociology, anthropology, communication studies and sociolinguistics (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). During the 1920s and 1930s, the Chicago School sociologists collected sets of participants' life stories for analysis to explore and demonstrate the formation and transformation of whole social classes (Barnes, 1948; Chase, 2007). Nearly at the same time, anthropologists started to analyse people's life stories in order to understand cultural facts and the relationship between cultural context and personality types (Langness, 1965; Langness and Frank, 1981).

Since the mid-1960s, sociolinguists began to pay attention to stories as a particular form of discourse and they contended that narratives are worthy to be analysed *per se* for studying text structure and linguistic forms in order to learn what makes life stories coherent (Chase, 2007, Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman, 1993).

More recently, more and more scholars across different fields start to put an emphasis on a narrative approach to social scientific inquiry. Some psychologists adopted narrative inquiry with a focus on the plot and characters to explore participants' psychosocial development over time (Josselson, 1996; McAdams and Bowman, 2001). Some sociologists regard narratives as lived experiences from which they understand how people make use of available resources to construct recognisable selves within specific institutional, organisational, discursive or local cultural contexts (Gubrium and Holsein, 2001; Langellier, 2001; Loske, 2001; Miller, 1997; Mishler, 1995; Riessman, 1990). Some anthropologists view narratives as the approach to make both the researcher and the researched present together within a single multivocal text. They explicitly discuss the intersubjectivity of the researcher and the researched for a purpose of understanding each other's voice, life and culture (Behar, 1993; Myerhoff, 1994; Shostak, 2009).

Given the popularity of narrative inquiry in the last few decades, Chase (2007) summarises five analytic lenses as the general directions for researchers who consider taking narrative inquiry in their research.

- Narrative as a distinct form of discourse that is a way of understanding and organising experiences;

- Narratives are verbal actions and construct and perform self/reality, with a focus on the person's voice;

- Narratives are constrained by social resources and circumstances, which can give focus to similarities and differences across narratives;

- Narratives are socially-located and interactive, with focus on flexible, situational, and variable stories;

- Narrative researchers view them/ourselves as narrators in the process of interpretation and publication.

3.1.1 Narrative Cognition

The popularity of adopting narrative inquiry in qualitative research also shows that scholars start to recognise the narrative cognition of constructing reality, which is an alternative to the more widely practised mode of cognition – paradigmatic cognition. Bruner (2009) argues that narrative knowledge is a legitimate form of reasoned knowing.

Paradigmatic cognition suggests that people generate useful and valid knowledge by classifying a particular instance to a category or concept. Each concept should be distinguished from the others by the possession of some peculiar attributes. In this sense, members who belong to different categories or concepts are highlighted while those who belong to the same category or concept are not differentiated (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It is a primary mode of cognition for human beings to constitute their experience as ordered and consistent (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Nevertheless, Bruner (2009) further contends that a narrative cognition is also rooted in people's mind.

> *[narrative cognition leads] to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily 'true') historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the*

particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place. Joyce thought of the particularities of the story as epiphanies of the ordinary (Bruner, 2009, p.13).

Bruner (2009) does not define clearly how narrative cognition operates in human minds, he discusses its characteristics in comparison with the paradigmatic cognition, which was also discussed by Polkinghorne (1995). Thus, I summarise the characteristics of the two cognitions in the following table (see: Table 5.2).

Comparison between the Paradigmatic and Narrative Cognitions

Paradigmatic cognition	Narrative cognition
Knowledge of one object can be substituted for another without loss of information.	Human actions are unique and not fully replicable.
It focuses on what is common amongst actions.	It focuses on the particular and special characteristic of each action.
It maintains in individual words that name a concept	It is maintained in storied memories that retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it.

Table 5.2 Source (Bruner, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1995)

The two types of cognition demonstrate not only how people's cognition functions, but also how people construct their experiences or phenomena in life (Kang, 2014). As I mentioned in Section 2 of this chapter, knowledge could be generated through people's constructions of reality. Here, informed by the discussion of the two types of human cognition. I decide to learn knowledge through people's narrative construction of reality because narrative cognition provides me with chances to explore why a person acts as s/he does from the participant's own voices (Polkinghorne, 1995).

More precisely, my research aim (cultural-making process and personal acculturation) needs to be explored through the participants' experiences of group work. "People are believed to be storytellers by nature" (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.7) and narrative plays an important role in people's daily life as it helps to make a personal experience coherent and continuous and then being understood by others (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). Thus, through participants' narrative cognition of constructing their realities, I could achieve my research

aim without imposing or prescribing participants' dramatic and integrative features into a set of propositions (McGuire, 1990). To put it another way, narrative cognition acknowledges the experiences of human beings as fluid entities that are constantly in a state of flux (Lemley and Mitchell, 2012), which resonates with the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm I adopt and the theoretical stance I hold.

3.1.2 Diverse Meanings of the Narrative Concept

Although the use of narrative inquiry in qualitative research seems to be more and more popular, the meaning of narrative is diverse because researchers present different understandings in the methodological literature.

Polkinghorne (1995) argued narrative can refer to either any prosaic discourse or merely story. Narrative as prosaic discourse means that "a narrative can represent any text that consists of complete sentences linked into a coherent and integrated statement […] any data that are in the form of natural discourse or speech […] the data form of field notes or original interview data and their written transcriptions" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 6). In a narrow sense, "narrative can be referred to story only – a particular type of discourse […] not simply to any prosaic discourse" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 6).

According to Chase (2007), narrative refers to (a) a short topical story about a particular event and specific characters such as an encounter with a friend, boss, or doctor; (b) an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life such as schooling, work, marriage, divorce, childbirth, an illness, a trauma, or participation in a war or social movement; or (c) a story of one's entire life, from birth to the present. Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) define narratives as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it.

According to the meanings of narrative discussed by those scholars, I have a sense that the concept of narrative and the concept of story seem to be interchangeable. This phenomenon is noticed by some scholars (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Frank, 2000) who attempted to distinguish the two concepts. They use story to refer to the data about the lived experiences that are generated from participants themselves while narrative refers to the process of

analysing the storied life resulting in researcher's description and interpretation, which shows what may not be able to be voiced by the participants themselves.

3.1.3 Analysis of Narrative vs. Narrative Analysis

Other than that the meaning of narrative is diverse, in the methodological literature regarding narrative inquiry, researchers treat narrative somehow in different ways. For instance, some scholars analysed narrative *per se*, such as, analysis of people's life stories (Langness, 1965; Langness and Frank, 1981) while others take narrative as a medium to understand something else, for example, exploration of people's psychosocial development via narrative (Josselson, 1996; McAdams and Bowman, 2001). This question was discussed by scholars (Bamberg, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1995) who distinguished two different treatments of narrative, namely, analysis of narrative and narrative analysis.

Analysis of narrative means that researchers study the narrative *per se*. In other words, they conduct research on narrative and narrative is the object for them to study (Bamberg, 2002). Researchers code participants' stories in order to generate themes across all the stories or even extended dimensions (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Narrative analysis, on the other hand, is a process of synthesising all the separate parts of relevant data together and uses the narrative to narrate and present the uniqueness or particularities (relevant to the research aim) of each participant. In order to achieve this, researchers first set up a kind of system or boundary regarding what data needs to be selected (relevant to the research aim). Next, researchers configure the collected data into a narrative by "developing or discovering a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.15). In this sense, narrative is no longer the object of study but a means to assist researchers as well as readers in understanding the complexity, uniqueness and individual's own voice. From this angle, they are conducting research with narrative (Bamberg, 2002) and narrative is a tool for researchers to explore participants' sense-making process to their own life or aspects of their lives.

Given that the meaning of narrative is diverse and the researchers treat narrative in different ways, there exists a need to clarify what the narrative means and how it is treated in this study. The discussion is present in the following section.

3.2 Narrative in This Study

In this study, first of all, I distinguish the two terms – narrative and story – in order to minimise the possible misleading or confusion. Story as a concept is adopted to describe the data *per se* generated by doing narrative interviews with the participants (discussed in Section 4.2) and the term narrative mainly refers to the approach (under the broad qualitative research methodology) from the data generation to the completion of data analysis. More precisely, with respect to the concept of narrative in this study, it includes the narrative interview conducted with the participants to generate data, the data preparation (discussed in Section 4.3) and the data analysis (discussed in Section 4.4).

That is to say, I make use of participants' stories about their group work experience as the units of analysis in order to explore and understand the cultural-making process and the participants' acculturation processes in group work (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In this sense, narrative describes the entire methodological design and it is the narrative analysis rather than the analysis of narrative for this study. The data is generated and analysed narratively.

4. Research Methods

Now that I have established narrative inquiry as a means to exploring the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in student group work and group members' individual acculturation processes, in this section, I report on the tools, techniques and strategies I adopted from data generation to data analysis.

4.1 Participant Recruitment

The data generation stage includes both the recruitment of participants and the narrative interviews I conducted with each individual participant.

4.1.1 Criterion Sampling to Recruit Participants

Given that I contextualise this research project into student group work at university, I need to target students with some criteria. Thus, I adopted the criterion sampling method (Patton, 2002) to recruit participants. These criteria are:

1. The group work is part of the students' assessment. I consider it as a criterion in order to make sure that the students would more likely consider the group work seriously in terms of what they need to do (Burford and Arnold, 1992; Clarke and Blissenden, 2013). The seriousness and importance students pay into their group work may lead them to value what they talk regarding their own group work experience during the interviews.

2. The group work is expected to be carried out by the students for a relatively extended period with the same group members. Based on the literature, it takes time for culture to emerge (e.g. the shaping of cohesive thinking and behaviours) and for personal acculturation to occur in a *cultural arena* (e.g. changes of the *cultural realities* in a person's mind) (Holliday, 2011; 2013). Thus, some other group work situations might not be sufficient or appropriate, such as, group work is only carried out in one or two sessions during the entire module, or group members constantly change.

3. The group is expected to be formed by 'strangers' instead of 'friends' or 'acquaintances'. 'Stranger' means that group members do not know each other well while 'friend' or 'acquaintance' means that the group members have already developed a (close) relationship between each other. If a group is constituted of 'friends' or 'acquaintance', this implies that they have already developed a certain way to communicate or collaborate before this group work. This established pattern of communication or collaboration might reduce the richness in terms of the dynamics (e.g. group members' personal acculturation and cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness) in this student group work. Therefore, I liaised with the module leaders personally to collect some information regarding the students who were going to do group work as part of the assessment designed in their modules. I requested information, such as,

are the students for this module newly arriving at this university? Do the students come together to this module from different programmes? Are the students from the same cohort who have already completed other modules in last trimester?

I targeted two modules with reference to the criteria I listed above. After promoting my research project, I recruited 13 voluntary students in the beginning and then 2 more participants joined the cohort of participants in the middle. They individually had signed the consent form before they formally became the participants for this study (see: Appendix 1). I provide some basic information regarding these participants in Section 4.1.2.

4.1.2 Basic Information of the Participants

At the time of being my participants, all the 15 participants were in their mid or late 20s and doing a one-year taught master's degree at a Scottish university. I summarise the details, namely, gender, ethnicity, which module they came from and which particular group each of them belonged to, in the following table (see: Table 5.3) where their actual names are replaced by pseudonyms in order to protect anonymity.

10 out of the 15 participants participated in the group work in a language and communication module. In this group work, the students were required to do two tasks: (a) to write a joint report and (b) to deliver an intercultural training session. These 10 participants worked in four separate groups (groups 1-3 and group 5).

The remaining 5 participants participated in the group work in a tourism module. The task for that group work was to complete a group presentation. The 5 participants worked in one group (Group 4).

With respect to ethnicity and gender, 13 participants came from other parts of the world while the remaining two participants were locally born. Only two participants are male whilst the rest are female.

A Summary of the Basic Information of the 15 Participants

The Pseudonym of each participant	Gender	Ethnicity	The group the participants belonged to	The module where the group work was situated
Giffie	female	German	Group 1	Group work in a language and
Kiele	female	Chinese		

Peder	male	German	Group 2	communication module
Cordey	female	Scottish		
Lauralee	female	German		
Marrilee	female	Chinese		
Jacquette	female	German	Group 3	
Nerissa	female	Greek		
Warde	male	Chinese		
Elmore	female	Japanese	Group 4	Group work in a tourism module
Filmer	male	Spanish		
Shari	female	American		
Alleva	female	Romanian		
Kelila	female	Scottish		
Fanchon	female	German	Group 5 (see the explanation in Section 4.1.3)	Group work in a language and communication module

Table 5.3

4.1.3 Reflection on Participant Recruitment

Originally, I planned to recruit several groups with complete group members in each group. At that moment, I was thinking that the culture (cohesive thinking and behaviours) could be mainly explored through comparing the group work experience told by the members who worked in the same group. Thus, the complete number of group members in each group seemed to be important for this study.

However, at the stage of participant recruitment, only two groups (highlighted in green in Table 5.3) participated in this study have complete group members. Not all the group members from the remaining three groups became the participants for this study. In particular, Group 1 was made of 5 students and only two group members (Giffie and Kiele) from that group voluntarily turned to be my participants. Group 3 was made of 5 students as well and 3 group members (Jacquette, Nerissa and Warde) voluntarily turned to be my participants. Group 5 was made of 5 students again, but only one group member (Fanchon) was willing to be my participant.

This situation made me further consider the initial intention of having complete group members of each group. It seemed not to be necessary to understand the cohesiveness through comparing the group work experience of the participants who were from the same group. Given that all the participants I recruited were doing their group work in the same university, therefore, I could explore the

cohesiveness by assembling all the groups together to compare their group experiences. In this sense, whether or not having complete group members within each group was no longer a problem for this study. In other words, if one student was willing to participate in this study, I could welcome him/her. That explains why in Table 5.3, a single participant (Fanchon) is considered as a group.

In addition to that, when I designed this research project, I had intended to recruit student groups that were constituted by several 'strangers' (who did not know each other), rather than a cohort of 'acquaintance' or 'friends', which was considered as the third criterion of participant recruitment (see: Section 4.1.1). However, in the real situation, among all the participants who were willing to participate in my research, only the five participants from the Group 4 met all the participant recruitment criteria.

The remaining 10 participants had known each other before starting this group work because they were classmates to one another since the beginning of their master's programmes due to other overlapping modules. This fact led me to further consider what implications it might have on the following data interpretation in relation to the cultural-making process and personal acculturation process.

Despite the fact that the majority of participants had known each other before doing this group work, the collaborations among the participants were new experiences to all of them. It was the first time for the participants to work with others, regardless whether they had known each other before or not. Furthermore, this group work, with its unique academic task and module context, would constitute a new *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011) to the participants, where they needed to negotiate with each other from 'anew' despite personal familiarity beyond the context of the tasks. Therefore, whether the participants knew each other in other spheres does not necessarily reduce the richness of dynamics in this student group work where my study is contextualised.

4.2 Data Generation: Narrative Interview

Once the recruitment was completed, I started to conduct interviews with each participant in order to hear their group work experience. Despite the fact that

qualitative interviewing is supposed to be less structured and interested in the richer data concerning participants' point of views (Bryman and Bell, 2011), in the mainstream, interview as a research method, its function still lies in the question-answer pattern between the researcher and the participant to stimulate responses from the participant side (Mishler, 1991). This traditional way of adopting interview as a research method does not regard the interview as a type of discourse for people to narrate their own experience that may contain very rich data in relation to the research aim (Mishler, 1991).

Informed by the narrative inquiry methodology (see: Section 3.1 in this chapter), I selected narrative interview as the specific method to generate data. Narrative interview refers to the interview which envisages a setting that encourages and stimulates a participant to tell stories about his/her experience in their life and social context, which contains some significant events that are relevant to the research aim (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000; Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000).

From this perspective, I would argue that narrative interview takes the uniqueness of narrative inquiry I discussed before (see: Section 3.1 in this chapter) into practice. Firstly, the unstructured feature of narrative interview encourages and stimulates the participants to tell what they would like to say, which could minimise the influence of the researcher in the data generation stage (Kvale, 1996; Liamputtong, 2009; Muylaert *et al.*, 2014). Taking the narrative interview in this research project, I could also give the participants time and space to foreground what they want to say instead of asking for what I want to hear in terms of their group work experience.

Secondly, if an unstructured interview is led by the participant and generated in a narrative way, the narrative technique (i.e. sequentially tell what happened) might provide the participant with chances to 're-experience' the group work in his/her mind (Muylaert *et al.*, 2014). To 'relive' the group work experience then could help the participant to provide more details that are attached to the meaningful and important events narrated by the participant during the interview.

4.2.1 The Procedure of Narrative Interview

I provided a prompt (see: Appendix 2) and had a brief discussion about it before the initial narrative interview with each participant in order to let him/her see the

main differences between a narrative interview and the conventional way of being interviewed, such as, narrative interview could be more than just giving a description of what happened there, the ask-and-answer played a supplementary role during the narrative interview.

As for the narrative interview procedure, I conducted the interviews by doing what is written in the table below (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000).

The Procedure of Conducting a Narrative Interview

Step	Strategies	Purpose(s)
1	I introduced the structure of this narrative interview by saying: *"This interview can be broadly divided into two parts, in the first part, I would like to hear your experience of the group meeting/activity you just had. When you start to talk about it, I will listen without interruption, but I may take a couple of notes. After you share your group work experience with me, I may come up with some questions to ask, which are fully based on what you told me".*	To let the participant have an idea about the structure in terms of what was going to happen during the narrative interview.
	I double checked with the participant by saying: "*so, is everything ok for you so far? Shall I still clarify something?"* and *"I am going to audio record the whole interview process. If you don't mind, I switch on the recorder now."*	To make sure the participant was ready to be interviewed To remind the participant that audio-recording was started.
	I formulated the central topic by saying: "*I would like to hear your stories regarding what you experienced in the group meeting/activity."*	To remind the participant what was the focus of the story s/he was going to narrate.
2	No interruption and I did note-taking to record the key words	To provide the participant with enough time and space to present what s/he would like to narrate. To remind myself of some key or interesting information that I may chase up.
3	Based on the notes, I asked some questions by reminding the participants of the key words, for instance, *"Could you further tell me more or some details regarding … that you mentioned previously."*	To fill the 'gap' for what the story narrated by the participant. To provide the participant with another chance to enrich the data which I consider might be relevant to my research aim.

4	I confirmed with the participant by saying: *"Anything else you want to further talk with me or want to say regarding the group activity?*	To provide the participant with the third chance in order to enrich the data. To use it as a sign to show that the interview was approaching the end.
	I closed the interview by saying: *"Thank you very much again for sharing with me all the interesting things. I learnt a lot. I switch off the recorder now."*	To show my appreciation for the participation of the participant. To tell the participant that the interview was over and audio-recording was off.

Table 5.4

I conducted several narrative interviews with each participant and the numbers of interviews varied across the 15 participants, which are summarised in the following table.

The Data Generation Outcome

Group No.	Participants (pseudonyms)	The number of Narrative Interviews
1	Giffie	7
	Kiele	2
2	Peder	6
	Cordey	5
	Lauralee	7
	Marrilee	7
3	Jacquette	7
	Nerissa	9
	Warde	8
4	Elmore	4
	Filmer	3
	Shari	5
	Alleva	5
	Kelila	6
5	Fanchon	1
In total	15 participants	82

Table 5.5

All the interviews were conducted in English which is the only communicative language that is available between the majority of the participants and myself. Interestingly, with the two participants whose native language is the same as mine (Mandarin Chinese), neither of them requested to use our mother tongue throughout all the interviews I conducted with them. All the participants could express and narrate their group work fluently in English and we understood

each other well. Thus, language *per se* seemed not to be a challenge during the data generation stage.

Averagely speaking, each interview was about 20-25 minutes and I realised that the first round narrative interview I conducted with the participants seemed to be the shortest ones, which might be due to the following two reasons. (A) The participants did not get used to the narrative form of interview, particularly, I encouraged them to talk about their group work experience after introducing the structure of the interview. Some participants quickly summarised what they did in the group work and then told me that they did not know what to say. (B) As the researcher, I was also gaining experience of doing the narrative interview in the first round. I might not have effectively implemented the strategies that could encourage the participants to narrate their group work experience. In the meantime, simply using a prompt, I might not have succeeded in letting the participants fully understand the expectation of the narrative interviews.

4.2.2 Reflection on Data Generation

When I designed this research project, I intended to generate data by conducting both ethnographic observation and narrative interviews with the participants. Ethnographic observation is generally recognised to rest upon participant observation and the researcher spends adequate time observing or even interacting with a (group of) participant(s) in order to understand the (social) phenomena in relation to the research topic (Herbert, 2000). According to my original research design, I was planning to act as a non-participatory observer in each group activity (e.g. group meetings, group presentation etc.) during the data generation stage. As I am convinced by what Reeves, Kuper and Hodges (2008) claimed in terms of the advantages of conducting ethnographic observation: (1) to enable a researcher to 'immerse' him/herself in a setting, thereby generating a rich understanding of social action and its subtleties in different contexts; (2) to give a researcher opportunities to gather empirical insights into social practices that could be 'hidden' from the public gaze; (3) ethnographic observation can identify, explore, and link social phenomena which, on the surface, have little connection with each other.

Therefore, in the initial version of the consent form, I explicitly addressed the two research methods of data generation:

RESEARCH PROCEDURES:

> Initially, I plan to observe (non-participatory observer) and make notes regarding every face-to-face group activity you are going to carry out. The notes will be used either as a stimulus in the interviews or as a tool to enrich my understandings of your group work experience.

> After every group activity, I will invite you to participate in a narrative interview during which you will mainly share with me your experience of the group activity that you just took part in. Every interview will be audio-recorded.

However, in the real situation, the majority of my participants were concerned about the request regarding my ethnographic observation although a few of them said that they were fine to be observed. For those who were concerned about the ethnographic observation, they thought my presence, even without any participation, would let them feel uncomfortable or odd because they treated me as an outsider and researcher. Seeing their concerns, I felt it was necessary to double check with each individual participant regarding the other details in the consent form, in particular, the narrative interview method, because I still intended to generate as rich data as possible about the participants' group work experience (see: Section 4.2 where I detail the justification about why narrative interview is selected for this research project).

Given that all the participants were happy with the remaining research activities I suggested in the original consent form, in order to maintain them as my participants, I decided not to generate data by conducting ethnographic observation and revised the consent form accordingly to produce the final version (see: Appendix 1).

Another reflection I had at the data generation stage was to consider how to continue doing the narrative interview with the participants after the first three narrative interviews. In order to make the expectation clear to the participants, apart from highlighting the insightful and interesting points in the prompt I used, I tried to adopt other strategies to get my expectation understood. For instance, I used an analogy by saying "imaging you are a celebrity and invited to write an autobiography, focusing the part of your academic life, what are you going to say?"

In a sense, the first three narrative interviews I conducted with the participants played an additional role – pilot study because they did not only provide me with data but also helped me to enhance the interviewing skills and strategies.

In addition to that, I intended to conduct a narrative interview with each participant after every group activity[2] s/he participated in until the completion of the entire group work. However, due to the unforeseen circumstances of every participant, not all of them were available after every group activity. That is why the actual number of interviews varied across these participants (see: Table 5.5 in Section 4.2.1). As a consequence, sometimes, I conducted a narrative interview with a participant after s/he had had two or three group activities.

This situation, on the one hand, might have an impact on the details that could be provided by the participants because some participants might forget the details if it happened more than a week ago. On the other hand, if something that happened a week ago still could be clearly narrated by the participants, it implies that the experience could be very meaningful and important to the participants. In this sense, I do not treat it as a problem (in the stage of data generation) that needs to be solved but part of a reality that I need to deal with.

Apart from that, I also reconsidered the use of prompt in the narrative interview. To put it another way, whether the prompt used in the narrative interviews had influenced the type of narrative the participants told.

The decision of using a prompt for each participant during their first narrative interview derived from my concern that the participants might not fully understand what a narrative interview was about. This kind of uncertainty could further lead my participants to be panic or not sure what to do. In order to minimise these negative reactions my participants might experience during the interview, I took the advantage of an open-ended prompt as a vivid example to illustrate that a story told by the participants themselves would constitute the main part for the interviews, which was different from the 'common sense' the participants might have in terms of interview, for instance, a question-and-answer process between myself and themselves.

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[2] All of my participants carried out the discussions and preparations for their group work in the form of group meetings. Four groups (1-4) had intercultural training as a final part of their group tasks. Group 5 had a group presentation to complete the task. Group work started from their initial discussion until the end of delivery either the intercultural training or presentation. Thus, I use the phrase - group activity - to represent (a) group meeting(s), the intercultural training session or the group presentation

More importantly, when I presented the prompt, I always emphasised the way of narration vis-à-vis group work experience and repeatedly mentioned that they could narrate the story in a way they prefer or feel comfortable. I did not emphasise the content in the prompt. After using the prompt, I never forgot to add a general comment before commencing the narrative interviews: *this example just illustrated one way of narrating a person's experience, you probably have your own preferred way of story-telling, and may I hear yours now?*

I thought, under the interview condition, compared to explaining the definition of narrative interview or purely stressing the purpose of narrative interview, the employment of an open-ended prompt could be more straightforward and effective to the participants in terms of sending a key message that the interviews, in this study, were more about to hear their accounts of the group work experiences than anything else (Eisen Quas and Goodman, 2001).

In this sense, I would like to argue that the use of prompt in the narrative interview of this research project is more about showing participants what a narrative interview would be like (the format) in order to minimise their uncertainty rather than leading them to say what I expected to hear (the type of story). Hence, the prompt is not necessarily considered as a way of influencing their types of narrative.

4.3 Data Preparation: Transcription

Not only did I decide to transcribe the narrative interviews, but I decided to transcribe them by myself because researchers who transcribe their own narrative interviews can reflect their own interviewing strategies and styles. In the meantime, they may generate insightful ideas during the transcription of the forthcoming data analysis (Kvale, 2007).

In addition, transcription is a process where data reduction may happen and the researchers need to consider what level of details they require the transcripts to be like (Bailey, 2008; McLellan *et al.*, 2003). My research aim is to focus on the participants' constructions of their group work experience, which could be mainly explored from the content ('the told') articulated by the participants during each narrative interview. Therefore, during the transcription, I focused on transcribing all the narrations produced by the participants.

In order to facilitate the transcription process, I conceived a transcription protocol (see: Appendix 3) after being informed by the transcription conventions conducted by the qualitative researchers (Bailey, 2008; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008). The transcription process mainly involved two steps. Referring to the transcription protocol, I initially transcribed each narrative interview with the help of a software (Express Scribe) and then, I listened to the audio-recordings to proofread each transcript by correcting the mistakes. It was also during the proofreading that I replaced all the identifiable names/places with a pseudonym or vague name to keep participants' confidentiality.

Each transcript contains three main parts. (A) A title of the transcript to illustrate the information of the corresponding narrative interview (e.g. which participant, which interview of the participant). (B) The narrow column on the left side to indicate what I said as the role of the researcher. (C) The broad column on the right side to show what the participant said in terms of his/her construction of the group work experience. An illustrative example of the transcript is attached as Appendix 4.

4.4 Data Analysis

Regarding the specific methods for analysing the data that is generated narratively, the methodological literature discusses three main approaches which are introduced first (Sections 4.4.1.1-4.4.1.3). Informed by the different analysis methods, I selected the categorical-content method (Lieblich *et.al.*, 1998) to analyse the transcripts which is the main focus of the discussion within this Section 4.4.

4.4.1 The Analysis Focus of the Narrative

Regardless of the different treatment of narrative (i.e. the object of study or a means to explore aspects of people's life) the scholars do in their research (see: Section 3.1.3), the focus of their analysis can be classified into three categories (Mishler, 1995), which are based on the three functions of language, namely, semantics, syntax and pragmatics (Halliday, 1973).

4.4.1.1 Meaning-focused Analysis Approach

Some researchers primarily emphasise content/meaning (semantic function) of the words or sentences in narratives, thus, the content or called 'the told', draws their attention. Narrative researchers could consider categorical-content method

(Lieblich *et.al.*, 1998). They may initially read each story carefully to code for themes (Riessman, 2008) and identify the relationships between different themes. Afterwards, the researchers move from one story to another to explore what themes are shared by all the stories (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Gibbs, 2007; Mishler, 1995). Therefore, the aim for researchers is to gain some commonalities across stories generated by different people or the same people at different times. Alternatively, narrative researchers may focus on every single story only to notice what themes emerge and how those themes evolve within that story. In such case, they may consider the holistic-content analysis (Lieblich *et.al.,* 1998) as a research method. They intend to understand or value the meanings gained from an entire story.

4.4.1.2 Form-focused Analysis Approach

Some narrative researchers shift the interest from the content to the form/structure (syntactic function) of narratives. That is to say, they pay attention to how the narratives are told or how they are put together to help the narrator deliver what s/he wants to say. Many researchers proposed frameworks to analyse the structure of the narratives. Distinctively, Labov's structural analysis (Riessman, 2008) demonstrates how a particular clause functions in the overall narrative. Gee's structural analysis (Riessman, 1993; 2008) displays how a sequence of an utterance is said and what topic-shifting effects could contribute to the whole narrative. Lieblich *et.al.* (1998) suggest the holistic-form analysis and categorical-form analysis to present what genre (comedy, tragedy, satire and romance) of the story could be and the dynamics of the plot development (static, regressive and progressive).

4.4.1.3 Pragmatic Function-focused Analysis Approach

Some narrative researchers argue that narratives serve as an empirical social process involving a stream of joint actions within a local context into a wider negotiated social world. Those researchers' interests lie in the performance (pragmatic function) of narrative by adopting the dialogic or performance analysis (Elliot, 2005; Riessman, 2008). In other words, they would like to explore how a narrative is interactively produced and performed by considering the interactions with others who attended to stories, the researcher himself, setting and social circumstances on the production of narrative (Riessman,

2008). More than that, narrative researchers will explore the social role that a narrative could play in the lives of individuals within society.

4.4.2 Meaning-focused Analysis Approach in This Study

Based upon the three main analysis approaches discussed in the methodological literature, I decided to focus on the meanings assigned by the participants and the content of the stories. This decision is closely associated with the research aim of this study.

Particularly speaking, when the participants were doing group work, they functioned as active agents (Bandura, 2001) to accomplish the tasks, such as, purposefully exchanging views, consciously doing something, generating emotions, perceptions or reflections etc. Based upon the literature review, I argue that the culture could form and that personal acculturation might occur (the research aim) during the participants' meaningfully proactive and generative interactions (between each other) and reactions (on self). Therefore, in order to understand the cultural-making process and personal acculturation, I need to get access to those meanings attached by each individual participant. The meanings largely lie in the content of the stories told by each participant (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Focusing on the content of the data, I selected the categorical-content method (Lieblich *et.al.*, 1998) under the narrative inquiry methodological approach to analyse the data, which is elaborated in following Section 4.4.3.

4.4.3 Categorical-content Method

The categorical-content method was introduced by Lieblich *et.al.* (1998) as one of the four data analysis methods, which requires a researcher to analytically analyse participants' stories by breaking it down into small units of content according to certain criteria (Lieblich *et.al.*, 1998). There are four steps for this approach. Firstly, all the relevant sections should be selected in the data. Secondly, categories should be defined within those selected data. Categories can be taken from the literature or emerge from the data. Thirdly, separate sentences or utterances are assigned to relevant categories. Finally, conclusions could be drawn from these categories. I consider the categorical-content method in this study can be divided into coding process and theme-emerging process.

4.4.3.1 Coding Process

I associated the small units suggested in the categorical-content method with the conceptual framework I have suggested in the literature review.

According to my conceptual framework, I contend that *cultural realities* (either personal or external ones) play a role in the cultural-making process and personal acculturation. More than that, I also argue the personal cultural reality can be divided into three broad components: affect, behaviour and cognition. Thus, when I read each transcript (a story narrated by a participant), I categorised the data into four categories, namely, the external cultural reality, affective-related cultural reality, behavioural-related cultural reality and cognitive-related cultural reality. In this sense, the definitions of the four categories come from the literature and each transcript was sorted into these four broad categories.

These four categories became the rationale for me to generate codes and I excluded the data articulated by the participants who technically reported the procedure in relation to a group activity. For example, in the fourth transcript of the participant Cordey, she descried that:

> "Ok, yeah, well, that was our last meeting and it was a very very short meeting, so, it went quite quickly […] well, first of all, we decided to look at Peder's part, so he, er, I think he opened up a document on the computer, so, as usual, we all sat and read it from the screen in silence and then we, it was quite a short part though, so it didn't take very long" (Cordey, Transcript 4).

In this example, I can see that Cordey merely reported what sequentially happened to them in that group activity. Although the temporal feature of narrative can be sensed from what she said, however, what Cordey described here does not disclose any cognitive or affective reactions of herself or those of other group members. Arguably, some behaviours were described by Cordey, nevertheless, these behavioural descriptions were simply a technique report with no interpretable meaning attached by Cordey as the narrator. As Bruner (1991, p. 11) pointed out "not every sequence of events recounted constitutes a narrative even when it is diachronic, particular, and organized around intentional states. Some happenings do not warrant telling about and accounts of them are said to be 'pointless' rather than story-like".

Hence, I did not code the data, like the example I present here, throughout all that transcripts because this type of data *per se* does not constitute narrativity itself although a story requires such scripts as necessary background (Bruner, 1991). To Bruner (1991), what can be construed as narrativity requires an implicit canonical script that has been breached, violated, or deviated from narration. Taking this argument into consideration, I argue that data which is worth interpreting need to reveal the cognitive, behavioural or affective reactions where participants' own meanings are attached.

Bearing the rationale I have explained above in my mind, I adopted the descriptive coding strategy (Saldaña, 2015; Taylor and Gibbs, 2010) to generate codes that summarised the meanings of each participant's data. This process was recorded by producing coding manuals (see: Appendix 5). At the same time, I produced a separate document called *Definitions of All the Codes* (see: Appendix 6) in order to define and record each code.

I take Cordey's fourth transcript as an example here (see: Table 5.6). The original data from the corresponding transcript was copied into the left column and the codes were generated in the right column. The rationale was recorded in the middle. As a result, I generated 82 coding manuals that were corresponding to the 82 transcripts.

An Illustrative Example of the Coding Manual

Data extract(s) from the corresponding transcript	Rationale	Code name
…we are quite ruthless, because I think we wanted the meeting just to end quite quickly because we were all exhausted and we had so much more coursework to do, so it didn't, wasn't difficult to come to these, these decisions.	external cultural reality	a stressful academic period
…no, at least, by that stage, there wasn't much else we could do…	cultural reality – C	unsure about how to collaborate
…Yeah. The only thing that, I am, not so good is the fact that Marrilee couldn't contribute more, that's, I think that is a shame, but I still don't really see how much more we could have done to involve her.		
…but I kept asking her are you happy with everything, and she said yes…	cultural reality – B	strategy to encourage other group

		members' participation
…er, er, I was happy with it, I was happy that finally it all came together, looked coherent and we all, we all er, well, some of us contributed to different parts, so it, it wasn't like each section completely separate, which I liked and in the end I was quite happy with it…	cultural reality – A	generate a coherent group report
…well, relieved, that's all done…	cultural reality – A	a sense of completion

Table 5.6

The coding process assisted me to reduce the meanings in the data (transcripts) into 220 meaningful codes. However, it seemed to be still challenging to abstract themes directly from these codes because of two reasons. First of all, meanings presented by the codes still remained complex and diverse. As Babbie (2013) suggests, an additional step is necessary to group the codes into a higher level in terms of meanings before abstracting the themes. Secondly, for the research aim of this study, cultural-making process in student group focuses on what cohesive meanings emerge among the participants while the personal acculturation focuses on the changes of the meanings (e.g. *cultural realities*) attached by each individual participant throughout the group work. This difference asks me to generate the themes from the codes by adopting different strategies that are discussed in Sections 4.4.3.2 and 4.4.3.3.

4.4.3.2 Theme-emerging in order to Understand Culture

I generated themes to understand the culture in student group work by taking two steps. In the first step, I interpreted the thematic connections among all the codes in order to group them into a higher level – groupings of codes. As a result, I further reduced the 220 codes into 39 groupings of codes according to their thematic connections. I recorded and organised this process in the document called *Groupings of Codes* (see: Appendix 7).

For instance, among the 220 codes, the following 8 codes (see: Table 5.7) all showed the meanings in the participants' minds regarding the leadership. Therefore, these 8 codes were grouped together into leadership.

An Illustrative Example of Grouping Codes

Codes	Groupings of Codes	Rationale
group work requires a leader		
leader is not changeable		
leader is changeable		These 8 codes illustrate the participants' ideas about leadership
expectations on a leader	leadership	
leader's skills recognition		
group member acts like a leader		
no intention to be a leader		
play the role of a follower		

Table 5.7

The groupings of codes facilitated the process of generating themes because the whole set of meticulous codes has been further reduced into 39 groupings of codes. Then, I took the second step to further interpret the thematic connections between the 39 groupings of codes and generated 13 themes. This process is recorded and organised in another document called *The 13 Themes for Understanding Culture in Student Group Work* (see: Appendix 8).

For example, the leadership I mentioned above as one of the groupings of code is thematically related to another two groupings of codes (e.g. power relations and issue of equal voice) because they all demonstrated the hierarchical relationship amongst the group members during their group work (see: Table 5.8).

An Illustrative Example of Theme-emerging (Culture)

Groupings of Codes	Theme	Rationale
leadership		3 groupings of codes are discussing the hierarchical relationship amongst the group members during their group work.
power relations	hierarchy amongst group members	
issue of equal voice		

Table 5.8

Eventually, the following 13 themes are generated, which are described in detail in the next chapter – findings – to report cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in student group work.

- The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere
- Being Stressed

- Reflection on Personal Performance

- Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members

- The Impact of Group Member Diversity

- Hierarchy amongst the Group Members

- (Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members

- Concerns of Fairness

- The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work

- Potential Challenges in This Group Work

- A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work

- Valuing the Group Work Outcome

- Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work

4.4.3.3 Theme-emerging in order to Understand Personal Acculturation

As part of the research aim, I also need to understand the personal acculturation in student group work. I assembled all the coding manuals (see: Section 4.4.3.1) of a participant together as a set to review again.

In particular, I reviewed all the extracted data in each coding manual in order to interpret what had been repeatedly described or emphasised throughout each story (Namey, *et al*., 2008) and then highlighted the corresponding codes as salient codes. As a result, for the 15 participants, I generated several salient codes for each of them. I then interpreted the thematic connections amongst the salient codes of a participant in order to generate themes for that participant. I conducted the same process for the 15 participants. I recorded and organised this process in a document called *Themes for Understanding Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work* (see: Appendix 9).

For instance, from all the Lauralee's 7 coding manuals, I interpreted that the following 21 codes are salient, which could be interpreted into 5 themes (see: Table 5.9).

An Illustrative Example of Theme-emerging (Personal Acculturation)

Participant's Pseudonym	Salient codes from all of Lauralee's data	Themes
Lauralee	motivation decrease	motivation for this group work
	assumptions carried into this group work	
	different opinions during group work	

	assumptions carried into this group work	the impact of individual differences on group work
	viewpoint insistence	
	provide suggestions	
	clearer group work direction	
	compromise in group work	
	unequal contribution	unfair feeling
	unfair to work for other group members	
	no credit for a part of this group work	
	self-evaluation	
	a painful experience	
	no expectation of group members' contribution	perception of Marrilee's performance
	evaluate group member's contribution	
	unsure about how to collaborate	
	strategy to encourage other group members' participation	
	strategy to participate in this group work	preference of a relaxing working atmosphere
	get used to working with friends	
	a good atmosphere	
	group member know each other better	

Table 5.9

These themes vary from one participant to another and are described in detail in the seventh chapter to report their personal acculturation in group work.

4.4.4 Reflection on Data Analysis

When I summarised the basic information about the recruited participants (see: Section 4.1.2), I pointed out that the 15 participants were doing group work in two separate modules whose tasks were different. The four groups from a language and communication module were assigned to two group tasks (group report and intercultural training session) whilst the group from a tourism module was assigned to one group task (group presentation). This fact shows that the participants doing different types as well as a different number of group tasks.

Throughout the data analysis stage, I did not sense the different types or the different number of group tasks exerted a big impact on the cultural-making process in each group. Having adopted my definition of culture from the literature review, I attempted to understand it in each group by focusing on the interactions among group members in terms of the emergence of cohesive thinking and behaviours. This emergence relies on the intensity of interactions among the group members rather than the type or the number of group tasks.

For instance, a group could have many interactions (e.g. frequent group meetings) for a single task while another group might have fewer interactions between each other with more assigned tasks.

In this sense, although the five groups can be distinguished in terms of the assigned group tasks, the intensity of interactions within these groups is no big difference because each group had regular meetings, broadly speaking once a week, to discuss the given task(s). In addition to that, the intensity of interactions in the five groups is also associated with the group work length. Comparing the overall length of doing this group work, I can see that the overall time that all the five groups had spent was the same, roughly speaking, three months from the early February to the end of April, which means they started and completed the group work at the same time.

However, during the data analysis, I realised that whether an assigned group task was assessed by the module leader had an impact on some participants' engagement in the group discussions. More precisely, the second group task (intercultural training session) was not assessed in the four groups from the language and communication module. It became a reason for some participants to be less engaged with the discussions or with the intercultural training session *per se*. This factor may influence the level of cohesive thinking and behaviours in a group, in other words, the cultural-making process in that group. I would argue this influence does not come from the type or the number of group tasks but from how an individual participant evaluated a particular group task (e.g. group task to be assessed or not). From this perspective, I am inclined to adopt Holliday's (2011; 2013) personal cultural reality concept to explain this influence on the cultural-making process in student group, which is reported in the findings chapters.

Another issue I raised in the reflection on data generation (see: Section 4.2.2) is that not all the participants had been successfully interviewed after every group activity. Then, in the data analysis stage, I was thinking what criteria could be used as a time marker to describe the cultural-making process. In other words, what criteria could be used to generate the chronological stages in order to describe the entire group work period. Originally, I would like to treat the group activity (e.g. the completion of each group meeting or group presentation) *per se* as the stage if all the participants had regularly been interviewed after each

time they completed the activity. However, given the fact that some participants narrated two or three group activities in one interview, it became a challenge for me to divide the group stage because simply using the calendar dates when they completed each group activity was no longer applicable.

I was struggling for this issue for a certain time and eventually came up with an idea to describe the stages in the five groups by synthesising the particular codes of different participants (who worked in the same group) in their coding manuals.

These particular codes refer to the codes that reflect the overall evaluations of the group activity/activities I interpreted from each participant's transcripts (see: Appendix 7 where the codes are presented in italics). I detail the process in the following paragraphs.

I went over each coding manual and annotated the codes that reflected a participant's overall evaluations of the group activity/activities. The annotation has been simplified into one of the three degrees: positive (+), neutral (0) or negative (-). If more than one annotation could be assigned to the codes in a particular coding manual, then I added them together to see which side overweighed the other. If there was a tie, then I interpreted the participant's overall evaluation of the activity/activities as neutral because s/he experienced both positivity and negativity.

For instance, in Cordey's fourth coding manual, two annotations could be given. I marked the code – unsure about the group work – as a negativity while a sense of completion as a positivity (see: Diagram 5.1). Then, for this case, it became neutral in terms of Cordey's overall perception regarding that particular group activity.

An Illustrative Example of Marking Participant's Coding Manuals

…we are quite ruthless, because I think we wanted the meeting just to end quite quickly because we were all exhausted and we had so much more coursework to do, so it didn't, wasn't difficult to come to these, these decisions.	external cultural reality	a stressful academic period	
…no, at least, by that stage, there wasn't much else we could do…	cultural reality – C	unsure about how to collaborate	Frank XU Negativity (-)
…Yeah. The only thing that, I am, not so good is the fact that Marrilee couldn't contribute more, that's, I think that is a shame, but I still don't really see how much more we could have done to involve her.			
…but I kept asking her are you happy with everything, and she said yes…	cultural reality – B	strategy to encourage other group members' participation	
…er, er, I was happy with it, I was happy that finally it all came together, looked coherent and we all, we all er, well, some of us contributed to different parts, so it, it wasn't like each section completely separate, which I liked and in the end I was quite happy with it…	cultural reality – A	generate a coherent group report	
…well, relieved, that's all done…	cultural reality – A	a sense of completion	Frank XU Positivity (+)

Diagram 5.1

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This strategy enabled me to generate a fluctuating line chronologically representing each participant's overall evaluations of all the group activities. Regardless of the time when the group activities were described by each participant, as long as the participants worked in the same group, the total group activities they could describe were the same. In this sense, the overall evaluations I interpreted from the participants' data could be compared in order to see how many moments their overall evaluations are overlapping. Stages then could be divided based upon these overlapping moments, which serve as the time markers. Putting this strategy into practice, I drew the participants' (who worked in the same group) fluctuating lines together to see the convergent moments that shared by the largest number of participants. According to those convergent moments, I divided the entire group work period into several stages as the time marker.

Based on the strategy I discussed above, each group's stages could be presented, which are demonstrated as follows.

4.4.4.1 The Four Stages in Giffie and Kiele's Group[3]

The Four Stages of Group Work (Giffie *et al.*)
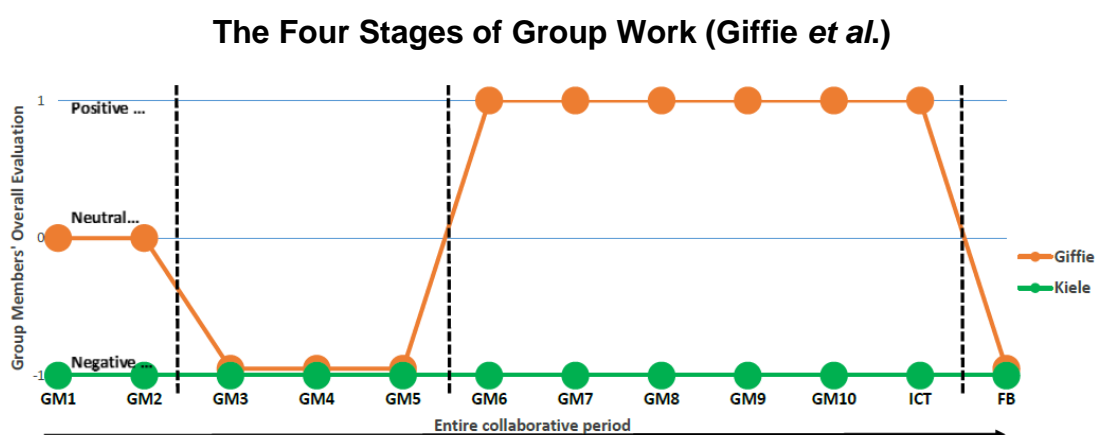
Diagram 5.2

From the diagram above, I can see that Kiele had a negative overall evaluation regarding all the group activities. This kind of stability is in contrast to Giffie's fluctuant overall evaluations of the same group activities. I can see that their overall evaluations converged at two different phases in Diagram 5.2. Based on

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[3] In the diagrams (5.2-5.5), I use different colours to distinguish different participants while adopting some abbreviations to name the activities the participants took part in during the group work. GM refers to a group meeting. ICT refers to the group work delivery in the form of an intercultural training session. GP refers to the group presentation they delivered. FB refers to the feedback they have received.

the two times of the convergence I identified their entire collaborative period into four stages.

4.4.4.2 The Five Stages in Peder, Marrilee, Lauralee and Cordey's Group

The Five Stages of Group Work (Peder *et al.*)
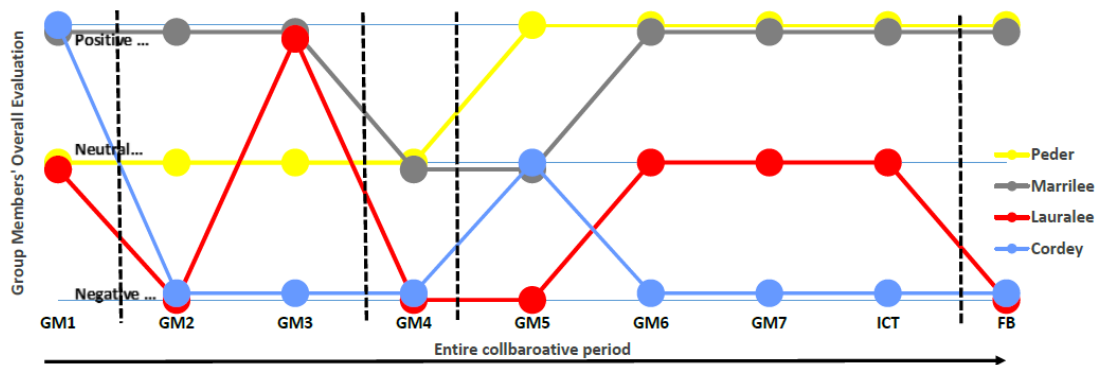
Diagram 5.3

As can be seen in the diagram above, Lauralee's and Cordey's overall evaluations of the group activities fluctuated greatly across three degrees whilst Peder's and Marrilee's overall evaluations of the activities jumped between positivity and neutrality. In the diagram, I can see that there is no such a moment when all the four participants' perceptions are converged to the same category. However, there are three moments when the four participants' overall evaluations converged to two different categories. Based on these three times of the convergence, I identified their entire collaborative period into five stages.

4.4.4.3 The Five Stages in Nerissa, Jacquette and Warde's Group

The Five Stages of Group Work (Nerissa *et al.*)

Diagram 5.4

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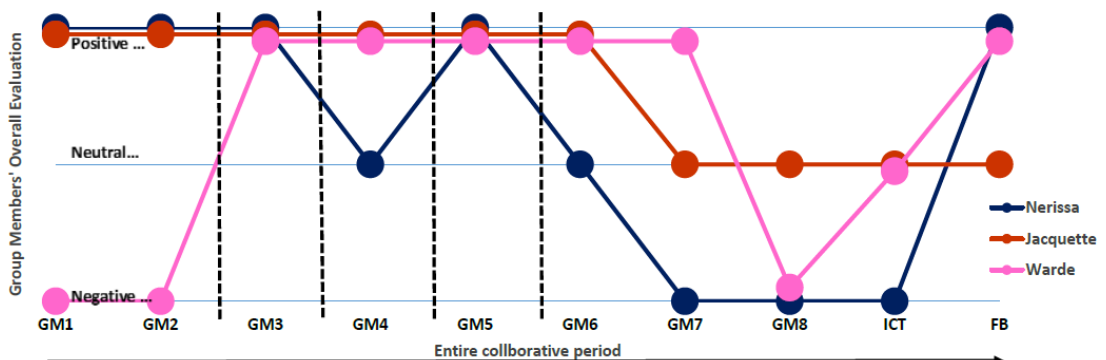
As can be seen in the diagram above, for the group activities in the beginning, Warde held negative overall evaluations. His overall evaluation then turned to be positive in the middle and became negative again in the later phase. However, his overall evaluation was positive again in the end. For Nerissa's case, she held positive overall evaluation of the group activities for the first half phase while changed it to be negative for the second half. Like Warde, she took a positive overall evaluation in the end. Jacquette's overall evaluations of the group activities did not fluctuate that much, which was positive for the first half while became neutral for the second half. I can see that there are two moments when all the three participants' overall evaluations converged to be positive. Based on the two times of the convergence, I identified their entire collaborative period into five stages.

4.4.4.4 The Three Stages in Alleva, Elmore, Filmer, Keilia and Shari's Group

The Three Stages of Group Work (Alleva *et al.*)
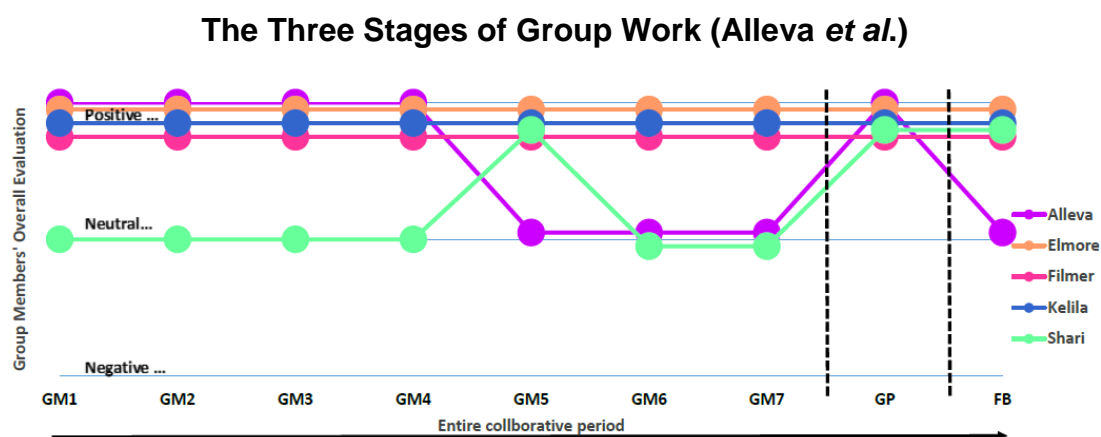
Diagram 5.5

From the diagram above, I can say that all the five participants were relatively positive in terms of their overall evaluations regarding the group activities they participated in. Occasionally, Shari and Alleva had neutral overall evaluations. After the delivery of their group presentation, all the five participants converged their positive overall evaluations. Based upon the only convergence, I identified their entire collaborative period into three stages.

4.4.4.5 The Stages in Fanchon's Group

However, for Fanchon's group, I recognised that she thematised the entire group work into several stages in her own way during the interview. Thus, I

respected her thematisation and took it as the stages for her group. The stages could be presented in Diagram 5.6

The Four Stages of Group Work (Fanchon)
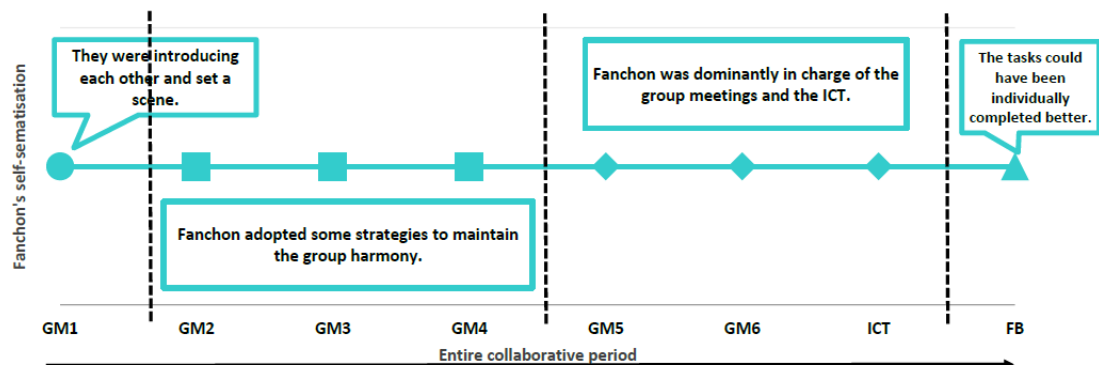
Diagram 5.6[4]

5. Rigour in Qualitative Research

The concept of rigour, in a general sense, mainly refers to the validity and reliability of research (Davies and Dodd, 2002; Krefting, 1991), which are the criteria to ensure quality for a research project. It is a perennial issue to have been discussed by scholars (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2003; Long and Johnson, 2000; Morse *et al.*, 2002; Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002; Smith, 1990).

This concept originally came from the natural sciences which takes a positivist philosophical perspective to seek the validity, reliability and generalisability in order to let the research be 'context-free' and suitable for use in various means and ways. However, the qualitative researchers who take the different ontological and epistemological stances to focus on the participants' subjective meanings (Popay *et al.*, 1998) argue that quantitative-oriented concept of rigour cannot be applied to the qualitative studies because of the different research purpose and property between them (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Rolfe, 2006; Silverman, 2005). This fundamental difference leads some scholars (Elliott *et al.*, 1999) to consider other forms as evaluative guidelines for qualitative research in order to make the qualitative research methodology more trustworthy.

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[4] The different shapes of dots in this diagram represent the different stages of the group work that Fanchon defined through the self-thematisation in her narrative.

Considering the importance of rigour in qualitative research, I discuss what strategies I adopted in the process of conducting this research project in order to protect and strengthen the rigour as best as I can. Nevertheless, I know that my interpretive practice can be always questioned, reviewed or revisited because a researcher can never know the truths which are always partial, fractured, contested and performed (Denzin and Giardina, 2008).

I consider the strategies from three perspectives: the trustworthiness to convince readers that this research project is worthy of confidence; the reflexivity to present my reflections on the research procedure as well as the ethical considerations to detail that the interactions between me and the participants were ethically carried out.

5.1 Trustworthiness

Since the mid-1908s, a plethora of works have been published to state and propose different criteria in relation to what constitutes good qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Creswell and Miller, 2000; Gibbs, 2007; Kvale and Brinkman, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested the four criteria of trustworthiness, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and corresponding techniques to consider the quality for those qualitative works within the constructionism, rather than the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisability that are strongly attached to the objectivism. These four criteria of trustworthiness are very influential and much-cited classic in the qualitative research works (Loh, 2013; Shenton, 2004). Besides, the transparency of qualitative research is also emphasised by many researchers to enhance its rigour and quality (Elman and Kapiszewski, 2014; Given, 2008). Therefore, I discuss some of those criteria that are relevant to my research project in order to demonstrate the trustworthiness. I did not subscribe all of the four criteria with the corresponding techniques as "there is no longer a single gold standard for qualitative work" (Denzin, 2009, p.154)

5.1.1 Credibility

Credibility is defined as the findings of a qualitative research are credible and believable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Two strategies I adopted to ensure the credibility of this study. Firstly, it is the prolonged engagement, which means that the researcher should be involved in the field sufficiently long to learn or

understand the phenomenon of interest (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In practice, I traced 13 out of the 15 participants from the beginning of their group work until the completion of it. I started to follow the other two participants as well since they joined the cohort of participants. I requested them to inform me of the group activity schedule and we kept in touch every week via emails or mobile by which I knew the progress and arrangements of their group work. It was through the contact that they told me their stress and negotiated the reschedule of the interviews. I also offered some help to a few participants for a separate academic task. I individually had a narrative interview with the majority of the participants every week. Only a few participants did not collaborate with me to make that happen every week due to their unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, I believed we had developed a good rapport and trusted each other in terms of the research-participant relationship.

When I had an interview with a participant, I always made small talk before and after the interview in order to further strengthen and develop the trust between me and a participant. More importantly, during every interview, I always left enough time for a participant to think and narrate his/her group work experience and checked with the participant to make sure s/he had nothing to share at that moment. Then I closed the interview. Thus, prolonged engagement happened in terms of the duration of collaboration with each participant as well as the interview time with each of them.

The second strategy, I adopted is member checks which refers to data and interpretations are sent back to the original participants who generated them (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea,2015). It is considered the crucial technique for establishing the credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.314).

In the consent form each participant signed with me, I clearly mentioned that the transcripts and findings would be sent to them when they were ready to be presented. I requested their personal email address after the last interview I conducted with each of them for this purpose. I sent the transcripts and findings back to the corresponding participant via email (see: Appendix 10) and welcomed their feedback. Interestingly, none of them seemed to have disagreement because only one participant replied to my email showing her appreciation (see: Appendix 10).

5.1.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim *et al.*, 2015). In this study, I explored the cultural-making process and personal acculturation process through the interpretations that were largely influenced by the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm as well as my personal experience regarding the academic sojourning life in the UK.

However, another researcher probably would generate different interpretations due to his/her cultural view and unique personal experience. Furthermore, since I believe in the constructionism and recognise the personal constructions of reality, my interpretations are heavily based upon the 15 participants' constructions in terms of their group work experience at those particular moments (interviews). The same participant would think and construct the same group work experience differently at a different time, no need to mention about different people (who play the role of participants).

Nevertheless, I attempted to describe each stage for this study (i.e. from the research design to reporting the findings) as thoroughly as I can in order to enhance the transferability. The thorough descriptions regarding each stage of this research project could provide detailed information for other researchers to consider and make their own decisions when they carry out similar studies in different situations.

In addition to that, the findings of this study do provide some valuable ideas about the cultural-making process and the personal acculturation process in student group work. In this sense, it is the readers themselves who need to decide the extent to which the design of this study could be relevant to their own research or the degree to which the findings resonate with what they experienced in their own group work.

5.1.3 Transparency

Transparency is another benchmark to consider the quality of research, which asks that the procedures of research (e.g. data generation, data analysis), not the findings, must be clear enough, in other words, transparent, for others to replicate if they want (Given, 2008).

In the previous sections of this methodology chapter, I strive to elaborate the procedure of my research in detail with the rationale for each decision I made (from the recruitment of participants to the completion of data analysis). In addition to that, I attached appendices as evidence to support my statements wherever it is necessary.

Concerning the findings, I have inserted rich extracts from the corresponding participants' transcripts to support my arguments and interpretations (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011) in that they demonstrate the connections between what the participants' constructions of reality and my interpretations on their constructions.

As Given (2008) pointed out the reflexivity goes hand in hand with the transparency and thus, the transparency of this research project can be further sensed through the presentation of my reflexivity (see: Section 5.2).

5.2 Reflexivity

"Reflexivity is a concept very much at home in the world of qualitative social research" (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 273), which illustrates the importance for a qualitative researcher to scrutinise and reflect the research process. It is one of the many aspects that should be considered in order to enhance the rigour in qualitative research (Finlay, 1998; Rice and Ezzy, 1999). As Harding (1991) argued that the reflexivity cannot be treated as a single or universal entity but an active process that should be represented at every stage of doing research. At the same time, reflexivity is not prescriptive in the sense that different researchers might have different responses to or considerations of the similar situation (Koch and Harrington, 1998). Researchers need to be reflexive not because it can predict all the problematic issues that may arise in the process of doing research but because it helps the researchers to develop skills to respond appropriately in each stage of doing research.

Thus, I embedded the reflexivity in different stages of this research design (i.e. reflection on participant recruitment, on data generation, on data analysis and reporting and discussing the findings) instead of simply summarising what I did in this section. By doing this, I intend to be reflective in relation to the interpersonal aspect of research practice rather than merely remain the reflexivity in the epistemological aspect of rigour in qualitative research.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations run through from the start of the research design and up to the final report (Kvale, 2007). Lichtman (2012) defines the ethics in qualitative research as a set of principles or rules, or standards that govern researchers to treat their participants fairly and minimise the changes to evoke their physical and mental discomfort, emotional turbulences or hurts. More accurately, ethical considerations in any research that deals with human being aim to predict and then minimise the potential risks or harm which might possibly occur to the participants (Polonsky and Waller, 2014). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) further divided the ethical considerations into procedural ethics and ethics in practice. The former refers to the completion of ethical form required by the institution and the latter refers to the ethical considerations in the process of doing research. I consider the ethical issue in this study from both sides and, particularly, I address the ethics in practice from three aspects.

5.3.1 Procedural Ethics

I had submitted the Research Integrity Approval Form to the institutional research committee to seek ethical approval. In that form I mainly detailed the criteria for selecting the participants, the specific research methods for data generation, the tools to facilitate the data generation and storage etc. I did not start to advertise this research project to the students or look for participants until the approval was granted by the committee.

5.3.2 Ethics in Practice

The main ethical considerations are involved from the recruitment of participants to the completion of reporting the findings. I discuss what strategies I adopted to minimise possible harm to my participants at each research stage.

5.3.2.1 Ethical Issues at the Data Generation

I drafted and sent a copy of the consent form with all the necessary information to those students who orally agreed to be my participants. In that consent form (see: Appendix 1), I specified the key issues that are related to the participants, for instance, the research procedure, how I protect the participant's confidentiality, what rights a participant has, what risks might happen, what benefits a participant may have etc. I left them time to read and consider whether they would still agree to be my participants without coercion. Then I

made an appointment with each participant in order to request them to sign the consent form before they officially became my participants. All the 15 participants in this study were well-informed and signed the consent form before any interview I conducted with them.

When I started to conduct interview with the participants, I always negotiated with each individual participant in terms of the interview time and venue because I knew they were busy with academic workload as well as other duties. More importantly, I adopted this strategy to show my consideration for the participants as they were all volunteers to contribute their private time for me. I needed to respect their own priorities all the time. As a consequence, sometimes, I travelled to participants' accommodation or I met them in places that were convenient to the participants.

In addition to that, during every narrative interview, I clearly reminded the participant when I switched on and off the audio-recorder because people could feel uncomfortable when his/her voices are being recorded, although all of my participants seemed to feel comfortable and did not bother that their voices were being recorded.

5.3.2.2 Ethical Issues at the Data Preparation

I gave each participant a pseudonym when I started to transcribe the audio-recorded interviews. Therefore, the participants' real names were no longer being used throughout my research project, such as transcript, data analysis, findings etc. More than that, I replaced all the identifiable information (e.g. persons, places or institutions) appearing during the narrative interviews with an unidentifiable pseudonym (for a person) or a symbol (for a place or institution). All those pseudonyms and symbols were used consistently and appeared across the transcripts, verbatim quotes and findings in this study. Those are my strategies to keep anonymity.

Once all the transcripts were ready, I sent them back to each corresponding participant (see: Section 5.1.1) and told him/her explicitly what pseudonym I took to replace his/her real name. A participant may (not) recognise the other individuals or group members (who had been described by using pseudonyms) when s/he read the transcripts. There exists a possibility that a participant may feel unpleasant or uncomfortable when recognising his/her group members in

the transcripts even if the transcripts were entirely based on the group experience narrated by him/herself.

Ethically speaking, before I carried on the data analysis, I had provided each participant with adequate time to come back to me if s/he had felt it was necessary to discuss his/her concerns or the content regarding the data presented in the transcripts. However, as I pointed out in Section 5.1.1, no participant came back to me except for one who replied to me with her appreciation instead of concerns. Hence, I would like to say, to a certain degree, the participants were happy with the data presented in the transcripts.

5.3.2.3 Ethical Issues at the Data Analysis and Reporting

I gave myself nearly a month as a gap after the data preparation and sending them to the corresponding participants. I did that in order to make sure that the participants had enough time to offer me their feedback after reading the transcripts. If any issues were raised by a participant, I could deal with it. Hence, I did not start to analyse the data in the form of transcripts until I was sure that my participants were all happy with the content on each transcript.

When I carried out the data analysis through reading the transcripts, I always kept an eye on the words/sentences that may still potentially reveal a participant's identity or institution. Thus, I did not stop removing the identifiable personal information as long as it was recognised or picked up by me.

Once all the findings were ready, I sent them back to each corresponding participant again for their information. None of the participants replied to my regarding their thoughts about my findings.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reported the epistemological underpinnings and methodological considerations in this study. I elaborated my postmodernist position on research philosophies which directs me to embrace qualitative research methodology and selected narrative inquiry as the specific methodological consideration.

Following that elaboration, the tools, techniques and strategies I adopted from data generation to data analysis have been explained in detail, which includes

two main methodological steps are narrative interview (for data generation) and categorical-content method (for data analysis).

I concluded this chapter by discussing how to achieve the rigour in this study through three aspects: trustworthiness, reflexivity and ethical considerations.

Chapter Six

Trajectories of Cultural-Making Processes towards Cohesiveness in Student Groups

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have detailed the methodological steps to generate and analyse data concerning participants' student group work experience. Regarding the outcome of data analysis, in this chapter, I report the findings with respect to the trajectories of cultural-making processes in participants' five groups, which answers the first research question of this study.

It begins with an overview and explanations of the 13 salient aspects that have been identified in the cultural-making processes towards cohesiveness in participants' five groups. These salient aspects delineate the cohesive thinking, behaviours as well as emotions in student group work.

After the explanations of the 13 salient aspects, I describe the trajectory in relation to the cultural-making process in each student group work through the *distribution* and *intensity* of the salient aspects I have discussed in the second section of this chapter.

This is then followed by a comparison across the groups, which shows how the trajectories of cultural-making processes in student group work share similar patterns but also differ in many ways. These patterns provide me with evidence to fine-tune and enrich the conceptual model concerning cultural-making process in student group work I have conceived in the literature review (see: Section 7 in Chapter 3).

I conclude this chapter by discussing a fine-tuned version, which contributes to knowledge in terms of understanding culture and its complexity.

2. An Overview of the Salient Aspects Identified in the Cultural-Making Processes towards Group Cohesiveness

In this section, I detail the 13 salient aspects identified with respect to the cultural-making processes towards cohesiveness in the five student groups and illustrate the meaning of each salient aspect by using data extracts. In addition,

I particularly address that two salient aspects (within the 13 salient aspects) show participants' cohesive emotions which can be considered as an additional cohesiveness to the thinking and behavioural cohesiveness (discussed in Section 2.2).

2.1 Explanations of the Salient Aspects

According to the definition of culture I suggested in the literature review (see: Section 6 in Chapter 3), culture arguably emerges as long as some cohesive thinking and behaviours can be noted in a *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013). After exploring the cohesiveness amongst the diverse *cultural realities* that the participants brought into their group work, I identified 13 themes, which indicate 13 salient aspects vis-à-vis the cohesive thinking and behaviours developing in the five student groups (see: Table 6.1).

The 13 Salient Aspects Identified in the Cultural-Making Processes towards Cohesiveness in the Five Student Groups

The Cohesiveness in the Five Student Groups	The Specific Salient Aspect
cohesive thinking	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere
cohesive thinking/ behaviour	Being Stressed
cohesive thinking and behaviour	Reflection on Personal Performance
cohesive thinking	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members
cohesive thinking	The Impact of Group Member Diversity
cohesive thinking	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members
cohesive thinking	'(Un)Healthy' Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members
cohesive thinking	Concerns of Fairness
cohesive thinking	The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work
cohesive thinking	Potential Challenges in This Group Work
cohesive behaviour	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work
cohesive thinking	Valuing the Group Work Outcome
cohesive thinking	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work

Table 6.1

In the following part of this section, with reference to data extracted from the 15 participants' narratives, I explain each salient aspect that has been identified in the cultural-making processes towards cohesiveness in the five student groups.

2.1.1 The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who believe the physical environment or the atmosphere built by the group members exerted an impact on the process of their group work.

Some participants thought that the physical environment (e.g. space, layout) where they had the group meetings constrained their group work progress, like what Jacuqette and Fanchon described.

> "…but this time, we were sitting on a smaller table, so we could communicate more easily" (Jacquette, Transcript 3).

> "The room was set up probably didn't help either...we've got all looking at the screen rather than looking at each other, therefore, when you asked a question, people kept looking the screen" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

In contrast to them, other participants commented that, sometimes, the physical environment facilitated their group work negotiations, like what Peder and Warde commented.

> "In a room, in a group study room, so we were a kind of shut off the rest of the world which is good for a kind of concentration" (Peder, Transcript 2).

> "We just went there to book a group study room, we all think maybe those group study room are more quiet, yeah...more space" (Warde, Transcript 3).

Besides the physical environments, some participants indicated that group members' reactions (e.g. anger, relaxation or anxiety) did spread to the rest group members and attribute to the nature of the atmosphere.

For instance, both Fanchon and Elmore described that a relaxing and comfortable group atmosphere was created during their negotiations.

> "I personally, I am quite chatty, and we were all chatty like talking about personal things...we felt a little bit relaxed" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

> "Everyone seems like smiling, relaxing and probably I think it was because of the weather, we were outside" (Elmore, Transcript 2).

Opposite to what Fachon and Elmore described, like what Peder and Nerissa said below, the annoyance or anxiety generated by a single group member may destroy the atmosphere within the whole group.

"She seemed quite annoyed about that and I think it's not, not necessary to get angry now because this will just contribute to bad atmosphere" (Peder, Transcript 4).

"Some people when they are anxious...they make at least me, feel a bit more anxious...they are transferring their emotions to the rest of the group, er, but it wasn't for this group" (Nerissa, Transcript 5).

2.1.2 Being Stressed

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking and/or the corresponding behaviours among the participants who all emphasised the stress went along with them in that particular trimester when they were doing the group work. The stress mainly came from the different academic tasks that had to be completed and submitted in quick succession.

For instance, Giffie explicitly mentioned about the amount of academic workload they had to carry out at that particular period.

"I think we all kind of facing a quite challenging time in next couple of weeks because we have a lot of things to do and we need to start" (Giffie, Transcript 2).

Instead, Cordey directly said that they had to deal with many deadlines for other modules while doing this group work.

"…but I was busy with lots of other deadlines as well, and other group meetings for other courses" (Cordey, Transcript 2).

Other participants, like Peder and Warde, expressed their stress in a different way by saying how rush they were when they commenced their individual tasks for this group work.

"I haven't read it yet, I only started yesterday|" (Peder, Transcript 1).

"Actually, I just finished my part one night one night before our meeting, so this kind of in a hurry" (Warde, Transcript 4).

2.1.3 Reflection on Personal Performance

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who had reflections on themselves regarding their own performances during the group work. First of all, the reflections can be noted from the participants' comments on their own personality, for example, Kiele commented on her own

personality, which seemed to be a reason that contributed to her uncomfortable feeling.

> "I am a kind of shy or introverted person, I couldn't deal with aggressive person...as a Chinese people, I try to avoid conflicts, so if something is very rude direct to me, I am, I just can't do anything" (Kiele, Transcript 1).

Secondly, the reflections can be understood through some participants'comments on the strategies they adopted for interactions and involvement in the group work, like what Fanchon said.

> "[I] didn't want to be too dominant, so to not give them the impression that I am being rigid…for the intercultural training, I was very involved because I am personally attached to it, I found it very interesting" (Fanchon Transcript 1).

Thirdly, such a reflection can also be interpreted from some participants' descriptions regarding the personal development they had or would like to have in the future. For example, Lauralee realised that she still had room to improve.

> "I mean I probably could have done it better, like to manage the diversity better, and probably" (Lauralee, Transcript 7).

Unlike Lauralee, Marrilee seemed to find another way of learning by doing this group work.

> "In this process, and you got another way to learnt things, one is, one was from the lecturers, but one was from students" (Marrilee, Transcript 7).

At the same time, Warde started to reflect on his stereotypes of Germans when he did this group work.

> "My previous stereotype about German, German, Germans, you know, they are only, the people kind of struggle or was really strict to the details, especially for working right, but those two girls are quite different" (Warde, Transcript 1).

2.1.4 Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who expressed their appreciation or dislike to other group members they collaborated with in a group.

Arguably, the appreciation first comes from group members' hard-working, like what Giffie said.

"I mean, I have to admit that I am glad that at least, the other two girls, are really skilled and really, they really work hard and I appreciate that" (Giffie, Transcript 4).

Shari commented that Kelila even did not mention what she had done for their group work. From what Shari said, I can interpret Kelila's dedication was appreciated.

"I am really happy er, the group member Kelila she booked the room without telling any of us just in case we would be interested, I was really happy she did that" (Shari, Transcript 4).

Some group members' personalities (e.g. peaceful) also become reasons for other group members to like them, which can be noted from what Alleva said.

"Elmore is the peaceful one, she just listens, and she thinks about things, then when she comes with something" (Alleva, Transcript 1).

Oppositely, some participants expressed their dislike towards each other in the process of their group work. The dislike seems to originate from other group members' personalities, for instance, Kiele commented on that she did not like another group member's aggression.

"Someone is really, really like to control everything and someone is really aggressive to me. I don't know whether it's personal or non-personal" (Kiele, Transcript 1).

Another reason to make the participants raise their dislike is about the 'low quality' of academic outcomes, like what Giffie said.

"Two girls who didn't do much sent me their proposal regarding the specific issues which were not really good, so it was completely chaotic, it was nothing in the right sense or was some theories where applied wrong" (Giffie, Transcript 5).

2.1.5 The Impact of Group Member Diversity

This salient reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who believed that the similarity or differences amongst themselves had an impact on the collaboration for the group work.

In particular, the similarity sensed by the participants mainly in relation to the similar thinking or ideas offered by different group members during the group discussions, like what Marrilee, Nerissa and Elmore commented blow.

> "Most of our meeting, you know we don't have very very obvious or very opposite ideas, so it's you know everyone er, thinks alike and so we, it's easy for us to make an agreement" (Marrilee, Transcript 3).

> "We have er, similar ideas, we are, most of the time agree on stuff, I don't know if it's good or bad, but, it will show" (Nerissa, Transcript 3).

> "We had, we all had opinions and they were not completely different, they were similar opinions, so that's why we could all agree with it, I guess" (Elmore, Transcript 3).

In contrast to the similar ideas some participants sensed from their group work, based on what the participants narrated, the difference between groups members can be interpreted from the following three broad aspects. Firstly, how much effort or dedication needs to be exerted by each individual group member, like what Lauralee and Filmer said below.

> "Peder said er, it's only thirty percent, so we shouldn't spend too much energy on it and then I was like, ok, that wasn't something I want to hear in the first meeting" (Lauralee, Transcript 1).

> "[I] rather to do four slides in my part. so, definitely, it's 10 percent er, er, work compare with the other kind of work, meanwhile people prefer to take like very seriously this task, and they working for presentation" (Filmer, Transcript 3).

Secondly, some participants held different opinions on what approach was expected to be taken, for example, Jaquette and Alleva commented on it.

> "So the person wanted slightly different structure than the rest of us proposed" (Jaquette, Transcript 1).

> "I didn't prepare anything, I just talked, but they all had the speeches ...I thought I will adapt to the situation and see how much do they all have to say" (Alleva, Transcript 3).

Different personalities seem to be the third reason for some participants to sense the diversity among group members, for instance, Nerissa and Shari mentioned this.

> "Some characters are different of course, some people do speak all the time, talk all the time, some characters like to er, think more and then speak up" (Nerissa, Transcript 1).

"Some people can be very strongly opinionated in group work and that can be difficult sometimes for people, other group members are more introverted and less outspoken" (Shari, Transcript 1).

2.1.6 Hierarchy amongst the Group Members

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who sensed the hierarchical relationship amongst themselves. I have interpreted the sense of hierarchal relationship from two perspectives.

Some participants shared the understandings that there should be different roles in a group, more particularly, the distinction between a leader and the group members, like what Giffie, Lauralee or Warde said.

"I always think somehow someone has to be the person who says or who structure the work" (Giffie, Transcript 3).

"I don't know if we could...everybody should be the leader from time to time, and that could be too confusing" (Lauralee, Transcript 7).

"We do need a group leader, for every group, yeah, so right" (Warde, Transcript 2).

Apart from the issue of group leader, on most occasions, participants said that they liked the freedom and equality within their groups as they were being respected and could voice their opinion freely, like what Cordey and Alleva said.

"We make sure that everybody had time to give their opinions, no one is talking over each other" (Cordey, Transcript 1).

"Everybody could express their opinion freely er, and we could filter good opinions for bad opinions together" (Alleva Transcript 1).

In other words, they believed the hierarchical relationship among them were not salient or significant. Jacquette pointed it out.

"It was a good experience again, emm, I still think it's a low hierarchy, we still speak, er communicate very well with each other" (Jacquette, Transcript 3).

However, on one particular occasion, Nerissa did mention that she seemed to be 'afraid' to voice in her group work, which indicates that hierarchical relationship still existed in her student group work at some time.

"I felt that I couldn't really say my opinion that loudly, because I was afraid that would be misunderstood, especially from one person…really sensitive to other people's comments" (Nerissa, Transcript 7).

2.1.7 '(Un)Healthy' Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who thought the interpersonal relationship among the group was in either a 'healthy' way or an 'unhealthy' way. A 'healthy' interpersonal relationship between one another in the group work can be owed to the mutual respect or care the group members offer to each other, for instance Warde and Kelila mentioned it.

"They all er, trying to be yeah, understandable to my situations, so, it's quite comforting" (Warde, Transcript 3).

"Like we just decided, we all trusted each other to go often and do that properly" (Kelila, Transcript 5).

On the contrary, one particular participant felt that the interpersonal relationship was not very 'healthy' in their group work due to the 'unauthorised leadership' or disrespect.

"We didn't ask her to be our leader, but she put her own role to be the leader if anyone would like to offer some responsibilities, she will say no, I will do that [...] feel they don't respect me and tell other members, just ignore it or didn't notice, just pretend nothing happened, but someone is too, yeah, that's my members" (Kiele, Transcript 1).

2.1.8 Concerns of Fairness

This salient reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who were all concerned about the issue of fairness in the process of doing their group work.

Specifically speaking, some participants believed that the workload had been divided in a fair way. The fairness can be showed from equal 'quantity', like what Kelila said.

"That we were not one person is gonna off and done everything, we were all contributed to the presentation, quite, like equal amounts" (Kelila, Transcript 3).

This fairness can also be demonstrated from the "equal effort", according to Fanchon.

"I did eighty percent of the whole training, …I didn't mind the others didn't do it because I was like, I know how to do this, I know how to do it well, so just, let

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me do it, I am fine, you guys handed in the other one, it's a kind of equal, yeah" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

At the same time, some participants felt that the group work was carried out unfairly, which largely means the amount of work each group member did. Lauralee emphasised she had done the majority in her group by saying:

"So I felt like I, I was more or less the only one that did some real work" (Lauralee, Transcript 2).

Differently, Warde seemed to admit that he did not do much work for their group work.

"And for me, since a kind of missed very first three sessions from this semester in the module leader's module, so, I was still not constructive to the whole group discussions, yeah" (Warde, Transcript 1).

In addition to that, some participants thought the unfairness is from the feedback or comments given by the module leader, like both Kelila and Elmore commented the grade and result of their group work.

"I feel that we worked really, really well...I think the point remained in the feedback were quite unfair because I don't think that they actually applied to our presentation at all" (Kelila, Transcript 6).

"Some of them came later during the presentation and then some of them was speaking during the speech, er, during the presenting and that was, we thought that was quite rude and but as the result, they got better than our mark and then we thought it was not fair" (Elmore, Transcript 4).

2.1.9 The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who thought the 'demographic features' played a role in their group work performance.

In particular, some participants shared an idea that the group size (the number of group members) would have an impact on their group work performance and they had different preference in terms of either a big or a small group.

Peder seemed to have seen the pros and cons for either a smaller group (four group members) or a bigger one (five group members) when he said:

"We are four people, some groups are consisted five people...I don't know if it's an advantage being five people because then you do have five different

opinions, so emm, but on the other hand, four people means more work for
each person" (Peder, Transcript 2).

Nerissa explicitly expressed that she preferred a bigger group that everyone
had to compromise instead of creating a deadlock.

"In this group we are like er, well five people in this group, we are not just two or
three, er, I think, it's better to have more people in a group, because em, er,
because people have to make compromises more than just being two or three
people" (Nerissa, Transcript 5).

In contrast to Nerissa, Shari felt that working with a big group could be
problematic as it added the complications to the negotiation process.

"I think our group might have been too large, because there were five of us, and
other groups only had like three group members, so, I thought that could be a
little bit er, because you are kind of reaching for more information to put into the
presentation, but it didn't need that, we need to be more simply" (Shari,
Transcript 5).

Apart from the group size, some participants thought gender imbalance (e.g.
only one male in a group) or the single-gender situation led to a difference in
terms of collaboration. For instance, Giffie said, as a girl, it could be easier to
work with boys.

"While in my experience, it is easier to work with boys or with guys because
they, they actually just do whatever you say they should do" (Giffie, Transcript
1).

As the only male group member in the group work, Warde mentioned that he
took advantage of his gender in group work.

"I am a kind of the only guy in the group, whatever, I just gave my opinions
straightforwardly, I would say" (Warde Transcript 5).

2.1.10 Potential Challenges in This Group Work

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who all
recognised the challenges they came across in the process of doing the group
work.

In the first place, some participants believed that communication issue between
them would be a challenge. This communication issue is manifested in
language (e.g. English) challenge like what Peder described.

"It seems sometimes a bit more difficult for [Marrilee] to follow because we were all speaking quite fast...I think we all have problems to understand Scottish people" (Peder, Transcript 1).

If it is not about language challenge, different communication style can be another reason to create difficulties for participants' group work, which is learnt from what Warde and Alleva said.

"I mean Nerissa just kind of asking the same question, every single time after they explained something to her, that she still cannot get it and for you and I mean for everyone gonna lose their patience a little bi" (Warde, Transcript 6).

"Some of them raised questions about the structure of the package...bothered me most, because we have discussed the package over, over, over again...so it was just a bit of waste time to respond to them again, but I did" (Alleva, Transcript 3).

Next, the challenge of doing group work is also from the commitment or participation in group activities (e.g. group meeting) that some group members did not do well or did not fulfil the expectations other group member had in terms of attendance. For example, Giffie commented on the absence of another group member.

"One of our group members didn't, didn't came to the class, so she didn't show up for the group meeting either and which we kind of expected but anyway" (Giffie, Transcript 6).

Peder and Alleva described that some of their group members seemed not to have done their job well, which generated some challenges for them or the other group members to face up to.

"Marrilee, she had said, so much, some good input from her as well......it's good stuff but I think the module leader is looking for something different" (Peder, Transcript 3).

"I think it was a bit, I expected it to be more clear this morning, I expected it to be everything cut down to proportions because basically we discussed this morning the same thing we discussed last time" (Alleva, Transcript 4).

Finally, another challenge of doing group work can be attributed to the group task *per se* as some participants felt it was difficult to incorporate different individuals' ideas together as a coherent joint-report, like what Giffie and Marrilee said.

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"Because we all think it's challenging to write a report, it's not a presentation, it's a writing. That's not easy" (Giffie, Transcript 2).

"It's really a problem for group works […] presentation you can try to divide the presentation into maybe, if it's four people...but for group work, this is er, this is er, group proposal, it means you should write a plan there and the plan should connect together but you know different people, different people have different ideas" (Marrilee, Transcript 1).

2.1.11 A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive behaviours among the participants who all 'democratically' collaborated in the process of doing the group work because the participants did a kind of 'vote' or 'choice' in terms of how to divide the group work.

"…told me that if I wanted to do the introduction and I said I don't mind if no one wants so, oh, I don't mind doing the presentation" (Nerissa, Transcript 1).

"We need to do four different things, so A, B, C and D, emm, anybody, I was like, does anybody have preferences, do you want to do something in particular" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

From what Nerissa and Fanchon said, I can interpret that the division of individual task for their group work was undertaken through negotiation rather than an allocation given by a 'leader' or a particular group member.

Apart from that, some groups divided their workload by seeing the strength and weakness of each group member, which can be seen as another kind of democracy, for instance, Warde described it.

"Jacquette she picked that part and for the strength and weakness and then evaluation part, then I just stand out, yeah, just that is supposed to be my part" (Warde, Transcript 3).

2.1.12 Valuing the Group Work Grade

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who shared an idea that grade was very important for doing this group work.

According to Giffie, a good or high grade was something she was expecting because Grade was related to her job-hunting.

"…to prove it you have to have the good grades, to be more competitive to get the job" (Giffie, Transcript 6).

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Marrilee and Nerissa just simply emphasised that a good grade was what they were looking for.

> "In some way, yes, is it's for for our credit right, you know we need to graduate and we need credits" (Marrilee, Transcript 2).

> "We just hope that we can fulfil the wishes of the professor's goal and have a good grade, let's hope" (Nerissa, Transcript 6).

From a different perspective, Fanchon said that group member might not be that 'interested' if a component of the group work was not graded. In other words, it shows that grade is something very important to most group members.

> "This is not graded, so technically should be less important if you think from a, you know, pass-fail of a module perspective" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

2.1.13 Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work

This salient aspect reveals the cohesive thinking among the participants who generated the appraisals of the group work they participated in.

Some participants reviewed the group work process and gave a relatively negative overall comment on his/her experience, like what Giffie said

> "I still think it's not really er, I don't know, it wasn't really a good thing to do" (Giffie, Transcript 7).

Such a negative appraisal seems to be more salient from the account given by Kiele who worked together with Giffie.

> "I should say that I am not happy with training, er, this whole group meeting, I have had group meetings before, but this one is kind of terrible for me from my point of view" (Kiele, Transcript 1).

Lauralee also thought this group work was not a good experience.

> "…but still, it's like, during the group work process, it's pain in the ass then, afterwards, it's like well, I did it anyway" (Lauralee, Transcript 7).

Unlike those participants' experiences in their group work, some other participants thought they enjoyed doing this group work and generated relatively positive overall appraisal, like what Marrilee and Jacquette commented at the end of their group work.

> "I think group work is quite useful and helpful for students to share ideas and to get new ideas and emm, that's quite good" (Marrilee, Transcript 2).

"I still think that was a good group, emm, and I enjoyed working with them" (Jacquette, Transcript 7).

2.2 Consideration of Cohesive Emotions in the Cultural-Making Processes towards Group Cohesiveness

As shown in Table 6.1, the majority of the 13 salient aspects I identified from the participants' *cultural realities* regarding their group work experience reflect the cohesive thinking and behaviours in the five student groups, which resonate with the discussion in the literature about the understanding of culture from an anti-essentialist perspective (Dahl, 2014; Holliday, 2011; 2013; Street, 1993). However, apart from the cohesive thinking or behaviour, I noticed that 2 out of the 13 salient aspects also demonstrate the shared emotions amongst the participants, such as unhappy with the unequal contribution, disappointment for the final mark, unpleasant or enjoyable overall experience in group work. I learnt the shared emotions through the *cultural realities* presented by the participants when they were involved in certain scenarios in the process of doing their group work.

In my view, the shared emotions among the participants can be regarded as another kind of cohesiveness because they are also achieved from the composite of participants' *cultural realities*. Therefore, the definition of culture might be enriched by adding the cohesive emotion into its concept.

I describe these two salient aspects in the remaining part of this section in order to highlight the emotional aspect as part of the cohesiveness.

2.2.1 Cohesive Emotions in the *Concerns of Fairness*

In the middle of the Peder *et al.*'s group work, the majority of the participants seemed to shape a cohesive emotion that they were not happy to see or experience the unequal contribution in the group.

First of all, the non-proactive participation of Marrilee and the performances of other colleagues in the group meetings drew Lauralee's attention and she said:

> "…I don't know if she [Marrilee] did some reading or not, because she just said this article might be helpful then we ask her did you read it, and she was like no, so, I don't know what she did…so I felt like I, I was more or less the only one that did some real work" (Lauralee, Transcript 2).

It seems that Lauralee felt negative about contributing more than what others did. She disliked the unequal contribution she experienced in this group work.

The quietness of Marrilee in their group discussion is also commented by Peder as he said:

> "...mainly, me and two girls which I have been for, since trimester one, mostly we were involved in the discussion, and the new girl from China, she was a bit more quiet" (Peder, Transcript 2).

He seemingly just described the situation in their group meeting, which, however showed his implied meaning that Marrilee did least in terms of the intellectual input in their group. He probably bothered about the unequal contribution, otherwise, he could not have commented on it.

Cordey worked with them in the same group directly described her worries and concerns when she thought she did not make enough contributions in this group work.

> "…I saw that everyone has been putting work up and that I hasn't…so I would have liked to prepare more than I did…And then meeting on Friday, I was actually very worried about it because er, because I have to go home a lot during the week back to my family home because for health issues and stuff, so I didn't have a lot of time to do anything" (Cordey, Transcript 2).

Lauralee, Peder and Cordey all expressed their emotions in a way when they saw or experienced the unequal contribution. They seemed to shape a cohesive emotion that they disliked it because it was unfair to those who worked more. Ideally, they expected the equal contribution.

2.2.2 Cohesive Emotion in the *Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work*

In the end of Alleva *et al.*'s group work, all the participants felt disappointed after they received the feedback and grade for their group work. All the participants had believed that they did their best and met all the criteria mentioned by the module leader. They thought they should have a better mark for it. However, they were all disappointed and shocked when they saw the mark and comments. The five participants all described their discomfort, disappointment and surprise in their own ways (see: the underlined words in the extracts [1a-5a] below).

[1a] "We got the feedback, I was a <u>bit disappointed</u> because it was very very easy to ask and it should have been so much better done…well, I think that the assessment was an easy D, so we could have got a D very very easy, and then we got P four, which is not justified" (Alleva, Transcript 5).

[2a] "I thought that, the mark was actually quite unfair emm<u>, I felt quite frustrated</u>, I was a bit upset, emm, I think generally the rest of the group feel the same" (Kelila, Transcript 6).

[3a] "When we got our mark back, it was a lot lower than we thought it would be…I think we had all the necessary parts and information…I think we were <u>all pretty surprised</u> when we got the feedback because we, as we really tried hard to put every element that the lecturers were looking for into it and making sure each of group member had equal part in it as well" (Shari, Transcript 5).

[4a] "Well, to be very honest with you, the feedback <u>was a bit disappointing</u>, we are expecting a better mark…we were talking to the girls and everybody seems to be a little disappointed, everybody is expected better marks" (Filmer, Transcript 3).

[5a] "To be honest, about that feedback, I <u>was not really happy</u> with that, actually we were not really happy with that, because we thought emm, we did more than that…I think everyone thinks the same as me, I guess, yeah" (Elmore, Transcript 4).

It is easy to learn that the five participants developed a cohesive emotion after seeing the feedback that made them disappointed, upset and unhappy.

The cohesive emotions could also be noted from other participants who talked about their overall group work experiences. In the end of Giffie and Kiele's Group, they both commented that their overall experience in their group work was not pleasant and they believed it was an unhappy experience (see: the underlined words in the extracts [1b-2b] below).

[1b] "Like my last group work experience here in […] <u>was horrible</u>…and <u>I never</u> experienced group works <u>in a positive way</u> when I, when I was forced to work with strangers" (Giffie, transcript 1).

[2b] "But I should say that <u>I am not happy with training, er, this whole group meeting</u>, I have had group meetings before, but this one is kind of terrible for me from my point of view…after first two or three meetings, <u>I realised, they don't like </u>my stuff" (Kiele, Transcript 1).

After collaborating with each other in the same group, Giffie and Kiele apparently developed a cohesive emotion that it was not happy by doing this group work.

By contrast, in the group constituted by Nerissa *et al.*, at the end, when they reviewed it, some participants developed a cohesive emotion that they were happy and enjoyed collaborating with each other for this group work (see: the underlined words in the extracts [1c-2c] below).

> [1c] "I mean through the whole process of doing this group work…we really happy to work together, there is no such a er, I mean, the argumentation, confrontation or discussion or even the quarrel upon to our group work, so, everything I mean, went very well in my opinion" (Warde, Transcript 8).

> [2c] "I still think that was a good group, emm, and I enjoyed working with them…I was thinking that working with them was really nice…was the best group I had so far, er, also everyone could say anything and contribute" (Jacquette, Transcript 7).

Based upon what I have described with the support of participants' data, I argue that the additional cohesive emotions (apart from cohesive thinking or behaviour) can be sensed from two specific ones (e.g. the *concerns of fairness* and the *positive/negative appraisal of the group work*). These two salient cultural aspects are among the 13 salient aspects that are identified to constitute the cultural-making processes towards cohesiveness in the five student groups, which are surmised in Table 6.2.

The Two Salient Aspects Indicating Emotional Cohesiveness

The cohesiveness in student group work	The specific salient aspect
cohesive thinking/emotions	Concerns of Fairness
cohesive thinking/emotions	Positive or Negative Appraisal of the Group Work

Table 6.2

3. The Trajectories of Cultural-Making Processes towards Cohesiveness in the Five Student Groups

The 13 salient aspects I identified and explained in the previous section only show what particular cohesive thinking, behaviours and emotions have shaped

in student group work, which has not directly demonstrated the trajectory of the cultural-making process in each student group yet. In order to illustrate that, I take the advantage of the stages I defined for each student group work (see: Section 4.4.4 in Chapter 5) as the time markers and report the trajectory of the cultural-making process in each student group in the remaining part of this section.

Drawing on the 13 salient aspects and the stages in each student group, I now describe the *distribution* and *intensity* of these salient aspects in each student group, which provides an interpretive possibility to chart the trajectories of cultural-making processes toward cohesiveness in the participants' five groups. By *distribution*, I mean the number of the salient aspects that appear prominent within and across the stages I defined for each student group work. By *Intensity*, I mean how many participants (who worked in the same group) shared a particular salient aspect that appears prominent at every stage of their group work.

Regarding the cultural-making process in Fanchon's group work, only the *distribution* of the salient aspects is reported, and the *intensity* is not applicable due to the fact that Fanchon is the only participant in this study who worked in that group.

3.1 The Cultural-Making Process towards Cohesiveness in Giffie and Kiele's Group

Giffie and Kiele worked in a group where I identified four stages (see: Section 4.4.4.1 in Chapter 5) based on their entire group work experiences. Table 6.3 (on the next page) represents the trajectory of the cultural-making process in their group work.

The Cultural-Making Process (Giffie and Kiele)

Salient aspects at stage 1	Salient aspects at stage 2	Salient aspects at stage 3	Salient aspects at stage 4
The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (G)			
Being Stressed (G)	Being Stressed (G)	Being Stressed (G)	
Reflection on Personal Performance (x2)	Reflection on Personal Performance (x2)	Reflection on Personal Performance (x2)	Reflection on Personal Performance (x2)
Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (K)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (x2)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (x2)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (K)
The Impact of Group Member Diversity (G)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (G)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (G)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (G)
Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x2)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x2)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x2)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (K)
(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (x2)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (x2)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (x2)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (K)
Concerns of Fairness (x2)	Concerns of Fairness (x2)	Concerns of Fairness (x2)	Concerns of Fairness (x2)
The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work (G)			
Potential Challenges in This Group Work (x2)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (x2)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (x2)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (K)
A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x2)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x2)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x2)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (K)
		Valuing the Group Work Outcome (G)	Valuing the Group Work Outcome (K)
Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x2)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x2)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x2)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x2)

Table 6.3[5]

As shown in Table 6.3, the culture in their group was initially formed by 12 salient aspects (stage 1), which was reformed by 10 salient aspects (stage 2) and then 13 salient aspects (stage 3) and eventually it was reformed by 10 salient aspects (stage 4) again.

Particularly speaking, across the 4 stages of their group work, three salient aspects (highlighted in pink in Table 6.3) disappeared in the late stages and one salient aspect (highlighted in yellow in Table 6.3) emerged since the third stage. The remaining salient aspects existed across the 4 stages of their group work.

In terms of the *intensity* of these salient aspects, three of them (marked in red in Table 6.3) were shared by both of the participants from the beginning to the end. Five of them (marked in black in Table 6.3) could merely be noted from either Giffie's or Kiele's *cultural realities.* Another four (marked in green in Table

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[5] In each table, when a salient aspect was identified from certain participants' data, I wrote the initial letters of their pseudonyms. If a salient aspect could be identified from all the participants who worked in the same group, then I used the multiple sign together with the number of participants who worked in that group, such as x2.

6.3) were first shared by both of the participants in the first three stages of their group work and then they were merely noted from Kiele's *cultural realities*. One salient aspect (marked in blue in Table 6.3) was shared by Giffie and Kiele at the second and third stages and then could only be noted from either of the two participants in the other two stages of their group work.

As I have interpreted, a trajectory in relation to the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in Giffie and Kiele's group can be described in four stages where its salient aspects emerged and evolved as the Table 6.3 shows.

3.2 The Cultural-Making Process towards Cohesiveness in Peder *et al*.'s Group

Peder, Marrilee, Lauralee and Cordey worked in a group where I identified five stages (see: Section 4.4.4.2 in Chapter 5) based on their entire group work experiences. The following Table 6.4 represents the trajectory of the cultural-making process in their group work.

The Cultural-Making Process (Peder *et al*.)

Salient aspects at stage 1	Salient aspects at stage 2	Salient aspects at sage 3	Salient aspects at stage 4	Salient aspects at stage 5
The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (P&C)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (P, M&L)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (P)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (P)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (M)
Being Stressed (P)	Being Stressed (P, L&C)	Being Stressed (P, L&C)	Being Stressed (P, L&C)	Being Stressed (P)
Reflection on Personal Performance (P, L&C)	Reflection on Personal Performance (L)	Reflection on Personal Performance (M, L&C)	Reflection on Personal Performance (x4)	Reflection on Personal Performance (x4)
Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (P&L)	Gratitude/ Dislike towards Other Group Members (x4)	Gratitude/ Dislike towards Other Group Members (x4)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (x4)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (P, M&C)
The Impact of Group Member Diversity (P, L&C)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (P, M&L)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (P, M&C)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (P, M&C)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (P, M&C)
Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x4)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x4)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (M, L&C)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x4)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (P, L&C)
(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P, L&C)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P&L)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P, L&C)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P, L&C)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (C)
	Concerns of Fairness (P, L&C)	Concerns of Fairness (P, L&C)	Concerns of Fairness (x4)	Concerns of Fairness (C)
	The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work (P, L)	The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work (P)	The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work (P)	
Potential Challenges in This Group Work (x4)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (P, L&C)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (x4)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (P, M&C)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (M&C)
A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x4)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x4)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x4)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x4)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x4)
	Valuing the Group Work Outcome (P, M&L)	Valuing the Group Work Outcome (P, M&L)	Valuing the Group Work Outcome (P, L&C)	Valuing the Group Work Outcome (P, L&C)
Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x4)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x4)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (P, L&C)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x4)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x4)

Table 6.4

As shown in Table 6.4, the culture in their group was initially formed by 10 salient aspects (stage 1), which was reformed by 13 salient aspects from the second stage to the fourth stage and then it was reformed by 12 salient aspects (stage 5).

Particularly speaking, across the 5 stages of their group work, two salient aspects (highlighted in yellow in Table 6.4) emerged since the second stage. One salient aspect (highlighted in light green in Table 6.4) only emerged from the second to the fourth stage in their group work. The remaining salient aspects existed across the 5 stages of their group work.

In terms of the *intensity* of these salient aspects, five of them (marked in red in Table 6.4) were shared by all or three of the participants from the beginning to the end. All the remaining salient aspects (marked in blue in Table 6.4) fluctuated throughout the five stages. At certain stages, those salient aspects were shared by all or some participants while, for the other stages, they were merely noted from one participant's *cultural realities*.

As I have interpreted, a trajectory in relation to the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in Peder *et al.*'s group can be delineated in five stages where its salient aspects emerged and evolved as the Table 6.4 shows.

3.3 The Cultural-Making Process towards Cohesiveness in Nerissa *et al.*'s Group

Nerissa, Jacquette and Warde worked in a group where I identified five stages (see: Section 4.4.4.3 in Chapter 5) based on their entire group work experiences. The following Table 6.5 (on the next page) represents the trajectory of the cultural-making process in their group work.

The Cultural-Making Process (Nerissa *et al.*)

Salient aspects at stage 1	Salient aspects at stage 2	Salient aspects at stage 3	Salient aspects at stage 4	Salient aspects at stage 5
The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (J&N)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (J&W)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (x3)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (N)	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere (x3)
	Being Stressed (x3)	Being Stressed (W)	Being Stressed (N&W)	Being Stressed (x3)
Reflection on Personal Performance (x3)	Reflection on Personal Performance (x3)	Reflection on Personal Performance (N&W)	Reflection on Personal Performance (W)	Reflection on Personal Performance (N&W)
Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (x3)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (N)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (x3)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (W)	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members (x3)
The Impact of Group Member Diversity (x3)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (J&N)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (J)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (W)	The Impact of Group Member Diversity (x3)
Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x3)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (J&W)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x3)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x3)	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members (x3)
(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (x3)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (J&W)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (J&W)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (J&W)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (x3)
Concerns of Fairness (W)		Concerns of Fairness (W)		Concerns of Fairness (N&W)
			The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work (N&W);	
Potential Challenges in This Group Work (J&N)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (J&N)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (N)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (J&N)	Potential Challenges in This Group Work (x3)
A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x3)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x3)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x3)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x3)	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work (x3)
Valuing the Group Work Outcome (W)	Valuing the Group Work Outcome (N)	Valuing the Group Work Outcome (J)		Valuing the Group Work Outcome (x3)
Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x3)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x3)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x3)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x3)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (x3)

Table 6.5

As shown in Table 6.5, the culture in their group was initially formed by 11 salient aspects (stage 1), which was reformed with the change of one salient aspect (stage 2). The culture was constituted by 12 salient aspects again (stage 3) and it was developed into 11 salient aspects (stage 4) and turned to 12 salient aspects in the end (stage 5).

Particularly speaking, across the 5 stages of their group work, one salient aspect (highlighted in yellow in Table 6.5) emerged since the second stage. Two salient aspects (highlighted in grey in Table 6.5) emerged, disappeared and then merged again. One salient aspect (highlighted in light green in Table 6.5) only emerged in the fourth stage of their group work. The remaining salient aspects existed across the 5 stages of their group work.

In terms of the *intensity* of these salient aspects in their group work, three of them (marked in red in Table 6.5) were shared by all or two participants from the beginning to the end. Another two salient aspects (marked in brown in Table

6.5) were initially merely noted from one participant's *cultural realities* and then they were shared with other participants. The remaining salient aspects fluctuated (marked in blue in Table 6.5). At certain stages, they were shared by all or two participants while, for the other stages, they were merely noted from one participant's *cultural realities*.

As I have interpreted, a trajectory in relation to the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in Nerissa *et al.'s* group can be delineated in five stages where its salient aspects emerged and evolved as the Table 6.5 shows.

3.4 The Cultural-Making Process towards Cohesiveness in Alleva *et al.*'s Group

Alleva, Elmore, Filmer, Keilia and Shari worked in a group where I identified three stages (see: Section 4.4.4.4 in Chapter 5) based on their entire group work experiences. The following Table 6.6 represents the trajectory of the cultural-making process in their group work.

The Cultural-Making Process (Alleva *et al.*)

Table 6.6

As shown in Table 6.6, the culture in their group was initially formed by 13 salient aspects (stage 1), which was reformed by 9 salient aspects (stage 2) and then 11 salient aspects (stage 3).

Particularly speaking, across the 4 stages of their group work, two salient aspects (highlighted in pink in Table 6.6) disappeared in the late stages and

another three salient aspects (highlighted in grey in Table 6.6) emerged, disappeared and then merged again. The remaining salient aspects existed across the 3 stages of their group work.

In terms of the *intensity* of these salient aspects in their group work, six of them (marked in green in Table 6.6) were initially shared by all or most of the participants and then shared by only two of the participants or even could be merely noted from one participant's *cultural realities*. Four of them (marked in red in Table 6.6) were always shared by two or all of the participants from the beginning to the end. One salient aspect (marked in black in Table 6.6) was merely noted from one participant's *cultural realities*. The remaining two salient aspects fluctuated (marked in blue in Table 6.6). At certain stages, they were shared by all or two participants while, for the other stages, they were merely noted from one participant's *cultural realities*.

As I have interpreted, a trajectory in relation to the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in Alleva *et al.'s* group can be depicted in three stages where its salient aspects emerged and evolved as the Table 6.6 shows.

3.5 The Cultural-Making Process towards Cohesiveness in Fanchon's Group

Fanchon worked in a group where I identified four stages (see: Section 4.4.4.5 in Chapter 5) according to Fanchon's self-thematisation regarding her entire group work experience. The following Table 6.7 (on the next page) represents the trajectory of the cultural-making process in her group work.

The Cultural-Making Process (Fanchon)

Salient aspects at stage 1	Salient aspects at stage 2	Salient aspects at stage 3	Salient aspects at stage 4
The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere		
Reflection on Personal Performance	Reflection on Personal Performance	Reflection on Personal Performance	
Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members		
Hierarchy amongst the Group Members	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members	
(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members		
	Concerns of Fairness	Concerns of Fairness	
		Potential Challenges in This Group Work	
A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work	
	Valuing the Group Work Outcome	Valuing the Group Work Outcome	Valuing the Group Work Outcome
Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work			

Table 6.7

As shown in Table 6.7, the cultural-making process was initiated by 7 salient aspects (stage 1), which was reformed by 8 salient aspects (stage 2) and then developed to 6 salient aspects (stage 3) and eventually only one salient aspect could be noted (stage 4).

Particularly speaking, across the 4 stages of her group work, seven salient aspects (highlighted in pink in Table 6.7) disappeared in the late stages. Two salient aspects (highlighted in light green in Table 6.7) only emerged in the second and/or third stage of her group work. One salient aspect (highlighted in yellow in Table 6.7) emerged since the second stage.

As I pointed out before, the *intensity* of each salient aspect is not applicable in Fanchon's group, therefore, no description is carried out here.

As I have interpreted, a trajectory in relation to the cultural-making process in Fanchon's group can be depicted in four stages where its salient aspects emerged and evolved as the Table 6.7 shows.

After describing the trajectories of cultural-making processes in the five student groups, I compared them in order to see whether it is possible to identify some commonalities and patterns, which could help me to further understand how the process of cultural-making developed in student group work. They are reported in the next section of this chapter.

4. Commonality and Patterns in the Trajectories of Cultural-Making Processes in Student Group Work

Having examined all the five student groups in detail regarding their cultural-making processes, in this section, through a comparison of the salient aspects identified in the five trajectories of cultural-making processes in student group work, I identify a commonality (discussed in Section 4.1) regarding the presence of the salient aspects within every stage of each student group work. Furthermore, I identified some patterns regarding the development of the salient aspects across different stages in each student group work (discussed in Section 4.2).

4.1 Unfolding the Complexity in the Trajectories of Cultural-Making Processes

Firstly, I compared every single stage across all the five student groups in terms of their cultural-making processes. As can be seen, nearly all the stages of the five student groups present various salient cultural aspects. The only exception is the fourth stage of Fanchon's group work (see: Table 6.7). I further explain this commonality by taking the first stage of the group constituted by Peder *et al.* (see: Table 6.4) as an example here.

In Peder *et al.*'s group, the external *cultural realities* could be noted within two salient aspects identified in the first stage of the cultural-making process in their group work. The first one is *The Impact of Group Member Diversity* where Peder spontaneously mentioned about their national backgrounds to describe the people who he worked with in the group. It seemed that people's national background functioned as a way to distinguish people in Peder's mind.

> "We are four group members from three different countries, there are two Germans including me, a girl from here, from Scotland and anther one from China" (Peder, Transcript 1).

The second one is the *Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work* where Marrilee believed that collaborating with some 'non-Chinese' could provide her with insightful thoughts which had been missing when she studied in China.

> "When I was studying in China...we have the same thinking style...it's so difficult to find something new...but when I go abroad, I can have some new ideas" (Marrilee, Transcript 1).

This extract shows that Marrilee thought crossing the national boundaries can be a significant attribute of her learning in this university.

I considered the remaining *cultural realities* (See: Table 6.8 below) brought by the participants were their personal ones that showed what they were concerned with at that particular moment. Both the external and personal *cultural realities* drawn on by the four participants' (namely, Peder, Marrilee, Lauralee and Cordey) reflect the conceptual model: *The Cultural-Making Process in Student Group Work* I discussed in the literature review (see: Section 7 in Chapter 3).

The Salient Aspects in the 1st stage of the Peder *et al.*'s Group

Extracts from the corresponding participants' date	The cohesiveness in their group work	The Salient Aspects in the 1st stage of their group work
...it was a kind of nice setting, because also we brought some food and some chocolates (Peder, Transcript 1). ...we were all coming to an agreement or something, coming up with different ideas, it worked very well (Cordey, Transcript 1).	cohesive thinking	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere
…I haven't read it yet, I only started yesterday (Peder, Transcript 1).	[cohesive]6 behaviour	Being stress
…I expected actually, we have to give a presentation but we don't, so I was wrong (Peder, Transcript 1). ...I found I actually felt beforehand, maybe I would have to take the leader a little bit because I am the only native English speaker (Cordey, transcript 1).	cohesive thinking	Reflection on Personal Performance
…Marrilee was a little bit quiet er, but she, she didn't seem to mind (Lauralee, Transcript 1). ...yeah, but I think she [Marrilee] will do a very good job (Peder, Transcript 1). ...however, she, she [Marrilee] proved well, she delivered some	cohesive thinking	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members

6 In the first stage of this group, this behaviour – 'rush preparation' was only noted from Peder's cultural realties.

good ideas as well (Peder, Transcript 1).		
…everybody probably has a different idea about the task and then we were try to have, er to put this, these different views together (Lauralee, Transcript 1). …every group member has a different idea, every group member has an er, er, finds a different solution (Peder, Transcript 1). ...we all interpreted the questions a little bit differently (Cordey, Transcript 1).	cohesive thinking	The Impact of Group Member Diversity
...actually, they, they did ask me about er, the location...I said yes, it's no problem (Marrilee, Transcript 1). ...She [Marrilee] is also new to the uni, she came in January (Lauralee, Transcript 1). ...But, as a group you have to find a goal in the middle so everybody is happy (Peder, Transcript 1). ...I am not used to, because I don't naturally take the leader these things (Cordey, Transcript 1). ...we trying, we were just trying to come to an agreement on that (Cordey, Transcript 1).	cohesive thinking	Hierarchy Amongst the Group Members
...everybody could say their opinions (Lauralee, Transcript 1). ...but we all worked together equally I think (Cordey, Transcript 1).	cohesive behaviour	
...as was the first time, we worked together of course, we had to, kind of get to know each other a bit, although we know each other already (Peder, Transcript 1).	cohesive thinking	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members

...so you kind of learnt a different side of someone how they worked in a group and that's maybe why I feel a little bit closer to them (Cordey, Transcript 1).		
…I don't know, I don't know why it's, it is called Scotland Adventure limited, does it mean just in Scotland or it can also provide some other services (Marrilee, Transcript 1). ...because I don't have the background, you know I don't have the business background and I don't have the cultural diversity background (Marrilee, Transcript 1). ...the problem is that we had learnt about er about intercultural issues last trimester, and she [Marrilee] didn't and er, and also she doesn't have any HRM knowledge (Lauralee, Transcript 1) ....she [Marrilee] didn't have that first course, so, we, I had a feeling we are more into the er, subject (Peder, Transcript 1). ...it seems sometimes a bit more difficult for her to follow because we were all speaking quite fast (Peder, Transcript 1).	cohesive thinking	Potential Challenges in This Group Work
...an another way is, sometimes, maybe everyone has difficulties in understanding this topic but we can discuss (Marrilee, Transcript 1). ...we try to include her and she was very silent but we try to ask her questions like, do you agree or do you have any more thoughts on this issue and she said yeah just listen for now (Lauralee, Transcript 1). ...we are all sensitive, I would say. Intercultrually, we tolerate and accept differences (Peder, Transcript 1).	cohesive thinking and behaviour	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work

...we kind of, we presented each of our kind of skills...just providing all our different skills that we can bring (Cordey, Transcript 1).		
...after we discussed for a while, and we think er, we know what can we do (Marrilee, Transcript 1). ...they can inspire your potential abilities and maybe you can give more details and more ideas...I think, it was really helpful for me (Marrilee, Transcript 1). …It was our first group meeting, and I thought it was, it went quite well overall (Lauralee, Transcript 1). ...we now know something about diversity and intercultural issues so, we learnt from the module leader and we have to respect other people's opinions and stuff like that, so I think it does help (Lauralee, Transcript 1). ...I thought it went quite well (Cordey, transcript 1).	cohesive thinking	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work

Table 6.8

Given that various salient aspects could be identified from nearly all the stages in the 5 student groups, thus, this example has evidenced that culture in student group does emerge after participants' *cultural realities* intermingled and it is always constituted by many salient aspects. Culture thus is not monolithic since its emergence (Holliday, 2011; 2013). A single salient aspect could not represent what a culture might be because, nearly at every stage of the five student groups, the cultural-making process is constituted by many different salient aspects. From this perspective, it seems rather limiting when people describe a culture by reducing and narrowing it down to some value-oriented concepts (e.g. collectivism, individualism) without attempting to explore and understand its complex aspects, which is discussed in Chapter 3.

4.2 Unfolding the Fluidity in the Trajectories of Cultural-Making Processes

After noticing the commonality regarding the presence of the salient aspects identified in the cultural-making processes, I further compare the *distribution* of these salient aspects across the five trajectories of cultural-making processes in student group work. It is not difficult to see that the *distribution* of these salient aspects could be categorised into five patterns.

(1) Some salient aspects identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes initially emerged and then disappeared in student group work (highlighted in pink in Tables 6.3; 6.6 and 6.7);

(2) Some salient aspects identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes did not emerge until a late stage in student group work (highlighted in yellow in Tables 6.3; 6.4; 6.5 and 6.7).

(3) Some salient aspects identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes only emerged in the middle stages in student group work (highlighted in light green in Tables 6.4; 6.5 and 6.7).

(4) Some salient aspects identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes emerged, disappeared and re-emerged again (highlighted in grey in Tables 6.5 and 6.6)

(5) The salient aspects identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes could not be noted throughout the entire period of student group work (blank spaces in Table 6.7).

Furthermore, when I compare the *intensity* of these salient aspects across the first four trajectories of the cultural-making processes in student group work (Fanchon's group is not applicable), another five patterns can be noted.

a. A salient aspect identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is always shared by the same number of participants (marked in red in Tables 6.3; 6.4; 6.5 and 6.6);

b. A salient aspect identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is noted from a single participant's *cultural realities* (marked in black in Tables 6.3; 6.6 and 6.7);

c. A salient aspect identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is shared by fewer and fewer participants (marked in green in Tables 6.3 and 6.6);

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d. A salient aspect identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is shared by more and more participants (marked in brown in Table 6.5);

e. A salient aspect identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes fluctuates, which means that, in some stages, it is shared by some participants, but, in the other stages, it is merely noted from a single participant's *cultural realities* (marked in blue in Tables 6.3; 6.4; 6.5 and 6.6).

I interpreted five patterns respectively regarding the *distribution* and *intensity* of these salient aspects, which provide evidence from two perspectives to support the argument that culture is fluid, which resonates with the discussion in the literature that culture is floating, fluid and it shapes and reshapes on the go (Dervin, 2011; Holliday, 2016). In other words, what could be taken into account as part of culture is always changing rather than fixed or definite. I explain this in detail in the remaining part of this section.

4.2.1 Dynamics Reflected in the *Distribution* of the Salient Aspect

With respect to the *distribution* of the salient aspects identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes, I identified five patterns and present one illustrative example here to elaborate one of the patterns. This example is also taken from the group constituted by Peder *et al.*

The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work as a salient aspect identified in the cultural-making process of Peder *et al.*'s group did not emerge in the initial stage until the second stage where both Peder and Lauralee talked about the impact of the group size on the group performance.

Peder thought the number of group members did make a difference on the group work outcome, like what he said.

> "We are four people, some groups are consisted five people...I don't know if it's an advantage being five people because then you do have five different opinions, so emm, but on the other hand, four people means more work for each person" (Peder, Transcript 2).

Lauralee who worked with Peder in the same group work thought the more group members they had, the more creativities they might have for their group work.

"...so maybe also because it's more creative and you can, emm, er, yeah, add more information when you are more people" (Lauralee, Transcript 3).

Interestingly, as the group work progressed, merely Peder continued generating the idea that the group members had impact on their group work. He thought not only the group size had an impact on their group work performance but also the gender had an influence as well.

"…the girls were a little bit, er worried about that, er, if we are under right track, but actually we, we, I think Cordey in particular, but most of us didn't say any" (Peder, Transcript 4).

"…and it was not a lot, I mean 3,000 words, is not a lot for four people" (Peder, Transcript 5).

Therefore, this salient aspect can be identified at the third and fourth stages of the cultural-making process in their group work. When the group work approached the end, none of the participants (i.e. Peder, Marrilee, Lauralee and Cordey) talked about the group size or gender. As a consequence, this salient aspect was not there anymore in the last stage of their group work.

As the above example illustrates, all the patterns show that what constitutes a culture somehow is not predictable because the emergence of an identifiable salient aspect in the cultural-making process is not fixed. It could be in one of the five ways (identified as the five patterns). To put it another way, the trajectory of the cultural-making process in student group work thus cannot be static as its salient aspects are fluid.

4.2.2 Dynamics Reflected in the *Intensity* of the Salient Aspects

As for the *intensity* of the salient aspects identified in the trajectories of cultural-making processes, five patterns have been identified as well. Taking the same reporting strategy, I provide an illustrative example here to detail one of the patterns. This example is taken from the group constituted by Nerissa *et al*. In their group, a salient aspect – *Valuing the Group Work Outcome* – was gradually shared by more and more participants in the cultural-making process towards their group cohesiveness.

Particularly speaking, in the initial stage of their group work, it was merely explored by Warde who expected for a good outcome by saying:

"Hopefully, we can work out by the end of this semester and have a, yeah, have an excellent training session, and also did a fantastic job on the group report" (Warde, Transcript 1).

When this group work moved on to the second stage, the same salient aspect was merely explored from Nerissa who believed that they did well, which implies that the outcome should be good.

"I am optimistic that we would do er, a good job" (Nerissa, Transcript 3).

When they came to the third stage of the group work, this salient aspect was only explored from Jacquette who believed that they would do a good job.

"We still have until Friday, just to rehearse, to edited the draft, so, it's already standing, so I guess, we are quite ok" (Jacquette, Transcript 4).

Interestingly, for the following stage, this salient aspect could not be explored from any of the participants. However, when their group work approached the last stage, all the three participants shared this salient aspect when they received the feedback and mark for the group work.

Nerissa was happy with the grade they received by saying that:

"Well, I get the results, which I found it was ok I think, the grade was ok as well, it was really nice, really great" (Nerissa, Transcript 9).

The same happiness or satisfaction regarding the grade can also be sensed from Warde:

"Actually at first, first sight, we saw the result…which is D1, we were areally pleased to see that mark… it's so right, I mean, it makes not that big difference between D1 and D3, because they are all D, distinction" (Warde, Transcript 8).

Being slightly disappointed, Jacquette thought their grade was not as high as the other groups but she still thought it was a good mark, which indicates her satisfaction.

"We still got distinction grade, so that was good, but all the other groups had D3, so, to be honest, I was really shocked, and er, I started to wonder what, er, what we didn't do so, so well, as we are the only group own that grade" (Jacquette, Transcript 7).

Like this example, all the patterns show different ways regarding the changes of the *intensity* regarding the salient aspects identified in the cultural-making processes of the five student groups. These changes illustrate the strength of

every salient aspect that is identified in the cultural-making process across the different stages of a student group. If the strength of a specific salient aspect cannot be stable but dynamic, nor could be the culture in student group work.

In addition, I realise that if a salient aspect was merely noted from a single participant's *cultural realities* in their group work, this salient aspect more likely disappeared. In other words, I consider that it could be a 'less strong' salient aspect that constitutes part of the culture in student group work. For instance, the three salient aspects (i.e. *The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere*, *Being Stressed* and *The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work*) were merely noted from Giffie in her group work and they all disappeared after the first or third stage in her group work. Therefore, there is no need to mention that the majority of the salient aspects in Fanchon's group eventually disappeared. That is to say, the duration of a salient aspect could be possibly related to the degree of how many participants shared it.

5. Further Development of the Conceptual Model of Cultural-Making Process

The findings I report in this chapter are about the trajectories regarding the cultural-making processes in the five student groups provide me with evidence to revisit the conceptual model I conceived in the literature review (see: Chapter 3). The patterns I identified from the data and reported in this chapter enrich my understanding of the cultural-making process in student group work. This understanding needs to be incorporated into the conceptual model. Therefore, I refine the original conceptual model and suggest a fine-turned version (see: Diagram 6.1 on the next page).

The Cultural-Making Process in Student Group Work (Fine-tuned Version)

The Cultural-Making Process towards Group Cohesiveness

Salient Aspect of culture (1)

Salient Aspect of culture (2)

Salient Aspect of culture (3)

Salient Aspect of culture (4)

Salient Aspect of culture (5)

... ...

Cohesive emotion

Cohesive behaviour

Cohesive thinking

Student group work as a particular cultural arena
(Holliday, 2011; 2013)

Diagram 6.1

In Diagram 6.1, the different shapes (e.g. triangles, rectangles, circles) represent different salient aspects that can be identified in the process of cultural-making. The presence and absence of the shapes represent the *distribution* of the salient aspects, for example, a salient aspect could always be there (blue) or a salient aspect only exists in a certain stage (red).

The changes of colour across an identical shape represent the changes of the *intensity* of a salient aspect, for instance, dark orange to light orange (*intensity* becomes weaker and weaker) or light brown to dark brown (*intensity* becomes stronger and stronger).

In addition to that, these salient aspects could be the cohesive thinking, behaviours or emotions that develop in student group work as the *cultural arena.*

This fine-tuned version of the conceptual model presents further complexities about the cultural-making process in every particular moment in student group work. In particular, (1) culture in student group work be constituted by many aspects and is therefore a mélange (rather than being monolithic); (2) The dynamics in the process of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness can be reflected in the *distribution* and *intensity* of its salient aspects.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reported the trajectory with respect to the cultural-making process in each student group work by discussing the *distribution* and *intensity* of the salient aspects I identified.

After having synthesised the five trajectories of cultural-making processes in student group work, I concluded that the complexity of culture can be revealed from its various salient aspects that are presented at every single stage of student group work. In addition, the fluid attribute of culture is manifested by tracing the *distribution* and *intensity* of its salient aspects across different stages of student group work.

These findings have enabled me to enrich the conceptual model vis-à-vis the cultural-making process in student group work I developed on the basis of the

literature review. The fine-tuned version of it reflects the complexity and fluidity of culture in student group work in detail.

Therefore, this fine-tuned version of the conceptual model has answered the first research question which is about the patterns regarding the trajectory of the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in student group work.

Chapter Seven

Trajectories of Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

1. Introduction

In Chapter 6, the trajectories of cultural-making processes towards cohesiveness in student groups are reported, which reveals that culture in student group work is complex through the discussion of the *distribution* and *intensity* of its salient aspects I identified. In this chapter, I report the findings regarding the trajectories of individual group member's acculturation processes in group work, which answers the second research question of this study.

It begins with the descriptions and explanations of the key aspects of acculturation I identified from the participants' salient *cultural realities* with respect to their group work experiences, and present three trends (i.e. *replacing, enriching and maintaining*) in which participants' experiences seemed to unfold in relation to these aspects. Next, I describe the participants' individual acculturation trajectories by synthesising the trends vis-à-vis their various key aspects of acculturation. I categorise their trajectories into four types, namely, *Stable, Replacing, Enriching and Blending*.

In the last part of this chapter, I revisit the conceptual model (see: Section 7 in Chapter 4) I adopted for my data exploration and discuss how it is further enriched by the results from my data interpretation, particularly from the perspective of acculturation. Consequently, a fine-tuned conceptual model regarding personal acculturation in student group work is suggested, which contributes to knowledge in terms of understanding personal acculturation from an anti-essentialist perspective.

2. An Overview of the Key Aspects of Acculturation Identified from Participants' Salient *Cultural Realities*

Following the definition of acculturation that I synthesised after reviewing the literature (see: Section 5 in Chapter 4), I traced the participants' acculturation trajectories by focusing on the changes of their *cultural realities* that appeared salient to me. On the one hand, the participants' salient *cultural realities* can be

further grouped into several aspects in terms of their thematic connections (see: Section 4.4.3.3 in Chapter 5). On the other hand, the changes of these salient *cultural realities* also indicate three different trends vis-à-vis the participants' key aspects of acculturation, namely, *replacing*, *maintaining* and *enriching*.

In the first part of this section, I explain the meaning of each trend vis-à-vis the participants' key aspects of acculturation and then, in the second part, I further discuss the key aspects of acculturation that have been identified from each participant's salient *cultural realities*.

2.1 Trends vis-à-vis the Participants' Key Aspects of Acculturation

Some participants seemed to adopt certain 'new perceptions, views or behaviours', which replace corresponding ones noted in their earlier experiences. For instance, one of Giifie's key aspects of acculturation regarding the group members' relationship shows such a *replacing* trend.

In the early stage of Giffie's group work, Giifie said that:

> "In my previous studies, I always worked with my good friends…it was easy to work with friends and I never experienced group work in a positive way when I forced to work with strangers" (Giffie, Transcript 1) and "I don't know them" (Giffie, Transcript 1).

From what she said, I can sense that she was concerned about working with 'strangers' in this group because, in her eyes, none of the rest of the group members was her friends yet at that stage. Giffie's previous group work experiences seemed to lead her to assume that this would not be a pleasant experience because she had to work with 'strangers'. As the group processed, she interpreted their relationship in a different way.

> "If you get to know the person, closer, you try to look deep and I think that's good…changed a bit" (Giffie, Transcript 3).

I consider that Giffie changed her initial *cultural reality* about 'get used to working with friends' to another *cultural reality* 'acquaintance with group members'. Giffie no longer thought the other group members as 'strangers' to her and admitted that they had become closer. Eventually, when the group work approached the end, Giffie said:

> "Finally, we are now friends" (Transcript 6, Giffie).

From this statement, I saw that Giffie's *cultural reality* replaced again because she defined the relationship between them as friends, which is much closer and more intimate than what she described in the middle of their group work in terms of their relationship. Thus, I consider that a key aspect of Giffie's acculturation can be her understanding of the relationship between herself and the group members.

Sometimes, no evidence can be noted as to participants' efforts to amend their existing views, and yet, their views were presented with additional complexity as enriched by their new experiences. Peder's perception of group harmony is an illustrative example of this *enriching* trend. Throughout the group work process, Peder felt that the group discussions between themselves were always carried out in a harmonious way. The group members respected each other and they were polite and indirect, like what he said:

> "Harmony, because I have the feeling we treated each other with respect…we were quite indirect…good combination in terms of we are four people…all the characters within the group were not looking for troubles" (Transcript 5, Peder).

As their group work processed, Peder's perception of group harmony retained because he described a kind of harmony never seemed to disappear.

> "We were all very diplomatic in a way so there was never an issue really bothered from the beginning" (Transcript 6, Peder).

However, in the later stage of the group work, Peder enriched his thoughts about the sense of harmony in terms of politeness and indirectness.

> "I like directness because it just tells you where you are and you have a better understanding of what went wrong…but on the other hand, it can be very negative, especially when it's rude" (Transcript 5, Peder).

From these extracts, I could see that Peder started to critically think about the group harmony. On the one hand, he did not change the idea that group members needed to maintain it by the means of showing their amicable personalities that would be compatible with the individual differences. On the other hand, he thought group harmony might not be always helpful. People maintained it simply for the sake of avoiding negativity or offence to others. However, the efficiency and quality of group work might be affected. From what Peder said, I could interpret that, because of the indirectness and politeness,

Peder might not receive the feedback as constructive and useful as he had thought. In this sense, I consider Peder's perception of group harmony to be enriched through this group work, because he started to critically think about the purpose for the group members to maintain harmony and question what roles group harmony played in group work.

The third salient trend I noted is the absence of change. The participants' views and behaviours remained stable over time. I illustrate this *maintaining* trend through Nerissa's example. The respect, equality and politeness Nerissa sensed in this group seemed to be a big contrast to her previous group work experiences, which was repeatedly mentioned by herself, for instance,

> "All people in the group were really cooperative…everybody cooperated…everybody's opinion was taken into consideration…there was no misrespect" (Transcript 1, Nerissa).

Nerissa continued to compare this group work experience with what she had in the previous trimester in order to emphasise that she appreciated the respect, quality and politeness in this group work. That is to say, she did not change her thoughts.

> "One person was really authoritative…I even couldn't say my opinions…that was my past experience of my first semester, on this semester, I am really pleased and then I am really happy with the group" (Transcript 2, Nerissa).

As can be seen, during her previous group work, she had been somehow treated unequally, which did not happen in this group. On the contrary, Nerissa was respected and supported by the rest group members all the time.

> "They were really supportive of every group member" (Transcript 2, Nerissa).

I interpreted the respect and support received by Nerissa could be an important reason for her to be delighted to work with others in this group. Nerissa even commented in the later stage that this group work was the best one she ever participated.

> "I think it has been the best...I felt really satisfied with my group, I think that we are going well" (Transcript 5, Nerissa).

She maintained the perception that this group was nice even if some group members became anxious and controlling when they discussed the intercultural training activity (a required task) for their group work.

> "It was just the anxiety of the moment, because it's really nice person" (Transcript 8, Nerissa).

From the starting point until the completion of group work, Nerissa maintained her perception that all the group members she worked with were nice, respectful and supportive. She was delighted and pleased to work with others as a group.

2.2 Discussion of the Participants' Key Aspects of Acculturation

In this part of Section 2, I discuss the participants' key aspects of acculturation identified against the three trends explained above. According to the content of these key aspects of acculturation, I organised them into three main groups, namely 'similar', 'conflicting' and 'unique', which are discussed from Section 2.2.1 to Section 2.2.3.

2.2.1 Participants' 'Similar' Key Aspects of Acculturation

Based on the interpretations of the participants' various cultural realities, 7 'similar' key aspects of acculturation from all the participants have been identified, which are reported from Section 2.2.1.1 to Section 2.2.1.7.

2.2.1.1 'Similar' Aspects: Impact of Individual Differences

These aspects apply to the cases of Peder, Lauralee, Nerissa and Jacquette. Both of Peder and Jacquette changed their ideas about the impact of individual differences on their group work. Nerissa enriched this key aspect of acculturation. Lauralee maintained her ideas for the impact of individual differences.

When the group work started, Peder showed his dichotomised view on the individual differences by saying:

> "Four different complex characters and cultural backgrounds…on the one hand the difficulty…on the other hand benefits…a lot of different perspectives" (Peder, Transcript 1).

From which, I can sense that Peder to some extent welcomed the individual differences in group work and treated it as a kind of resource.

Differently, in the beginning of Jacquette's group work, she did not seem to welcome the individual differences when they discussed the group work. Jacquette said:

"We got the kind of feeling that she has a different thinking as well" (Jacquette, Transcript 1) and "I kind of noticed there were a few gaps of knowledge…we have to interrupt from time to time to let her know" (Jacquette, Transcript 2).

To Jacquette, the knowledge gap between that member and the rest of them was the reason for that member to think differently, which made additional explanations necessary in order to let that member think in the same direction as what they thought. Otherwise, it was not efficient for a group discussion.

As the group work processed, Peder changed his dichotomised view on the individual differences when he was experiencing the challenges of incorporating different group members' ideas into their joint-report. He said:

"It's hard to put it all together in a way…four different persons with different opinions…do group work [report] is more difficult than do a group presentation" (Peder, Transcript 4).

Thus, I can see that Peder at that moment no longer welcomed the individual differences and thought it more negatively than what he had thought before.

In Jacquette's group, she gradually felt that all the group members became more and more similar and no different voices could be heard. She did not like this situation either and said:

"I think the entire group has a kind of similar thinking…it's better to have a few different ideas…not too similar" (Jacquette, Transcript 3).

From which I see that Jacquette changed her view from unwelcoming different ideas to expecting different ideas in group work. It seems that, as the group work went, Jacquette did not worry about the efficiency of group discussion but started to consider missing an advantage of group work: collecting diverse ideas or insights from each other.

Unlike Peder or Jacquette, Lauralee did not change her views on this aspect throughout the group work. For Lauralee, she always emphasised the importance of the human resources-related knowledge in writing the joint-report, which seemed not to be fully agreed by the rest members. She attempted to persuade the rest members because she believed the others might not on the right track.

"It's difficult for me to try and take the HRM [human resources management] out my head because that's what I learnt before… I tried to upload my document

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and make them read it, so maybe they can understand it better next time…I think they are going sometimes in the wrong direction…I don't want to go completely off the right direction" (Lauralee, Transcript 2)

As the group wok processed, Lauralee had to compromise when the rest suggested her getting rid of her "human resources-oriented mind" and did not do as she assumed what it should be. However, Lauralee did not change her opinion as she said at the end of the group work:

"There is so much to say about diversity management…why do we have to do it like that…I wish it would be different…when I realised that it's not going to be what I expected…I just have to live up with it, I can't change anything" (Lauralee, Transcript 4).

Individual differences to Lauralee seems to be why the others could not agree with her point in this group work. She has not managed to get out of her assumption that human resources-related knowledge was very important for this group work. More than that, because of this assumption, she seemed to judge others.

The last participant who enriched this key aspect of acculturation is Nerissa. She realised the individual differences throughout the group work, which became a kind of phenomenon to help her consider two related issues: personal adjustment or compromise and group size. Nerissa said:

"But since we are here, we have to adjust our personalities…so we can fit in the group… you have to accept that another person has another opinion and view…so you have to compromise" (Nerissa, Transcript 4).

As for the group size, she thought that a big group with more members would be less possible to have conflicts because some people had to make compromises. By contrast, the small size group (e.g. two or three group members) was easy to have a kind of "confrontation".

2.2.1.2 'Similar' Aspects: Perceptions of Group Harmony

These aspects apply to the cases of Peder, Nerissa and Jacquette. Throughout the group work, both Peder and Nerissa enriched their understanding of group harmony. They commented that all the group members were very nice and tried to be as respectful and polite as they could. Harmony was there all the time.

> "Harmony, because I have the feeling we treated each other with respect…we were quite indirect…good combination in terms of we are four people…all the characters within the group were not looking for troubles" (Peder, Transcript 5).

> "All people in the group were really cooperative…everybody cooperated…everybody's opinion was taken into consideration…there was no misrespect" (Nerissa, Transcript 1).

Apart from simply thanking all their group members who spent efforts to maintain the group harmony, they both started to consider what impact of group harmony would be. They felt, sometimes, the group members did not directly point out what the problems could be or hide their genuine comments for the sake of keeping a harmonious, amicable and friendly interpersonal communication in group work.

> "I like directness because it just tells you where you are and you have a better understanding of what went wrong…but on the other hand, it can be very negative, especially when it's rude" (Peder, Transcript 5).

> "It's just a general feeling…everybody tried to be too nice, they don't say what they really feel…but in that way…your opinions are hidden…so I tried sometimes to tell people please tell me freely what you want or what you prefer" (Nerissa, Transcript 4).

Thus, group harmony might not that helpful in the group work because it might impede the progress or improvement of the group work outcome. From their statements, I realise that Peder and Nerissa started to consider how to balance the two purposes, namely, maintain group harmony and point out the issues, during group work.

Differently, Jacquette seemed mainly remained her understanding in relation to the group harmony. She was simply appreciating the harmony in her group from the beginning to the end. That is why this key aspect of acculturation did not change for her.

> "It was really nice…it was friendly from the very beginning because of low hierarchy" (Transcript 4, Jacquette) and "The group work was nice… overall it was very nice" (Transcript 7, Jacquette).

2.2.1.3 'Similar' Aspects: Views on Other Group Members' Performances

These aspects apply to eight participants. More than half of them maintained their views on other group members' performances while some enriched their understandings.

Peder, Cordey and Lauralee who worked in a group all thought of Marrilee's performances throughout their group work. They recognised that Marrilee was in an "unfavourable position" because she had neither background knowledge nor familiarity of studying in the UK. As Peder said.

> "[Marrilee] is very new to the system here in the UK, how to work…didn't have that first course…I had a feeling we are more into the subject" (Peder, Transcript 1).

Marrilee's "unfavourable position" led Lauralee to assume that the rest group members had to cover her part.

> "I think, in the end, yeah, help [Marrilee] a lot" (Lauralee, Transcript 2).

Unlike Lauralee, Peder took this "unfavourable position" to account for Marrilee's lesser involvement during the group work as well as the moment when Marrilee did not provide what the other group members had expected for their joint-report.

As they continued doing this group work, Coredy and Lauralee were not sure what they could do to change such a situation or without possibly hurting Marrilee.

> "I don't know how to tell it to someone without being rude…just didn't speak about Marrilee's part again" (Lauralee, Transcript 4).

Particularly speaking, Cordey who shared the responsibilities for a task was disappointed about Marrilee's performance and even felt annoyed when Marrilee did not tell the group about her concerns regarding a task allocated to her.

> "Marrile was meant to help me with [that part], but she didn't" (Cordey, Transcript 3).

Cordey's disappointment of Marrilee's group work performance continued and in the late stage of their group work, Cordey still described like:

> "I don't know why [Marrilee] hadn't asked us anything beforehand, I was a bit annoyed that [Marrilee] waited until the meeting to say" (Cordey, Transcript 5).

However, Marrilee's "unfavourable position" let Peder appreciate the efforts she put into this group work.

> "Marrilee…contributes greatly some good ideas…she doesn't share the same background…a bit more difficult…she did a lot of reading and verbally she did positive contribution" (Peder, Transcript 3).

In the meantime, Marrilee's apology for her helpless in the group meetings seemed to make Peder and Cordey feel sorry for her.

> "I thought a little bit sad at the end of the meeting because Marrilee said she felt a little bit helpless" (Transcript 3, Cordey).

Furthermore, Peder started to empathise with Marrilee and tried to console her in person.

> "We felt sorry about it…it's not a perfect situation… I will talk to her and try to cheer her up…she should not worry if she can't contribute so much…we understand" (Peder, Transcript 4).

While Cordey started to consider how to include people while doing group work because she said

> "What I've learnt from it…I think I have to try hard to include everyone" (Cordey, Transcript 5).

Nevertheless, Lauralee did not change much regarding her understanding of Marrilee's performance because she said in the end.

> "I don't know what to give her. I don't know what she could have done" (Transcript 7, Lauralee).

I could see Peder attempted to understand and empathise with Marrilee during the group work. When necessary, he did console Marrilee. As for Cordey, although she was not satisfied with Marrilee's performance, this experience seemed to be a lesson for Cordey to consider how to include group members during group work. By contrast, Lauralee seemed to remain her thinking about Marrilee's performance.

In another group where Alleva, Elmore, Filmer, Kelila and Shari worked together, they also thought about some particular group members' performances.

In the middle of the group work, Alleva started to shape the impression that Filmer and Elmore were not willing to shorten or condense their part for the group presentation. Such a view was maintained. The mark of their group presentation was taken by Alleva to support her perception of these two group members' performances.

> "[Elmore and Filmer] were at the same level of detachment for the beginning to the end and I think that affected our group work…[Elmore and Filmer] have not done much [condense their parts] (Alleva, Transcript 5).

At the same time, Elmore, Kelila and Shari maintained their perceptions of Alleva's performance throughout the group work.

Through this group work, Elmore and Kelila sensed that Alleva was a strongly opinionated person who sometimes made them feel uncomfortable during the group discussions.

In the beginning of their group work, Kelila had an idea about Alleva's personality by saying that:

> "[Alleva] will say 'why' until you say ok let's do it…this person is saying every single idea…my credit is not really there" (Kelila, Transcript 1).

That could be a reason why when Alleva was absent for the group meetings in the middle stage, Kelila would feel more relieved.

> "[Alleva] wasn't present but we felt like we were moving a little bit fast…we seem to agree with all our ideas…it sounds really mean" (Kelila, Transcript 2).

Elmore, another member in their group, started to shape the similar idea like what Kelila had in the middle of their group work.

> "[Alleva] is a kind of person that have really strong opinions, so that was not really easy for us…I am uncomfortable with that member [Alleva]" (Elmore, Transcript 4).

When their group work approached the time when group members desperately wanted to complete it, Kelila felt that Alleva seemed to be no longer strongly

opinionated and their discussions went well. She started to consider it was possible to collaborate with Alleva.

"After yesterday's meeting, I think everyone gets along with the group fine…a couple of meetings back, I would say no, I personally don't get along well with [Alleva] 100%" (Kelila, Transcript 3).

However, Kelila eventually considered that she was unwilling to work with a person like Alleva when she experienced her strongly opinionated personality again during the very end when Alleva insisted that it was not necessary to change a mistake in their slides.

"I shouldn't work with people like…they don't like listening to any other people's opinions if they are different to your opinions" (Kelila, Transcript 6).

Shari admitted that Alleva was a strongly opinionated person, but she thought a group needed such an out-spoken person as a leader and what Alleva performed during the group work met Shari's expectation. Thus, she maintained her perception of Alleva as well.

"That person kind of basically very out-spoken and strong opinionated, which is fine because we need that kind of leadership" (Shari, Transcript 1).

The last participant who presented this key aspect of acculturation is Warde. He admitted that he had the stereotype about "German group members" that they were supposed to pay attention to all the details. He shaped this stereotype through his previous group work experience. However, he started to question this stereotype when worked in this group.

"From last trimester…both of the German girls are really stick to the details…but for those…I am with for this semester, they totally different…they are not that strict to those details at all" (Warde, Transcript 4).

Although he seemed to be aware of his stereotype, when he saw that the "German group members" checked the details for the references etc. in their joint-report, he still felt bored and lost patience. He resorted to the national cultural differences and stereotypes to explain this situation.

"I have come from the northeast part of China, we really don't pay that much attention to the details even for the business or relationship…totally opposite way of maybe Germany. That's why made me really bored" (Warde, Transcript 5).

However, Warde started to appreciate the "German" group members' scrutiny and appreciated the scrutiny given by them. Warde thought they were necessary and important for the sake of a good mark.

> "We do realise how important that we have two group members from Germany because they really strict, a lot of patience to check all the details" (Warde, Transcript 5).

I consider that Warde did not fully abandon his stereotype regarding "Germans" because he still resorted to this stereotype to explain the phenomenon. However, he enriched his understanding and started to appreciate them. In other words, his stereotype was shifted from a negative view towards a positive view.

2.2.1.4 'Similar' Aspects: Helping Other Group Members

These aspects apply to the cases of Peder and Kelila. They were both happy and willing to help other group members when they felt necessary. Particularly, Peder considered it was a purpose of doing group work.

> "[Cordey] does know what to include how to start [her part]…then I realised ok, that's a good point where we can show some team effort" (Peder, Transcript 3).

It was through helping Cordey that Peder gradually enriched his understanding about offering help in group work, which may add the confusion to both sides. He realised that group members provided different opinions to Cordey because they were not sure what could be the "right" way of doing it. Those suggestions then confused Cordey as well.

> "It was problematic, we didn't know how to cut down Cordey's part…she didn't know exactly what was important for a report...we have different opinions in it" (Peder, Transcript 4).

Furthermore, Peder generated his empathy to Cordey when he saw she was suffering from the confusion and complexity in terms of her part for this joint-report.

> "I think she has the most difficult task …like for me…more easy, straightforward what to do and for her it was rather difficult" (Peder, Transcript 4).

Slightly different from Cordey who indeed needed some help, Kelila helped Elmore not because she doubted about Elmore's competence for this group work or Elmore was confused but because Kelila felt that Elmore needed

someone else's encouragement to build up her own confidence while doing this group work.

> "I think her confidence has built up, but she is still not confident enough" (Kelila, Transcript 1).

Kelila's motive to help Elmore was further explained by herself later on.

> "It didn't really need that many corrections because [Elmore] was worrying for no reason, she is usually good" (Kelila, Transcript 4).

2.2.1.5 'Similar' Aspects: Participants' Motivation

Lauralee and Warde talked about their motivations for this group work. Lauralee's motivation for this group work declined as it went. Initially, she described herself as super-motivated because this group work met her expectation.

> "The first time I read the task…it was really cool and that's exactly what I want to do" (Lauralee, Transcript 2).

Lauralee's motivation for doing this group work was again emphasised by herself even in the middle stage.

> "I am super motivated, so I was motivated when I came into the first meeting" (Lauralee, Transcript 4).

However, after the second group meeting, her motivation decreased and she became reluctant to make effort for this group work. Two main reasons might be related to her reluctance. First of all, Lauralee thought this group work was not progressing in a way as she expected. In other words, other group members did not interpret this group work as she did.

> "The second week potentially went on to the next subject and I thought managing cultural diversity in the workplace is something else" (Lauralee, Transcript 4).

In addition to that, the unfairness she sensed in this group work further decrease her motivation and willingness to make contributions, which I discussed in her key aspect of acculturation regarding the perception of fairness (see: Section 2.2.2.1).

Differently from Lauralee, Warde's motivation seemed to be closely linked to whether the group work was assessed or not. When he was involved in the first

group task: writing a joint-report, he tried to build the connections between different modules from which I could see his motivation and effort. However, once they came to the second part of the group work, which was ungraded, Warde immediately lost his interest and motivation. He decided to play a role of a bystander who made the least effort.

> "Since it won't be marked, I mean we don't wanna spend more time on it" (Warde, Transcript 6).

Warde further confirmed his disinterest in the ungraded part of their group work in the final stage:

> "I was feeling like a bystander…since it won't be marked…I just want to let the training session finish as soon as possible" (Warde, Transcript 7).

Thus, Lauralee's motivation changed after the second group meeting and became less proactive while Warde maintained his "zero motivation" since they started the second part of the group work.

2.2.1.6 'Similar' Aspects: Gratitude to Other Group Members

Marrilee and Cordey expressed their gratitude to other group members during their group work. They maintained their appreciation and thanks, which they thought were helpful.

Marrilee mainly thanked Peder who showed his empathy and understanding for her "unfavourable position" in this group work.

> "He tried to understand me…he doesn't need to care about my feelings but he cares" (Marrilee, Transcript 4).

Peder's empathy seemed to be a good way of emotional support when Marrilee was upset and felt herself was "not useful" in this group.

> "Maybe this time, I felt better because Peder has already talked with me…it means someone can understand me, can understand my feelings" (Marrilee, Transcript 5).

Cordey was grateful to Lauralee who helped her to overcome the challenges and confusions during the group work when she was working on her part of the joint-report that she was responsible for.

"Lauralee is actually helping me with it and we organised everything to make it more comprehensible…I am very grateful for her helping me with that" (Cordey, Transcript 3).

2.2.1.7 'Similar' Aspects: Having Delivered a "Good" Group Presentation

Alleva, Elmore, Filmer, Kelila and Shari, all of whom worked in the same group, delivered a group presentation together. They all discussed their own views on the delivery of their group presentation and the feedback given by the module leader who presented her view on their group presentation.

After their group presentation, all of them unanimously had a feeling that they had done a good job, which they believed could be told from different "signs", such as the smiles from the markers, group members' fluent and confident talks. Such a positive feeling can be noted from what Elmore said:

"I felt so nervous last time but this time was not as much as the last one…I tried not to read the notes and yeah…the presentation itself went good" (Elmore, Transcript 3).

In addition, Shari was also commenting that she thought they had done a good job.

"It was really logically easy to understand…our theme…it's completely relevant" (Shari, Transcript 4).

When they received the feedback, among the five people, Alleva and Shari took this chance to reflect their delivery and seemed to agree that it was not as good as they thought. Alleva started to realise that they did not pay attention to what could be improved for their group presentation.

"The grade was cut down because of very simple things that we could have done" (Alleva, Transcript 5).

Shari started to consider the impact of group size on the quality of group presentation, although she still believed that they did well.

"I think our group might be too large, because we were five of us…you are kind of searching for more information to put into the presentation, but we need to be more simply…I am still proud of the work that we did" (Shari, Transcript 5).

Therefore, Alleva and Shari might have enriched their understanding in relation to the understanding of their group presentation.

The other three group members were surprised to see the feedback and did not think the feedback reflects what actually they did for this group presentation, which was not fair enough to reflect on their group presentation process.

> "The points remained in the feedback were quite unfair because I don't think that they actually applied to our presentation at all" (Kelila, Transcript 6).

From a different perspective, Filmer thought the feedback was very subjective regarding what is good or not when the module leaders marked their group presentation.

> "Probably, it's very personal, very subjective, I mean how they appreciate our work" (Filmer, Transcript 3).

Hence, for them, they did not change their ideas that they had delivered a good presentation and seemed to "blame" the module leader for giving an unfair mark.

2.2.1.8 A Summary of the 'Similar' Key Aspects of Participants' Acculturation

After reporting the 7 'similar' key aspects of acculturation across all the participants in terms of their content. I draw a table (see: Table 7.1) below to present a summary of these key aspects.

'Similar' Key Aspects of Acculturation across the Participants

Participant	Key aspect of acculturation	Trend vis-à-vis a key aspect of acculturation	'Similar' meanings of these key aspects
Peder	the impact of individual differences on group work	replaced	Participants' ideas about the impact of individual differences on their group work
Lauralee	the impact of individual differences on group work	maintained	
Jacquette	the impact of individual differences on group work	replaced	
Nerissa	the impact of individual differences on group work	enriched	
Peder	perception of group harmony	enriched	

Nerissa	perception of group harmony	enriched	Participants' perceptions of group harmony
Jacquette	perception of group harmony	maintained	
Peder	perception of Marrilee's performance	enriched	Participants' perceptions of other group members' performances in this group work
Lauralee	perception of Marrilee's performance	maintained	
Cordey	perception of Marrilee's performance	enriched	
Warde	perception of 'German group members'	enriched	
Alleva	perception of other group members' performances	maintained	
Elmore	perception of Alleva's performance	maintained	
Kelila	perception of Alleva's performance	maintained	
Shari	perception of Alleva's performance	maintained	
Peder	helping Cordey to clarify her confusions	enriched	Participants helped other group members.
Kelila	helping Elmore in this group work	maintained	
Lauralee	motivation for this group work	replaced	Participants' motivation
Warde	no motivation for an unmarked part	maintained	
Marrilee	appreciation for Peder's empathy	maintained	Participants expressed gratitude to other group members.
Cordey	appreciation for other group members' help	maintained	
Alleva	a good group presentation	enriched	Participants' perception regarding the delivery of a 'good' group presentation
Elmore	a good group presentation	maintained	
Filmer	a good group presentation	maintained	
Kelila	a good group presentation	maintained	
Shari	a good group presentation	enriched	

Table 7.1

2.2.2. Participants' 'Conflicting' Key Aspects of Acculturation

Some of the key aspects of acculturation I identified across the participants seemed to be 'conflicting' in terms of their content. The 'conflicting' key aspects of acculturation are reported in Section 2.2.2.1 and Section 2.2.2.2.

2.2.2.1 'Conflicting' Aspects: Different Perceptions of Fairness

These aspects apply to the cases of Giffie, Lauralee and Fanchon, who showed totally conflicting understandings, although none of them changed their own views.

Both Giffie and Lauralee emphasised the unfairness in their group work and described that sometimes they were the only group members who actually did the work.

> "If the work is not done someone has to do it…none is doing it then I am doing it…it's more work for me" (Giffie, Transcript 4).

The similar idea of unfairness in terms of individual workload can also be interpreted from Lauralee.

> "I was more or less the only one that did some real work" (Lauraee, Transcript 2).

To both of them, the unfairness first came from the unequal contribution of workload. Not surprisingly, they disliked this kind of unfairness in their group work and even felt annoyed. However, they had to tolerate it for the sake of getting the grade as the group work was assessed. As Lauralee said.

> "It's annoying because you know you work for other people and you are not supposed to do that but if you don't do it, you can't get a great grade…but it's not fair" (Laurelee, Transcript 2).

Furthermore, Giffee and Lauralee strengthened the feeling of unfairness when they considered how the group members would receive the grade, which could be another reason for them to be unhappy or annoyed.

> "Think in a group of five, just three are working is fine, it's still come something out but it's for the other ones, they just get the grade" (Transcript 6, Giffie).

However, in Fanchon's group, she interpreted the equal contribution in a different way. In her eyes, equality is not represented by the same amount of

workload but is about the effort a group member has exerted into this group work.

> "It's not personally, say, it has to be equally divided, but maybe equal effort that you bring" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

Thinking from this perspective, Fanchon's response to the fairness became different to Giffie and Lauralee. The different interpretations of equal contribution led to their different reactions when they moved on to the ungraded part of their group work.

Given that Giffie and Lauralee's tolerance of unfairness came from the grade they wanted to have, when there was no grade, they no longer would like to do it.

> "I put so much effort in the report, I just don't see the point why I should spend more time on that, given the fact that there is no grade…I don't see why I should work for other people" (Lauralee, Transcript 6).

On the contrary, for Fanchon, she was motivated and covered almost all the work for the ungraded part of their group work. Fanchon felt it was actually fair.

> "Let me do it, I am fine, you guys handed in the other one, it's a kind of equal, yeah" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

For Fanchon, fairness in group work is not only about equal effort, but also about how each group member puts their efforts into the part that could make use of his/her advantages. Fanchon believed she was good at doing the intercultural training session. Thus, she did not mind at all.

> "I didn't mind the others didn't do it because I was like, I know how to do this, I know how to do it well, so just, let me do it, I am fine" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

Unlike what Fanchon thought, Giffie and Lauralee always minded the unequal contribution in terms of the workload, therefore, until the end of the group work, they did not stop complaining.

> "I am not working for anyone else to get such a good grade…I don't't' want to work for a people, I just want to work for myself" (Giffie, Transcript 7).

Like what Giffie complained about her group work, Lauralee also commented her group work experience with a similar feeling.

> "As long as I can reach my goals...I am probably almost fine with working more, but...during the group work process, it's pain in the ass" (Lauralee, Transcript 7).

2.2.2.2 'Conflicting' Aspects: Different Overall Group Work Experience

Three participants, namely, Kiele, Nerissa and Filmer, described their overall group work experiences, which also presented conflicting directions. Each of them maintained this feeling throughout the whole group work process.

Both Nerissa and Filmer appreciated and enjoyed their group work. Therefore, they described it as a pleasant and enjoyable experience. Nerissa compared this group work with a previous one she had participated in. The contrast in terms of the interpersonal relationship and ways of communication seemed to be an important reason for Nerissa to prefer working in this group. Particularly speaking, what she said and did had been respected during the group discussions.

> "One person was really authoritative...I even couldn't say my opinions...that was my past experience of my first semester, on this semester, I am really pleased and then I am really happy with the group" (Transcript 2, Nerissa).

This pleasant feeling lasted and she further commented that it was the best group work she ever had.

> "I think it has been the best...I felt really satisfied with my group, I think that we are going well" (Nerissa, Transcript 5).

If Nerissa's pleasant experience of this group mainly came from the respectful interactions among the group members. Then, for Filmer, his pleasant feeling came from three reasons. Firstly, like what Nerissa felt in her group, Filmer also thought the interactions during his group work were nice and friendly.

> "We are very optimistic...very open to suggestions...we are like friends" (Filmer, Transcript 1).

Secondly, he thought this group project was a good combination of theory and practice.

> "It's not just like theoretical experience, just a practical as well" (Transcript 1, Filmer).

His own preference for group work as a form of assessment where he could have fun and learn from others seems to be the last reason.

> "I think it's very good…you can see when someone is working and appreciate his work and at them same time, you can identify yourself with his work…you can see like weakness" (Filmer, Transcript 1).

In Kiele's group, which had entirely different experiences, she stressed that this group work was the worst she ever had experienced.

> "I had group meetings before, but his one is kind of terrible for me" (Kiele, Transcript 1).

Kiele believed that some of her group members were not nice and showed no respect to her at all.

> "From my point of view, because someone is really like to control everything and someone is really aggressive to me…some of my members are universally unfriendly members in my class" (Kiele, Transcript 1).

Working with those group members, Kiele said she was not "permitted" to contribute because the others disliked her and interrupted her when she would like to voice her opinions.

> "I am confident about my ideas…but they did not allow me to" (Kiele, Transcript 2).

2.2.2.3 A Summary of the 'Conflicting' Key Aspects of Participants' Acculturation

After discussing the 2 'conflicting' key aspects of acculturation across all the participants in terms of their content. I draw a table (see: Table 7.2) below to present a summary of these key aspects.

'Conflicting' Key Aspects of Acculturation across the Participants

Participant	Key aspect of acculturation	Trend vis-à-vis a key aspect of acculturation	'Conflicting' meanings of these key aspects
Giffie	unfair feeling	maintained	Participants' perception of the fairness in group work
Lauralee	unfair feeling	maintained	
Fanchon	fair feeling	maintained	
Kiele	dislike doing this group work	maintained	Participants' overall experience in this group work.
Nerissa	like doing this group work	maintained	
Filmer	like doing this group work	maintained	

Table 7.2

2.2.3. Participants' 'Unique' Key Aspects of Acculturation

Some participants presented their 'unique' key aspects of acculturation during the process of group work, which did not seem to apply to the other participants. I identified three main reasons regarding the occurrences of these 'unique' key aspects of acculturation. I then organised them into three categories, which are reported in Section 2.2.3.1 to Section 2.2.3.3.

2.2.3.1 Occurrence of 'Unique' Aspects: Linked to Personal Assumptions

Participants' assumptions mainly derived from two sources: other group work they had participated or were participating at that moment or the general personal learning experiences.

Lauralee, Alleva and Shari linked this group work with their other group work experiences. They compared the differences between them and then generated their respective key aspect of acculturation. For instance, Lauralee's preference of a relaxing working atmosphere started when she compared two groups she was participating in at that moment.

> "We have another group work this trimester…they are my friends…it's much easier and more comfortable to work with them" (Lauralee, Transcript 2).

Drawing on the previous group work experiences, both Alleva and Shari started to develop their own perceptions for this group work based upon their own conditions. For Alleva, it was about herself who joined an "existing group".

> "Normally if a group is already established, you expect them to have some sort of insider communication methods that are not very accessible to the outsiders" (Alleva, Transcript 1).

While for Shari, it was the frequency of group meeting, which she felt was missing in her previous group work.

> "I think, we meeting weekly has been a good thing… I think that's really important and that kind of got…lost transitions in last trimester" (Shari, Transcript 1).

The assumptions for Marrillee and Warde to draw on came from their general learning experiences. For example, Marrilee compared this group work with her previous learning experience and then said like that:

> "We have different thinking styles…I think it's better to work with people who come from different countries and another thing is related to their experiences" (Marrilee, Transcript 3).

Warde compared the tasks given in his group work with another coursework he had to do in a different module.

> "I just asked them…do you think there is some similarities between the lesson plan and also the training plans" (Warde, Transcript 2).

All these examples showed that they drew on what they believed was relevant to this group work and then built up the connections in order to serve different purposes. The first purpose is about having expectations, such as Marrilee's expectation of working with people from other countries and Lauralee's preference of a relaxing working atmosphere. The second purpose is about providing methods, such as, Warde who would like to transfer a method into this group work in order to complete the task. The third purpose is about giving explanations, which can be learnt from Alleva's and Shari's ideas.

Once the connections made sense to them and they seemed to prefer maintaining it. Thus, I can see that almost all of these key aspects of acculturation were maintained in terms of the development (see: Table 7.3 in Section 2.2.2.4).

In the meantime, Marrilee's key aspect of acculturation regarding gaining knowledge and experience through group work tells me that an aspect of acceleration generated based on assumptions could also be enriched. In the beginning, Marrilee assumed that this group work might inspire her.

> "It's quite good for me because you can share ideas with others…they can inspire your potential abilities" (Marrilee, Transcript 1).

When she completed this group work, this assumption was strengthened because she described what she could learn more specifically.

> "In this process, you got another way to learn things…one was from the lecturer, but one was from students…if another student tried to explain it to you based on the student's understanding and it makes more sense for you" (Marrilee, Transcript 7).

2.2.3.2 Occurrence of 'Unique' Aspects: Linked to the Interpretations of Interactions in Group Work

When Giffie felt that the group work was stuck and did not progress well, she decided to play the role of a leader in order to guide the discussion.

> "I decided to kind of lead the group…let's focus…the structure we got was a bit confusing at some point…I highlighted everything what I thought is important" (Giffie, Transcript 2).

However, through the interactions, when Giffie realised that she needed to consider and decide many things for their joint-report, she became unwilling to continue leading the group and eventually, she gave up the leadership.

> "I just did my part which was not that much work" (Giffie, Transcript 6).

Taking Nerissa's perception of the not-well-organised group meeting as another example. Since the middle of their group discussions, Nerissa's group did not organise or book a proper meeting room, they always found somewhere in the public space to carry out the discussion. Nerissa started to shape this idea.

> "Should be in a proper room…today I was really uncomfortable where I was sitting and I couldn't hear everybody's opinions" (Nerissa, Transcript 4).

Through the interactions with other group members during the rest part of their group work, Nerissa strengthened this idea because she was not informed in terms of the meeting time or venues. More seriously, when they worked for the intercultural training session, she was not even told about what had been changed in the slides until the last minute before they needed to deliver it. Hence, Nerissa did not change her idea that their group work did not organise well.

> "We were not really organised…I couldn't know what they had changes in the night… I felt a bit outside of the circle" (Nerissa, Transcript 8).

From these two examples, I would like to argue that some key aspects of acculturation emerged through the interactions between the group members. Therefore, the development of these key aspects of acculturation also heavily relied on how the interactions went. It could be changed like Giffie's case or maintained as Nerissa's case.

2.2.3.3 Occurrence of A 'Unique' Aspect: Linked to Personal Development

I interpret that the occurrences of one key aspect of acculturation in Fanchon's case is closely related to her personal development. Unlike the majority of the participants who did this group work for the sake of getting the credit. Fanchon took this group work as a good chance to develop her own personal skills.

That was the main reason why she changed her aim for doing this group work when they carried out the two individual tasks. More precisely, for the first task: writing a joint-report, Fanchon did not aim for an excellent grade, instead, she would like to see how herself worked with group members, how she kept the group harmony and made sure every member was happy.

> "To me, what was a good meeting, is not only if we have done everything like tick the boxes that we need to tick, but if we had a good time" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

In order to reach this aim, she deliberately adopted some strategies to encourage all the group members' participations, like what Fanchon said:

> "I just stopped talking and just hoped that somebody else would take the leader, which sometimes worked, sometimes it was really an awards silence […] I took the one that was leftover…I didn't choose the topic I like the best, because I wanted the group to be happy" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

When they moved on to the second part of the group work: delivering intercultural training. Personally, she was passionate about it and would like to be involved as much as she could. Given that it was an ungraded part, she thought that other group members might not as motivated as she did. Thus, she changed her aim and became the leader to direct and complete the majority of the work.

> "I was very involved…with the training session, I wasn't so much worried about everybody being happy… I focus on more on the task…did eighty percent of the whole training" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

When she concluded her own experience in this group work, she said

> "I wasn't emotionally attached to it, I just want to get a passing grade, I was pretty confident that we would get that while with the intercultural training session, I was very emotionally attached to it, I wanted to do it well" (Fanchon, Transcript 1).

Fanchon used this group work experience to learn what she had planned to get out of this group work. Unlike other participants whose aspects of acculturation occurred mainly as the outcomes of their responses to the assumptions or the interactions during group work, Fanchon changed this key aspect of acculturation (aim for this group work) deliberately to serve for her own personal development. Therefore, from this case, I see that a person's acculturation could occur in a way as s/he had designed beforehand.

2.2.2.4 A Summary of the 'Unique' Key Aspects of Participants' Acculturation

After discussing the three reasons for the occurrence of the participants' 'unque' key aspects of acculturation, I draw a table (see: Table 7.3) below to summarise these key aspects.

'Unique' Key Aspect(s) of Acculturation within a Participant

Participants	'Unique' Key aspect of acculturation	Trend vis-à-vis a key aspect of acculturation	The main reason for the occurrence of the key aspects
Marrilee	expectation of working with people from other countries	maintained	These six key aspects of acculturation were largely influenced by the assumptions the corresponding participants brought into their group work.
	gaining knowledge and experience through group work	enriched	
Lauralee	preference of a relaxing working atmosphere	maintained	
Warde	knowledge connections between two modules	maintained	
Alleva	perception of joining an "existing" group	maintained	
Shari	good to have constant group meetings	maintained	
Giffie	group members' relationship	replaced	These eight key aspects of acculturation were largely influenced by the corresponding participants own interpretations of the interactions they had during their group work.
	being a group leader	replaced	
Marrilee	strategy to participate in this group work	maintained	
	clearer group tasks through discussion	maintained	
Nerissa	the impact of national cultural differences on group work	replaced	
Nerisa	the not-well-organised group meetings	maintained	
Elmore	being more confident	maintained	

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Kelila	the initial stage of the group work was more important	maintained	
Fanchon	aim for this group work	replaced	This key aspect of acculturation was influenced by Fanchon's consideration of her personal development.

Table 7.3

3. The Participants' Acculturation Trajectories

In the preceding section, I focused on the key aspects of acculturation I identified from the participants' narratives and illustrated the trends vis-à-vis these aspects. I compared these aspects across the participants and explained them in detail in terms of similarities, contrasts and unique experiences. In this section, I place the focus on the individual participants and describe their acculturation trajectories with reference to these key aspects.

Based on a synthesised understanding of the key aspects of acculturation (together with the trends of these aspects) noted from each participant's case, I identified four types of acculturation trajectories, namely, *Stable Trajectory, Replacing Trajectory, Enriching Trajectory* and *Blending Trajectory*. These four acculturation trajectories are presented from Sections 3.1 to Section 3.4 in a graphic form. Each graph represents an individual participant's all key aspects of acculturation and their trends. The three trends (i.e. *replacing, enriching and maintaining*) discussed in the previous section of this chapter are indicated by three angels in the following graphic forms in relation to personal acculturation trajectories (see: Diagrams 7.1-7.15). Specifically speaking, a *replacing* trend is represented by an up-and-down angle; an *enriching* trend is represented by a rising angle and a *maintaining* trend is represented by a horizontal angle.

3.1 A 'Stable Type' Acculturation Trajectory

The acculturation processes constructed by Kiele, Marrilee, Lauralee, Warde, Alleva, Elmore, Filmer, Kelila and Shari can be interpreted as a relatively 'stable' trajectory. All or most of the key aspects of acculturation shown from these participants were maintained throughout their participations in group work (see: Diagram 7.1 – 7.9).

Kiele's Acculturation Process

Dislike doing this group work

Entire group work period
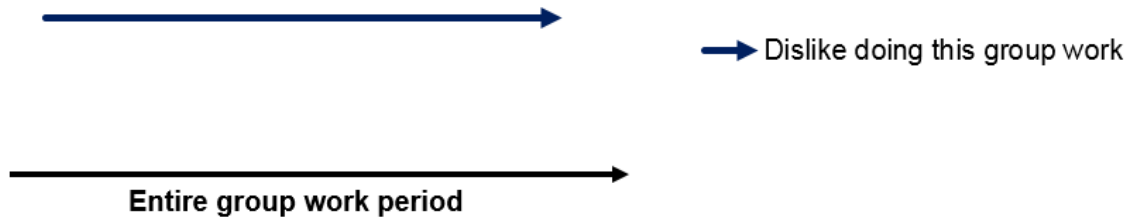
Diagram 7.1

Marrilee's Acculturation Process

Strategy to participate in this group work
Appreciation for Peder's empathy
Clearer group tasks through discussion
Expectation of working with people from other countries
Gaining knowledge and experience through group work

Entire group work period
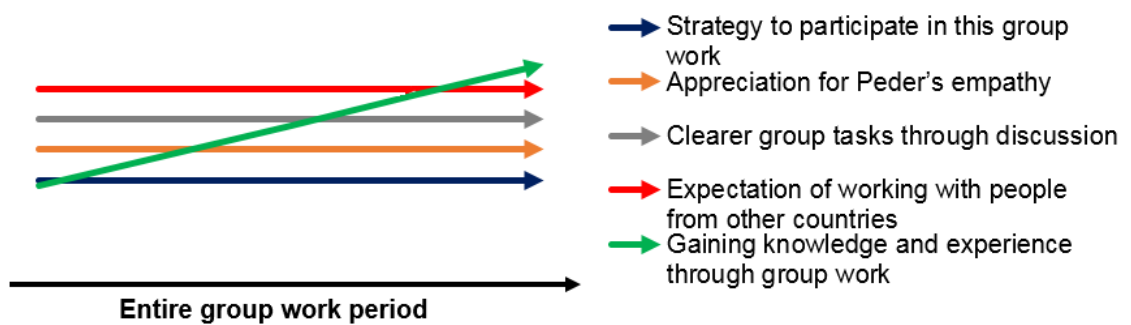
Diagram 7.2

Lauralee's Acculturation Process

The impact of individual differences on group work
Unfair feeling
Perception of Marrilee's performance
Preference of a relaxing working atmosphere
Motivation for this group work

Entire group work period
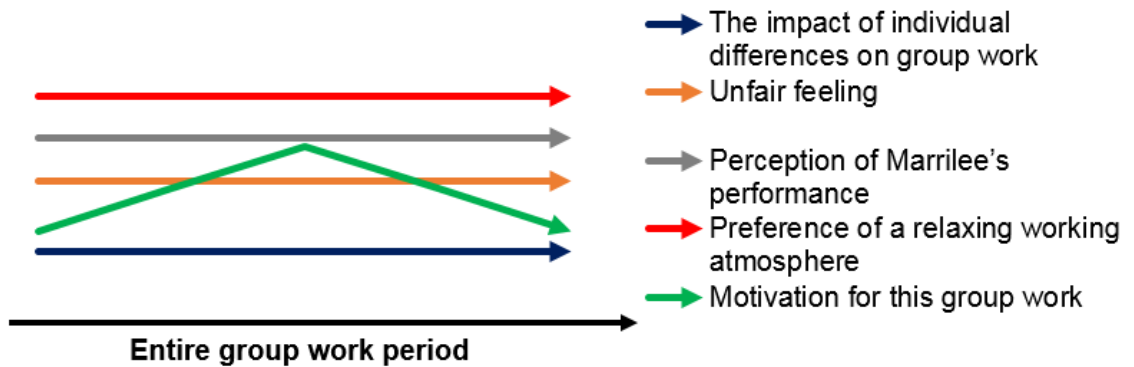
Diagram 7.3

Warde's Acculturation Process

Entire group work period

Perception of "German group members"

Knowledge connections between two modules

No motivation for an unmarked part
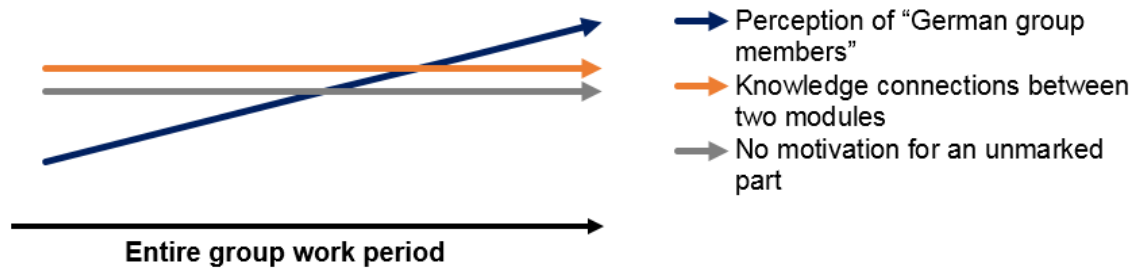
Diagram 7.4

Alleva's Acculturation Process

Entire group work period

A good group presentation

Perception of joining an "existing" group

Perception of other group members' performances
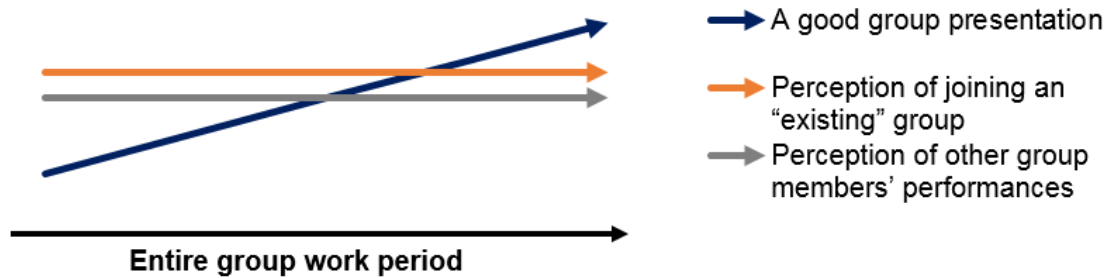
Diagram 7.5

Elmore's Acculturation Process

Entire group work period

A good group presentation

Being more confident

Perception of Alleva's performance
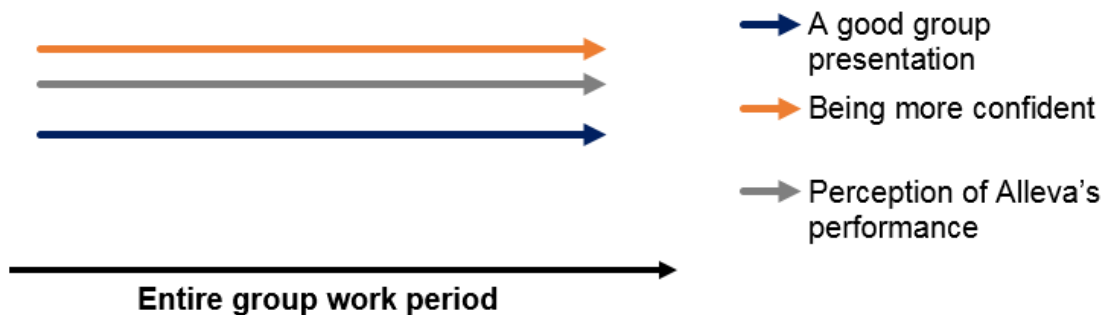
Diagram 7.6

Filmer's Acculturation Process
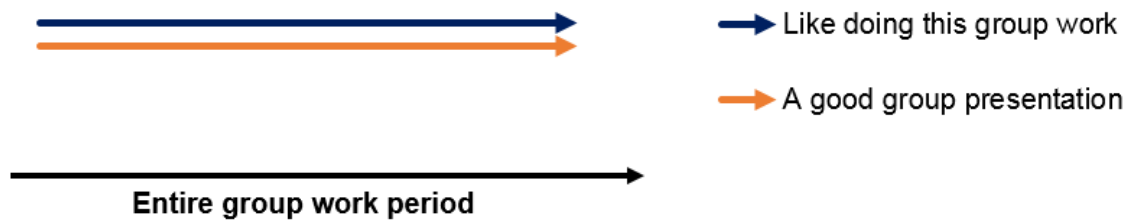
Diagram 7.7

Kelila's Acculturation Process
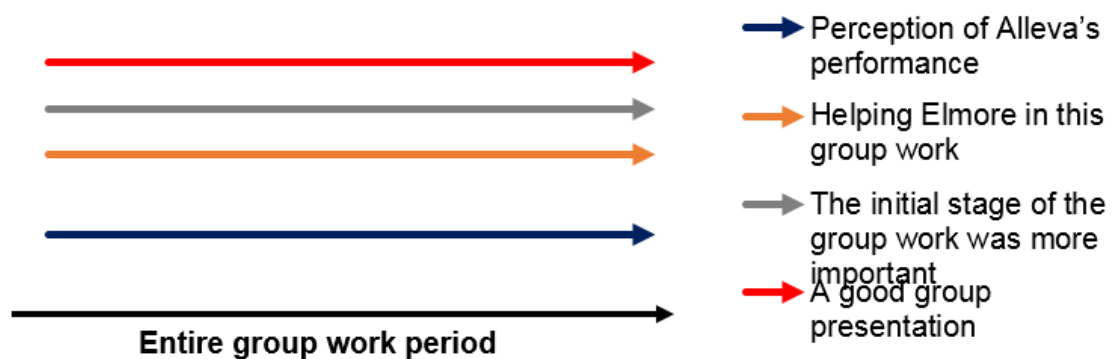
Diagram 7.8

Shari's Acculturation Process
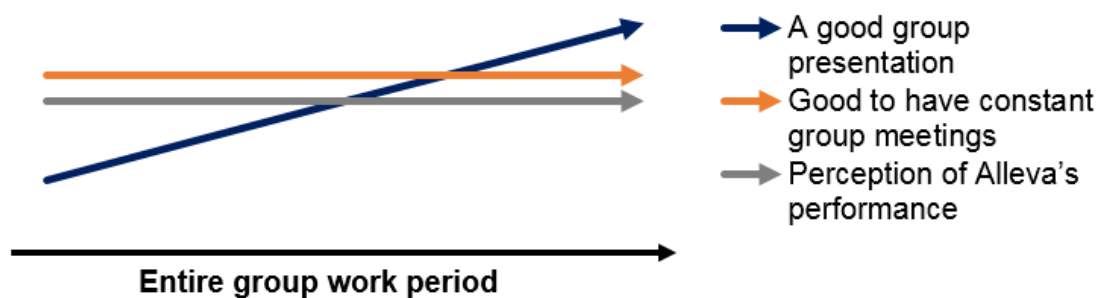
Diagram 7.9

As the nine diagrams (7.1-7.9) show above, the nine paricipants' key aspects of acculturation are dominated by the stable trend, which indicates that these nine participants' acculturation processes can be broadly interpreted as 'Stable Trajectories'.

3.2 A 'Replacing Type' Acculturation Trajectory

In Giffie's acculturation process, most of the relevant key aspects of acculturation demonstrated a replacing trend, i.e. views and behaviours renewed in the light of new experience (see: Diagram 7.10).

Giffie's Acculturation Process
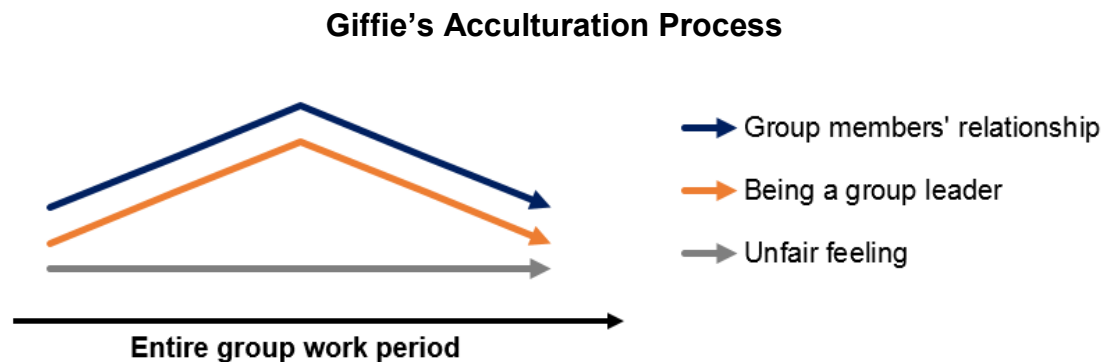
Diagram 7.10

As the diagram (7.10) shows above, Giffie's key aspects of acculturation are dominated by the replacing trend, which indicates that her acculturation process can be interpreted as a 'Relacing Trajecotory'.

3.3 An 'Enriching Type' Acculturation Trajectory

In Peder's acculturation process, most of the relevant key aspects of acculturation seemed to demonstrate an enriching trend in the course of the group work (see: Diagram 7.11).

Peder's Acculturation Process
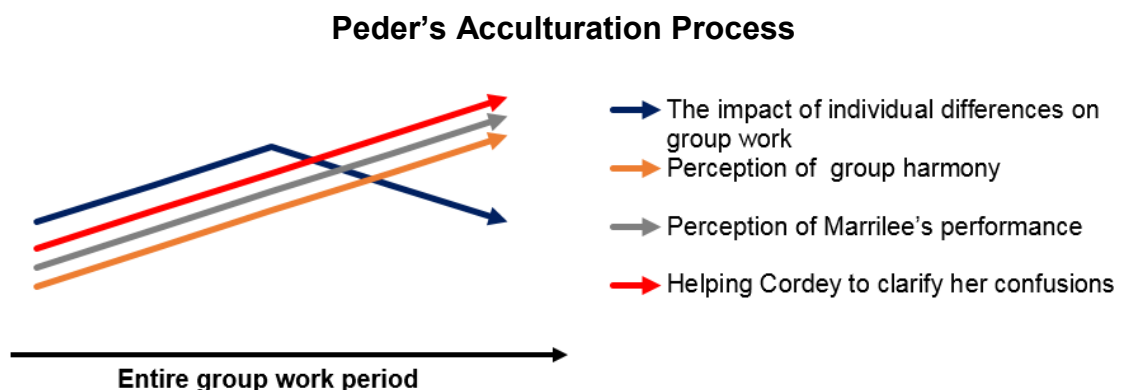
Diagram 7.11

As the diagram (7.11) shows above, Peder's key aspects of acculturation are dominated by the enriching trend, which indicates that his accultuaration process can be interpreted as an 'Enriching Trajectory'.

3.4 A 'Blending Type' Acculturation Trajectory

The acculturation processes constructed by Cordey, Nerissa, Jacquette and Fanchon can be interpreted as a relatively 'Blending' trajectory. The key aspects of acculturation shown from these participants (unlike the previous three types) were not dominated by any of the three trends throughout their participations in group work (see: Diagram 7.12 – 7.15).

Cordey's Acculturation Process
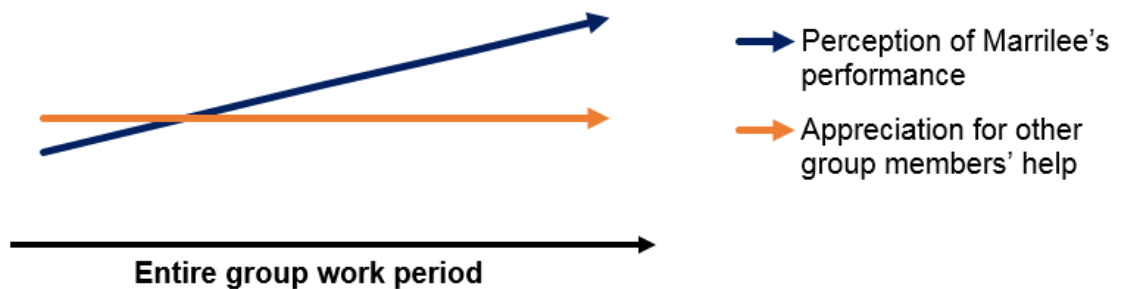
Diagram 7.12

Nerissa's Acculturation Process
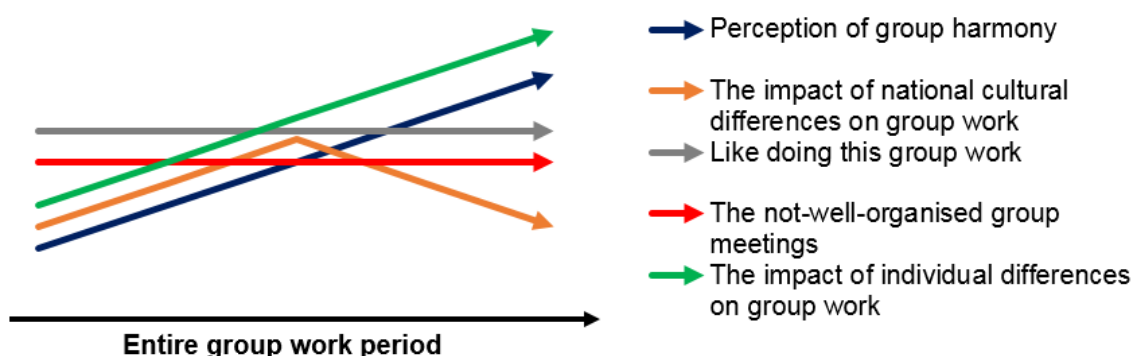
Diagram 7.13

Jacquette's Acculturation Process

The impact of individual differences on group work

Perception of group harmony

Entire group work period
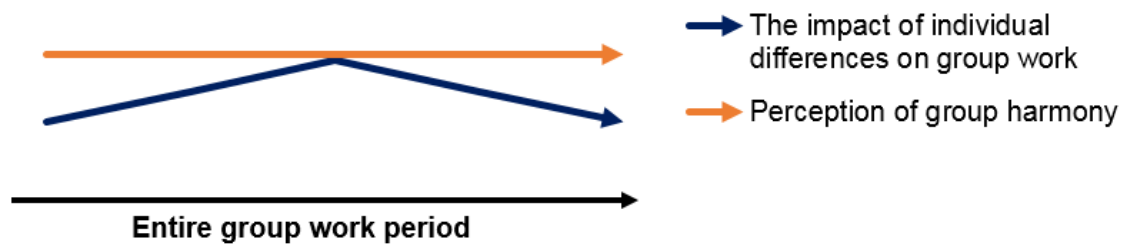
Diagram 7.14

Fanchon's Acculturation Process

Aim for this group work

Fair feeling

Entire group work period
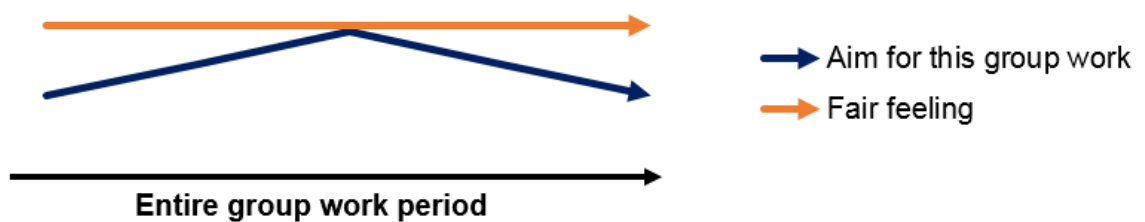
Diagram 7.15

As the four diagrams (7.12-7.15) show above, it is difficult to tell a straightforward trend from these four participants' accultuaration processes because the developments in relation to the key aspects of acculturation within each participant present different trends.

4. Further Development of the Conceptual Model of Acculturation

The findings I have reported in this chapter enabled me to further fine-tune the conceptual model I conceived in the literature review for exploring acculturation (see: Section 5 in Chapter 4). In that initial version, I broadly suggested that individuals' acculturation processes could be explored through the changes of their cultural realities. Now, I present a fine-tuned version of this conceptual model in Diagram 7.16 (see: p.212) to further specify that the changes of an individual's *cultural realities* indicate three different trends (i.e. *maintaining, enriching or replacing*) vis-à-vis the key aspects of acculturation an individual may present. An individual's acculturation process (e.g. group member X in Diagram 7.16) then can be represented through a synthesised understanding of the trends of the key aspects s/he presents.

In this fine-tuned version of the conceptual model of acculturation, the rectangles within each oval area represent the changes of an individual's (e.g. group member X) salient cultural realities. These salient *cultural realities* indicate a specific trend vis-à-vis a key aspect of acculturation that individual may present.

In particular, an individual's (e.g. a group member X) *cultural realities* perhaps can be replaced by alternative ones (top oval). The same individual, his/her some *cultural realities* can also be possibly enriched by new ones (middle oval) or his/her other *cultural realities* might remain stable (bottom oval). In a word, the three oval areas represent three possible trends of development regarding a given key aspect of acculturation that an individual may have.

The big light red arrow indicates that an individual's overall acculturation process can be understood through synthesising the trends of change concerning the relevant key aspects. That is to say, an individual's acculturation may occur in different directions. To some extent, it is not precise enough or appropriate to describe an individual's acculturation process by merely focusing on the dominant trend or simplifying such a process into a general direction. This argument contrasts with the majority of existing studies of acculturation that generate different models (e.g. Berry's fourfold model) to generalise or predict what direction an individual's acculturation process would be like.

Therefore, this fine-tuned conceptual model reveals the complexity in relation to the personal acculturation process in student group work, which contributes and enriches the existing discussions and studies on acculturation in the literature.

Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work (Fine-tuned Version)
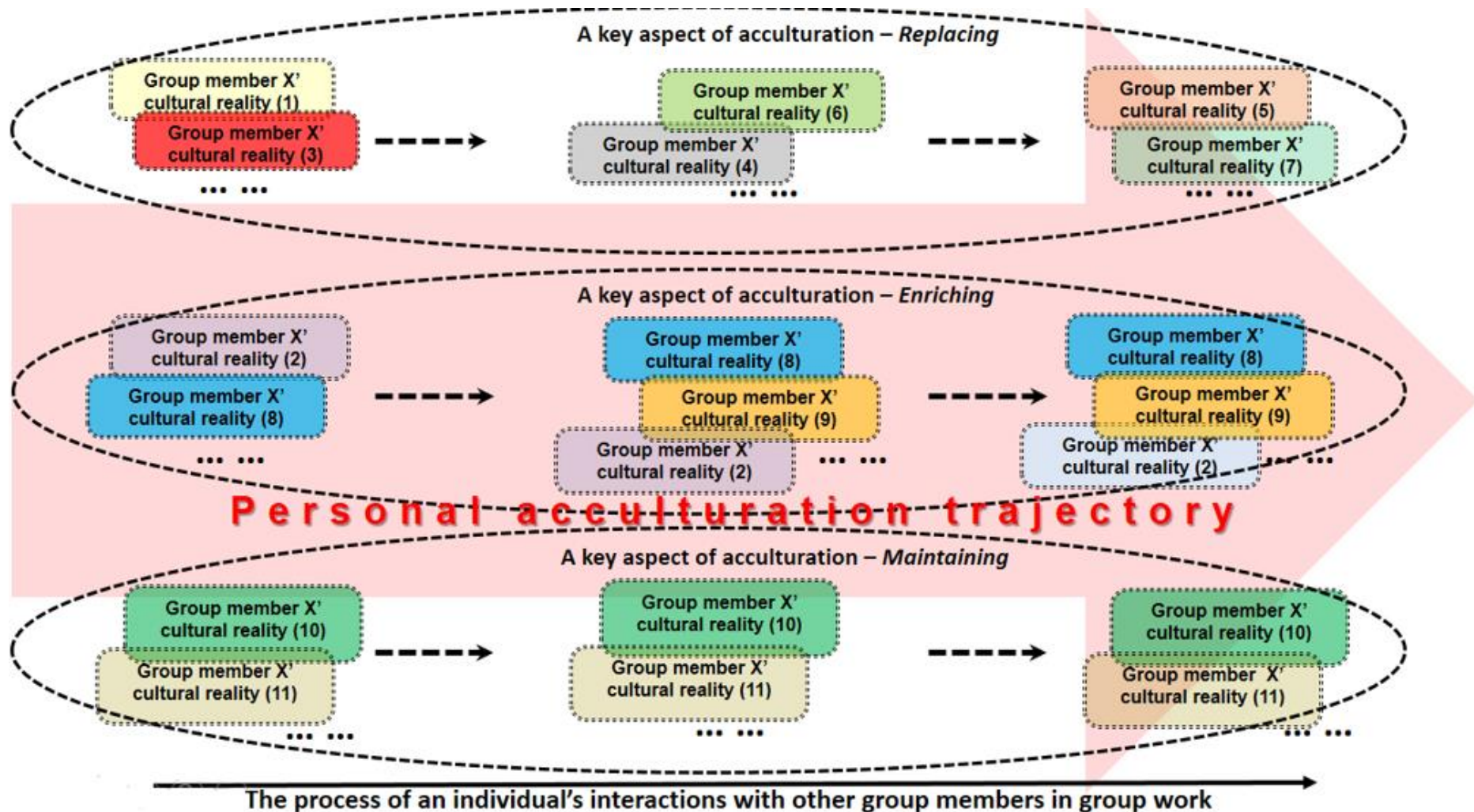
Diagram 7.16

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reported on the trajectories of participants' acculturation through tracing the trends of the key aspects of their (narrativised) experiences, which provide indications of their cultural realities. Based on a synthesised understanding of the trends regarding the changes of each individual's *cultural realities* in the course of group work, I categorised the 15 participants' acculturation trajectories into four broad types, which respectively represent processes of stability, replacement, enrichment, and blend.

The findings have enabled me to enrich the conceptual model about personal acculturation in student group work I developed on the basis of the literature review. Although four types of acculturation trajectories are interpreted by seeing the domain trend of a participant's all key aspects of acculturation, the fine-tuned conceptual model reveals the complexity within a personal's acculturation process.

As the fine-tuned conceptual model suggests, an individual's acculturation process in student group work can be constituted by many key aspects and each aspect presents its own trend. Therefore, this fine-tuned version of the conceptual model has answered the second research question which is about the patterns regarding students' individual acculturation trajectories

Chapter Eight Discussion

1. Introduction

Drawing on the findings reported in the previous two chapters (6-7), in this chapter, I discuss the cultural-making process toward cohesiveness, personal acculturation in student group work and the discernible links between these two separate, but interrelated processes. The discussions provide a fuller understanding of the research questions I raised in this study (see Section 3 in Chapter 1 and on p.88).

It begins with a discussion on a possibility of considering student group work as a micro-level *cultural arena* where two dynamic processes (e.g. cultural-making process and personal acculturation) can be foregrounded. This is followed by discussing the trajectories of the cultural-making processes in participants' five groups, which demonstrates the uncertain and fluid attributes in these trajectories.

I then discuss the participants' individual acculturation trajectories, which emphasises a culturally non-binary possibility to explore personal acculturation and acknowledges the unpredictability of an individual's acculturation trajectory.

In the last part of this chapter, I synthesis the discussions and draw on the two fine-tuned conceptual models (presented in the previous two chapters) to provide a refined version regarding the conceptual framework, which works as the analytical guide throughout this study. In this refined conceptual framework, I emphasise that the two separate, but interrelated processes show an *interplay* in student group work as the specific *cultural arena.*

2. Considering Student Group Work through the Lens of *Cultural Arena*

Through the discussion on the majority of existing studies on student group work (see: Chapter 2), I have pointed out two problematic issues: a reductionist view on cultural difference and task/goal-driven research orientation of investigating each group member (Bacon *et al*. 1998; De Vita 2002; Hartley, 1997; Livingstone and Lynch's, 2000). These problematic issues imply that the efficacy or deficiency in a student group has been largely examined by

considering 'good- or mal-functioning' of (some) group members and that cultural difference (which is commonly reduced or equated to national/ethnic difference) is believed as one of the factors that leads to that 'good- or mal-malfunction' (Montgomery, 2009; Popov *et al.,* 2012; Sweeney *et al.,* 2008; Umans, 2011; Volet and Ang, 2012). This premise reflects structural-functionalism and treats student group as a system of different working parts (Durkheim, 1984).

However, having taken the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm to theorise student group work from an intercultural angle (see: chapters 2-4), I am able to offer a possibility of considering student group work as a specific *cultural arena* in which a cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness perhaps occurs. In doing so, culture in student group work becomes a 'device' (Holliday, 1999; 2000) for researchers to interpret the ever-changing negotiation process among students when they are engaging in collaborations to complete the given tasks.

Arguably, this interpretive perspective of exploring the cultural-making process in student groups is in contrast to the essentialist cultural view that treats culture as a solid 'facet' through postivistically detailed prescriptions (Holliday, 1999).

As the findings suggest (see: Chapter 6-7), in the specific *cultural arena* of student group work, each group member brings his/her *cultural realities* (Holliday, 2011; 2013) and the cultural-making process emerges and then evolves to develop a kind of cohesiveness. This cultural-making process in student group produces something new or unrecognisable (e.g. some group members' *cultural realities* are changed or enriched) which can be considered as the result of hybridity (Bhabha, 1990; 2004) (e.g. group members' interactions). This argument is further developed in the third section of this chapter.

Moreover, the findings, to some extent, resonate with Vygotsky's ZPD model which argued that students' interactions in an authentic learning activity, in this case – student group work at university, can assist students' cognitive development and give rise to personal changes (Doolittle, 1997; Vygotsky, 1987). Students' cognitive development and personal changes are manifested in each group member's own acculturation trajectory. In the fourth section of this chapter, this point is further elaborated.

3. The Complexities of Cultural-Making Process towards Group Cohesiveness

In Chapter 3, through the discussion and comparison of different scholars' understandings of culture, I favour the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm. This cultural paradigm foregrounds the complex, hybrid and fluid attributes in culture (Baumann, 1996; Bhabha, 1990; 2004; Brower, 1980; Holliday, 2004; Kramsch, 1993; 2009; 2013; Nathan, 2015; Stonequist, 1937) and consider it emerges through individual interactions within a site rather than being prescribed by some pre-determined characteristics (e.g. nationality or ethnicity). In other words, culture can emerge within a group of individuals and its meanings need to be summarised or abstracted from the constructions of that group of individuals.

However, most of their discussions are carried out at the theoretical level, the findings of this study have provided empirical support (see: Chapter 6) for the anti-essentialist argument that culture is always developing, fluid and uncertain (Holiday, 2011; Soderberg and Holden, 2002). This support is demonstrated through answering the research question 1 in this study: *what patterns can be identified about the trajectory with respect to the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness in the course of students' group projects?*

The findings suggest that the trajectory of the cultural-making process in each student group emerged as a complex whole constituted by various salient aspects in relation to participants' cohesive thinking, behaviour as well as emotions. Furthermore, these salient aspects might be constantly changing in terms of *distribution* (e.g. some salient aspect might disappear; new aspects might emerge) and *intensity* (e.g. some salient aspects are identifiable from many participants; others might only apply to a few) over time.

Precisely speaking, I have identified several patterns regarding the *distribution* and *intensity* of the salient aspects identified in the cultural-making processes in the participants' five groups (discussed in detail in Chapter 6), which are summarised as follows:

> ➤ **The five patterns with regard to the *distribution*:**

- ▪ A situation in which some salient aspects in the trajectories of cultural-making processes initially emerged and then disappeared;

- A situation in which some salient aspects in the trajectories of cultural-making processes did not emerge until a late stage;
- A situation in which some salient aspects in the trajectories of cultural-making processes only emerged in the middle stages;
- A situation in which some salient aspects in the trajectories of cultural-making processes emerged, disappeared and re-emerged again;
- A situation in which a salient aspect in the trajectories of cultural-making processes could not be noted throughout the entire group work period.

➢ **The five patterns with regard to the *intensity*:**

- A situation in which a salient aspect in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is always shared the same number of participants;
- A situation in which a salient aspect in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is always explored from a single participant's *cultural realities*;
- A situation in which a salient aspect in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is shared by fewer and fewer participants;
- A situation in which a salient aspect in the trajectories of cultural-making processes is shared by more and more participants;
- A situation in which a salient aspect in the trajectories of cultural-making processes fluctuates.

These trajectories of the cultural-making processes in the participants' five groups can be further discussed from, at least three aspects, which are elucidated from Section 3.1 to Section 3.3.

3.1 The Uncertainty and Fluidity of Cultural-Making Process

As the trajectories of cultural-making processes in participants' five groups show (see: Chapter 6), the *distribution* of the salient aspects did not remain the same from one stage to another. The only exception was Peder *et al.*'s group, where most of the salient aspects stayed the same from the second stage to the fourth stage (see: Section 3.2 in Chapter 6). Nevertheless, they still changed in terms of *intensity* across these three stages. Therefore, it can be argued that every 'version' vis-à-vis the cultural-making process (a snapshot captured at a given moment) in a student group has its unique characteristics and is always subject to change as the group work proceeds.

In this study, I interpreted the cultural-making process in each student group through the lens of three to five 'stages' of development (see: Section 4.4.4 in Chapter 5). This is a rather broad way of segmenting the trajectory of the cultural-making process along an abstract timeline, and the trajectory may well be explored in much finer detail in relation to smaller units of time markers. Nevertheless, given the purpose and scope of this study, the findings provided some empirical evidence to reveal the uncertain and fluid attributes in the cultural-making process, which constantly develops from a past 'version' to a present 'version' and is open to further changes towards a future 'version', as long as the group members engage in interactions (see: Diagram 8.1). Any single 'version' vis-à-vis the cultural-making process is only a snapshot of a temporary state.

The Uncertainty and Fluidity of Cultural-Making Process in Student Group Work

Transitions between two 'Versions'

| A past 'version' vis-à-vis the cultural-making process | A present 'version' vis-à-vis the cultural-making process | A future 'version' vis-à-vis the cultural-making process |

The last moment   **The current moment**   **The next moment**
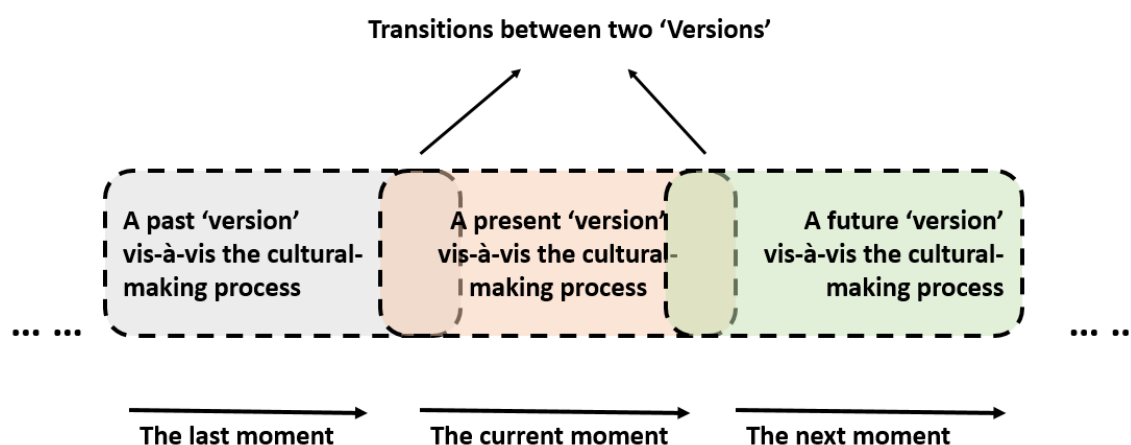
Diagram 8.1

The uncertainty and fluidity of cultural-making process suggest that it is difficult to predict the characteristics of culture or to claim about culture in its 'fullness'. As this study shows, understandings of the culture in student group work are enabled through various snapshots captured at particular moments. Even when the group work was completed, the cohesive thinking and behaviour exhibited by the group members at that moment only presented a somewhat 'final version' of the cultural-making process in their group. In this sense, a single 'version' vis-à-vis the cultural-making process in student group work (i.e. a

description of the cultural-making process at a specific moment alone) cannot represent or reveal the nature of culture as a process 'on the go'.

However, this is not to suggest the 'impossibility' of understanding culture, which might render culture a 'meaningless' entity. This study, through illustrating the trajectories of the cultural-making processes in participants' five groups, presents some possibilities for interpreting culture as a dynamic process 'on the go' by tracing the various 'versions' vis-à-vis this cultural-making process. In particular, the cultural-making processes in student group work I explored in this study are associated with academic tasks that had clearly defined beginnings and ends. Therefore, I was able to trace the cultural-making process from an 'initial' point of time, i.e. when shared thinking and behaviour started to emerge in groups, to an 'ending', i.e. when the groups were dismissed upon completion of the tasks. Based on these time markers, I was able to describe the trajectories of the cultural-making processes in the five student groups (see: Sections 3.1 – 3.5 in Chapter 6). However, I would like to point out that these trajectories do not summarise culture as a solid entity, but instead, they illustrate the 'life' of culture, which emphasises its fluid attribute. I further explain this in Diagram 8.2.

The 'Life' of Culture in Student Group Work

The beginning of the cultural-making process

The completion of the cultural-making process
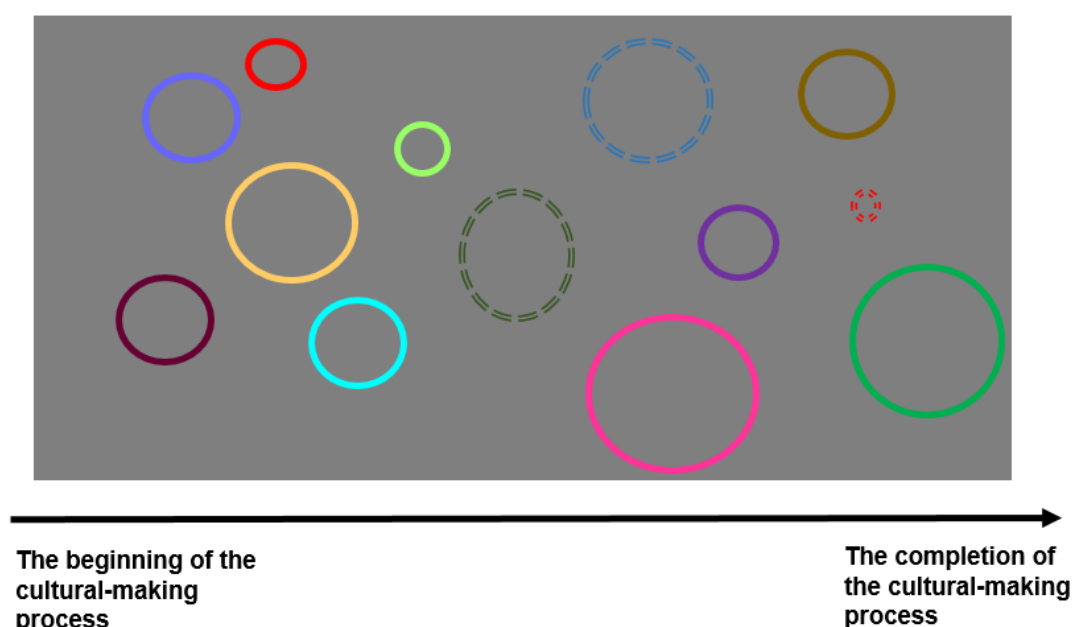
Diagram 8.2

In Diagram 8.2, the cultural-making process in student group work can be imagined as an 'entirety' which is represented by the big grey rectangle (from the formation of a student group when a cultural-making process might start to the dismiss of that student group when the cultural-making process terminates). This cultural-making process can be deconstructed into various salient aspects which are represented by the coloured circles inside the grey rectangle. Throughout the 'life' of culture in student group work, its salient aspects may emerge, become strengthened (represented by the solid circles), or become weakened and then disappear (represented by the dotted circles). This strength is reflected by the intensity of a salient aspect, which is indicated by the size of a circle. Bigger circles indicate the salient aspects that were shared by more and more participants. If a salient aspect becomes less and less evident across the participants' narratives, then the corresponding circle might diminish in time. Clearly, traditional essentialist constructs (see: Chapter 3) do not provide sufficient explanatory power to account for such complexities in terms of the fluidity of culture. This study presents an interpretive attempt to unpack some of them.

3.2 Cultural-Making Process Can Operate in the 'Background'

As I discussed in the preceding section, a cultural-making process towards cohesiveness perhaps occurs in student group as a local *cultural arena*. This process, I argue, can operate in the 'background'. I take the following example to support this argument.

When I look at the salient aspect of '*being stressed'* – a cohesive thinking – shared by many participants, I can sense that the participants had their own ideas or reactions to what they had come across during the group work in that trimester. Situations in which the participants were involved varied from person to person.

Some participants described multiple deadlines they had to deal with within a short period of time, which caused their stress, for instance:

> "…but I was busy with lots of other deadlines as well, and other group meetings for other courses" (Cordey, Transcript 2).

Some other participants expressed their stress through telling how short of time had been 'left' or 'given' to them when they commenced this group work, for example:

> "I haven't read it yet, I only started yesterday" (Peder, Transcript 1).

> "Actually, I just finished my part one night one night before our meeting, so this kind of in a hurry" (Warde, Transcript 4).

> "…and I think we all kind of facing a quite challenging time in next couple of weeks because we have a lot of things to do and we need to start" (Giffie, Transcript 2).

These feelings were presented as natural and individual responses to their work commitments rather than a mutual understanding reached through the participants' discussion. That is to say, for the participants, they came together to do group work and their priority was to successfully complete the given tasks as a group. (Some) cohesive thinking, behaviours and emotions did shape in the 'background' at certain points during the participants' interactions. However, (these) cohesive thinking, behaviours and emotions emerged among participants at different paces and in different forms, whether the participants explicitly discuss it or not.

In such a case, cohesiveness is not necessarily a product that participants create with intentionality. The argument that cultural-making process can operate in the background explains that it is somehow difficult to predict a particular moment when a certain kind of cohesiveness (i.e. a salient aspect) would shape, which means that the construction of culture has 'its own agenda'. If it is not possible to predict the shape of a salient aspect, it is impossible to prescribe what a cultural-making process would be like beforehand.

From this perspective, when a group of individuals gather together in a *cultural arena*, their priorities would be always to 'do business' rather than come together in order to construct a culture. However, culture can form in the background during the process when they 'do business'.

3.3 Cultural-Making Process Indicates Group Members' Collaborations

When researchers discuss the student group formation, the developmental stages or performance of student group work (Belbin, 1981; 1993; Chapman *et al.*, 2006; Hartley, 1997; Ledwith and Lee, 1998; Mason, 2006; So *et al.*, 2010;

Strauss and Young, 2011), regardless of the different perspectives selected by these scholars, to a large degree, they all take student group work as an opportunity for the students to exchange ideas, thoughts, and perceptions through an 'offering-and-taking' process. This process is a necessary step for them to complete the given tasks. To what extent the group members collaborate well largely depends on whether the exchange process is a success or a failure. Researchers identified and discussed many factors that might disturb or impede the exchange process to be carried out successfully (Aggarwal and O'Brien, 2008; Mulvey and Klein, 1998; Teng and Luo, 2015; Turner, 2009; Voyles, 2015) as if it were their ultimate purpose for the studies on student group work.

Understanding group members' collaboration from the perspective of idea exchange seems to be too functionalist and constraining for understanding the richness and learning potential afforded by group work. It does not address the value of collaborations among group members. Nor does it recognise or acknowledge the co-construction that might happen in student group work. Metaphorically speaking, from the perspective of idea exchange, the collaboration in group work is like 'a bowl of salad', i.e. a collection of the different ideas offered by each individual group member after they reach agreements.

Nevertheless, if a cultural-making process does emerge and evolve in student group work as the specific *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013), a focus on that process may shed light on the constructive learning aspects of group work as a collaborative activity. As I demonstrated in the findings, the cultural-making process in student group work (i.e. the *distribution* and *intensity* of its salient aspects) reveals the processes of how the different ideas are exchanged among the group members to develop their shared thinking and behaviours. Exploring student group work from the perspective of the cultural-making process not only recognises the resources (termed '*cultural realities*' in this study) each group member draws on and brings to the site of group work (termed '*cultural arena*' in this study), but also acknowledges emerging patterns of behaviour co-constructed by the group members. The *cultural realities* brought or developed by each group member in their group work can be considered as the 'ingredients' which are essential for the birth and

development of the cultural-making process. This process is a hybrid and synergistic outcome of what the group members bring to their collaborative learning activities.

4. The Complexities of Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

In Chapter 4, I argued that the majority of acculturation studies conceive cultural difference through a binary view, which is largely influenced by the essentialist cultural paradigm that reifies culture into a bounded entity (Holiday, 1999). This binary view is manifest in traditional conceptualisations of both the 'places' associated with an individual's acculturation and of the individuals themselves as the agents in the acculturation process (Berry, 2005; Gullberg and Watts, 2014; Schildkraut, 2007; Smith and Khawaja; 2014; Walker, 2007). Because of the binarism, acculturating individuals are usually presented as marginalised 'guests' or 'cultural receivers', who are expected to adopt the norms laid down by the dominant 'hosts' or 'cultural providers' (Berry, 1997; Fu, 2015; Marlowe *et al.*, 2014; Piontkowski *et al.*, 2000). Acculturation is often studied as a challenging experience solely relevant to 'cultural receivers', an experience that involves their emotional disturbance such as stress and discomfort while they make an effort to fit into the dominant cultures (Berry, 1997; 2005; Van Acker and Vanbeselaere, 2011; 2012).

In contrast to the major discussions in the research area of acculturation, the findings of this study also provide empirical evidence (see: Chapter 7) to support the conceptualisation of acculturation form the anti-essentialist perspective. This support is demonstrated through answering the research question 2: *What patterns can be identified about students' individual acculturation trajectories, especially in terms of any changes occurring to their cultural realities concerning group work?*

In Chapter 7, I summarised the participants' acculturation trajectories into four broad types and named them as follows (see more details in Chapter 7):

> ➢ A 'Stable Type' acculturation trajectory, which means the participants' key aspects of acculturations are dominated by the maintaining trend;
> ➢ A 'Replacing Type' acculturation trajectory, which means the participants' key aspects of acculturations are dominated by the replacing trend;

> An 'Enriching Type' acculturation trajectory, which means the
> participants' key aspects of acculturations are dominated by the
> enriching trend;

> A 'Blending Type' acculturation trajectory, which means there is no
> dominant trend amongst the participants' key aspects of acculturation.

The taxonomy above echoes many existing acculturation studies in that it
describes the overall pattern of development with regard to an individual's
acculturation and the categories are, to a certain extent, resonant with the
concepts developed in those studies (e.g. Berry, 1997; 2005; 2008; Coleman,
1995; La Fromboise *et al.*, 1993; Phinney, 1996; Ryder, Alden and Paulhus,
2000; Schildkraut, 2007). For instance, some participants' 'Stable Type'
acculturation trajectories may resonate with the 'separation' type in Berry's
(2005) work on acculturation strategy, indicating that an individual remains
'loyal' to the values and behaviours acquired prior to his/her acculturative
experiences. The 'Enriching Type' acculturation in this study can also be related
to Berry's (2005) 'integration' strategy, which shows that the acculturating
individual has incorporated new cultural elements into his/her cultural repertoire
without 'unlearning' his/her earlier cultural preferences. The 'Replacing Type'
acculturation addresses similar concerns to Berry's (2005) concept of
'assimilation', which means that a person acquires new values and behaviours
in place of existing ones.

These broad categories provide a tentative, interpretive possibility for describing
the orientations of change occurring to acculturating individuals. However, I
would like to emphasise that the findings from this study revealed much greater
complexity. My interpretation of the 'replacing', 'maintaining' and 'enriching'
trajectories was only based on the 'dominant' patterns I identified from the
various aspects of acculturation relevant to each individual participant. For
example, in Giffie's case, I summarised her overall acculturation as a 'replacing'
type (see: Section 3.2 in Chapter 7), because I interpreted two key aspects of
her acculturation (i.e. group member's friendship and being a group leader) as
falling into a 'replacing' trend and the third key aspect (unfair feeling) into a
'maintaining' trend. Similarly, the other participants also demonstrated a mixture
of trends in relation to the specific key aspects of their acculturation.
Furthermore, four of the 15 participants demonstrated even greater variation in

this regard and I could not identify any 'dominant' trend. Their acculturation trajectories, which I termed 'Blending Type', suggest that there may be other possibilities that cannot be fit into the aforementioned categories. Therefore, the taxonomy I developed is by no means conclusive, but only intended for describing broad patterns of acculturation, only when such patterns are identifiable by applying certain procedures.

These trajectories of the individual group members' acculturation processes are further discussed from three aspects in the remaining part of this section.

4.1 Acculturation beyond a Binary Perspective

This study scrutinised the dynamics of acculturation occurring in student group work as a specific *cultural arena* which cannot be defined in binary terms. In this study, only two groups included 'local' British students (i.e. the group constituted by Peder *et al.,* and the group constituted by Alleva *et al.*) while the remaining 3 groups were entirely formed by the 'international students'. For these 3 groups, from the binary view of dividing the 'hosts' and 'guests', there seemed to be no 'hosts' in their group work as none of them was a 'local' student who could provide 'the British academic culture' in relation to doing group work to the rest members. For the two groups where 'local students' were there, they did not play the roles of 'hosts' either. For example, in the group constituted by Peder *et al,* Codey was a 'local' student, she had assumed that she would lead the group as she said that:

> "I found I actually felt beforehand, maybe I would have to take the leader a little bit because I am the only native English speaker… if I were studying abroad, I might look towards if I was not the native speaker, I might look towards the native speaker, to turn to, to take the lead" (Cordey, Transcript 1).

However, in their group, she did not lead the group work, it was Lauralee, an 'international student' who became the leader which is commented by Peder.

> "Today, we had to deliver today, so, [Lauralee] sent it around yesterday er and she cut down to, believe it or not, 2,999 words…and Lauralee said ok, that's fine er, I will check it again at home, I will do, I will do the rest, we were all happy with that…Lauralee sent the report around like in the email an attachment and she said ok please everybody have a look again" (Peder, Transcript 5).

These examples indicate that the binary view on the distinction between 'guests' and 'hosts' become rather blur or unnecessary in student group work (as a local *cultural arena*) where I explore the personal acculturation process.

The findings from this study show that every participant's *cultural realities* were constantly shaped and re-shaped through their interactions with their group members. Therefore, it can be argued that all of these participants experienced acculturation, regardless of their nationalities and cultural 'relationships' with the host society. Although the participants demonstrated individually different trajectories regarding their changing *cultural realities*, the changes occurred in response to the cultural-making process in student group work could never be predicted with certainty. Nor are these changes simply in response to a 'host' culture 'owned' by any of the group members as 'cultural providers'. This calls into question the traditional binary concepts that seek to explain the power imbalance between 'dominant' and 'marginalised' individuals solely through their cultures of 'origin'.

4.2 Acculturation as an Unpredictable Process

In Chapter 7, I presented and discussed the complex key aspects of the participant's acculturation, which are individually different. For example, I noted five key aspects of acculturation from Lauralee's narratives, but only two from Cordey's narratives throughout their entire participations in the group work. Moreover, the findings suggested three trends of development concerning the key aspects of acculturation, which are *replacing, enriching and maintaining* (see: Chapter 7). The development trajectories varied from one aspect to another. A synthesised understanding of several key aspects, based on which I drew my findings about each individual participant's acculturation trajectory, led to even more diverse results. Therefore, I did not find any notable linear correlations between these development trajectories and the participants' 'background' information, such as their nationalities and ethnicities. This suggests that any *prior* predictions of individuals' acculturation trajectories based on their 'backgrounds' can be problematic, if decontextualised from the dynamics of their experiences in the relevant *cultural arena*. This means that acculturation trajectories, illustrated by the participants in this study, can be highly personalised.

4.3 Acculturation Trajectory Indicates Personal Development

A highly personalised acculturation trajectory potentially suggests a liminal stage of a group member throughout his/her participation in group work. As I argued in the literature review (see: Chapter 4), an individual could undergo a 'in-between' stage in terms of the changes of his/her *cultural realities*. Before an individual started to do this group work, s/he probably had held a set of *cultural realities* vis-à-vis how to do group work. However, after doing this specific group work, an individual's set of *cultural realities* vis-à-vis how to do group work might be changed. Therefore, it is vague and indeterminate about what changes of *cultural realities* an individual might experience during the participation in group work.

Arguably, the liminal stages are more salient from those participants who are categorised into either *Replacing* or *Enriching* trajectories (see: Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in Chapter 7) because the majority of their key aspects of acculturation have either replaced or enriched throughout their group work participation (see: the circled key aspects in Diagram 8.3).

Two Participants' Acculturation Processes in Their Student Group Work
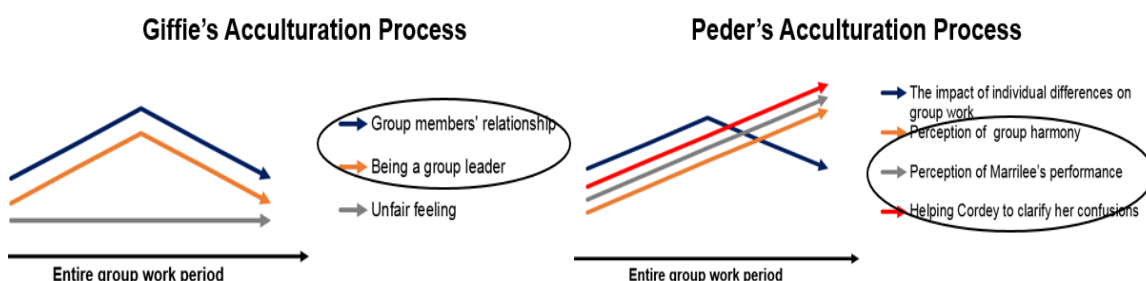
Diagram 8.3 (Source: Chapter Seven Findings)

For instance, as I pointed out in the findings (see: section 2.1 in Chapter 7), at the beginning of Giffie's group work, she thought it was difficult and challenging to work with 'strangers' (Giffie's *cultural realities* at the beginning of her group work). At that particular moment, I would argue it is uncertain and indeterminate in terms of what direction she would develop in terms of the perception of group members' relationship. In other words, once the group work completed, she described that she became friends with the other group members (Giffie's *cultural realities* at the end of her group work), which was one of the many possibilities that could happen to her. To Giffie, throughout the participation in

this group work, the relationship between her and her group members turned from 'strangers' to 'friends'. In this case, arguably, the group work is a liminal stage for her to develop the relationship with her group members.

However, this does not imply that the remaining participants have not experienced their liminal stages. Although those participants have been categorised into either *Stable* or *Blending* trajectories (see: Sections 3.1 and 3.4 in Chapter 7), some of their key aspects still showed changes throughout the group work experience. I take Warde's acculturation process – a *Stable Trajectory* – as an example here (see: Diagram 8.4).

Warde's Acculturation Process in Student Group Work
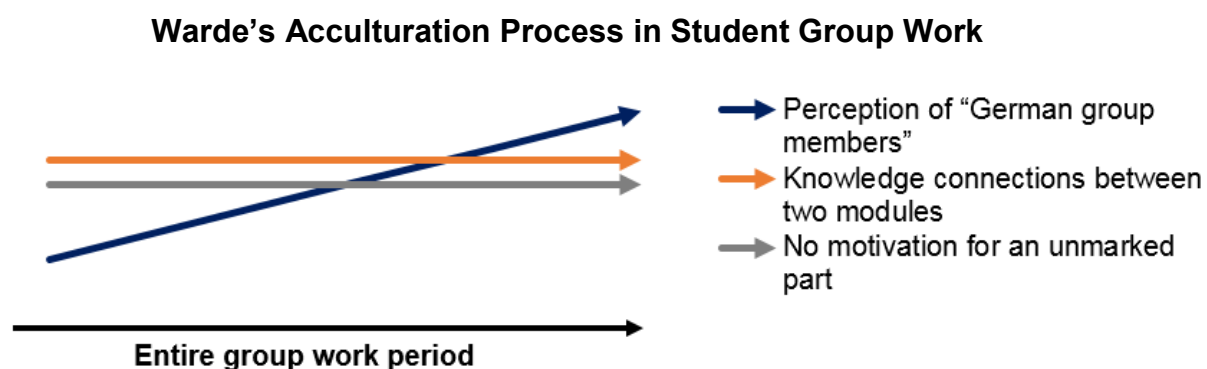
Diagram 8.4 (Source: Chapter Seven Findings)

As Diagram 8.4 shows, regarding one of Warde's key aspects of acculturation: *Perception of 'German Group Members'*, he said the followings when the group work had started, which showed explicitly that Warde held stereotypes about German students.

> "My previous stereotype about Germans…strict to the details, especially for working" (Transcript 1, Warde).

As their group work progressed, from the middle stage onwards, he started to comment the group members from Germany like this:

> "…from last trimester…both of the German girls are really stick to the details…but for those…I am with for this semester, they totally different…they are not that strict to those details at all" (Transcript 4, Warde).

From what Warde said, I can interpret that Warde started to question himself in terms of the stereotypical impressions about German students. He started to realise that individuals can be different even if they were all called 'German students'.

Moreover, in the later stage of their group work, he even began to appreciate the scrutiny given by these students from Germany as the check was important for them. Warde no longer considered their behaviours as 'time-consuming' or 'unnecessary' because he said:

> "We do realise how important that we have two group members from Germany because they really strict, a lot of patience to check all the details" (Transcript 5, Warde).

I would argue, Warde's negative stereotypes about Germans or German students have been diminished or shifted after doing this group work. Therefore, Warde's participation in this group work is a liminal stage to him in terms of his perception of German students (part of Warde's *cultural realities*) because his perception of German student was changed over his participation in this group work.

Thus, I claim that the majority of the participants in this study could have experienced liminal stages through doing their group work, although the degree varies from person to person.

The liminal stage individual group members experienced suggests that personal acculturation trajectory indicates an individual's main concerns may change over time. These concerns reflect what challenges a group member may have encountered, what benefits s/he could have gained and what strategies s/he intended to or had adopted. In a word, a participant's personal acculturation trajectory in student group work synthesises not only what s/he 'encounters' (e.g. benefits and challenges) but also what s/he would 'offer' (e.g. strategies, responses).

Thus, personal acculturation trajectory can be considered as an analytical lens for researchers to gain deeper insights into each group member's personal development.

As the findings show, personal acculturation did happen to each participant when they conducted group work, regardless what the group members' national backgrounds are. The findings provide some evidence to contrast the two main arguments I learnt in the literature on student group work: (1) students might not gain the 'intercultural-related benefits', such as intercultural awareness, intercultural competences or skills, until they have chances to work with fellow

students from other countries or ethnic groups as the culturally different others (De Vita, 2005; Liu and Alba, 2012; Popov *et al.*, 2012; Turner, 2009); (2) Students probably need to maximise the benefits while minimising the challenges (Dolmans *et al.*, 2001; Maguire and Edmondson, 2001; Montgomery, 2009; Sweeney *et al.,* 2008; Williams and Johnson, 2011).

In this sense, working in a group with nationality-mixed group members does not necessarily increase the chances of gaining benefits. In the meantime, benefits and challenges can be individually different and they are mixed together throughout the experience of participating in group work. These insights can further provide educational practitioners with 'rich data' to create bespoke strategies or methods to assist students in higher education.

5. The *Interplay* between Cultural-Making Process and Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

In contrast to the existing studies on acculturation tend to conceive this phenomenon as a personal experience of adapting into a 'solid' culture, the findings from this study suggest that personal acculturation may not take place against a 'solid' culture, but instead, against an uncertain and fluid cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness. In the previous two sections of this chapter, I have discussed the trajectories of the cultural-making processes and group members' acculturation trajectories as two parallel processes occurring in student group work as the given *cultural area*. I now turn to the relationship between these two dynamic processes and examine how they influence each other. Thus, the discussion in this section responses to the research question 3: *Are there any discernible links between the group members' individual acculturation trajectories and the developmental patterns regarding the processes of cultural-making towards group cohesiveness?*

5.1 The Cultural-Making Process Influences the Trend(s) of an Individual's Key Aspect(s) of Acculturation

Drawing on the analytical categories I developed for describing the trajectories of cultural-making processes and those of individual members' acculturation in student group work, I argue that the salient aspects identified in the cultural-making process have an influence on the key aspects of acculturation (and their

trajectories of development) demonstrated by the participants. I now illustrate this argument with an example. Marrilee's acculturation process could be understood from the trajectories of development regarding the five key aspects of acculturation she presents, which are cited in Diagram 8.5 in order to facilitate the following discussion.

Marrilee's Acculturation Process in a Student Group
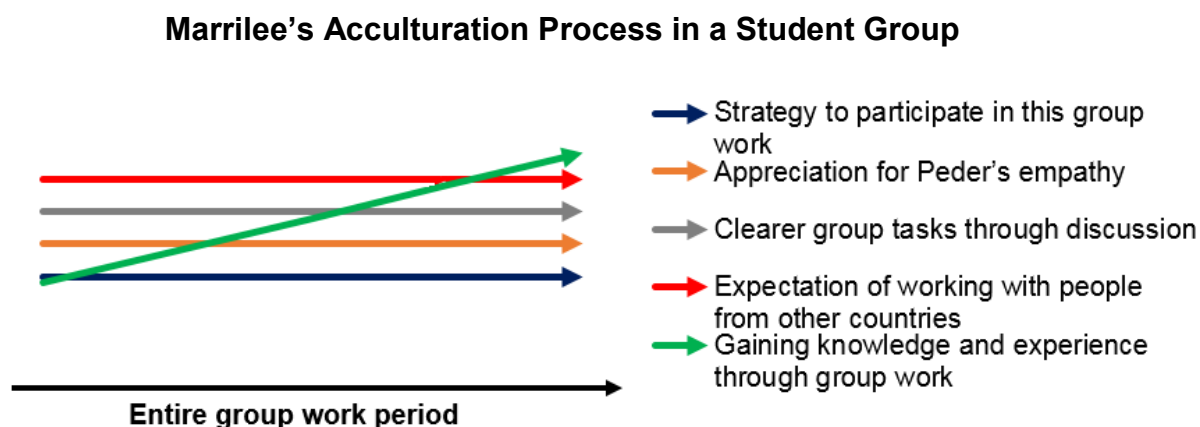
Diagram 8.5 (Source: Chapter Seven Findings)

Amongst the five key aspects of acculturation I identified from Marrillee's case, I interpreted a *'maintaining'* trend for the *Appreciation for Peder's Empathy* aspect, and an *'enriching'* trajectory for the *Gaining Knowledge and Experience through Group Work* aspect. These two aspects of her acculturation seem closely related to two salient aspects identified in her group's cultural-making process, namely, *Hierarchy amongst Group Members* and *Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members*. Regarding these two salient aspects, the other members in her group (i.e. Lauralee, Peder and Cordey) seemed to share the thinking that Marrilee was new to join this module who had no background knowledge like they had had. Peder and Cordey generally commented that Marrilee had no knowledge in relation to intercultural business communication (they called it 'IBC'), which they learnt from a module in the previous trimester. For example, Cordey directly pointed out her concerns regarding this.

> "[Marrilee] brought nothing really, not, not much, but she, I think she also struggles, maybe because she didn't do the course last semester, she is new so she doesn't have the same kind of background knowledge that we have" (Cordey, Transcript 2).

Slightly indirect, Peder also mentioned that Marrilee had some challenging times to work with them in the group as she had not had a chance to do the intercultural business communication module they had done.

"We all had er a course before called intercultural business communication and what we are doing now a kind of building on that, it's, it's continuing, so [Marrilee] didn't have that first course, so, we, I had a feeling we are more into the subject" (Peder, Transcript 1).

"Was for [Marrilee], it's more difficult, she didn't have the first course" (Peder, Transcript 4).

From Lauralee's perspective, apart from sharing the same idea as what Peder and Cordey did, she thought Marrilee also had no human resources management (she called it HRM) knowledge.

"The problem is that we had learnt about intercultural issues last trimester, and [Marrilee] didn't and also she doesn't have any HRM knowledge" (Lauralee, Transcript 1).

"[Marrilee] didn't have the IBC course last trimester, so, she doesn't have a background and she doesn't have a business background either" (Lauralee, Transcript 2).

Marrilee seemed to be positioned by her group members in a less advantageous position if I compare her positions with the positions the other members had in her group. To some extent, Marrilee also acknowledged this position. On the one hand, Marrilee emphasised that she lacked background knowledge and, on the other hand, she highlighted the skills and working experiences that the other group members had, like what she said in the following extracts:

"I don't have the background, I don't have the business background and I don't have the cultural diversity background, I don't have any background about this subjects" (Marrilee, Transcript 1).

"Their advantages are working experience" (Marrilee, Transcript 5).

"Lauralee, I think she, she said she did a module before and which was quite similar to this module, to the module, in last trimester, so, she could find some similarities that some kind of connections" (Marrilee, Transcript 7).

When Marrilee's 'disadvantageous position' was recognised by all the other members in their group and Peder showed empathy and understanding to Marrilee throughout the group work, it could be 'significant' to Marrilee. Marrilee appreciated it and thus she said:

"[Peder] can, you know, he can, he doesn't need to, he doesn't need to care about my feeling but he cares and he talked with me, maybe he is a good guy and another way" (Marrilee, Transcript 4).

Peder's support and empathy can also be noted from what he described at the same time:

"I would like to talk to…Marrilee…because I have the feeling that she just doesn't feel at this moment well placed and but sad about the situation, I would like to talk to her to tell her that…we are happy to have a group and we see that she tries and put effort "(Peder, Transcript 4).

From this perspective, it is not difficult to understand why Marrilee's one key aspect of acculturation is about *Appreciation for Peder's Empathy* and it shows a *maintaining* trajectory.

Moreover, Marrilee also recognised this 'disadvantageous position' by herself and then believed that she needed to be a follower to learn from other 'experienced group members' in terms of knowledge as well as how to do the group work. As the group work progressed, she did feel that she learnt a lot from her colleagues. Marrilee described like this:

"[I] play a role of follow, just like follow something like follow…I just follow, try to follow, I just try to add some ideas and maybe when they are talking and I get some ideas" (Marrilee, Transcript 4).

When their group work completed, Marrilee emphasised that learning from group members (she described as learning from students) was a good approach for her.

"In this process, you got another way to learn things…one was from the lecturer, but one was from students…if another student tried to explain it to you based on the student's understanding and it makes more sense for you" (Marrilee, Transcript 7).

I take these interpretations to explain the *enriching* trajectory regarding her another key aspect of acculturation about *Gaining Knowledge and Experience through Group Work*.

We can imagine, if Marrilee had not 'agreed' with her group members' perception that 'Marrilee is in a disadvantageous position', her acculturation in relation to the above two aspects might proceed towards different trends.

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5.2 Personal Acculturation Influences the Intensity of Salient Aspect(s) Identified in the Cultural-Making Process

Whilst the cultural-making process in a student group may have shaped the individual members' acculturation, the latter, in turn, seemed to influence the trajectory of the cultural-making process in a student group. I, again, take examples from the group formed by Marrilee, Peder, Lauralee and Cordey. In Peder's, Lauralee's and Cordey's acculturation narratives, I noted one shared theme: *Perception of Marrilee's Performance*. (see: Diagram 8.6). In other words, these three participants all perceived Marrilee to be a 'different' member, who might pose certain challenges to their collaboration, although their perceptions and reactions were individually different.

Three Participants' Shared Key Aspect of Acculturation in a Student Group
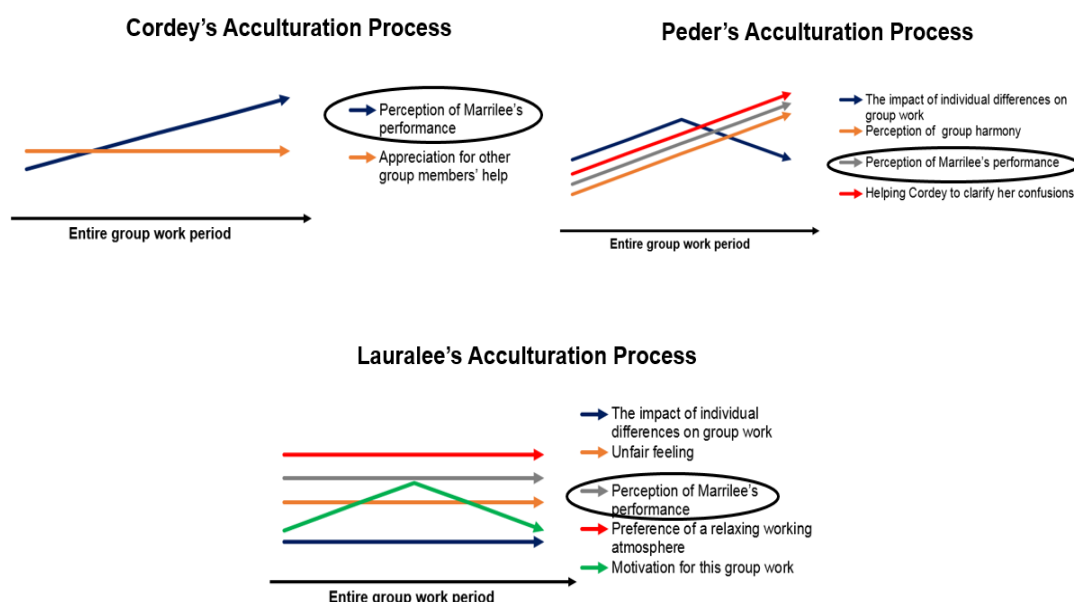
Diagram 8.6

As Diagram 8.6 shows, this key aspect is manifested by *enriching* trends within both Cordey's and Peder's personal acculturation processes, however, it retains a *maintaining* trend in Lauralee's acculturation process.

More specifically, Peder gradually developed empathy and understandings to Marrilee's 'non-proactive' performance. In the meantime, he tried to foreground other merits that Marrilee had as a way to recognise her role in this group, for example:

> "Some good input from [Marrilee] as well, she also prepared something but what she prepared was more related to what we did last trimester, so, it's good

stuff but I think the module leader is looking for something different" (Peder, Transcript 3).

"Marrilee, I mean she is a very pleasant person, you can hardly imagine anything negative come from her" (Peder, Transcript 5).

I consider Peder's *enriching* trend regarding this key aspect of acculturation is shaped through some *cultural realities* with a focus to see what Marrilee had done well and her good personalities during their group work. These *cultural realities* make contributions to the salient aspect about *'(Un)healthy' Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members*. As can be seen in the trajectory regarding the cultural-making process in their group, Peder (represented by the initial P in Diagram 8.7) shared this aspect with other group members in the first four stages (see: Diagram 8.7).

A Salient Aspect Identified in the Cultural-Making Process

in Peder *et al.'*s Group (1)

Salient aspects at stage 1	Salient aspects at stage 2	Salient aspects at sage 3	Salient aspects at stage 4	Salient aspects at stage 5
(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P, L&C)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P&L)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P, L&C)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (P, L&C)	(Un)Healthy Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members (C)

Diagram 8.7

As for Lauralee, she made complaints about Marrilee's performance in group work and thought the rest members had to cover Marrilee's part. She felt it was unfair and annoyed most of the time during their group work because she said:

"It doesn't really make sense to tell her you need to catch up from reading because you can't do that for seven hundred words group report that each one of us basically has his part, to share the task, so, well, I think, in the end, well, yeah, help her out a lot" (Lauralee, Transcript 2).

Lauralee also had no idea how to make Marrilee perform better and, as a consequence, she decided to 'gloss over' or make no comments on Marrilee's performance.

"I don't know how to tell it to someone without being rude…just didn't speak about Marrilee's part again" (Lauralee, Transcript 4).

Lauralee's *maintaining* trend about this key aspect of acculturation is shaped by her *cultural realities* that emphasise the unfairness or workload, which arguably contributed to the salient aspect about *Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group*

Work identified in the cultural-making process in their group. As can be seen in the trajectory regarding the cultural-making process in their group, Lauralee (represented by the initial L in Diagram 8.8) then shared this aspect with other group members throughout all the five stages (see: Diagram 8.8).

A Salient Aspect Identified in the Cultural-Making Process
in Peder *et al.*'s Group (2)

Salient aspects at stage 1	Salient aspects at stage 2	Salient aspects at sage 3	Salient aspects at stage 4	Salient aspects at stage 5
Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (P, M, L&C)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (P, M, L&C)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (P, L&C)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (P, M, L&C)	Positive/Negative Appraisal of the Group Work (P, M, L&C)

Diagram 8.8

In terms of Cordey, working with Marrilee seemed to provide a chance for Cordey to reflect on her own skills in group work and what she would need to do better for the next time if she came across similar situations, as she said:

> "What I've learnt from it…I think I have to try hard to include [Marrilee]" (Cordey, Transcript 5).

When Cordey drew on *cultural realities* towards her personal development, she shows an *enriching* trend of this key aspect of acculturation as well, which arguably contributed to the salient aspect about *Reflection on Personal Performance*. As can be seen in the trajectory regarding the cultural-making process in their group, Cordey (represented by the initial C in Diagram 8.9) shared this salient aspect with other group members in most of the stages, except for the second stage (see: Diagram 8.9).

A Salient Aspect Identified in the Cultural-Making Process
in Peder *et al.*'s Group (3)

Salient aspects at stage 1	Salient aspects at stage 2	Salient aspects at sage 3	Salient aspects at stage 4	Salient aspects at stage 5
Reflection on Personal Performance (P, L&C)	Reflection on Personal Performance (L)	Reflection on Personal Performance (M, L&C)	Reflection on Personal Performance (P, M, L&C)	Reflection on Personal Performance (P, M, L&C)
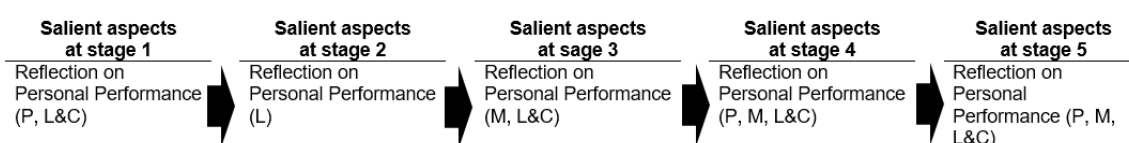
Diagram 8.9

These examples suggest that members working in a group may not necessarily share the same way of thinking and behaviour at all times, but some of them may develop similar thinking at some point, hence engaging with acculturation – a process of gaining 'membership' into the group in question. This process, in

turn, would add to the 'intensity' of the certain salient aspects that are identified in the cultural-making process in a student group.

5.3 The Development of the Conceptual Framework

In the last two chapters, I have revisited the conceptual models guiding this study and fine-tuned them with insights from my research results with regard to the cultural-making process and personal acculturation respectively in student group work. In the light of the previously discussed interlink between these two processes, I now present a further synthesised version of this conceptual framework (see: Diagram 8.10 on the next page).

Compared to the initial version of this conceptual framework (see: Section 7 in Chapter 4), in the present version, once each group member draws on and brings his/her *cultural realities* (left-hand side in Diagram 8.10) into their group work as a local *cultural arena* (represented by the irregular circle in Diagram 8.10), all the *cultural realities* start to intermingle. The two processes – cultural-making process and personal acculturation – start to unfold simultaneously and interactively, which are represented by the big rectangle on the top and the big oval at the bottom. The findings (see: Chapters 6 and 7) enable me to demonstrate the complexity in the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in student group work (top right-hand side in Diagram 8.10) as well as the different trends regarding the key aspects of acculturation a group member may present (bottom right-hand side in Diagram 8.10).

More importantly, while the group members are participating in this *cultural arena to* interact and negotiate meanings, the two processes are not only parallel to each other in terms of the development but also indicate an *interplay*, which means:

> ***The cultural-making process in student group work has an effect on the development trends regarding the key aspects of each group member's acculturation. In turn, each individual's acculturation may influence the intensity of the salient aspects which shapes the characteristics of culture in student group (if captured at any given moment).***

The *Interplay* between Cultural-Making Process and Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

(Fine-tuned Version)
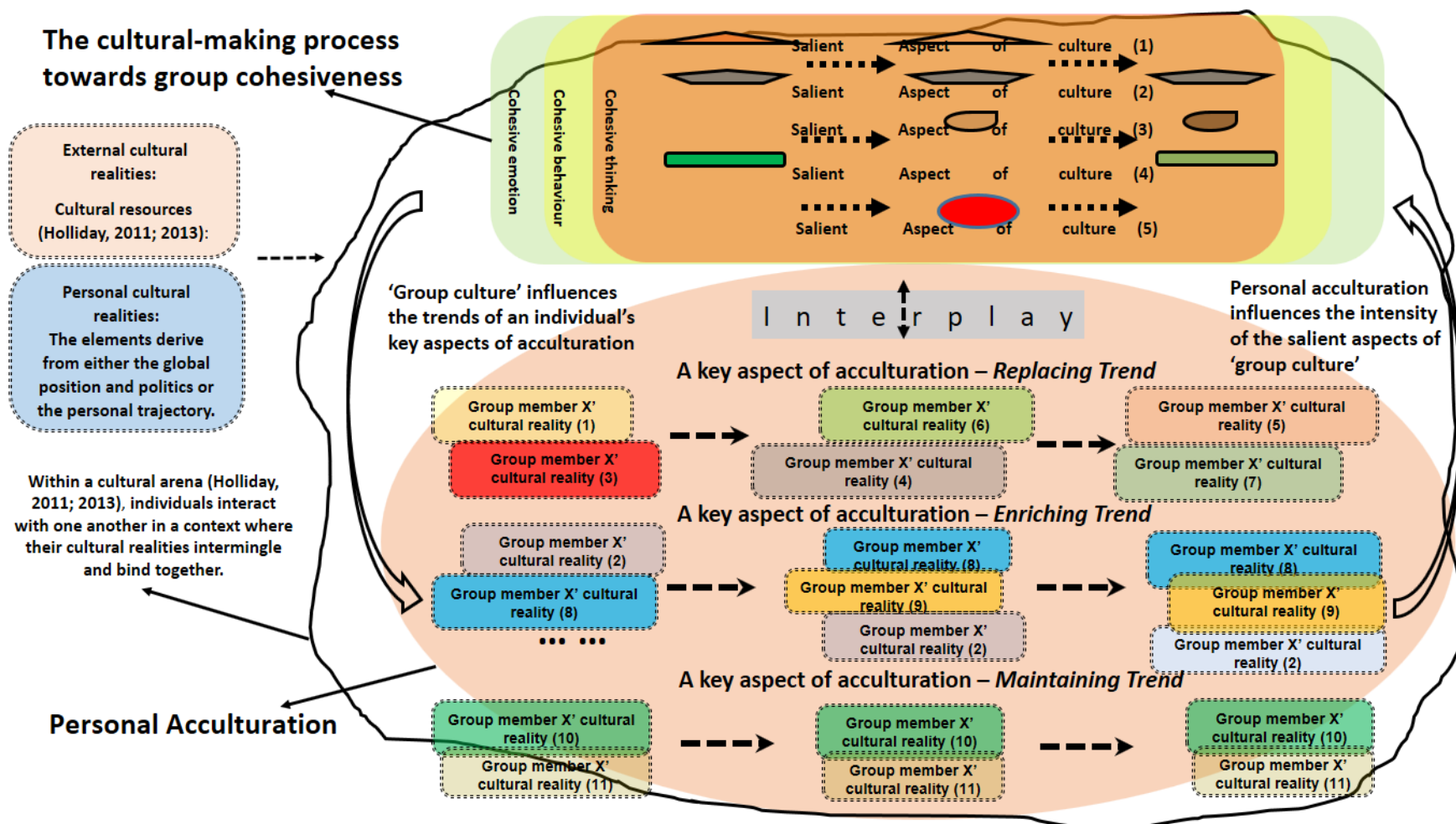
Diagram 8.10

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings reported in the previous two chapters. I suggested considering culture in student group work as a 'device' instead of a 'facet' (Holliday, 1999; 2000) through the lens of the concept *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013).

As the discussions presented, the cultural-making process towards cohesiveness in student group work (reported in the findings: Chapter 6) provided empirical evidence to support the anti-essentialist cultural view regarding the uncertain and fluid attributes of culture. In the meantime, group members' individual acculturation trajectories (reported in the findings: Chapter 7) reveals that personal acculturation does occur in a micro-level *cultural arena* and it can be highly personalised with unpredictability in terms of its developmental direction. This discussion put the binary cultural perspective ('culture of origin' vs. 'culture of settlement') argued in many existing acculturation studies into question.

As I argued, highlighting the two processes (cultural-making process and personal acculturation) in this form of collaborative learning as a specific *cultural arena* might provide alternative insights that foreground the constructive aspects of group and personal development, which seems to have been downplayed in most existing studies on student group work.

Furthermore, the discussions have enabled me to enrich the analytical guide – the conceptual framework – developed on the basis of the literature review (see: Chapter 4). The fine-tuned version of this conceptual framework indicates an *interplay* between cultural-making process and personal acculturation in student group work. In particular, the cultural-making process can influence individual members' key aspects of acculturation in terms of their trends, and the personal acculturation can have an impact on the intensity of the salient aspects identified in the cultural-making process.

Chapter Nine Conclusions

1. Introduction

Following the preceding chapter where I have carried out the discussions on the findings in this study, in this concluding chapter, I summarise the main arguments developed throughout this study and highlight their theoretical contributions and practical implications.

It begins with a summary to emphasise the key arguments I developed in each of the preceding chapters. After the summary, I contend that the theoretical contributions mainly lie in the conceptual framework I have conceived and refined throughout this study to understand the *interplay* between the two separate, parallel, but interrelated processes (e.g. the cultural-making process and personal acculturation) in student group work as a micro-level *cultural arena.*

In addition to that, I put forward some practical implications for educational practitioners to consider student group work from the perspective of thinking it as a specific *cultural arena* and suggest how educational practitioners could evaluate student group work differently in their pedagogic practices.

I then reflect on the process of conducting this study, where some limitations are discussed. In the final part of this chapter, I point out how future research could be methodologically conducted in a more nuanced way when cultural phenomena are explored from the perspective of the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm.

2. A Summary of This Thesis

This thesis starts with student group work in the context of higher education due to my personal interest which is narrated in Chapter 1. The review of student group work directs me to realise two problematic issues regarding how the student group work has been academically investigated. These two problematic issues are discussed in Chapter 2. Bearing these two problematic issues in my mind, I suggest the interpersonal dynamics in student group work can be further

explored by drawing on insights from other research domains, which leads me to review the field of intercultural communication and study of acculturation.

I then have examined the interpersonal dynamics and interactions through the discussion on the concept of culture in the field of intercultural communication in chapter 3 where I emphasise a current shift from the essentialist to the anti-essentialist in terms of the cultural paradigm. As I have argued, a cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness perhaps occurs when I adopt the anti-essentialist cultural perspective to investigate and interpret culture in student group work. I have further conceived conceptual model in order to understand the process of cultural-making that possibly takes shape in student group work.

Following that chapter, in Chapter 4, I have explored the dynamics within each individual student by locating this phenomenon in the research arena of acculturation where individual changes are discussed under the context of cultural difference. This review reveals that the majority of existing studies on acculturation conceptualise cultural difference in an essentialist way by foregrounding the differences within agents (i.e. 'hosts' and 'guests') and places (i.e. 'the culture of origin' and 'the culture of settlement').

However, informed by the anti-essentialist cultural perspective with particular insights drawn from Holliday's (2011; 2013) concept of *cultural reality*, I consider the possibility of (re-)conceptualising acculturation from an anti-essentialist perspective. This reconceptualisation of acculturation has enabled me to conceive another conceptual model to describe individual acculturation process.

All these discussions in the literature review helped me to finalise the two-fold research aim of this study: explore how students individually acculturate within group work as the specific *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013) where the cultural-making process towards group cohesiveness perhaps occurs as the group members constantly negotiate their *cultural realities*.

In order to achieve this research aim, in Chapter 5, I have elaborated the research procedure after clarifying my research philosophies. Most importantly, I discussed the narrative interview (data generation process) and categorical-content method (data analysis process) as the specific methodological steps under the narrative inquiry.

The findings are reported in the two following chapters. More precisely, in Chapter 6, I have reported the trajectories of cultural-making processes in the participants' five groups. These trajectories are described by means of synthesising the different patterns regarding the *distribution* and *intensity* of the 13 salient aspects that were identified in the five student groups. These patterns have enabled me to modify the conceptual model in relation to the cultural-making process in student group work.

In Chapter 7, I have reported the trajectories of individual group members' acculturation processes in their group work. These trajectories are delineated by means of synthesising the trends with respect to the key aspects of acculturation I identified from each participant. I further categorised the participants' acculturation trajectories into four types. They are '*Replacing Type', 'Enriching Type', 'Maintaining Type' and 'Blending Type'*. These findings, again, have enabled me to modify the conceptual model in relation to the personal acculturation in student group work.

Relying on the findings reported in Chapters 6 and 7, I respectively discussed the complexities illustrated in the trajectories of cultural-making processes and those of individual group members' acculturation processes in Chapter 8. Furthermore, I also discussed the discernible links between these two separate, but interconnected processes in student group work and interpret such interlinking as an *interplay* (see: Section 5 in Chapter 8).

Based upon the discussion, a fine-tuned version of the conceptual framework is suggested, which shows the theoretical contributions to knowledge in this study (see: Section 3 in this chapter) as well as some practical implications for the educational practitioners (see: Section 4 in this chapter). I sum up the thinking flow of this thesis in the following Diagram (9.1) to visualise the relationship between each chapter (on the next page).

A Summary of This Thesis

Chapter Two
Evaluation of Studies on Student Group Work

To promblematise two issues existing in the current studies on student group work, which directs to the other research areas, i.e. intercultural communication and acculturation

Exploring relevant literature

Chapter One Introduction

Personal academic sojourning life shapes my broad research-related interest and then turns into specific research aim and questions of this study.

Chapter Three Culture as Eemergent, Hybrid and Fluid Processes

To suggest a definition of culture and a conceptual model in order to explore the cultural-making process in student group work

Chapter Four Unfolding Complexities of Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

To reconceptualise acculturation and suggest a conceptual model in order to explore personal acculturation in student group work and develop a conceptual framework (a synthesis of two conceptual models) to indicate that the cultural-making process and personal acculturation are in parallel

A context where cultural realities can be explored

Chapter Five Methodology

To generate data in the form of narrative interview and analyse it by implementing the categorical-content method

Cultural realities

A perception of culture difference that is not necessarily associated with fixed physical entities.

Chapter Six Trajectories of Cultural-Making Processes towards Cohesiveness in Student Groups

Demonstration of the trajectories about the cultural-making process in participants' groups through the distribution and intensity of its salient aspects

A refined conceptual model vis-à-vis the cultural-making process in student group work

Chapter Seven Trajectories of Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

Demonstration of the personal acculturation trajectories through the synthesis of trends regarding the key aspects of acculturation explored from each individual participant

A refined conceptual model vis-à-vis personal acculturation in student group work

A conceptual framework to indicate the interplay between the cultural-making process and personal acculturation

Chapter Eight Discussion

Enriching understandings

(1) The complexity of the cultural-making process

(2) Multi-directions of personal acculturation

(3) A fine-tuned conceptual framework of exploring these two processes in student group work

Chapter Nine Conclusions

Main theoretical contributions: a conceptual framework to reveal the interplay between the cultural-making process and acculturation in student group work as a local cultural arena

Practical implications: to pay more attention to the process of student group work by exploring its cohesiveness and changes of personal cultural realties.

Diagram 9.1

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3. Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this study can be discussed from four aspects. First of all, the findings of this study enrich the understanding of the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm. Particularly speaking, scholars have been proactively discussing the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm since the late 1990s but most of the discussions are carried out at the conceptual level to problematise the dominant essentialist cultural paradigm that is popularly adopted in research and daily life to explore and interpret cultural phenomena through prioritising or emphasising the impact of the national or ethnic differences on the shape of culture (Hills, 2002; Hofstede,1980; 2001; 2010; House *et al.*, 2004; Schwartz, 1994).

Situated in the context of student group work at university, the findings of this study (see: Chapter 6) provide empirical evidence to support the argument that a cultural-making process can occur in a micro-level *cultural arena* (Holliday, 2011; 2013) as long as a group of members cohesively interact with each other. In addition to the cohesive thinking and behaviours that can be identified in the cultural-making process, the findings also demonstrate that cohesive emotions may take shape at some point among a group of members. In this sense, the meaning of culture regarding cohesiveness could be extended.

More importantly, the findings regarding the trajectories of cultural-making processes in five student groups (see: chapter 6) reflect the argument that culture is complex in reality (Baumann, 1996; Holliday, 2004; Nathan, 2015). Through the discussion on these trajectories (see: Chapter 8), I not only demonstrate the uncertain and fluid attributes of culture (as part of the cultural complexity) but also further deepen the understanding of these attributes by associating them with the liminality vis-à-vis the changes of cultural realities in each individual group member during their collaborations in groups. The discussion suggests that culture is constantly changing with some patterns in student group work, which means that when people describe culture, they need to be aware of the attribution of temporality to their cultural descriptions. That is to say, the description of culture needs to be considered as a snapshot of a constant changing abstraction. If the temporal attribute is not addressed in the cultural description, people might shift their cultural views back to the

essentialist paradigm that claims culture is fixed, static and not changing over time.

Secondly, I have discussed the existing studies on people's acculturation from both the essentialist and anti-essentialist perspectives in Chapter 4, which enables me to conclude that the majority of current acculturation studies are influenced by the essentialist cultural paradigm in terms of the binarism in the minds of the researchers when they interpret cultural difference. Guided by this binarism, researchers tend to categorise and divide the agents (i.e. 'hosts' and 'guests') as well as the contexts (i.e. 'culture of origin' and 'culture of settlement') to discuss acculturation and consider acculturation mainly apply to those who physically cross the 'boundaries' when a 'host' in his/her 'culture of origin' travels to a 'culture of settlement' where s/he becomes a 'guest'. As a consequence, the binarism is reflected in their definitions of acculturation (Berry, 1994; Da Costa, 2008; Schwartz *et al.*, 2010; Skuza, 2007) and the theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature (Berry, 1997, 2005; Oberg; 1960; Phinney, 1996; Ryder, Alden and Paulhus, 2000; Schildkraut, 2007).

After identifying this gap in the research area of acculturation, I reconceptualise acculturation from the lens of the anti-essentialist cultural perspective and suggest that personal acculturation could be explored by tracing the changes of an individual's cultural realities in a *cultural arena* which is contextualised in student group work in this study. This argument developed throughout Chapter 4 is supported by the findings that are reported in Chapter 7. Therefore, this study shows that people probably do acculturate in a micro-level *cultural arena* which can be explored everywhere, such as study group, colleagues working together in an office or neighbourhood. It is then not necessarily to associate the occurrence of a person's acculturation merely with his/her geographical movement between two distant places (e.g. China to the UK).

In other words, the distinction between 'guests' and 'hosts' or between a 'culture of origin' and a 'culture of settlement' is not necessary in studying acculturation. Under certain circumstances, this binary distinction is even impossible because a group of individuals might cohesively work together in a place where none of them is local. In such a case, it is difficult to define who is the 'host' while the others are 'guests'. For instance, in this study, some student groups are entirely formed by several international students when they study in the UK.

Apart from the reconceptualisation of acculturation *per se*, the findings (see: Chapter 7) also provide me with some empirical evidence to argue that personal acculturation process can present multiple trends simultaneously (i.e. *enriching, replacing and maintaining*) because a person could have various key aspects acculturated in a *cultural arena* and each aspect could show its own trend of development. This argument foregrounds the complexity in personal acculturation process and suggests that personal acculturation can be understood through synthesising the trends of development concerning the individual's key aspects.

Additionally, I further discuss the interplay (explained in Chapter 8) between these two separate, parallel but interrelated processes (e.g. the cultural-making process and personal acculturation). Particularly speaking, the cultural-making process can influence the trends of the key aspects of acculturation an individual may present. In turn, an individual's acculturation process can influence the intensity of the salient aspects that are identified in the cultural-making process in student group work. This interplay indicates that, on one hand, the cultural-making process and personal acculturation are inseparable and interdependent and, on the other hand, these two processes in student group work are still equal and independent (they have their own trajectories of development) of each other. Thus, this interplay differs from the relationship between culture and individual discussed in the essentialist cultural paradigm in which individuals are mainly governed by the culture which is largely associated with particular physical entities (Hofstede, 1980; 2001; 2010).

4. Practical Implications

In the previous discussion chapter, I have argued that one of the possible approaches to evaluating student group work is to consider it as a specific *cultural arena* where the cultural-making process and personal acculturation perhaps occur. This approach regards culture as a 'device' (Holliday, 2000) and suggests understanding student group work from a lens of emergent culture. This approach might lead the educational practitioners to further consider three issues when they adopt the group work for the pedagogic purposes in higher education.

(1) It is the construction of cohesiveness, in other words, the cultural-making process in a group of students that needs to be paid much more attention. As I discussed in this study, the cultural-making process perhaps occurs in a student group which shows what and how group members have exchanged and co-constructed through interactions. Exploring the cultural-making process might provide educational practitioners with a better understanding regarding the process of collaboration through which they can appreciate what the students have done well and give feedback to what the students could improve. In a sense, it could be a more constructive evaluation method than the traditional methods to evaluate student group work mainly based upon their final outcome (e.g. group presentation) because the final group work outcome may not represent the dynamics students have experienced during group work. More importantly, evaluating student group work in such a way encourages students to focus and reflect on the process of collaboration during their group work rather than merely concentrate on the completion of the given tasks. In the end, it is the process of experiential learning in the group that matters to students.

(2) The educational practitioners should not disregard the autonomy and agency of each student when they work in a group. Each student draws on his/her sense-making competence when they work together as a group. This competence needs to be recognised and foregrounded. Paying attention to students' acculturation process might provide the educational practitioners with a perspective to learn how students' sense-making competencies develop, which is related to the personal development of each student. That is part of the ultimate purpose of having the (higher) education.

(3) Educational practitioners need to reconsider the formation of a student group. In the first place, the strategy of forming a student group would affect its cultural-making process and its group members' personal acculturation process. In particular, if a student group is formed through self-selection (i.e. a group is formed by some classmates who know each other well), cultural-making process and personal acculturation might have already occurred among the students before they start to collaborate for a project. By contrast, if a student group is formed under the criteria given by the educational practitioners, its cultural-making process might need time to emerge and develop, thus,

educational practitioners may need to consider when would be a good time to assess their group work performance.

In addition, educational practitioners, to some extent, can downplay the group members' cultural backgrounds (i.e. a group is constituted by all the local students, all the international students or mixed nationals). As this study shows, the cultural-making process and personal acculturation could occur as long as a *cultural arena* is constructed. Educational practitioners might need to consider how to make sure a group of students can cohesively interact so as to build a cultural arena instead of emphasising too much about the different cultural backgrounds of each student. To put it another way, educational practitioners need to understand the meanings of student group work from those who interact instead of ascribing attributes based on their national backgrounds.

5. Reflections on This Study

In undertaking this study, the main challenges I came across were in the methodological steps from the data generation to the data analysis. Some critical moments have already been reflected in the methodology chapter (see: Chapter 5) where the strategies I adopted to deal with the challenges are also discussed. Here I discuss some issues I was reflecting at the end of this study. This discussion also illustrates some limitations in this study.

As I mentioned in the reflection on the data generation (see: Section 4.2.2 in Chapter 5), I did not do a pilot study before approaching the actual participants. After the initial conceptualisation for this study (around December 2013), I believed that it was important to recruit participants 'promptly', which means I wanted to recruit the voluntary students as my participants before they started to do the group work. In such a way, I could carry out interviews along with their group work progress and I could invite the participants to narrate their group work experiences shortly after they completed every group activity. I thought that the participants would more likely provide rich data if they narrated a fresh experience. Guided by this assumption, I seemed not to have sufficient time to conduct a pilot study as I intended to complete the recruitment at the beginning of a trimester (January 2014). When I reflect on this decision. I think that reserving some time to do a pilot study could be useful for this study as I could

amend the research design, practise interview skills and strategies during the pilot study. In my case, the first three interviews do serve as the pilot study to me. As Mishler (1991) said, story-telling is a constructed process between the researcher (me) and the participants. Given that I was learning how to use different strategies to encourage the participants to narrate their group work experiences, the stories told by the participants in these three interviews might be affected by my interview skills.

In addition to that, in order to generate rich data, I interviewed each participant after their every group activity unless some participants could not make it due to their personal circumstances. When I reflect on the frequency of interviewing participants, I consider I might have done more than necessary. Reducing the frequency of interviewing does not mean that I would not have rich data. During the data generation stage for this study, some participants could not attend the interview regularly after every group activity they participated in, which did not affect much in terms of the richness regarding their group work experiences. Thus, for the future, I might reduce the frequency of interviewing participants. I associate the frequency of interviewing with the ethical consideration in this study because every participant voluntarily offered their private time to be interviewed.

6. Directions for Future Research

As the researcher of this study, conceptually speaking, I mainly situated in the anti-essentialist cultural paradigm to foreground the complexity of culture and argue that acculturation is possibly detached from individuals' geographical movements. They may occur in a micro-level *cultural arena* – student group work - as long as a group of individuals cohesively interact with each other. From this perspective, I emphasise the importance of understanding cultural phenomena through interpreting the interactions among individuals.

However, as Miles and Huberman (1994) argued, the mass of data needs to be meaningfully organised, reduced or reconfigured for the sake of manageability. In this sense, somehow, meanings presented in data have been reduced through the data condensation in order to make them intelligible in terms of the research-related issues being addressed (Frechtling and Sharp, 1997).

Accurately speaking, in this study, the process of simplifying the understandings of the cultural-making process and personal acculturation in student group work largely relies on identifying the patterns among the themes drawn from the categorical-content method (see: Section 4.4 in Chapter 5). This data analysis process – a process of meaning reduction – would have an impact on the rich understanding with respect to the research aim of this study.

For future research in relation to understanding cultural phenomena, this kind of methodological considerations and steps can be further nuanced. On the one hand, how to simplify the complexity of a cultural phenomenon that is under investigation. On the other hand, this process of simplification happens at the methodological level will not lead the researchers to fall into the pitfalls of the reductivism and determinism that have been problematised in the essentialist cultural paradigm (Holliday, 1999).

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Appendix 1 Consent Form

RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE[1]:

An Exploration of University Students' Acculturation Processes and the "Group Culture" Development from the Context of Students' Group Work

RESEARCHER[2]:

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

In my study, I intend to explore university students' acculturation processes when they are doing group work as a part of the assessment for a particular module. Meanwhile, I also want to learn how the 'group culture' noted from the group forms and develops.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES:

Initially, I hope you could let me know the agreed/planned schedule regarding your group activities.

After every group activity, I will invite you to participate in a narrative interview during which you will mainly share with me your experience of the group activity that you just took part in. Every interview will be audio-recorded.

After each interview, I will transcribe the recorded interview into transcript(s).

When I complete transcribing all the recorded interviews that are conducted with you, I will send those transcripts to you via e-mails in order to let you check that all the content presented in the transcripts are accurate.

Once I complete the data analysis and generate the initial findings, I will, again,

send you the parts that are concerned with your acculturation process in order to keep you informed.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

I will adopt a pseudonym to represent you wherever you are necessarily to be referred to, such as in the forthcoming interviews, the data analysis and findings in my PhD thesis etc.

All the recorded interviews will be securely stored in my desktop with password protection. It is only I who will access to and transcribe (audio-recordings) them. All the recordings will be carefully destroyed after I complete the PhD study.

In the process of transcribing, I will change any identifiable factual information mentioned in any interview into vague term(s) to maintain confidentiality.

In case that I have to discuss with my supervisors about any issue occurred in the stages of the data generation and analysis, I will use the term "a/the participant(s)" to conceal your identity and ensure that no other identifiable information can be released.

I will ensure that any quotations or attached transcripts (as appendices) presented in my PhD thesis are attributed to the pseudonymous.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE PARTICIPANT:

- Keep me informed of your every group activity in advance.
- Being agreeing to participate in the interview after every group activity.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO THE PARTICIPANT:

- Additional chances (i.e. the interviews) for you to consider your own group work experience, which may assist you to further deepen the understandings of yourself and others and then result in more thorough reflections.
- An illustrative example of conducting research-i.e. the date generation (the interviews), the data preparation (transcripts) and the data analysis (initial findings)-through which you may gain insights or learn lessons for your own postgraduate study.

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[1] The research title and research purpose of this research project were further refined during the data analysis and writing-up stages. Therefore, the version I wrote in the consent form were the conceptual ideas I had when carrying out data generation.
[2] Some personal information under this section (i.e. contact details) is intentionally omitted when this consent form is attached as an appendix in this thesis.

- An opportunity to understand your own acculturation process in the context of doing group work, which may enhance or develop your intercultural competence in other situations when you need to work with others.

RIGHTS OF THE PARTICIPANT:

- You participate in my study voluntarily without any coercion.

- You are given the opportunity to check the transcripts of what you said for accuracy.

- This is a fully independent study which will be conducted carefully and will not be related to your coursework outcomes in any way.

- You have the right to withdraw at any time. If this happens, I would like you to inform me in advance and provides me with some explanations or reasons for your withdrawal (if possible).

POTENTIAL DISCOMFORT TO THE PARTICIPANT:

You will be devoting your spare time to my study regarding the interviews. My strategies to deal with it: (a) You can decide both the interviewing time and venue as long as they are convenient to you; (b) Re-scheduling the interviewing time is acceptable.

THE STATEMENT OF PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT

I have read through the information from Page 1-3 and clearly understand the purpose and procedures of this research. I am willing to conduct the activities presented in the section titled as **EXPECTATIONS OF THE PARTICIPANT**. As a participant, I have been clearly told by the researcher about the confidentiality and potential benefits of my participation, the rights I have as well as the potential discomfort that may occur. In addition, I have opportunities to ask the researcher questions and have those questions satisfactorily answered.

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

The signed information sheet will be in duplicate, both the participant and the researcher keep a copy of each.

Note: from Page 1-3 of the information sheet, the first pronoun "I" refers to the researcher whilst the second pronoun "you" refers to the participant. On Page 4 of the information sheet, the first pronoun "I" refers to the "participant".

Appendix 2 A Prompt Used in the Initial Narrative Interview

I adapted this story to serve as a prompt for my research project. This story was originally written and published on the internet by a student about her group work experience.

My Group Work Experience

In my MBA course, we were asked to work as a team. My group members were Meenakshi Saluja, Ajay Verma, Deepak Khandelwal and Shivika Kapil. In the very beginning of our first group work meeting, I felt is seemed to be rather difficult to understand what Meenakshi and Shivika said. I thought that I would get used to them and it was just an issue of some unfamiliar accounts. Unfortunately, I went through that problem during our discussion. This problematic issue really made me upset and I even became slightly reluctant to continue the group discussion. I was trying to guess the meanings from their words all the time. It was really, really hard. Because of that, I did not have enough time to construct my own thoughts and articulated it. Even if I could, I probably would not do it, simply because I did not want to make any kind of mistake or offend any people. I was not confident about the meanings I understood from them. Therefore, what I decided to do was not to comment on anything my group members said because I didn't know how I should behave and get along with my group members, especially them; how to respond to them.

I raised this issue to Deepak after the group meeting, he told me that I could suggest them writing down what they had thought in their mind, which may make the communication easier to all of us. However, I was worried about that, though I agreed with his advice. At that moment, I was not sure whether my suggestion may offend them or, would make them have a kind of implicit interpretation that I thought they were stupid or something like that. In addition, it seemed only I who had this issue, not the other two members. So, I was doubt whether it was my problem rather them theirs.

To be continued …

Source: http://iilm.wordpress.com/2008/04/23/my-experience-of-group-work-with-my-group/

Appendix 3 Transcription Protocol

I The Presentation and Format

- I use the Normal template in Margins Option within the Microsoft Word to set the margin of each page.
- At the top left side of each page, in the header, I put information about the interview, such as Transcript 1-1, the 1st interview with Giffie, in 11-size, Arial font. The first part of the two numbers, such as '1-', stands for the first person of my participants (15 in total) and the second part, such as '-1', refers to the first transcript of the first participant.
- At the bottom of each page, in the footer, I put information about the page number in the right corner.
- I entitle each transcript by using a name such as, 'Transcript of the First Interview with Giffie', in 14-size, Arial font.
- After the title, I write a legend to indicate what initials are adopted to represent the researcher and the participant.
- I use 'F:' to refer to the researcher and the first one or two letters of the pseudonym plus colon, like 'G:' to refer to the participant.
- I present all the content of a transcript in a conversational form, in 12-size, Arial font, double space.
- The content of the researcher is on the right side of the page within a narrow section while the content of a participant on the left side within a wider section. I intend to use this layout to show readers that the emphasis lies in the participant's side.
- Normally, I demonstrate the turn-takings between I and the participant in a sequential order (one after another), whenever the researcher's and the participant's voices were overlapping, I write the words in the same line.
- I put 'THE END OF THE INTERVIEW', in 12-size, Arial font at the end of each transcript.
- I numerate each line by using the Line Number function in Page Layout option within the Microsoft Word in order to provide the specific content/segments.

II Definition of Each Symbol Used in the Transcripts

- I use the bracket [ ] with the words inside to provide additional information when it is necessary, for instance, [show me what in the Whatapp].
- I use the ellipses to indicate what a sentence was not completed, for instance, I am not….
- I use the bracket () with the word inaudible segment, plus the time to indicate where I cannot recognise what a participant said during a narrative interview, for example, (inaudible segment 4'30''30).
- I add the bracket () with the question mark after a particular word to illustrate that I am not quite sure about that word, though I transcribed it, for instance, less fair (?).
- I use the comma to indicate a natural pause within a sentence articulated by a participant or myself during a narrative interview.
- I use the question mark to indicate a question raised by a participant or myself during a narrative interview.
- I use the full stop to indicate a natural pause when a sentence is completed by a participant or myself during a narrative interview.

Appendix 4 An Illustrative Example of the Transcript

I attached the 3rd transcript of the participant – Marrilee – as an illustrative example to demonstrate the presentation, format and structure of the transcripts.

Transcript 6-3, the 3rd interview with Marrilee

Transcript of the Third Interview with Marrilee

F: = Frank (The researcher/interviewer) presented on the right section

M: = The participant (Marrilee) presented on the left section

1 F: thank you again to
2 be interviewed by me
3 again, and yeah, I
4 know that you just
5 completed another
6 group discussion this
7 morning, so, I would
8 like to know your
9 story or your
10 experience of this
11 one?

12 M: so for the second meeting, we just assigned
13 our tasks, I mean not this one, the second one,
14 so, er, so what have we, er achieved is just finish
15 our individual tasks and er, and we share, we
16 share our tasks what we have done so far and
17 you know we we read it and and we emm, we try
18 to make an agreement and we discuss a lot for
19 for some maybe for training or for some
20 something else and er, because you know firstly
21 we we do the tasks individually, but you know it's

22 difficult to make everything, er it's difficult to reach
23 an agreement, so today we come here just read
24 our individual works and then we selected some
25 information what we can we can totally agree and
26 then we collect them put to, put them in one box
27 and you know, it makes, it makes a lot of sense to
28 understand something and em, and and we did a
29 lot of reading and we, you know we try to er,
30 understand some journals for training and emm,
31 we express our individual ideas on training and
32 er, we share we share ideas and we get new
33 ideas as well and emm, and yeah, I think the
34 assignment is er, is almost finished, emm,
35 anything else, emm, maybe for one assignment,
36 and is a little limited to say a lot of things but er,
37 yeah, the group work is quite helpful for us and so
38 everything is becoming more clear and clear,
39 something like that, ok this is what I want to say.

40 F: anything else?

41 M: anything else er, er, er, maybe you can ask
42 me some questions.

43 F: ok, yeah, I got
44 something here, you
45 said this time, you,
46 for this third meeting,

288

47 you try to have a

48 discussion and then

49 reach an agreement

50 on what you have

51 done, the tasks

52 individually, so could

53 you tell me, or give

54 me the examples of

55 the details regarding

56 the process how you

57 try to er, discuss

58 about the individual

59 tasks and then reach

60 an agreement,

61 something like that.

62   M: sure, and I think, for the beginning, we just for

63   example, and maybe Lauralee is doing the

64   training part and all, er and related to human

65   resources because she has the er, an advantage

66   of human resources and she has the background

67   and you know she must be the, er expert of this

68   area and emm, and then you know she shared

69   the er, she shared her work online and we both,

70   all of us, we can see it and you know we can

71   express our er, evaluation and emm, er, yeah, so

72   during this process, when we are, er, it's when we

73   are trying to analysing the work, her work and you

74   know maybe some a lot of ideas more clear and

75   but most of us, all agree with her work and we

76   don't have, we don't have a lot of disagreements

77   and er, actually so, most of our meeting, you

78   know we don't have very very obvious or very

79   opposite ideas, so it's you know everyone er,

80   thinks alike and so we, it's easy for us to make an

81   agreement, maybe it's just the character of, it's

82   just feature of our group and emm, you know

83   most of time, we just share, we just, we are

84   sharing ideas rather than debat- debating

85   something, and emm, so maybe we think quite

86   alike and this is why we, we can easily make an

87   agreement yeah.

88 F: great, and also

89 you mentioned about

90 that the group seem

91 to do a lot of reading,

92 reading journals, and

93 also the journals

94 about training, and

95 also try to express

96 the ideas by each

97 person about the

98 training, their ideas

99 about that part, also

100 get new ideas as

101 well. So I think this is

102 happened in the third

103 group discussion as

104 you mentioned, could

105 you also detail that

106 as well?

107 M: er, yeah, but you know it's quite similar, is the,

108 everything is the same, the process is the same

109 but er, er, I don't think we have a lot of difference

110 here and we have a lot of similarities actually so

111 it's emm, you know we, you know the more we

112 we think, and the more, I mean the more areas

113 we can cover, you know, it's sometimes, er, if we

114 just focus, er, we just focus on one area, that will

115 be, that will be emm, emm, how can I say that, er,

116 you know, it's it's if we just focus on one area is

117 too, is too particular, too specific, shall we, you

118 know firstly we need a broad, a broad area to

119 open our minds and then you know, we try to

120 work in details and that will be helpful because

121 you know, before we work on this assignment, we

122 need to, we need to have a very clear structure

123 right and er, it's just like the introduction, we need

124 to, what the steps, what we need to do and it will

125 be easy to follow right and emm, and then we,

126 you know when we can make sure the structure

127 here and then it's easy to, to support some details

128 and emm, maybe maybe a lot of details here,

129 because you know we, you know, most of our,

130 most of my group, group members, they are

131 really, they have a lot of good ideas, you know

132 they think a lot, and their, their mind is very broad

133 and you know they can cover everything of this

134 assignment, related to this assignment, so you

135 know, most of them, you know are connected, are

136 related to this assignment, so they are all

137 relevant, but you know it's it's very good because

138 you know we have, it's mean we have a lot of

139 options here we can select something every

140 important and and we don't have limited source

141 here and it's it's really, it's really beneficial and

142 colourful source here, so emm, so, I think, it's

143 adequate and it's adequate information and it's

144 yeah, it's good, it's very good and [laughing] I

145 don't know, anything else I can, I can talk about

146 here, and do you, do you have something in

147   particular, you want to know or...

148 F: yeah, I see and

149 you said, you

150 mentioned twice at

151 least, you said that

152 we seem to have no

153 many differences, we

154 think we have a lot of

155 similarities, and you

156 also have mentioned

157 that er, in our group,

158 er, we don't have

159 very very different

160 ideas or opposite

161 something like that,

162 most of the time, we

163 try to share ideas

164 rather than debating,

165 something like that,

166 so could you, this is I

167 can see is your

168 general impression

169 about group

170 discussion, so could

171 you have some

172 examples or some

173 details to illustrate

174 how do you think like

175 that way?

176   M: emm, you know it's easy to understand

177   because sometimes, you know, er, when a

178   person is speaking something, you know we just

179   listening and so the person will try to clarify his

180   his thoughts or her thoughts, so during this

181   process as, you know we are as listening as

182   thinking right and you know we try to analyse her

183   or his thoughts and we try to evaluate is that right

184   or not and I think, you know, it, it's related, you

185   know it's closely related to the person's

186   preparation, you know if the person prepare

187   something very well, you know, it maybe the

188   person did a lot of reading before, before the

189   discussion, of course, it will be a good work right,

190   so it's, it's obvious, it's very obvious because you

191   prepared, it's very er, very adequate and you

192   prepare very well so, of course, you did the good

193   work.

194 F: I see, so, great,

195 this is what you've

196 got from the group

197 discussion...

198   M: yeah, yeah, yeah, I think a key point here for

199   the discussion is we, you know for, we need

200   prepare for the next meeting, you know, before,

201   before we, before the discussion, everyone need

202   to prepare in advance, we need prepare a lot of

203   informations, maybe you know, it doesn't matter it

204   will, it will be useful or not, but you know, it's it's

205   a good chance to open our minds, because you

206   know, sometimes, we got no idea and we don't

207   have a lot of ideas here, but if the more you

208   speak and the more ideas you will have.

209 F: great, from what

210 you have just said,

211 you said it's very

212 important for our, for

213 us to open our mind,

214 and then we can

215 discuss about that,

216 new ideas could

217 come up, so could

218 you also detail that

219 part by using some

220 examples, you that,

221 occurred to your or

222 something like that,

223 or you experienced

224 or you observed in

225 the group

226 discussion?

227   M: yes, I think er, in my opinions, just er just, I just

228   from my experience and you know, we are talking

229   about some methods on training for example,

230   some role play or er, learning journals, yeah

231   today, today we are talking about learning

232   journals, we are, we are thinking about if we need

233   to learning journals, because you know everyone,

234   everyone is is busy working in a company right,

235   you know, cultural diversity is quite a small area,

236   you know it's difficult to, to, it's difficult for

237   everyone to be aware of cultural diversity all the

238   time, you know, because everyone is too tired to

239   work right, if you, it's difficult to let the someone

240   find a, find some additional time to do, to learn

241   journals, right, of course, learning journals will be

242   helpful for for understand the, for understanding

243   the cultural diversity but it's difficult you know, it

244   can't be compulsory, so, so, during this, so

245   according to this point, you know, we actually, we

246   didn't make an agreement so far, because I think,

247   I said I think it's you know, it's, you know it's quite

248   quite small area and it's it's difficult to do that

249   because everyone is thinking about work and

250   everyone pay more attention on their works rather

251   than cultural diversity or leaning journals, so

252   during, during this part, maybe we can if you

253   really want to do that, to emm, to study more, to

254   learn more, about cultural diversity, maybe we

255   can design the journal, or maybe we can make

256   the journal more easier maybe we can just outline

257   some source and some main ideas and we can

258   just do, just make a very very short structure

259   there, just, you know just let them memorise it

260   and understand it and just remember it, that's all.

261   We don't need to spend a lot of time, so it means,

262   we need select select journals if they want to

263   study, so, so far, we didn't reach an agreement if

264   we need to, we need er, we need provide journals

265   for for the training course you know, yeah.

266 F: great, and another

267 thing I noted is that,

268 you several times

269 mentioned all your

270 group members, they

271 are very great,

272 because they have a

273 lot of ideas, they

274 cover everything they

275 could do and gave

276 you a lot ideas

277 something like that,

278 so, yeah, I am

279 interested in you had

280 an impression about

281 great, the greatness

282 of them, so how as

283 usual, how, er could

284 you just illustrate that

285 point in details and

286 also if possible, give

287 me some examples

288 to support your ideas

289 when you think they

290 are great.

291   M: sorry, sorry, can you repeat your point here?

292 F: ok, because you

293 mentioned that your

294 group members are

295 great, because they

296 have a lot of ideas,

297 they cover everything

298 for the group

299 discussion, so, could

300 you er, could you

301 illustrate that point a

302 little bit further or in

303 details in terms of

304 your understanding

305 of them, they are

306 great.

307   M: ok, sure, I think, emm, you know, sometimes,

308   you know, the successful source should owe to

309   the teacher do you know why, because you know,

310   when she, she is, when she is dividing, when she

311   divided the groups, you know, you know just

312   emm, let me give you an example, if you put all of

313   Chinese students together, it's difficult to get a lot

314   of new thinking styles right, so when the teacher

315   er, when the teacher try, tried to divide, divided

316   us, from you know, from different countries and

317   she put, she put us together and so, emm, so

318   firstly, our group members all have different

319   backgrounds here, so definitely, we all have

320   different thinking styles, and emm, so, and er, for

321   the group work, I think er, it's better to, work with

322 people who come from different countries, and

323 this is the first thing, and another thing is related

324 to their experiences, past experiences,

325 experiences, and er, er, some of them, er some

326 of them have have working experience and emm,

327 so this is why they can, they can put theory into

328 practice, they can connect them easily and emm,

329 and another thing maybe you know, everyone,

330 you know everyone treated the assignment er as

331 you know, as very, as emm, as importantly and

332 emm, so, we er, so maybe we have some

333 responsibilities for on this er, assignment, this is

334 why we can spend a lot of time on this one and

335 you know, we we all, we all think it's important

336 and you know, er, so all of my group members

337 they are really responsible people and you know

338 they, you know, they treat, they think the

339 assignment is quite important, so we need to do it

340 very well and emm, you know sometimes, you

341 know, before before people begin to do

342 something, if you think this one is important, of

343 course you will prepare it very well, you will do it

344 very well of course the outcome will be good, will

345 be very good right, so, this is, you know, it's, it's

346 really connected with er, the importance of the

347 assignment, what do you think and how do you

348 treat it as a part of your study.

349 F: em, great,

350 anything else you

351 would like to add

352 regarding the group

353 discussion you had

354 this morning,

355 anything happened

356 to you, how did you

357 feel about that, and

358 any particular

359 incident?

360 M: emm, I think that's enough but if you, do you

361 any questions for me?

362 F: so far, no,

363 because I already

364 asked based on the

365 notes I made, so

366 yeah, I got a lot of

367 information from your

368 experience regarding

369 that one.

370 M: yeah, anyway, the group work, I like the group

371 work because it's quite helpful, you know it's

372 sharing, it's sharing ideas, it's really a good thing

373 and especially you know it doesn't matter, even I

374 don't have this background before but, I can still

375 study a lot, you know it's, it's the process of

376 studying and also the process of thinking, and

377 learning, and learning new things and it's quite

378 good, you know, when, you know, sometimes, all

379 of my group members, because they have

380 studied these theories before, you know now, we

381 know, em, maybe they they can use it in, in their

382 working life, er, and so, when they are talking

383 about something maybe they have, they have

384 already connected with practice, connected the

385 theory with practice, so which will be more useful

386 for me, rather than the teacher told me, you

387 know, you know, and so, I think, for me, it's quite

388 useful, you know because, you know after you

389 learn, learning some theories, and maybe one

390 years after, one year after and what you, what

391 you can remember of course, what is you, of

392 course, you can remember something important,

393 something is useful for you , this is what you can

394 remember, right, so this is what they tell me, what

395 they, what they told me now, so, er, so I think,

396 they are quite useful you know, something,

397	something leave, er, after you studying the
398	theories, what something leave you, something,
399	something are left in your mind should be more,
400	should be the most important thing, so you know,
401	during this situation, I got a lot of emm, summary
402	of the theory and yeah, I think so.
403 F: great, anything	
404 else, would like to	
405 add?	
406	M: so far no.
407 F: thank you again	
408 and I would like to	
409 switch off.	
410	M: ok.
	THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

Appendix 5 An Illustrative Example of the Coding Manual

This coding manual is an illustrative example to support the arguments I report in the coding process (section 4.3.3.1) in the fifth chapter methodology. This coding manual is the codes generated in response to the 4th transcript of the participant – Cordey.

Data extract(s)	Rationale for this/these extract(s)	Code name
…ok, yeah, well, that was our last meeting and it was a very very short meeting, so, it went quite quickly… …well, first of all, we decided to look at Peder's part, so he, er, I think he opened up a document on the computer, so, as usual, we all sat and read it from the screen in silence and then we, it was quite a short part though, so it didn't take very long…	N/A	N/A
…and then we had the final version and we said that we would all, we agreed that we would all go away and read over it and then any of those changes we had, we wanted to add, we would email each other and then handed in on Friday, so we didn't really do a lot during the meeting. …and we, we try to, we all came to an agreement on some suggestions about what to cut down and how to make it sound a bit better, er, that's all we did really, I think… …I added a few things, so I showed everyone that and they agreed that was fine and Lauralee also changed some parts, so she showed her parts to us, we just all agreed that was fine. …er, well, just, just comes about naturally… …and then we just decided during the rest of week until Friday, we were carrying on cutting down our own parts a bit, so that's what we did for the rest of the week.	cohesive thinking cohesive behaviour	reach an agreement

…reading sentences and then we agreed if they were useful or not.		
…We all, well, well, me, Lauralee and Peder did it and Marrilee didn't really comment…	cultural reality – C	unequal contribution
…she didn't, she really say anything during the whole meeting…		
…and, but also I think Lauralee had read some of it a bit I had written beforehand, so she already knew what she thought but I don't think Peder had seen it, er, so yeah, I just, I asked him and Marrilee, what they really thought of it…	cultural reality – B	expect the feedback
…they said it was good, everyone's happy with it, so…	cultural reality – C	contribution recognition
…and Lauralee mainly put everything together and made all coherent…		
… and we, we were just really looking at everything put together and mainly looking at Peder's part about the er, evaluation of the training programme er, and we were trying to cut the words down as well because we were over the word count, so we all kind of sat there and try to, we worked together, trying to condense Peder's part and fit it in. And that all we did really…	external cultural reality cohesive thinking cohesive behaviour	modify group report draft
…well, during the actual meeting, we only cut Peder's part quite a lot…		
…yeah, I think so, er, a bit of both, we cut some of it during the meeting…		
…we just read through his part and any bit of it wasn't completely relevant, or if he was repeating himself, we just changed it.		
……and it was good but it was too long, so, then we, we agreed that it was too long and we tried to cut it down and we did that all together, I think…		

…while we were cutting it, we were just, we discussed a bit, does this needs to be here or not, that's how we discussed it, and then if it wasn't needed, we agreed, it can be taken out…		
…and she continued cutting, so did I and then we put all together on Friday.		
…I think and then afterwards, as well, for our own parts.		
…That's a quite easy process because I used to, I always write too much and I am used to cutting the words down, so, it wasn't difficult really…	cultural reality – C	
…we are quite ruthless, because I think we wanted the meeting just to end quite quickly because we were all exhausted and we had so much more coursework to do, so it didn't, wasn't difficult to come to these, these decisions.	external cultural reality cohesive thinking	a stressful academic period
…no, at least, by that stage, there wasn't much else we could do…	cultural reality – C	unsure about how to collaborate
…Yeah. The only thing that, I am, not so good is the fact that Marrilee couldn't contribute more, that's, I think that is a shame, but I still don't really see how much more we could have done to involve her.		
…but I kept asking her are you happy with everything, and she said yes…	cultural reality – B	strategy to encourage other group members' participation
…er, er, I was happy with it, I was happy that finally it all came together, looked coherent and we all, we all er, well, some of us contributed to different parts, so it, it wasn't like each section completely separate, which I liked and in the end I was quite happy with it…	cultural reality – A	generate a coherent group report
…well, relieved, that's all done…	cultural reality – A	a sense of completion

Commented [FX1]: Negativity (-)

Commented [FX2]: Positivity (+)

Appendix 6: Definitions of All the Codes

(15 participants -220 codes)

Code	Definition
reach an agreement	Group members have a consensual decision after the discussion during group work.
different opinions during group work	Group members hold opposite/different arguments about how to approach it during group work.
seek an agreement	Group members are expecting or look for an agreement amongst the members during group work.
collision in task division	Group members have collisions while doing the group work, such as, two members would like to do the same task.
group member acts like a leader	In other group members' eyes or even his/her own eyes, what a group member is saying or doing plays the role of a leader during group meetings.
a mixed feeling	Group members had both positive and negative general feelings after doing this group work.
group work requires a leader	Group members believe that a leader is necessary and required if they are doing group work.
no intention to be a leader	Group members do not intend to play the role of a leader in this group work.
leader is not changeable	Group members think that the leader for a group work should not be changed amongst different members.
leader is changeable	Group members think that the leader for a group work can be changed amongst different members.
expectations on a leader	The skills or competences that group members expect to see from the leader of this group.
leader's skills recognition	Group members recognise the role of the leader a member plays in the group work due to his/her demonstrated skills.

expect group member's support	Some group members hope others within their group could assist them to complete the allocated individual parts for this group work.
group members provide support	Group members helped others within their group in different ways, such as to complete the allocated individual parts for this group work, to cover what others are unable to do, to answer others' questions.
willing to provide support	Group members show their willingness and happiness to help others in terms of the allocated individual part for this group work.
appreciate the given support	Group members appreciate the support that have been provided by others within their group.
unsure about how to collaborate	Group members have no ideas about how to work together as a group.
unsure about the group work direction	Group members do not know how to conduct this group work, for example, what they should do or an individual group member does not know how to conduct his/her allocated part.
clearer group work direction	Group members feel that the direction about doing this group work become clearer in the process of having meetings as well as having classes for that module.
strategy to participate in this group work	Different approaches that are adopted by group members to collaborate with others during this group work.
strategy to encourage other group members' participation	group members use different strategies to let others become more proactive to be involved in this group work, such as discussion, giving suggestions, make contributions etc.
Strategy to deliver the group presentation	Group members consider what could be the 'best way' for them to take when deliver in a group presentation.
task division in group work	Group members carry out this group work by dividing it into individual tasks for each member.
task division by providing choices	Group members provide choices to others for letting them select what individual task they intend to carry out.
task division depends on personal choice	Group members make up their minds to select the individual task they want to do for this group work.
task division depends on personal skills	Group members do their individual tasks based upon their acquired relevant knowledge and skills.

task division depends on suggestion	Group members advise what individual tasks another group member could do.
task division depends on relevance	Group members take an individual take that is relevant to what they have been doing already for this group work or what they have experienced before this group work.
equal contribution	Group members consider that each member makes nearly the same amount of dedication for this group work.
unequal contribution	Group members consider that, compared with other members within the group, they dedicated different amounts of effort and workload during the group work.
willing to make contribution	Group members do not mind as well as happy to do additional tasks or spend extra time for this group work.
fail to make contribution	Group members who want to make contribution do not get response from the rest members in a group.
contribution recognition	Group members recognise the effort, workload and/or input provided by themselves or others within this group work.
expect group members' contribution	Group members would like to see the input contributed by others during the group work.
gap between group members' contributions and others' expectations	Group members' contributions does not meet the expectations others hold for them.
no expectation of group members' contribution	Group members do not expect to have contributions from some certain members within a group.
concern about self-image	Group members are concerned about what kind of image they have left in other members' eyes.
self-evaluation	Group members evaluate themselves in relation to doing this group work.
lack of confidence to work in a group	Group members feel less confident to work with others in this group.
a pleasant environment	group members mention that the environment where they are situated for discussing the group work is nice
a good atmosphere	Group members mention that they feel the atmosphere for the group discussion is good and stress-free and people are relaxed.
group-study-room preference	Group members show their interest to book group study room for discussion.

a business-like atmosphere	Group members comment that the atmosphere seems to be serious and working-wise.
setting does not facilitate the group work	Group members think that the setting disturbs or constrains their group discussions.
setting facilitates the group work	Group members think that the setting provides convenience to their group discussions.
modify group report draft	Group members revise the group report before submission.
different reactions to the modification	Group members reacts differently while they are modifying the group report draft before submission.
revise the group presentation	Group members revise the presentation slides or scripts to correct all the mistakes.
tailor the group presentation through rehearsal	Group members fine-tune the presentation while practising it as a kind of rehearsal.
satisfy with the group work delivery	Group members are satisfied with what they delivered on the group presentation day.
keep group members informed of the progress	Group members keep each other informed of what the progress is after each group meeting, especially for those who are absent, as well as the procedure for next meeting.
a satisfactory progress	Group members are generally satisfied with what happening during each group meeting, it seems that everything is fine and gradually progressing.
a happy experience	Group members felt happy and enjoyable after doing this entire group work.
non-productive progress	Group members consider that the group meeting is not productive enough to move the group work forward.
harmony in this group	Group members consider that they collaborate well with each other and enjoy doing this group work, for instance, feel happy.
a terrible experience	A group member considers this entire group work is a disaster and a failure.
a painful experience	A group member considers this entire group work is painful.
voice opinion equally	Group members consider that they all should and can present their opinions and ideas regarding how to conduct this group work without any restrictions.
fail to voice opinion equally	Group members cannot express their opinions during group work.

similar ideas amongst group members	Group members notice that they suggest or give similar ideas which makes it easy to reach an agreement.
viewpoint insistence	Group members insist on their view of point during the group work discussion.
understand each other	Group members show their understanding between one another in relation to their remarks or behaviour noted in the group work.
empathise with group members	Group members show their empathy towards others who have come across issues, for instance healthy issue, difficulties while they are doing this group work.
appreciate the empathy	Group members feel comfortable and thanks for the empathy given by others.
no motivation for this group work	Group members nearly give up contributing to the group work and just let others do whatever they want.
motivation decrease	Group members think their motivation for this group work decreases along with its process.
motivation for this group work	Group members mention their motivations to keep them doing the group work.
fair workload distribution	Group members adopt some methods to keep the fairness in terms of workload allocation between group members.
unfair group work grade	Group members think the grade given by the module leader is not fair, especially after they compare with other groups.
unfair to work for other group members	Group members consider that it is unfair to work for others and each member should have made same contribution.
unfair treatment	A group member considers that she is treated unfairly by others and they always ask her to make adjustment for the schedule.
unfair feedback	A group member believes that the feedback given by the module leader does not reflect what they have done for the group work, it is unfair.
a sense of pressure	Group members feel they are under pressure because they how to complete this group work within a pressing time.
no pressure for this group work	Group members feel that they have got enough time to complete this group work, therefore, there is no need to stress out.
stress of breaking the criteria	Group members feel stressed out when they notice something is not right for their group work.

a sense of nervousness	Group members feel they are nervous when they are waiting to deliver the presentation while watching other groups' presentations.
release the nervousness	Group members relieve the nervousness after having interactions with audience.
a stressful academic period	It is a trimester that students feel stressful because they have to submit assignments required by different modules throughout several months.
a rush preparation	Group members prepare for this group work in a rush, which is very close to the meeting or delivery date.
a sense of completion	Group members think the group work is nearly completed and they are expecting that happen and feel relieved.
assumptions carried into this group work	Group members carry their own assumptions when they start to do this group work.
stereotypes carried into this group work	Group members carry their stereotypes about the characteristics of other group members from particular countries.
contrast to existing assumption/stereotype	Group members notice that the other groups they collaborate with are different from what they have assumed or stereotyped before.
awareness of personal interpretation	Group members are aware that their interpretations may be limited to their own experience, stereotypes or assumptions. They need to be careful about those interpretations.
unhappy with the grade	Group members are unhappy and disappointed about the group work grade.
accept the grade reluctantly	Group members feel that they have to accept the unsatisfactory grade anyway.
happy with the grade	Group members are satisfied with the grade given by the module leader.
grade is not the only purpose	Group members do this group work as a part of assessment is not merely for the grade.
high grade expectation	Group members feel that they would like to have a high grade for this group work.
grade is very important	A group member says that grade is the most important thing after doing the assessment including the group work.
preference of non-graded group work	Group members consider it is better to do group work in the form of non-grade.
different learning approaches	Group members notice that the learning approaches are different when they compare the approach of doing group or academic work here with what they used to do somewhere else.

different thinking patterns	Group members consider that people have different ways of thinking, i.e. national cultural difference, different subject area etc.
personal working style	Group members explain and detail the way how they handle the given individual task of (this group) work.
different personalities	Group members notice that group members present different personalities while doing this group work.
different individuals	Group members consider that a group is made up of individuals who are all different to each other in many aspects.
personalities facilitate this group work	Group members feel that the personalities of group members are nice and compatible to each other, which may help to carry on the group work smoothly.
personal adjustment	Group members think that it is necessary for each member to adjust themselves to fit into this group work context.
refuse a suggestion	Group members say no to what others suggested doing in a group meeting.
provide suggestions	Group members (intend to) offer pieces of advices to others in relation to this group work.
take suggestions	Group members take what others suggest into action.
an unpleasant interaction	Group members feel the interactions with other group members are unpleasant, for example, conversation, behavioural reactions etc.
friendship with group members	Group members define the relationship between him/herself and others (whether not within her group or) as friends.
acquaintance with group members	Group members define the relationship with the rest as acquaintance.
similar people collaborate better	A group members believes that it could work together better if the people share some similarities.
get used to working with friends	Group members say that are more used to work with (close) friends who they have known each other.
confident about group members	Group members show their confidence about other group members' performance in this group work.
group work as an assignment is important	A group members feels that they attach importance for this group work because it is a part of their assignment for this module.

group member impression	Group members express their impressions on other members after they start work together for this group work.
expect the feedback	Group members would like to hear how insiders (other group members) or outsiders (i.e. module leader, audience, maker etc.) think about their group work.
give feedback to each other	Group members provide feedback to each other regarding what they have presented for this group work.
appreciate the feedback	Group members appreciate the feedback provided by others (insiders and outsiders).
no feedback	Group members do not have any feedback on what others have presented in a group meeting.
language issue	Group members comment on the English as a communicative language could be a barrier for those who acquire it as a foreign language.
academic English challenge	One group member thinks that it is the English academic terms, instead of daily English use, that are the challenges to her.
a dominant speaker	Group members point out a member who dominates all the times in terms of taking and presenting all his/her thoughts without listening others.
a repetitive explanation	Group members attempt to explain again for what has been discussed before to others in terms of the structure or design of the group work.
different communication styles	Group members point out that they have different ways to communication due to the different cultural backgrounds where they are from.
separate discussions in a group meeting	Group members split up to discuss issues while in the same group meeting.
a temporary group meeting	Group members call for a meeting without a prior arrangement or notice.
two different learning channels	A group member points out that there are two learning channels for her, one is from the lecturer in class and the other is from the group members during the group work.
appreciate module leader's design	Group members express their appreciation regarding how the group work is constructed by the module leader.

a good preparation facilitates the group discussion	A group member believes that a good preparation can help a group member do well in the group discussion.
learning the connections between theories and practice	A group member thinks the group work provides her with a chance to learn how the theories have been connected with the practice through other members' talk.
similar knowledge, different personal experience	A group member thinks that group members learnt the similar theories or knowledge, but each of them has different personal (working) experience.
prefer to work with people from different countries	According to a group member, working with people from different countries is interesting and new.
interpretation of the group work task	A group member presents her own interpretations and explanations in relation to the given group work task.
academic writing criteria	A group member thinks the importance of academic writing criteria for this group work.
good attitude	A group member thinks that group members' good attitudes contribute to a good collaboration.
an unusual meeting time	A group member highlights that meeting on Saturday is not a usual time for discussing a group work.
dislike group member's push	A group member expresses that he does not like to be pushed by other group members, like saying please work to your best.
marking is subjective	A group member thinks that giving marks could be a subjective judgement by the module leader.
different progresses between different groups	A group member shocks at the different progresses between his group and another group.
the number of group member matters	A group member thinks the number of group members working for a group may have an impact on the collaboration.
no reward for extra contribution	A group members thinks that, unlike the workplace, there is no reward for a group member who does extra contribution during the group work in the university.
high grade pays off hard working	Group members think the high grade they have got pays off their hard-working for this group work.
group work delivery reflects individual contribution	A group member believes that the final group work delivery session reflects each individual group member's contribution during the group work period.

evaluate group member's contribution	Group members evaluate the individual part that has been contributed by others in terms of its quality.
group report is more difficult than group presentation	Group members feel that the output of the group work in the form of a joint-report is more difficult than the form of doing a presentation.
marker's impact	A group member thinks that the marker's reactions during the group work delivery can have an impact on the presenters' performance.
efficient meetings for updates	A group member considers that meetings can be efficient and provide members with chances to update their progress. It is not always necessarily to last that long.
initial meetings are important	A group member considers that the first couple of meetings are the impressible and important ones.
constant meetings facilitate the group work	A group member thinks that having meeting constantly could help them to do the group work better.
slides meets all the marking criteria	The slides completed by the group has met all the criteria listed by the module leader.
group presentation sequence matters	A group member says that he is concerned about the sequence for different groups to present on that day.
group work task is easy	The task required by the module leader for the group to complete is not difficult.
easy to have the content for the group work delivery	Group members think it is easy to have content for doing the second part of the group work due to their previous preparation.
reading massive information	Group members are requested to read many documents about a specific topic that is brought by a group member.
a separately additional meeting	Some group members meet separately for another discussion, apart from the meeting they attend with all the members.
opposite effect of comfort	Group members' comfort may result in counterpart's worse feelings.
combination of practice and theories	Group work would be a chance for the students to combine the theories they have learnt with some practical issues.
take advantage of cultural differences	Culturally different group members may contribute to the group work.
extended discussion	Group members extend discussions of this group work into other spaces, such as email or classes.

conservative about the group work outcome	A group member does not think this group work will be excellent, though it will not be a bad one.
generate a coherent group report	Group member consider the group report should be generated coherently and consistently and it should not be a simple assemble of different individual parts.
reflections on personal skills	After completing this group work, group members start to reflect on what personal skills are required or need to be enhanced in relation to doing group work.
personal development	Group members think about what they have learn from doing this group work, which will benefit their future.
room for improvement	Group members believe they could have done this group work better.
trust group members	Group members trust what others present or said and feel it is not necessary to do a double check.
unsatisfactory group meeting process	Group members consider that the group meeting programme is not satisfactory, which makes the meeting less productive and slightly chaotic.
soft skills lead to a good collaboration	Group members feel that the soft skills each of them have applied into this group work may lead to a good collaboration.
intention of independent completion	Group members intend to complete their individual part by themselves and do not want other members' help.
tiredness	Group members physically feel tired after a long group meeting or a stressful period of academic assignments.
shaping a group identity	Group members consider the identity of a group can be shaped through working with, communicating with and influencing each other.
similar learning experience	Group members' learning experience during this group work period seem to have some similarities, such as same module, stress, busy timeline etc.
mutual target	Group members believe that the mutual target they have to achieve makes them unite as a group.
exploring group members' skills	Group members try to know what are the strengths and weaknesses of each member, which could be either used or avoided for this group work.
description of the group work delivery	Group members describe how they deliver the intercultural training session as the second part of their group work.

comments on the group work delivery	Group members provide their own comments on the group work they have delivered.
group member is a new student	One group member is a new international student and has just started her study in a culturally different university here.
increase confidence	After receiving a great grade for a part of the group work, group members feel more confident about their collaboration.
no relevance between group harmony and group work outcome	Group members consider the harmony in a group is not related to the group work outcome, therefore, they need to either balance them or focus on one side.
no relevance between group effort and group work outcome	A group member believes that the effort they have dedicated into this group work does not reflect on the final outcome, i.e. grade.
no relevance between workload and mark weighting	There is no correlation between the percentage of mark and the required workload for this group work.
exploring the structure and content	Group members are together to brainstorm and intellectually discuss the structure and content of the group work.
individual work preference	Group members prefer to do individual work instead doing group work.
group work preference	Group members prefer to do group work instead doing individual work.
more group members, less individual influence	Group members believe that a group having more members could weaken an individual member's potential impact on the group work.
more group members, less simple	A group member considers that the larger number of people a group has, the less simple it could be in terms of process information.
more group members, more creative	A group member considers the more people they work with, the more creative the group work would be.
gender imbalance	Group members believe the gender imbalance in a group means some kind of 'privilege', such as, one male member works with all the rest females or the other way around.
gender difference	Group members consider it is the gender difference that causes the different behaviours or thinking.
play the role of a follower	A group member admits that she follows the rest group members to do this group work.

group outcome is primary	A group member thinks that as long as the group work outcome is good, there is no need to question other issues.
fewer chances of doing group work	A group member notices that there are fewer chances for them to do group work than do individual work in the university as a form of assessment.
views on group work	Group members present their thoughts and views about group work as a form of assessment they are doing.
prioritise group meetings	Group members give up other academic-related activities, such as attending classes, in order to have a meeting for this group work.
spread a group member's ideas	One group member spreads what she has heard from a member to the rest during the group work.
less proactive participation	Group members participate in the group meetings less proactively due to some personal issues.
technologies facilitate the group work	Group members use online services to liaise with each other for meeting arrangement and document exchange.
miss the chance for additional support	Group members complained about not knowing that they have a chance to ask for support from their module leader.
joining an existing group	A group member joins an existing group that has been formed to conduct this group work
avoiding mentioning personal problems	Group members do not mention their personal problems under a business context-group meetings.
separate social life and working life	Group members do not mix their social life with their working life and business is business, regardless of how they are getting on in their social life.
dislike group work	Group members show that they do not want to do group work anymore and they do not like it.
group work rehearsal	Group members rehearse what they intend to do before they deliver their group work, i.e. group presentation or intercultural training session (ICT).
no different treatment	A group member feels that she is treated in the same way as the others even though she jointed into this existing group as a new member.
spread of emotions	Within a group or under the same context, one group member's emotional reactions can transmit to the rest and let them feel the same.

first collaboration requires knowing each other	Group members consider that they need to know their group members, especially how they work in a group before start the first collaboration.
no credit for a part of this group work	Group members emphasise that doing the second part of this group work do not help them to gain any credit for this module.
no need for an additional meeting	Some group members consider there is not necessary for an additional meeting to discuss further about the group work.
inadequate knowledge	Group members consider that selves or others have no adequate knowledge to fulfil the individual part given for this group work.
group members with different nationalities	Group members point out that the people who form this group come from different countries.
compromise in group wok	Group members have to sacrifice or give up something or do something they may not want to do in order to secure the entire group work progress.
group member's quietness	Group members are keeping quiet without letting others know what they are thinking while doing the group work.
group members know each other better	Group members believe that they have known others better in the process of doing this group work.
virtual participation via internet	Group members do not physically come to the meetings but they still participate in discussions via internet.
group member's absence	Group members are absent for the scheduled meetings.
respect each other	Group members are respectful to each other during the group work.
no respect	A group member comments that there is no respect to her from a particular member in the group where she is working.
confident about the group work outcome	Group members believe that the group work outcome would be good.
familiarise with other group members at different levels	Group members mention that they have different levels of familiarity with the rest members when they start to do this group work.
curiosity of the group work	Group members show their curiosity in relation to how they would collaborate, what would happen and what the outcome would look like for this group work.
understand module leader's expectations	Group members mention that they are clear about what the module leader is expecting from them after their participation in this group work.

grade depends on the module leader	Group members say finally it is the module leader who gives the grade to their group work and they have no clear idea about what the module leader wants.
mark weighting matters	Group members care about the mark weighing for this group work.
incorporate knowledge into this group work	Group members add what they have learnt from different sources or channels into this group work.
different expectations of learning outcome	Group members hold different expectations of their learning outcomes in terms of grade.
absent-minded in the meeting	Group members say that sometimes they realise some members are absent-minded while others are discussing for this group work.
difficult to schedule a meeting for all members	Group members realise that it is difficult to find a time that suits all group members.

Appendix 7: Groupings of the Codes

(Developing from the 220 codes into 39 Groupings of Codes)

*The codes in italics are used to identify the group patterns.

Codes	Groupings of Codes	Rationale
a pleasant environment group-study-room preference setting facilitates the group work *a good atmosphere* *a business-like atmosphere* *harmony in this group*	the good environment or atmosphere	6 codes show the participants' positive thinking in relation to the group work environment or atmosphere.
setting does not facilitate the group work spread of negative emotions	the unhelpful environment or atmosphere	2 codes show the participants' negative thinking in relation to the group work environment or atmosphere.

Codes	Groupings of Codes	Rationale
a sense of pressure a stressful academic period	the sense of stress	2 codes show the participants' sense of stress
a rush preparation	a rush preparation	N/A

Codes	Groupings of Codes	Rationale
concern about self-image	concern about self-image	N/A
less proactive participation lack of confidence to work in a group self-evaluation viewpoint insistence *Tiredness* reflections on personal skills	self-valuation	7 codes show group members' self-understanding in terms of their performance in this group work.

increase confidence		
assumptions carried into this group work	awareness of personal thoughts	4 codes show group member deal with their thoughts that are shaped before they start to do the group work.
stereotypes carried into this group work		
contrast to existing assumption/stereotype		
awareness of personal interpretation		
motivation decrease	variation of individual motivation	4 codes are discussing the motivation group members have for their group work.
motivation for this group work		
no motivation for this group work		
curiosity of the group work		
personal development	personal improvement	4 codes show some personal development or growth after the group members have completed the group work.
two different learning channels		
learning the connections between theories and practice		
combination of practice and theories		

group member impression	evaluation of other group members	5 codes show group members' understandings about other members while they collaborate for this group work.
evaluate group member's contribution		
group member's quietness		
absent-minded in the meeting		
intention of independent completion		
confident about group members	confident about group members	N/A
expect group member's contribution	expectations of others	3 codes show what group members may expect from the others while they work as a group.
expect group members' support		
expect the feedback		
appreciate the feedback	appreciation for others	5 codes show group members' gratefulness and recognition for the efforts made by other members for this group work.
appreciate the empathy		
appreciate the given support		
appreciate module leader's design		
contribution recognition		

different opinions during group work different thinking patterns different expectations of learning outcome different personalities different individuals personal working style similar knowledge, different personal experience different learning approaches take advantage of cultural differences group members with different nationalities	the differences amongst the group members	10 codes show that group members notice there are differences amongst themselves while working as a group.
similar ideas amongst group members mutual target similar learning experience	the similar ideas amongst the group members	3 codes show that group members notice there are similarities amongst themselves while working as a group.

group work requires a leader leader is not changeable leader is changeable expectations on a leader leader's skills recognition group member acts like a leader no intention to be a leader *play the role of a follower*	leadership	8 codes are discussing about group members' understandings of the role of a leader in their group work.
seek an agreement reach an agreement a dominant speaker	power relations	7 codes show the different levels of 'power/dominance'

compromise in group wok		that group members have in a group.
group member is a new student		
joining an existing group		
no different treatment		
voice opinion equally	issue of equal voice	2 codes show group members' concern about their rights to voice opinions.
fail to voice opinion equally		

acquaintance with group members	acquaintance to friends	6 codes show how group members define the relationship between themselves.
familiarise with other group members at different levels		
friendship with group members		
group members know each other better		
first collaboration requires knowing each other		
shaping a group identity		
understand each other	the good rapport between group members	4 codes are describing the close and harmonious ways of treating each other while the group members doing the work.
respect each other		
trust group members		
empathise with group members		
willing to provide support	group members' willingness	2 codes show an individual group member's intention re doing the group work.
willing to make contribution		

equal contribution	*sense of fairness*	2 codes show the fairness in terms of personal contribution to the group work.
fair workload distribution		
unequal contribution	*sense of unfairness*	
unfair to work for other group members		

unfair treatment		6 codes show the unfairness group members sensed during their group work.
unfair feedback		
unfair group work grade		
miss the chance for additional support		

the number of group member matters	group size matters	4 codes tell that the size of a group matters to the group members.
more group members, less individual influence		
more group members, less simple		
more group members, more creative		
gender difference	gender matters	2 codes are discussing the gender means something in a group.
gender imbalance		

academic English challenge	communication issues	5 codes show the reasons that cause the problematic issues regarding communication.
language issue		
different communication styles		
separate discussions in a group meeting		
a repetitive explanation		
no feedback	difficulties in doing this group work	7 codes show the difficulties group members meet when they work together to complete the group work.
gap between group members' contributions and others' expectations		
no expectation of group members' contribution		
inadequate knowledge		
different reactions to the modification		
group report is more difficult than group presentation		
collision in task division		
no respect	discomfort during group work	6 codes show group members' unpleasant experiences that
fail to make contribution		

opposite effect of comfort		cause their personal discomfort in their group work.
an unpleasant interaction		
dislike group member's push		
refuse a suggestion		

understand module leader's expectations	the importance of following the instructions	5 codes show what are treated as the guidance for the group members to carry out their group work.
academic writing criteria		
slides meets all the marking criteria		
generate a coherent group report		
stress of breaking the criteria		
an unusual meeting time	uneasy job to arrange group meeting	7 codes are discussing how the group members to meet each other in the form of meetings
difficult to schedule a meeting for all members		
a separately additional meeting		
no need for an additional meeting		
a temporary group meeting		
prioritise group meetings		
group member's absence		
task division in group work	group task arrangement	6 codes are about how to divide the entire group work task is arranged amongst the group members.
task division depends on relevance		
task division depends on personal choice		
task division depends on personal skills		
task division depends on suggestion		
task division by providing choices		
exploring the structure and content	group work strategies	23 codes show what group members may do during their group work.
incorporate knowledge into this group work		
provide suggestions		
take suggestions		

give feedback to each other		
group members provide support		
reading massive information		
modify group report draft		
revise the group presentation		
tailor the group presentation through rehearsal		
group work rehearsal		
interpretation of the group work task		
strategy to participate in this group work		
strategy to encourage other group members' participation		
spread a group member's ideas		
keep group members informed of the progress		
personal adjustment		
avoiding mentioning personal problems		
extended discussion		
exploring group members' skills		
separate social life and working life		
strategy to deliver the group presentation		
virtual participation via internet		

grade is very important		16 codes show grade is considered as an important factor through their group work process.
high grade expectation		
no credit for a part of this group work		
mark weighting matters		
group outcome is primary	the importance of grade	
confident about the group work outcome		
conservative about the group work outcome		
grade depends on the module leader		
a sense of nervousness		

release the nervousness		
happy with the grade		
unhappy with the grade		
accept the grade reluctantly		
marking is subjective		
high grade pays off hard working		
group work task is easy		
no relevance between group harmony and group work outcome	no link between the process and outcome	4 codes show the group work outcome does not necessarily link with the positive feelings or hard work they do in the process.
no relevance between group effort and group work outcome		
no relevance between workload and mark weighting		
no reward for extra contribution		

a satisfactory progress		18 codes tell group members' general evaluations towards their group work progress.
non-productive progress		
unsatisfactory group meeting process		
clearer group work direction		
efficient meetings for updates		
initial meetings are important		
a sense of completion		
different progresses between different groups	evaluation of the group work progress	
unsure about how to collaborate		
unsure about the group work direction		
description of the group work delivery		
satisfy with the group work delivery		
comments on the group work delivery		
easy to have the content for the group work delivery		
room for improvement		

group work delivery reflects individual contribution		
marker's impact		
group presentation sequence matters		
a painful experience		5 codes show group members' general impression or evaluations towards their group work experience.
a terrible experience	overall experiences	
a happy experience		
no pressure for this group work		
a mixed feeling		
good attitude		6 codes show some factors that help the group members to collaborate for carrying out the group work.
soft skills lead to a good collaboration		
personalities facilitate this group work	factors facilitating the collaboration	
a good preparation facilitates the group discussion		
technologies facilitate the group work		
constant meetings facilitate the group work		
similar people collaborate better		5 codes show what are the ideal or preferred ways for people to work together.
get used to working with friends		
prefer to work with people from different countries	collaboration preference	
group work preference		
individual work preference		
views on group work		6 codes show group members' general comments and views on the group work throughout their participations.
fewer chances of doing group work		
grade is not the only purpose	group work review	
preference of non-graded group work		
group work as an assignment is important		
dislike group work		

Appendix 8: The 13 Themes for Understanding Culture in Student Group Work

(Developing from the 39 Groupings of Codes into 13 themes)

Groupings of Codes	Theme	Rationale
the good environment or atmosphere	The Impact of the Group Work Environment or Atmosphere	2 groupings of codes are all about the general setting: a broad context, physical environment and atmosphere.
the unhelpful environment or atmosphere		
the sense of stress	Being Stressed	2 groupings of codes show the stress that participants sensed during the group work.
a rush preparation		
concern about self-image	Reflection on Personal Performance	5 groupings of codes are discussing about how the group members understand themselves.
Self-valuation		
awareness of personal thoughts		
variation of individual motivation		
personal improvement		
evaluation of other group members	Gratitude/Dislike towards Other Group Members	4 groupings of codes are discussing about what images of others are presented in the mind of the group members.
confident about group members		
expectations of others		
appreciation for others		
the differences amongst the group members	The Impact of Group Member Diversity	2 groupings of codes are telling the individual differences, cultural background differences or similarities that group members sense to connect them.
the similar ideas amongst the group members		
leadership	Hierarchy amongst the Group Members	3 groupings of codes are discussing the hierarchical relationship amongst the group members during their group work.
power relations		
issue of equal voice		
acquaintance to friends	'(Un)healthy' Interpersonal Relationship amongst Group Members	3 groupings of codes are about the relationship group members describe amongst themselves.
the good rapport between group members		

group members' willingness		
sense of fairness	Concerns of Fairness	2 groupings of codes show the issue of fairness in group work.
sense of unfairness		
group size matters	The Impact of the 'Demographic Features' on Group Work	2 groupings of codes showing the number of a group and the gender issue concerns some group members.
gender matters		
communication issues	Potential Challenges in This Group Work	3 groupings of codes are about what may disturb group members to work well for this group work.
difficulties in doing this group work		
discomfort during group work		
the importance of following the instructions	A 'Democratic' Approach for the Group Work	4 groupings of codes are discussing the methods group members adopt to carry out the group work.
uneasy job to arrange group meeting		
group task arrangement		
group work strategies		
the importance of grade	Valuing the Group Work Outcome	2 groupings of codes tell the importance group members attach to their group work outcome largely in the format of grade.
no link between group work process and final outcome		
evaluation of the group work progress	Positive or Negative Appraisal of the Group Work	5 groupings of codes are showing what group members evaluate this group work they have participated.
overall experiences		
factors facilitating the collaboration		
collaboration preference		
group work review		

Appendix 9: Themes for Understanding Personal Acculturation in Student Group Work

Participant's Pseudonym	The Salient codes from all of a participant's data	Themes
Giffie	get used to working with friends	group members' relationship
	acquaintance with group members	
	group members know each other better	
	group member acts like a leader	being a group leader
	no intention to be a leader	
	motivation decrease	
	unfair to work for other group members	unfair feeling
	unequal contribution	
Kiele	a terrible experience	dislike doing this group work
	group member impression	
	self-evaluation	
Peder	different opinions during group work	the impact of individual differences on group work
	strategy to participate in this group work	
	group report is more difficult than group presentation	
	respect each other	perception of the group harmony
	personalities facilitate this group work	
	strategy to participate in this group work	
	group member is a new student	perception of Marrilee's performance
	inadequate knowledge	
	unequal contribution	
	gap between group members'	

	contributions and others' expectations	
	group member impression	
	contribution recognition	
	empathise with group members	
	group member impression	helping Cordey to clarify her confusions
	group members provide support	
	appreciate the given support	
	reach an agreement	
	unsure about how to collaborate	
	unequal contribution	
Marrilee	strategy to participate in this group	strategy to participate in this group work
	views on group work	
	inadequate knowledge	
	self-evaluation	
	unequal contribution	
	appreciate the empathy	appreciation for Peder's empathy
	unsure about the group work direction	clearer group tasks through discussion
	clearer group work direction	
	prefer to work with people from different countries	expectation of working with people from other countries
	views on group work	gaining knowledge and experience through group work
	learning the connections between theories and practice	
	two different learning channels	
Lauralee	motivation decrease	motivation for this group work
	assumptions carried into this group work	
	different opinions during group work	the impact of individual differences on group work
	assumptions carried into this group	

	work	
	viewpoint insistence	
	provide suggestions	
	clearer group work direction	
	compromise in group work	
	unequal contribution	unfair feeling
	unfair to work for other group members	
	no credit for a part of this group work	
	self-evaluation	
	a painful experience	
	no expectation of group members' contribution	perception of Marrilee's performance
	evaluate group member's contribution	
	unsure about how to collaborate	
	strategy to encourage other group members' participation	
	strategy to participate in this group work	preference of a relaxing working atmosphere
	get used to working with friends	
	a good atmosphere	
	group members know each other better	
Cordey	unequal contribution	perception of Marrilee's performance
	unsure about how to collaborate	
	inadequate knowledge	
	expect group member's support	
	empathise with group members	
	an unpleasant interaction	
	reflections on personal skills	
	unequal contribution	appreciation for other group members' help
	group members provide support	

	group member impression	
Nerissa	a satisfactory progress	perception of the group harmony
	voice opinion equally	
	personalities facilitate this group work	
	strategy to participate in this group work	
	soft skills lead to a good collaboration	the impact of national cultural differences on group work
	different communication styles	
	different learning approaches	
	fail to voice opinion equally	like doing this group work
	a satisfactory progress	
	harmony in this group	
	a sense of nervousness	
	group-study-room preference	the not-well-organised group meetings
	unsatisfactory group meeting process	
	different personalities	the impact of individual differences on group work
	Personal adjustment	
	compromise in group work	
	spread of negative emotions	
	more group members, less individual influence	
	a dominant speaker	
Jacquette	different thinking patterns	the impact of individual differences on group work
	inadequate knowledge	
	similar ideas amongst group members	
	harmony in this group	perception of the group harmony
	respect each other	
	voice opinion equally	
	a happy experience	
Warde	contrast to existing	perception of "German group members"

	assumption/stereotype	
	stereotypes carried into this group	
	self-evaluation	
	contribution recognition	
	provide suggestions	knowledge connections between two modules
	reach an agreement	
	personal working style	
	modify group report draft	
	reach an agreement	no motivation for an unmarked part
	no credit for a part of this group work	
Alleva	assumptions carried into this group work	perception of joining an "existing" group
	group member impression	
	no different treatment	
	join an existing group	
	group work requires a leader	
	tailor the group presentation through rehearsal	perception of other group members' performances
	group member impression	
	comments on the group work delivery	
	satisfy with the group work delivery	a good group presentation
	room for improvement	
Elmore	clearer group work direction	being more confident
	contribution recognition	
	confident about the group work outcome	
	satisfy with the group presentation delivery	
	group member impression	perception of Alleva's performance

	a dominant speaker	
	a sense of nervousness	a good group presentation
	satisfy with the group presentation delivery	
Filmer	group work preference	like doing this group work
	reflections on personal skills	
	combination of practice and theories	
	different expectations of learning outcome	
	personalities facilitate this group work	
	harmony in this group	a good group presentation
	marking is subjective	
Kelila	a dominant speaker	perception of Alleva's performance
	group member's absence	
	a pleasant environment	
	group members know each other better	
	reach an agreement	
	different opinions during group work	
	group member impression	
	strategy to encourage other group members' participation	helping Elmore in this group work
	group members provide support	
	initial meetings are important	the initial stage of the group work was more important
	efficient meetings for updates	
	confident about group work outcome	a good group presentation
	markers' impact	
	unfair feedback	
	room for improvement	

		no relevance between group effort and group work outcome	
Shari		a satisfactory group progress	good to have constant group meetings
		constant meetings facilitate the group work	
		satisfy with the group work delivery	
		expectation on a leader	perception of Alleva's performance
		different personalities	
		group member acts like a leader	
		satisfy with the group work delivery	a good group presentation
		more group members, less simple	
		a satisfactory progress	
Fanchon		motivation for this group work	aim for this group work
		no relevance between group harmony and group work outcome	
		strategy to participate in this group work	
		leader is changeable	
		compromise in group work	
		no credit for a part of this group work	
		equal contribution	
		unequal contribution	fair feeling
		mark weighting matters	
		equal contribution	

Appendix 10:

An Illustrative Example of Member Checks Strategy

The email I sent to the participants with the relevant attachments

Hi [the participant's real name],

How is everything going on? It has been nearly two years after you voluntarily participated in my PhD study and provided me with your valuable thoughts and experiences regarding the group work experiences. Thank you again for your dedication in terms of time and efforts.

I am wring to you in order to keep you informed of my PhD progress briefly. Particularly speaking, how I processed the data that was generated through the interviews with you.

I completed all the data generation in the form of narrative interviews in May 2014. Then, data preparation was started around the August 2014 towards the beginning of 2015. Thus, I created all the transcripts around early spring 2015.

I have attached all the transcripts (in the format of PDF) based on the interviews I conducted with you. Within each transcript, I used a pseudonym to represent you. In addition to that, I removed all the sensitive information and replaced the identifiable information with a vague term wherever I consider it is necessary. Regarding the first number in the beginning of each transcript's title, please ignore them. That is a way for me to record and arrange all the participants' transcripts.

After reading them (you do not have to), if you have got any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I will keep you informed when the findings are ready to be presented.

Thanks again for your participation.

All the best wishes.

Frank

The reply from a participant

Hi Frank

I am very delighted to hear from you! Thanks for letting me know your PH.D. progress. It seems that you are approaching the goal. I am happy with what you sent. Let me know once you completely finish your PH.D.

All the best! Keep in touch.

[signature of the participant's real name]

The Road Not Taken

By Robert Frost, 1916

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

未选择的路

翻译：徐航（2018）

秋黄的树林道分两股，
甚是遗憾无法两者兼顾
我这孤单的过客徘徊良久
向着其中一条穷极眼眸
目送它折入灌木丛深处；

我选择了另一条，看似一样，
或许有个更好的理由，
因为它杂草覆盖，唤人踏足；
纵使在我行经之后，
它也会变得足迹遍布，杂草全无，

那个和煦清晨
两路皆被落叶覆盖，不见前人脚步。
啊，将原来一条留待他日再赴，
但我深知路复一路，
一旦选择，便难回最初。

时过境迁，
我长叹倾诉：
曾经面对树林里的两条岔路 –
我踏上了人迹罕至之路，
从此给予了我一生的命运非同。

偶然

作者：徐志摩（1926）

我是天空里的一片云，
偶尔投影在你的波心
你不必讶异，
更无须欢喜
在转瞬间消灭了踪影。

你我相逢在黑夜的海上，
你有你的，我有我的，方向；

你记得也好，
最好你忘掉，
在这交会时互放的光亮！

Fortuitousness
Translator: Frank H. XU, 2018

Being a cloud in the sky,
By chance, I cast my soul on your heart
You don't need to be astonished,
Nor should you jubilate
As I might vanish in an instant.

On the dark sea we encounter,
In different directions of our own we steer;

It's kind of you to remember,
Nevertheless, you'd better forget the radiance,
That we have lightened to each other!