

‘What the student does’
Undergraduate business students in group work: A
narrative study of learner experiences

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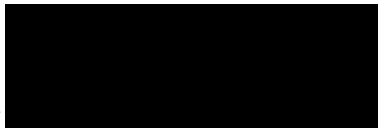
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6th November, 2015

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

— 

Signature of Candidate

9th April 2018

Date

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ABSTRACT

Australian undergraduate business education has experienced a dramatic change in the diversity of the student cohort. International students are now expected to co-exist in the same Anglo-western educational frameworks as domestic students. Employers of this diverse student cohort highly desire the skills which are encompassed under the generic banner of teamwork. Group work is a common teaching method utilised to develop the intended outcomes of teamwork, yet when this framework is analysed through organisational behaviour theory, it reveals gaps in theory and practical reality. Critically, the literature suggests group dynamics, and the impact these social processes can have on the development of teamwork skills, is largely absent in teaching practice.

By eliciting the students' stories and experiences, my narrative research sought to understand 'what the student does' when group work is the teaching method used to develop teamwork skills. The individual stories of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students were investigated. My data were examined using a case-centred thematic analysis to preserve the experience of each individual story. This was followed by a critical events analysis to burrow into and confirm the process events themes which students identified. These stories are presented using the Student Group Experience Model, a model I developed within my research based on prominent learning and organisational behaviour theories. My research has shown through a combined literature lens that leadership within the group will influence process events, and impact on an individual student's approach and the acquisition of intended outcomes of teamwork skills.

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Glossary of terms

Accountability: the obligation of an individual to hold themselves responsible to others within the group setting. This refers to the individual accountability of students within a group, not organisational accountability.

Apparency: a criteria interwoven in the narrative research process to establish trustworthiness.

Approach to learning: Student **Approaches to Learning** is a theory that students will take a different **approach** to how they study, depending upon the perceived objectives of the course they are studying.

Assessment: refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students.

Authentic learning: is a teaching approach that allows students to explore, discuss and meaningfully construct relationships and concepts that involve real-world problems, relevant to a business degree.

‘Chart their own course’: A term used by Hackman (2012) in which groups, as social systems, create internal and external realities which evolve for their own purpose and strategies for pursuing those purposes.

Collaboration: the ability for a group to work together and a necessary condition for groups to become teams. Collaboration is measured by the level of synergy in the group.

Collaborative learning: is a philosophy of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product through students working together in groups. Collaborative frameworks require individuals to be responsible for their own actions and respect the abilities and contributions of their peers.

Composition of the group: the composition of the individual characteristics of the individual group members and the design of the group. Organisational behaviour theory considers this to be one of the most important factors influencing group effectiveness.

‘Conditions-focused approach’: An approach to researching groups and group effectiveness, used by Hackman (2012) that focuses on the conditions within which a group will ‘chart their own course’.

Constructive alignment: is a principle theory devising teaching and learning activities, as well as assessment tasks that directly address the intended outcomes of learning.

Constructivism: is a theory of learning which considers learning to be active and meaning-making by the learner. This perspective considers learning as qualitative and the learning process to be one where learners construct their own knowledge through both individual and social activity.

Cooperative group learning: is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product through students working in groups.

Course: individual unit of study within a program or degree. Course is the terminology used in this thesis.

Critical event: represents an event in a story that impacted on an individual student.

Cross-cultural: deals with the comparison of different cultures. In cross-cultural communication, differences are understood and acknowledged, and can bring about individual change, but not collective transformations. In cross-cultural societies, one culture is often considered “the norm” and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture.

Cross-cultural groups: student group whose membership is made up of individuals with different cultural backgrounds.

Diversity: is the understanding that each individual is unique, based on differing dimensions including race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, age, or other ideologies.

Domestic student: a student who is an Australian citizen, a New Zealand citizen or a permanent resident.

Efficacy: the ability to produce the desired or intended outcome.

Effectiveness: is the capacity a group has to accomplish the goals and objectives administered by an authorised person. In group behaviour, effectiveness is the characteristics of a team.

Emergence: referred to the phenomena of concepts like group spirit, which emerge during interactions.

English as a second language student (ESL): a student who are non-native English speakers.

English speaking student (ES): a student whose native language is English.

Equifinality: an organised endeavour in groups in the way the group itself operates.

Free-riding: an opportunity or advantage an individual receives without doing anything for it.

Generic skills: the skills, knowledge and abilities of university graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable in a range of contexts and are acquired as a result of completing any undergraduate degree.

Globalisation: is the process of international integration. It is the catalyst for internationalisation.

Group: a group of individual students who come together and interact with one another to share ideas and discuss on a topic. Groups have individual accountability, a focus on individual goals and neutral or negative synergy. This differs to teams.

Group dynamics: the characteristics and interplay of the individuals who form a group.

Group synergy: is a process which occurs within a group when individuals come together to collaborate. It is the process gains and losses which impact on the ability of both the group and individuals within the group to perform a task. Synergy can be termed in three ways: positive, neutral and negative.

Group work: involves students working together collaboratively on set tasks. Group work includes learning and teaching activities which involve students working collaboratively, and any formal assessment task associated.

Heuristic: enabling discovery in a research problem and stimulating further development.

Inertia: within a group is the level of resistance of the group and its members. This is set by the socialisation process which continues in its existing state of motion unless that state is changed by a temporal midpoint or an external force. Low-level resistance creates positive group inertia, high-level resistance negative group inertia.

Intended outcomes: The objective or product of the teaching methods and assessments within a course. For this study the intended outcomes are teamwork skills.

Internationalised curriculum: involves providing students with global perspectives of their discipline and broadening their knowledge base for future careers.

Internationalisation of higher education: the process of integrating international, intercultural and global dimensions into the purpose, functions and delivery of tertiary education.

Internationalisation: is a response to globalisation which includes both local and international elements and involves the movement of people and the need for individuals to interact with cultures other than their own.

Internationalised business education: a degree which focuses on the business curriculum which will encompass the skills and understandings that allow all students to participate in a diverse world which is increasingly international and cross-cultural.

International student: refers to students who cross borders with the intention to study.

Leadership: the actions of motivating a group of people towards a common goal. The definition of leadership in this thesis is from the discipline of organisational behaviour.

Like event: represents similar events to critical events which occurred to other students.

Norms: the accepted or proper standard of behaviour and doing things most people agree with.

Organisational context: the larger system in which a group operates. In this research this context is an Anglo-western university.

Other event: are interwoven into critical and like events and represents the process event which confirm the critical event.

Othering: is to view or treat a person or group of people as intrinsically different to oneself. It may lead to making generalisations or inaccurate predictions about a person as a result of their language or cultural background

Outcomes-based teaching and learning (OBTL): is focused on not what the lecturers intend to teach, but places emphasis on what the student or learners' outcomes are from that teaching.

Power: is the ability or capacity to do something or to act in a particular way. In groups, it is the ability and capacity to direct or influence the behaviours of others in the course of group activities.

Pedagogy: the method and practice of teaching which deals with both the theory and practice of teaching.

Process events: the events which occur within the group itself and shown in the Student Group Experience Model.

Process & process phase: the interaction of students in group and task processing. This is the phase where students adopt an approach to learning and is critical in the development of the intended outcomes of communication and teamwork skills.

Product: the end phase of the 3P Model and depicts the desired or intended outcomes of the teaching and learning environment.

Program: collective of individual courses of study for the attainment of qualification. Program is used as the terminology in this thesis.

Quanxi: describes the basic dynamic in personal relationships cultivated with others. A central idea in Chinese society.

Restorying: the further creation of meaning in narrative inquiry by arranging the original participants' story into a consistent framework.

Rewards: are the benefits received by the individual performing a task.

Roles: refers to how a person behaves and what function they perform within a group as a whole.

Socialisation: the process by which the initial meeting of a group is influenced through internal and external factors.

Social-loafing: the tendency of group members to exert less effort than what they would have working alone. The causes of social-loafing stem from an individual's feeling that their effort will not matter to the group.

Status: the relative social position within a group.

Student-centred learning: is a method of teaching, pedagogical idea or philosophy based in constructivist learning theories in which the learner is central. The role of the teacher in student-centred learning is facilitator and the learner takes an active role in learning.

Sub-group: is a distinct group within a group. Formation of a sub-group may indicate an ineffective group.

Support: a term from organisational behaviour which identifies the level of external support a group receives during their group interactions.

Synergy: in organisational behaviour synergy is when individuals combine their efforts to accomplish more together than they can separately. It is measured through collaborative effort, either positive, neutral or negative.

Task: the piece of work to be done or undertaken by a group and the reason a group comes together.

Teacher-centred learning: is a method of teaching, pedagogical idea or philosophy based in traditional theoretical views of learning where the teacher is central. The role of the teacher is knowledge transmission, which views the teacher as the expert who imparts knowledge. The learner has a passive role in the learning process.

Teaching methods: the activities within a course which are designed to develop in undergraduate business students the intended outcomes of communication and teamwork skills.

Team: a small number of people, who are committed to a common purpose, set of goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. Teams have positive group synergy, appropriate leadership and communication. Three characteristics of teamwork are collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

Team cohesion: an effective group which shows unity while working towards a goal which satisfies the needs of its members.

Transferability: the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts and settings.

Undergraduate business students: students undertaking their first degree in a business-related course.

Unit: a single subject of study at university.

Verisimilitude: the appearance of being true or real. In narrative inquiry it is the truthfulness in the confirmation of the participants of their reported stories of experience.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is my experience that although there is much rhetoric about the benefits of internationalisation and its contribution to greater understanding of local cultures, there is very little research conducted into the complex, grass-roots experiences of students and staff in international higher education communities.

(Trahar, 2009a, pp. 201-202)

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces my research by first providing background to my research topic and locating it in the context of the challenges facing teaching and learning in Australia's higher education sector. The chapter discusses how I became interested in this topic and identifies my research aims and objectives. It then gives an overview of the research findings and implications of my research. The final section of the chapter outlines the structure of my thesis. Key terms included in the glossary of terms are italicised in their first use.

1.2 Background to the research

“How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students’ experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?” is the question guiding my research. The question was initially sparked in 2008 while I was a lecturer, teaching *undergraduate business students* in the field of organisational behaviour and management. My observations in the classroom and the concerns students had voiced to me about working in *groups* had created for me an interest about the actual experiences of students in the *group work* activities in which they were involved. My background in organisational behaviour had also informed concern as to whether what I observed from outside the group was indeed contributing to their educational experience. Further to this, the increasing number of *international students* in the classroom complicated the already complex group interactions. The apprehension many of the international students voiced in regards to working in groups sparked a need for me to develop my knowledge of educational theories. Group *diversity* is emphasised in organisational behaviour literature as a critical consideration for group success (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004), but I also wanted to know how this was dealt with in educational practice. How was I to ensure all students were gaining the most from the group experience?

To inform my teaching, a participative action research project was conducted to understand the challenges faced by students while working in diverse groups. The initial and subsequent research was reported in the following conference papers and a journal article:

Vickery, J., & Hunter, J., D. (2008, July). Underwriting a quality undergraduate business education by promoting communities of learning. Paper presented at the HERSDA 2008 *Engaging Communities*, Rotorua, New Zealand.

Vickery, J., & Hunter, J. D. (2009, November). Improving the student group work experience through 'team-building'. Paper presented at ANZAM Conference: *Sustainable Management and Marketing*, Melbourne, Victoria.

Hunter, J. D., Vickery, J., & Smyth, R. (2010). Enhancing learning outcomes through group work in an internationalized undergraduate business education context. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 16(5), 700-714.

This research highlighted the issues students saw as impacting on their learning experience in groups including communication, *accountability* within the group, *leadership* and group diversity. The interpersonal processes which occurred during group activities and the lack of maturity and skills to negotiate these processes had, at times, a negative impact on the learning environment (Hunter et al., 2010; Vickery & Hunter, 2008). Interestingly, students did not see the connection between performing group work activities and development of *generic skills*, and in particular, teamwork skills (Vickery & Hunter, 2008).

With this in mind, further participative action research was conducted with a team-building intervention prior to the groups receiving a task (Hunter et al., 2010; Vickery & Hunter, 2009). Students expressed the view that, as a result of the intervention, the group work experience had been more positive, and that it enhanced their self-awareness and their interactions with others in the group. Even though students had reported a more positive experience, my research did not answer the many questions in my mind about my understanding of teaching and learning activities in a diverse classroom. My previous research also provoked questions with regard to the *efficacy* of group work as a *teaching method* to achieve *intended outcomes* of teamwork. From my background in organisational behaviour, I understood that groups and *teams* are not the same and there appeared to be some definitional disparity. This prompted me to commence my doctoral studies to research the questions my previous research and observations had raised.

The aim of my exploratory research is to better understand ‘what students do’ when the teaching method of group work is utilised to develop the intended outcomes of teamwork skills. The participants in my research were Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. In light of the presence of domestic and international students in Australian universities, I was interested in exploring the complexity of students’ experiences of group work and how these experiences impact on the efficacy of group work as a teaching method for teamwork skills. As a lecturer in a diverse classroom I was looking for ways in which I could internationalise my teaching perspective whilst attempting to also develop teaching methods which could assist in creating an *authentic learning* environment. My perspective at the time saw group work as a valuable teaching method but I was curious about the actual individual experiences of the students in groups with a mix of domestic and international students.

1.3 Context of the research

Over the last twenty-five years, two topic areas have attracted considerable attention in higher education in Australia, namely *internationalisation* (Arkoudis, Baik, Marginson, & Cassidy, 2012) and the development of generic skills (Hughes & Barrie, 2010). These two areas have created changes in the day-to-day challenges facing lecturers in the teaching and learning environment.

Internationalisation has created a diverse student population compared to the more traditional university entrants in Australia in the post-war era (Arkoudis et al., 2012). The term *international student* refers to students who cross borders expressly with the intention to study (OECD, 2013) as opposed to a *domestic student* who studies in their home country (Field, 1999). Whilst the term international student is used in my thesis it is acknowledged that the term is sometimes associated with *othering* (Palfreyman, 2005). Othering may lead to making generalisations or inaccurate predictions about a student as a result of their language or cultural background (Spack, 1997). Despite the concern, the term international student was used as it is the official Australian government category (Pearson, Cumming, Evans, Macaulay, & Ryland, 2011) and identifies students as individuals who may have little or no previous experience in Anglo-western education systems.

Diversity within the student population can be seen in terms of cultural background (Li, 2008), prior experience, intellectual capacity, age, gender and learning style (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001), with many international students linguistically and culturally ill-equipped to deal with their

new academic environment (Bass, 2007; Comell & Macken, 2003). As Shaw (2005) suggested, diversity is a central issue for teaching and learning. For lecturers, the challenge is how to promote interaction between domestic and international students (Arkoudis et al., 2012) whilst offering genuine opportunities for learning to a diverse audience (Shaw, 2005) and providing an education that will prepare all students for future work life (Ryan, 2011).

The skills, attributes or competencies identified as important by employers and which universities seek to develop in their graduates, created a change in the intended outcomes of the learning environment (Hughes & Barrie, 2010). These skills differ in name and definition in discipline contexts, and have outcomes which vary from discipline-based knowledge outcomes (Barrie, 2007). In terms of teaching and learning addressing these generic outcomes has impacted on curricula (Barrie, 2006) and *assessment*. Concerns have been realised in Australia in regards to the quality of skills, such as teamwork in business graduates (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). As Jackson and Chapman's (2012, p. 108) findings show, "...poor graduate outcomes are being overlooked by university lecturers and indicate a strong need for curriculum review to align with industry needs". The difference in an employer's and a lecturer's expectation of skills has been suggested as a possible explanation of the skills gap in business graduates (Jackson & Chapman, 2012).

Extensive research has been conducted on internationalisation in higher education (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2012; Arkoudis et al., 2013; Breen, 2002; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Byram, 2011) as well as the development of generic skills (e.g., Barrie, 2005; 2007; Jackson, 2014; Jackson, Sibson, & Riebe, 2013; Ramli, Nawawi, & Chun, 2010). For me, there was a need to investigate further how the bringing together of these influences impacts on the individual experiences of students in group activities and how these experiences could inform my teaching practice.

1.4 Research focus

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry which crosses disciplines and subject matter through interpretive activities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It utilises a range of approaches and methods to understand the human experience, including narrative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Narratives are a means by which individuals tell the stories of their experience (Riessman, 2008). They are well suited in attending to, and learning about, the complexities and subtle nature of the human experience in teaching and learning as it crosses the boundaries between teaching and learning, practice and research (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry allows researchers to present complex and rich experiences of a phenomena, it is human centred and enables analysis

of life stories (Trahar, 2009a; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The aim of my research was to investigate the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students, and applying a narrative inquiry approach was deemed appropriate to shed light on these experiences.

The following discussion shows the context in which my research was conducted as well as the focus areas. In answering “How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students’ experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?” the parameters of my research needed to be defined. These parameters, which include undergraduate business in higher education, the student cohort case studies, intended outcomes and teaching method, are discussed in the following sections.

1.4.1 Undergraduate business higher education

My research was confined to undergraduate business higher education. The reasons for the focus on the business discipline in higher education are, first, it is my discipline field. I had been an academic staff member teaching organisational behaviour and management courses. I viewed the decision to undertake doctoral research as a way to develop my teaching practice through investigating educational theories and models, using these and my knowledge of groups and teams and incorporating the primary data gathered from the students’ experiences. In 2014, management and commerce had the largest proportion of enrolled students in higher education (24.6%), the business discipline alone, is the largest study field for international students, equating to almost half (46.5%) of commencements in the first half of 2014 (Department of Education and Training, 2014). Conceptualising generic skills can vary from discipline to discipline and therefore the definitional meaning may differ (Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009). Given this, a single discipline focus was appropriate.

Employing a narrative case study design allows for the investigation of a phenomenon in real world contexts (Yin, 2014), and the gathering of rich layers of information to understand the participants’ experience with these phenomenon (Etherington & Bridges, 2011). In order to explore student experiences in depth, my research confines itself to a business school within one Australian University. This allows for the investigation of the mixing of international and domestic students and what these students do when interacting in group work activities. The case study university in my research currently has partnerships with five universities, two institutes of

technology and one college, all in mainland China. These partnerships are pathways for which international students from mainland China enrol in degrees in Australia.

1.4.2 Student cohort case study

Over the past two decades there has been a growing body of literature focused on international students studying in Australia. The principal themes of this research have been in terms of market and policy (Marginson, 2007), English language competency (Marginson & Sawir, 2011), culture of origin (De Vita, 2007), student engagement (Coates & McCormick, 2014) and participation (Straker, 2016). The importance of language has been most prominent and is often viewed as the main reason international students have difficulties with communication (Carroll, 2015). This view has also been argued in regards to culture, with the focus of research on the implicit relationship between language and culture (Gu, 2009). Research into culture and language has largely been focused on students from East Asia, in particular China (Coates & McCormick, 2014; Ryan & Louie, 2007). This is not surprising as in the higher education sector in Australia in 2017, 106, 658 students from China were enrolled at Australian universities, accounting for 38.1% of enrolments of international students in the sector (Austrade, 2018). Given the complexity of culture, it would not be possible for my research to include the many nationalities that are currently studying in Australia, hence confining the research to one international cohort was a pragmatic decision.

Cross-border business and relations lead to direct confrontations and misunderstandings, not only politically and socially, but also culturally (Chiang, 2005). The same could be said about higher education. As Baron and Strout-Dapaz (2001) discussed, international students face challenges studying abroad. Trahar, Green, de Wit and Whitsed (2015, p. 36) argued that “internationalisation research across the globe continues to be characterised by a lack of attention on the experiences of students” and criticise research which positions itself by homogenising ‘international students’ and ‘local students’. Whilst my research focuses on the individual experiences of domestic and international undergraduate business students, a decision needed to be made in making this a manageable research process. Nield (2004) suggested that educational differences must be addressed if Chinese students in higher education programs in western countries are to reach their full potential. Yet, Ryan and Louie (2007) argued that binary terms such as western and eastern do not take into account the complexity of the individual within the higher education context. They espoused that “educationists should be aware of the differences and complexities within cultures before they begin to examine and compare between cultures”

(p.404) and this can lead to bad practice. Trahar et al. (2015) highlighted that learning and teaching and assessment are culturally mediated. An interrogation into the individual experiences of students therefore would not be comprehensive without recognising cultural background. As Chinese students are the largest cohort of international students in business programs in Australia, this student cohort was the case study group for international students.

1.4.3 Intended outcomes: teamwork

The use of teams in organisations is a growing phenomenon in both western and eastern organisations (Yukl, 2006; Wei, Liu, & Herndon, 2011). Team-based structures in organisations improve the quality of problem-solving (Schley & van Woerkom, 2014), improve corporate identity (Malone, 2013) and potentially increase productivity (O’Leary, Mortensen, & Woolley, 2011). As China’s businesses are transitioning into the market economy, the structure of these business have changed to team-based work systems (Wei et al., 2011).

For these reasons, it is critical for undergraduate students to develop the ability to work in teams, in particular multicultural teams (Horn & Murray, 2012). As Fischer and Friedman (2015) noted, a business degree may be worthless to an employer if no skills are taught or attained. Various research highlights teamwork as one of the most important skills for business graduates (e.g., Clarke, 2013; English, Manton, Sami, & Dubey, 2012; Jackling & De Lange, 2009; Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Jackson et al., 2013). Many employer reports also consider teamwork important to business graduates (e.g., Australian Business Industry Group, 2005; Australian Industry Group and Deloitte, 2009; Lindsay, 2014). Teamwork is a prominent example of the skills required in business graduates and is framed as the most synergistic of generic skills, because it offers a framework for students to develop other generic skills (Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Jackson et al., 2013).

Tempone et al. (2012) as well as Jackling and De Lange (2009) noted some variation in what was considered teamwork by employers. Jackling and De Lange (2009) found the definition of teamwork skills by employers may depend on the discipline or role in the organisation. For example, their research on human resources managers found leadership and communication as critical skills as part of teamwork. Other research on employers noted that they want business graduates to be good communicators, team players, problem-solvers and critical thinkers (Crebert, 2002). Under the banner of team skills (Jackling & De Lange, 2009), employers want business graduates with interpersonal skills (Harvey, 2000), to demonstrate adaptability (Holmes, Kinslow,

& Pope, 2012), and have leadership qualities (Caple & Bogle, 2013). Love (2014) noted critical teamwork skills such as interpersonal skills, problem solving and *collaboration* can only be developed by students working together.

In some cases, employers noted working collaboratively rather than teamwork as a desired skill. To understand what employers meant by working collaboratively, Wilton (2008) divided these skills into three areas, management skills, leadership skills and entrepreneurial skills.

Management and leadership skills were considered the most important (Wilton, 2008). Jackson and Parry (2011) noted that in the job market, employers are looking for graduates who not only show leadership skills but understand what the role of a leader is. Mill (2011) also found that business schools are not adequately providing students with competencies considered important by employers, with leadership skills (or potential) being high on the list of skills for students to be able to work effectively in teams. As Jackson and Chapman (2012) showed, the skill gap is particularly evident for business graduates in the vital elements of the managerial skill set (communication, critical-thinking, problem-solving and leadership). Hodge and Lear's (2014) compilation and analysis of three employer surveys (2008, 2009, and 2010) found teamwork as one of the most desired skills in the U.S.A. Further to their research, they found international students, in particular the Chinese students interviewed, believed management, teamwork and interpersonal skills to be the top skills they required.

1.4.4 Teaching method: group work

Individuals are the 'raw material' who make up a group (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). Not all groups are the same and individuals join groups for different reasons (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Groups can be defined by their reason for existence, for example a group that comes together to share knowledge and experiences, such as a group of undergraduate business students is defined as a learning group (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). As a learning group, students working together on activities is known as *cooperative learning* (Sharan, 2010).

As the modern use of cooperative learning began at the University of Minnesota in 1966 (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), it has its foundation in the Anglo-western sphere. Group work is a teaching method used in cooperative learning which requires students to work together and to help each other learn and goes beyond active learning approaches in which the students are learning by doing (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014; Marks & O'Connor, 2013; O'Donnell, 2006; Toohey, 2002; Wee & Kek, 2002). Cooperative group work requires students to collaborate and is what

individuals, as a collective, undertake to work towards a common goal (Marks & O'Connor, 2013). While cooperative group work is used in higher education, research on groups is prominent in the discipline of organisational behaviour (Miner, 2015), which is utilised in my research.

As groups are made up of individuals, all groups have elements of diversity depending on the definition of diversity. Diversity of individuals in groups can be defined in terms of ability (Jaques & Salmon, 2007), gender (Curşeu & Pluut, 2013) or culture (Montgomery, 2009), among others. Diversity can have a positive influence on groups such as increased creativity or a negative influence such as reduced cohesion (Kannan, Harvey, & Peterson, 2016).

My research focus is situated in an undergraduate business higher education program, which investigated the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international students. The development of teamwork skills, through group work, as a teaching method was explored. The study of groups and the interactions of individuals within groups form a major portion of my discipline area.

1.5 My discipline background

Dating back to research on coal-mining organisations in Britain in the 1940's and Japanese organisations in the 1970's, it became apparent that people in groups in organisations made better decisions, produced better products, and were happier at work (McShane & Travaglone, 2007). However, this was dependent on the right conditions. From these beginnings, groups and teams have been researched widely in management fields (Argote, Gruenfeld, & Naquin, 2001; Borkowski, 2005; Goodman, Ravlin, & Schminke, 1987; McShane & Travaglone, 2007; Miner, 2015). Organisational behaviour emerged as a distinct field in the 1940's as a result of this trend (McShane & Travaglone, 2007). My disciplinary background in organisational behaviour has influenced the shaping of my research.

The study of groups through organisational behaviour theory offers insight into understanding, predicting and hence influencing behaviours of the individual and the groups these individuals work in (McShane & Travaglone, 2007). Groups offer opportunities for both organisations and teaching (Zeff, Higby, & Bossman, 2006). Many theories and models have been offered as a means to explain and predict the behaviour of individuals when faced with a group situation (Bogenrieder & Nooteboom, 2004; Bushe & Johnson, 1989; Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993; Hackman, 1987; Pinder, 2014; Robbins, Judge, Millett, & Boyle, 2013).

Overall, within this body of research, most authors agree that a group comes together with a set of characteristics and input factors that define a group's potential. The characteristics of a group have been linked to predicting the effectiveness of that group (Campion et al., 1993; Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997; Luciano, Mathieu, & Ruddy, 2014). From this potential, contextual and internal variables then come into play (Bushe & Johnson, 1989; Christie, 2012). These variables impact on the processes which occur within the interaction of a group. This in turn impacts on the effectiveness of a group in completing a task (Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997; Luciano et al., 2014). As with each individual group, each member of that group has their own individual characteristics (Bogenrieder & Nooteboom, 2004). These individuals will also bring with them a set of expectations arising out of their past experiences (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). All of these factors come together to influence and impact on outcomes of groups and if they are effective. Effective groups are known as teams.

1.6 Justifications of the research

My exploratory research intended to shed light on the current teaching methods of group work activities and how the design and implementation contribute (or not) to the development of intended outcomes of teamwork skills in an internationalised undergraduate business education at an individual *unit* (subject) level. Importantly, my research presented a focus; from the students' perspective, highlighting the importance of their own individual story. As Bath, Smith, Stein, and Swann (2004, p. 326) noted: "the strength of using student perceptions is that it captures development of outcomes that were not intended by the curriculum, expected or espoused by the lecturers". This is important for my own teaching practice as without understanding the student experience from their perspective, the outcomes of my practice may not be what I intended.

1.7 Contributions of the research

My research adds to existing research on the student experience of group work in an undergraduate business higher education by focusing specifically on students' individual stories and a situated account of their perspectives of these experiences. My research also adds to existing literature on student learning in the field of education by incorporating literature on groups and teams from the field of organisational behaviour. This cross-disciplinary approach allowed for the development of a conceptual framework, which can be synthesised into practice. For me personally, the process itself has given me insight into my teaching practice and myself as a researcher entwined in the process. The thesis title – "*What the student does*". *Undergraduate*

business students in group work: A narrative study of learner experiences” – refers not only to the focus on the student as central but literature used in my research from John Biggs and his notion of the importance of ‘what the students does’ (1999), when holding an inclusive view of teaching.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

My thesis is presented in seven chapters framed by the Introduction, Literature Review, Conceptual Framework, Research Process, Thematic Analysis, Critical Events Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion. The first chapter has introduced my research and outlined the background, context and focus of my research. The content of each of the remaining chapters is outlined below.

Chapter 2 introduces and defines the central constructs investigated in this research which are internationalisation and teamwork skills, constructive alignment and Hackman’s (2012) conditions-focused approach to researching groups, which recognises groups as social systems, made up of individuals, who are themselves, complex. The chapter is then divided into three main sections, shaped by Biggs’ 3P Model (2003b), from the literature. These sections include student and teaching contextual factors, group process and product. The chapter concludes with a reflective discussion on the education model used to guide the literature review.

Chapter 3 begins with an exploration of a further two models, The Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) (Hackman, 1987) and the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) (Gersick, 1988), to extend the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) presented in Chapter 2. These models provide insight into the complexities of groups, group process and effectiveness as an outcome which influences whether a group can develop into a team. The chapter also presents the research questions and a conceptual framework developed using Hackman’s (2012) conditions-focused approach utilising the cross-disciplinary nature of the literature review.

Chapter 4 presents the rationale and justifications for the methodology and methods employed for my research. Social constructivism is discussed as the theoretical foundation which guided my research. The narrative inquiry adopted for my research is discussed in relation to the methodologies selected and methods employed to guide the selection of the twelve sample participants, six Australian domestic and six Chinese international students. The discussion then outlines the data gathering process, methods of analysis employed and exploration of the role of myself as the researcher.

Twelve student narratives were collected and analysed using thematic case-centred data in-line with Ewick and Silbey's (2003) approach. Chapter 5 displays the narratives of two students, one Australian domestic and one Chinese international undergraduate business student. These stories were selected as a representation of the thematic analysis. The narratives are presented to give the reader a representative selection of the data, in a way which preserves the story of the participant. The remaining narratives are presented throughout the chapter, in thematic areas.

Chapter 6 employs a critical events analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007) to confirm the themes identified in the thematic analysis and further investigate the connections in these themes. The burrowing technique employed utilised a conceptual map adapted from Webster and Mertova (2007) of critical, like and other representation. The chapter presents the data from the analysis, with the critical event under scrutiny being the nature of emergent leadership.

Chapter 7 presents an overview of my research findings, drawing together the outcomes of the two analysis chapters. It also considers the strengths and limitations of the research and evaluates the conceptual framework applied to the data. The chapter summarises the research findings, draws conclusions and discusses the implications for students and lecturers. The chapter also presents reflections on my research and identifies suggestions for future research.

1.9 Definitions

For the purpose of my research I have offered definitions to assist in the understanding of the terminology and the stance taken in the investigation. The definitions are supplied as a *Glossary of terms* located at the front of my thesis. What became apparent in reviewing the literature is the disparity between theory and practice in the use of some definitional terms. Hence the definitions offered in the glossary of terms assist in defining the terms as theory would state, not in terms of the way higher education may apply these terms in practice.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A [team] task done well, cannot simply call some people together, toss them a task and hope for the best. This is the bad news. (Hackman, 1987, p. 337)

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter introduced the study and outlined the contents of the thesis. This chapter introduces and defines the central constructs investigated in this research which are internationalisation and teamwork skills constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011), and a conditions focused approach to researching groups (Hackman, 2012). The chapter discusses constructive alignment and uses Biggs' 3P Model (2003b) to examine student and teaching contextual factors, group process and the product of group work; teamwork skills. The chapter concludes with a reflective discussion on Biggs' Model which is used to guide the literature review.

2.2 Internationalisation

The internationalisation of business due to globalisation has been a key trend over the last fifty years (Edwards, Crosling, Petrovic-Lazarovic, & O'Neill, 2003; Robbins et al., 2013) and has been a catalyst of change in higher education (Bourn, 2011). It has also brought about many challenges for the higher education sector as a whole (Altbach & Knight, 2007), individual universities (Marginson, 2004), teaching staff (Edwards & Usher, 2008) and the increasingly diverse cohort of students (Alfred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003). Globalisation can be considered on different levels: market globalisation, including the removal of trade barriers, and the ability for the free movement of goods, services, people and capital; political globalisation which has seen new relationships between countries develop as well as global mandates being constructed; and social globalisation, including the convergence of social and cultural values across countries that previously remained segregated (Anastasiou & Schäler, 2010). De Wit (1995) offered the following elements to assist in the development of a definition of internationalisation:

1. Internationalisation is a process; internationalisation is a response to globalisation and is not to be confused with the globalisation process itself;

2. Internationalisation includes both international and local elements and is therefore intercultural, and;
3. It involves the movement of people and the need for individuals to interact with cultures different from their own.

As a result of the process of internationalisation, higher education now has access to students from all around the world and is exposed to competitive international market forces (Bourn, 2011). The response to this has resulted in the term *internationalisation of higher education* being used to describe the impact of these factors (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

In the 1990s, internationalisation of higher education became a topic of great debate (De Wit, 2011), which has continued because of the rapid pace of change, competition and socio-economic demands such as expansion of participation in education (Stephens & Graham, 2010). The rapid expansion of tertiary education by way of increased access to higher education and increased recruitment by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries has intensified the financial pressures on education systems, exacerbated by reduced government funding and greater interest in recruiting international students (OECD, 2013). Internationalisation of higher education has vastly different rationales within and across countries and higher education institutions (Caruana, 2010). This has created the phenomenon of the ‘problem (atisation)’ of international students as a research interest (Trahar, 2011).

International students have greater choice in the country of destination and programs offered, and are more discerning buyers than previously (Li, 2008). This has led Anglo-western higher education providers, such as Australian universities, to actively recruit international students resulting in greater diversity in the student cohort in university classrooms (Ryan, 2011). International students choose to study abroad to gain experience in using English to gain an advantage over students who remain in their home to study (Li, 2008). Students from Mainland China also describe how they have better access to lecturers and ‘there is lots of group works (sic) and it is not quite like this in China’ (Robinson, 2018, para. 16).

Over the past two decades a growing body of literature has sought to understand international students’ participation in higher education in Anglo-western countries such as Australia (Straker, 2016). Teaching in these countries is delivered in English and the teaching and learning environment is based around western values (Carroll, 2015). As noted in Chapter 1, research into international students in Australia has focused on the ‘issues’ faced by students such as English

language competency (Marginson & Sawir, 2011) and culture of origin (De Vita, 2007). Egege and Kutieleh (2008, p. 72) agreed that language and culture impact on teaching and learning and noted “these differences are not without impact on teaching and learning, but they are also not unique to international students or one particular group of students”.

Straker’s (2016) conceptual analysis questioned the framing of international students using language and culture as the parameters and claimed it plays to a ‘deficit discourse’ which has not offered practical guidance to teaching practice. Egege and Kutieleh (2008) suggested all students bring an implicit set of cultural values into the learning environment. They proposed generalisation across groups becomes problematic and over-emphasised by academics, particularly given it is the intent of international students when enrolling in Anglo-western universities to be involved in Western education. Ryan (2013) agreed that there has been a binary view of cross-cultural learning emphasising the difference between cultures, and suggested a closer examination of learning showed there are more often differences within cultures. Egege and Kutieleh (2008) noted that a challenge for universities in Australia is to address perceived cultural and academic differences and to provide programs which are culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Biggs and Tang (2011) considered cultural diversity as a characteristic which should be dealt with through *pedagogy* by improving quality in teaching and learning practices. Ryan and Carroll (2005) concluded that changes in pedagogy which benefit international students will also benefit the broader range of students by identification of issues students face in participation within educational contexts. Briguglio and Smith (2012) suggested more needs to be done to encourage the development of interpersonal skills of international students, in particular, students from mainland China. They also noted that two-way learning strategies should be developed to inspire greater engagement between Australian domestic and Chinese international students. Popov et al. (2012) agreed the challenges faced by students in multicultural learning groups should be investigated to develop a better understanding of the students’ perception of the challenges and develop group learning frameworks that assist in successful outcomes for all students.

As a response to this greater diversity, higher education providers in Anglo-western universities have attempted to develop an *internationalised curriculum* (Leask, 2005). Leask (2005, p. 119) suggests an internationalised curriculum utilises:

...a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies, all carefully selected and constructed to develop graduates who, as professionals and as citizens, can call on a range of international perspectives.

Although the premise of the internationalisation of curriculum is a long-standing concept, the conceptualisation and implementation remains under-theorised and challenging in practice (Whitsed & Green, 2013). There is a large body of research in relation to how these strategies should be conducted in the classroom (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2012; Foster, 2015; Leask, 2005). This research has included discussion on development of culturally relevant professional practice (Leask, 2005), enhancing learning of intercultural skills (Foster, 2015), and improving student interactions (Arkoudis et al., 2012). Yet, as Ryan (2011, p. 632) argued:

...there has only been modest moves towards the internationalisation of teaching and learning practices to take advantage of these flows of people and ideas and to put into practice universities' internationalisation rhetoric.

Leask and Bridge (2013) suggest the intercultural dimension of curriculum should be espoused in learning outcomes. Designing internationalised curriculum should embrace both the domestic and international student cohorts (Clifford & Montgomery, 2017). The underpinning philosophy should ensure both domestic and international students receive learning experiences which broaden their mindsets (Whitsed & Green, 2015), are high quality and relevant to their future careers through the development of generic skills (Ryan, 2011). This should be focal as current programs arguably under-utilised the opportunity in developing cross-cultural understanding to prepare both domestic and international student for an unknown future in a globalised world (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Mestenhauser, 2011).

2.3 Teamwork

The generic skills described by employers encompass learning outcomes across the entire education sector in Australia (Bowman, 2010). Australian universities were mandated by regulatory bodies through the Australian government to produce graduates with core employability skills or key competencies (Campbell, 2010; DEST, 2007). The higher education sector adopted a set of generic skills or key competencies, based on those highlighted by the Mayer Committee in 1992 (Bridgstock, 2009). These included collecting and analysing information, communicating ideas and information, planning and organising activities, working with others and in teams, problem-solving, using mathematical ideas and using technology

(Mayer, 1992). A generic definition for each skill was developed and this led to the creation of a set of generic attributes in a system-wide approach across all nationally recognised qualifications. They are variously known as generic skills, graduate attributes, generic attributes, employability skills or competencies. As Barrie (2005) said “pick a term”. Barrie (2007, p. 440) also stated:

In Australia ‘Generic Graduate Attributes’ have come to be accepted as being the skills, knowledge and abilities of university graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable in a range of contexts and are acquired as a result of completing any undergraduate degree.

Early importance was placed on the development of generic skills for higher education students and higher education institutions embedded them as part of their mission and objectives (Bath et al., 2004). As with any business, it is essential that an organisation produces a product or service that meets the stakeholders’ expectations. For universities, these include undergraduate business students, and their future employers. Yet employers highlight a level of dissatisfaction in the quality of the skills acquired by graduates at Australian universities (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). Boulton (2009) noted the role and place of universities as a contentious issue and the central role of universities is education. He argued that universities have an important role in developing social and cultural knowledge, as well as innovation in their students and these ideals should not be detached from the world of employment and stakeholders.

Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) suggested there needed to be a greater level of attention to the generic skills which are given precedence by employers. Each year, Graduate Careers Australia surveys graduate employers about their recruitment intentions and the quality of graduate applications. In 2013, 484 employers were surveyed and consistent with the survey in previous years, interpersonal skills were rated by employers as the most desired when recruiting graduates (Lindsay, 2014). Shah and Nair (2011) described interpersonal skills as the ability to empathise, and work productively, with people from a wide range of backgrounds, a willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision, and being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based projects.

Teamwork skills have been consistently ranked highly by employers in disciplines which encompass business, for example, management (Baker, 2014), accounting (Jackling & De Lange, 2009) and in broader terms of business (Jackson, 2012). Significantly, teamwork aids in the development of other generic skills such as ethical decision-making, communication,

interpersonal skills and problem-solving (Jackson, 2010). With employers considering interpersonal skills as the most desirable skills (Harvey, 2000; Lindsay, 2014), teamwork is a vehicle for developing these skills. Other skills which have been noted under the teamwork banner as important include: leadership (Mill, 2011) and the ability to work collaboratively (Martin, Maytham, Case, & Fraser, 2005).

The ability to work together collaboratively is also seen as critical by employers in Asia and, in particular, China, which has a highly competitive employment market. Graduates who possess collaborative skills have been more favoured by Chinese employers (Jing-fen, 2009; Zaharim et al., 2009). Employers in China noted the ability to communicate, interest in the job, the ability to work well with others, willingness to be flexible, show initiative, reliability and a desire to be successful as the attributes they require in graduates (Velde, 2009). It seems the generic skills described by universities as teamwork, is in fact a collective of skills desired by employers, both in Australia and in China. Generic skills may be acquired and developed through many experiences (DEST, 2007). Kalfa and Taska (2015) noted skill acquisition as a social process and does not occur in a 'vacuum'. If teamwork is the intended outcome for undergraduate business students to develop, they need to actively engage with other students in a teaching framework which operationalises teamwork skills and with the objectives clearly stated (Kalfa & Taska, 2015). An exemplar of universities descriptors for teamwork skills is included as Appendix 1.

2.4 Constructive alignment framework

Outcomes-based teaching and learning (OBTL) focuses not on what the lecturers intend to teach, but on what the students' outcomes are from that teaching (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The premise behind OBTL is that all teaching and learning activities, including assessment, should align with the stated intended outcomes (objectives) of a course (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In OBTL, students are required to perform the intended outcome themselves. As such, to develop the intended outcome of teamwork skills, Australian domestic and international business students would be required to engage in learning activities which encourage the acquisition of teamwork skills and assessment should align with this objective.

Constructive alignment is a form of OBTL (Biggs & Tang, 2011) and a basis for curriculum mapping (Oliver, 2013). Constructive alignment is not a new framework; it has long been accepted in the higher education discipline. Constructive alignment is part of the extensive work of John Biggs (e.g., Biggs, 1987, 1989, 1993, 1996a, 1999, 2003b, 2012a; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Central to Biggs' work is the notion that learners' activities create meaning in their learning environment and the implications these have for teaching and assessment are related (Biggs, 1996a). Constructive alignment broadly consists of four areas to consider:

1. What are the objectives?
2. What are the intended outcomes?
3. What are the teaching methods used? and;
4. What assessment will measure these outcomes? (Biggs, 1996a)

Pivotal to this process is the student (Biggs, 1996a). When the objectives of the teaching activities are the development of teamwork skills, the student, the teaching methods and the intended outcomes need to be understood and articulated prior to developing measures to assess the outcomes. One criticism of constructive alignment noted by Jervis and Jervis (2005), is that it restricts emergent outcomes due to formal documentation and this may cause the 'death of originality' (p.7) and questions how students can gain credit for originality or outcomes which were not defined in advance. They also question how to 'get students to do things' that the objectives state (Jervis & Jervis, 2005). As Borrego and Cutler (2010) found in their research, a lack of constructive alignment between the components of curriculum, such as intended outcomes and teaching methods, is a major weakness when the outcomes are skill specific. Jackson, Sibson, and Riebe (2014) also showed the importance of constructive alignment in the development of generic skills in undergraduate business students. How, therefore, can Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' experiences in group work activities be further developed to understand if the teaching method of group work activities is contributing to the development of an intended outcome of teamwork skills?

2.5 Conditions-focused approach

Hackman has a long research background into the processes and interactions of groups (Hackman, 1968, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). From his extensive research he saw groups not only as social systems but systems which create new realities and evolve in their own purpose and create strategies based on that purpose. Hackman (2012, p. 434) further suggested, "that any attempt to 'make' a group do well is doomed from the start – it is likely to be ineffectual or, in some cases, result in effects that are opposite of what was intended".

Hackman (2012) proposed that groups will '*chart their own course*', and research focus should attempt to understand what conditions, when present, increase the likelihood that desired

outcomes of the group be achieved. He referred to this as a *conditions-focused approach*. This approach allowed researchers to investigate through the interactions of a group, what conditions led to either intended or undesired outcomes. From analysis of this, the conditions which increased the likelihood that a group will naturally operate to achieve intended outcomes, can be put in place in future group interactions.

Hackman (2012) noted there was a great deal of descriptive research, including his own, into group effectiveness, which had an input-output focus. In recent years, Hackman's work has moved from the traditional input-output and causal models to an analysis of the conditions under which groups operate (Hackman, 2012). This work suggested that groups are social systems and as such create new realities for their members and the system they interact in; they evolve for their own purposes and create strategies based on those purposes. Hackman (2012) identified two critical concepts from systems theory, which bound a conditions-focused approach, *emergence* and *equifinality*. Emergence referred to the phenomena of concepts like group spirit, which emerge during interactions and cannot be explained through conditions (Hackman, 2012). The other concept, equifinality means a "social system, such as a group, can reach the same outcome from various initial conditions and by a variety of means" (Hackman, 2012, p. 440). How equifinality operates in groups is the core of a conditions-focused approach, meaning each individual with a group can have a different experience when interacting in a group.

Whilst Hackman's work is normative in its approach, the underlying notions could be applied to the interpretive and hence, a constructivist view, through the study of groups as social systems. He suggested group behaviour is a social phenomenon and that researchers need to be more inventive in research and development of conceptual models based around team development (Hackman, 2012). Biggs and Tang (2011) proposed that diversity in the student cohort be dealt with by aligning teaching and learning activities. Whilst this notion underpins this current research, the question of 'how?' appears unanswered in the practical realities faced by lecturers. This requires further investigation into what conditions are in place in the learning environment (Hackman, 2012).

2.6 Education Model: Biggs' 3P Model

Constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999, 2003b; Biggs & Tang, 2011) is a western framework to ensure that teaching is effective in achieving its intended outcomes by actively engaging students in learning. Biggs' work is extensive (Walsh, 2006). During the 1970's Biggs tested a proposed

model which identified student factors that exist prior to the student entering the learning situation and the teaching context (Biggs, 1978). This research led to major advancements in education including the development of the Study Behaviour Questionnaire (Biggs, 1976) and later the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ), which is a tool for lecturers to evaluate their learning environment (Biggs, Kember, & Leung, 2001). This questionnaire presented a measure for evaluating students' approaches to learning in the schema of the Presage-Process-Product (3P) Model (Biggs, 1987). The SPQ is similar to the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI) used by Biggs et al. (2001) and Entwistle and Ramsden (1983). The SPQ (revised) assesses deep and surface approaches and one of the conceptualisations of student approaches to learning (SAL) theory.

The 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) has been widely adopted as a framework for pedagogy and to guide research into practice (Albelbisi, Yusop, & Salleh, 2018; Fryer, 2017; Gray, Stein, Osborne, & Aitken, 2013). Biggs' research is Australian-based and is well-known and accepted internationally. His later work, which used his model in comparative studies with Chinese students in Hong Kong, is particularly relevant to the research outlined here (e.g., Biggs, 1996b; Watkins & Biggs, 1996, 2001).

Teaching and learning from a student's perspective can be conceptualised using Biggs' 3P Model. The 3P Model offers a framework for designing and analysing learning activities, as Walsh (2006, p. 80) suggested, by asking three questions:

1. What should students be able to understand/ know and be able to do at the end of a learning experience?
2. What activities should students undertake in order to learn this? and,
3. How can lecturers find out if the students have successfully learned?

As mentioned above, the model is broken down into three sections, presage, process and product. "Presage factors refer to what exists prior to engagement that affects learning" (Biggs, Kember, & Leung, 2001, p. 4). Presage factors consider the student factors or characteristics, together with the design of the teaching; that is, "what is intended to be taught, how it will be taught and assessed and to whom" (Biggs, 2003a, p. 18). The interaction of the presage factors impact on the process phase which include student focused activities, when students choose an approach to their study and finally, the product phase which relates to the outcomes of the activities (Biggs, 2003b). The model is demonstrated in Figure 2.1.

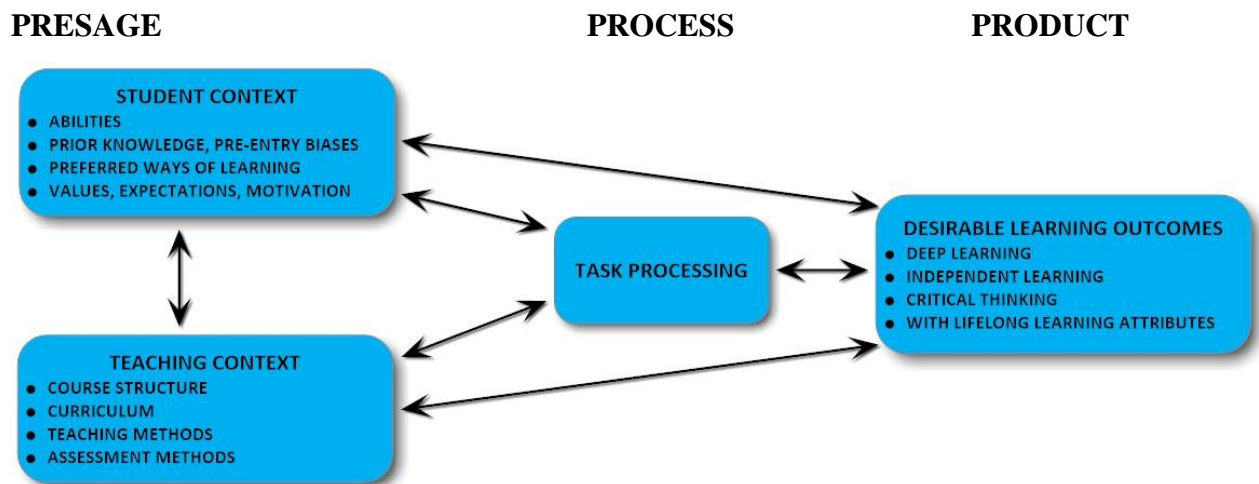


Figure 2.1: Biggs' 3P Model: Approaches to the enhancement of tertiary teaching (Biggs, 2003b, p. 19)

2.6.1 Student context

The student-related context refers to the predispositions students bring with them to the learning environment. These factors are in place before learning begins (Biggs, 2003b). The 3P Model itself is an adaption of Dunkin and Biddle's presage-process-product model (Zhang, 2000). In Biggs' original model (1987), these characteristics were defined as motivation and academic commitment, abilities, prior knowledge, values, expectations and ways of learning (Biggs, 2003a). Other studies have reconceptualised these characteristics and used the model in an adapted way (e.g., Han, 2014; Zhang, 2000). The student presage factors need to be considered when designing teaching methods for the development of teamwork skills in diverse student groups. Yet, these factors are multi-dimensional and both culturally and individually-bound (Curşeu & Sari, 2015). As noted, a group is a complex system made up of the individual members who are themselves a complex system (Hackman, 2012). Group membership implies a variation in the individual characteristics of each member in terms of cultural background, experience, skills and personal characteristics (Popov et.al. 2012). This prompted the question, what presage factors are most relevant to the teaching and learning environment for group work for Australian domestic and Chinese international students?

Han's (2014) adaption of the 3P Model provides a framework to address the complexity of the student presage factors. This model uses background (e.g., individual characteristics), prior cognitive (e.g., knowledge) and non-cognitive (e.g., motivation) factors. Duff and Mladenovic

(2015), in their study on approaches to learning in undergraduate accounting students, also adapted the student presage factor of the 3P Model. Their research found the key presage factors to be gender, language and prior experience, and expectations.

To inform the research question “How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students’ experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?” the student presage factors most relevant to the research question need to be reviewed, with a focus on who the students are. The student presage factors considered most relevant and adapted in this research are language, culture, expectations, prior knowledge, motivation and perception.

2.6.1.1 Language and culture

Biggs (2003b) termed student abilities as the qualities which students bring with them to the learning environment. In the 3P Model, language forms part of the students’ abilities. Abilities are a determinant of performance and out of the control of the lecturer, but Biggs and Tang (2011) suggested abilities are not the major determinant of performance, yet this is included as one of the models presage factors. This is at odds with other research (Bretag, 2007; Chan & Ryan, 2013), which suggested the level of English language ability impacted on academic success for international students. The impact of poor language skills in the Western academic environment is well researched and well documented. For example, language ability is perceived to be poor in Chinese international students (De Wit, 2015; Gao, 2006). The research on impact of language in Chinese international students has focused on the pitfalls of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Oliver, Vanderford, & Grote, 2012), barriers to learning in Anglo-western systems (Chan & Ryan, 2013) and obstacles to interaction with domestic students (Arkoudis et al., 2013).

Cummins (1979) noted the different time periods it takes international students studying in a second language to develop Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Conversational fluency is generally acquired within the first two years of exposure to a second language, but the academic aspects of the second language take far longer, up to five years (Byram & Hu, 2013; Cummins, 1979, 2013). Students who are anxious about their speaking and listening skills tended to put up perceived barriers (Ariza, 2002), particularly if they are not cognitive academic language proficient. Often times, a lecturer’s

misunderstanding of an international student's language proficiency has contributed to their academic difficulties (Byram & Hu, 2013; Cummins, 2013).

Linguistic capability and communicative competency are two different things (Kameda, 2001). Language or linguistic capability is simply the words used given the background of the individual (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). More importantly, it is communicative competency; the meaning which is meant to be given to these words in an attempt to communicate, not just the words themselves (Kameda, 2001; Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Misunderstandings occur when the meaning behind the words is not understood.

The Communication Theory Model from organisation behaviour suggests language is the vehicle for communication but, in groups, communication is a critical aspect of group success (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Napier and Gershenfeld (2004) explained communication as the interaction between senders and receiver. The receiver gets a message through verbal communication, but **dependent** on their language proficiency, they have to take time to process this in their mind. For example, international students may take time to process information in a group work situation. If the student only has a certain level of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (Cummins, 2013), by the time they process this message, the next piece of information may already have been given and missed. In the group setting, the messages sent to the receiver through both verbal and non-verbal cues and the way an individual receiver processes these are the key to effective intercultural communication (Krajewski, 2011). In cross-cultural group activities, domestic and international students need to take time to ensure the messages through language and non-verbal cues are being received so as to promote positive group communication.

Making this process more problematic, as McCallen (1989) noted, each country that speaks English as its first language injects aspects of its own culture into the usage. For example, native speakers of English believe they never make mistakes in communicating the English language (Kameda, 2001). However, even in situations where people from two English speaking countries (such as the U.S.A. and the U.K.) are conversing, there can be issues because of communication customs and culture. Although Biggs and Tang (2011) suggested abilities are not a major determinant of performance, the extensive literature on international students' language abilities suggested language and culture are a critical presage factor for group work activities.

Culture is inherent in all students (Arkoudis et al., 2013). While group work activities allows for interaction between Australian domestic and Chinese international students, communication in

reality may be difficult when students inject their own cultural aspects. Arkoudis et al. (2013) found that all students, domestic and international, come to university with cultural predispositions which impact their ability to engage with diversity and shape their intercultural interactions. Cultural differences are often homogenised into Eastern and Western cultural values, Li (2003) attributes this to the Confucian-Socratic framework. He also suggested that both learning styles share the “same epistemological basis and argued the differences lay merely in their approaches” (p.146).

Confucian philosophy dominates Chinese society and the philosophy has a unique view of teaching and learning (Yang, Zheng & Li, 2006). Flowerdew (1998) categorises these as cooperation, propriety and humanism and are operationalised in learning. Her research suggested the value of cooperation can foster a learning style which is conducive to group work activities, if the framework acknowledges cultural differences. Group orientation and harmony in relationships are some of the more predominant cultural characteristics in Chinese society (Bond, 1991). An analysis of Chinese international students’ perceptions of group interaction indicated the Chinese students’ primary goal for the groups was social, to maintain group harmony, and that this goal affected the nature and types of interaction they allowed themselves in group discussions (Carson & Nelson, 1996). The Chinese students were often reluctant to initiate comments and, when they did, monitored themselves carefully so as not to precipitate conflict within the group. This self-monitoring led them to avoid criticism of the work of peers and to avoid disagreeing with comments about peers or their own writing (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Wang, 2012).

Particular values and norms in Chinese society contribute to maintaining harmony in relationships: group orientation, respect for authority, interdependence (*quanxi*), friendship (*ganqing*) and reciprocity (*renqing*) (Bond, 1991). *Quanxi* is the Chinese cultural trait meaning relationship and is the most important of these traits (Zhu, McKenna, & Zhu, 2007). Organisational behaviour literature discussed *quanxi* and placed emphasis on developing and keeping good *quanxi* to achieve success, but developing good *quanxi* takes time (Zhu et al., 2007). In a group work situation in a higher education setting, one could expect Chinese international students to maintain the qualities and values due to the societal norms they have developed. As a result, in the western classroom, they may not engage actively in discussions due to these norms. Wang’s (2012) research showed that many international students become ‘silent partners’ in group work activities. He suggested that one of the issues that needs to be addressed

to increase engagement is the international students' expectation of western teaching methods, particularly in group activities (Wang, 2012).

2.6.1.2 Expectations

Undergraduate first-year students arrive at university with a set of expectations about the nature of their university life and many students find a gap between their expectations and reality (McInnis, James, & Hartley, 2000). School is the foundation for an individual's expectations of learning. Many domestic students find the final year of school was not sufficient in preparing them for the first year of university, in terms of the amount/standard of work required, and the shift in responsibility for personal learning (McInnis et al., 2000). These expectations are formed from their experiences in secondary school in Australia (Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995). The expectations of the learning experience held by international students, such as students from mainland China, are based on their home experience of learning and teaching styles (Shaw, 2005).

Wang (2012) noted the difficulties many international students from mainland China have with moving from teacher-centred educational practices to student-centred educational practices. In Australian universities, group work brings students together in a cooperative framework with the goal of sharing ideas and working together to achieve an outcome (Galegher, Kraut, & Egidio, 2014). In researching group work in China and how it is used in the classroom, Yeung and Fu (2011), found that the definition of group work was different to that used in western classrooms. As part of the Chinese school classroom, many students are grouped together so the more advanced students help to tutor the weaker students. This is considered by teachers to be beneficial to all students. The more advanced students may assist others with individual assessment and Chinese students and their teachers see this as group work (Yeung & Fu, 2011).

Although Chinese international students are not completely unfamiliar with group activities, the value of participating in group activities is impacted by their expectations (Wang, 2012). International students from mainland China view the teacher as the expert (Wang, 2012) and do not want to learn errors from classmates (Cortazzi & Jin, 2009). Their expectation of group activities is also influenced by their view of how group activities will assist them in meeting expectations of assessment (Wang, 2012), not only for group activities but for other assessments, such as examinations.

Quantitative assessment through examinations is still central to the Chinese educational system (Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Gao, 2014). Although some efforts have been made to change this system,

economic factors, conceptual ambiguity and resistance have seen these reforms stifled (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). Importantly for developing an understanding of the expectations of international students from mainland China, is the notion that these examinations can have life-long consequences (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). Expectations, as a presage factor, impacts on the way in which Australian domestic and Chinese international students approach group work activities in terms of what they expect from the activities and the way in which they will engage with the group.

2.6.1.3 Prior knowledge

Biggs and Tang (2011), noted the differences between the natures of knowledge that are taught in higher education. They made the distinction between declarative knowledge (replication, logically consistent, what the teacher declares) and functioning knowledge (what professionals are concerned with, problem-solving, applying knowledge in contexts). Functioning knowledge (problem-solving, group activities) may require a firm foundation in declarative knowledge (lectures) or can be constructed together (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The development of teamwork skills requires teaching and learning activities for functioning knowledge (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Learning outcomes are influenced by what a student already knows and impacts their engagement in group activities. Prior knowledge includes previous learning experiences, information imparted as part of the curriculum of a course that assists with assessments and lectures (Biggs, 1987).

Traditionally, lectures are provided so that students have an understanding of the discipline, its theories and course materials (Ramsden, 2002). Group work is a teaching technique seen by lecturers as allowing students to practically apply this knowledge (Stein, Isaacs, & Andrews, 2004), and brings together a level of quality that is often missed and under-utilised. Some of the prior knowledge, therefore, is gained through attendance at lectures, but questions have been raised as to the quality of this prior knowledge and students' experiences using traditional models, such as lectures (Garrison & Vaughan, 2007). Costa, Van Rensberg, and Rushton (2007) agreed that lectures are not the best way to impart knowledge to international undergraduate students studying in western classrooms due to language difficulties. They suggested group work offered a teaching method in which all students can engage with the course material.

2.6.1.4 Motivation

What motivates a student to enrol in a particular degree program is linked to their prior learning experiences and performances (Chan & Ryan, 2013). Factors relevant to undergraduate business students include parental pressure (Doghonadze, 2013), a field that interests them, or getting a job/degree (McInnis, et al. 2000). The lure of residency has also been a focus of study on international student motivation (Jackling, 2007). Student motivation has been studied widely, particularly comparing intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Armstrong, Brown, & Thompson, 2014; Chan & Ryan, 2013). Jackling (2007) defined the difference in these rewards by using the examples of students that were interested in the discipline career and subject (intrinsic) and students who were interested in a high salary (extrinsic). She noted that students with intrinsic motivators were more able to recognise and solve problems at a complex level than those motivated by extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic motivators strongly relate to higher performance in students (Chan & Ryan, 2013). Chan and Ryan's (2013) research challenges the stereotyping of international students, in particular Chinese students, where intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are not mutually exclusive, i.e., students may have an interest in the field, and want a high salary.

Motivation is one of the factors which influence academic commitment (Cassidy, 2012).

According to Biggs and Tang (2011, p. 7), good teaching narrows the gap between the academic commitment and motivation of students as “Good teaching is about getting most students to use the level of cognitive processes needed to achieve the intended outcomes that the more academic students use spontaneously”.

Biggs and Tang (2011) maintained that ‘ethnic diversity’ raised issues for teaching and learning, but should be dealt with in the same way as academic commitment and motivation. Whilst, they acknowledge the ‘special needs’ of international students with language and culture, they believe this should be dealt with outside the classroom, not by lecturers in the classroom. This appears at odds with Biggs’ notion that “it’s not what the teachers do, it’s what the students do that is the important thing” (1999, p. 63) and creates questions about what ‘good teaching’ is if it doesn’t take into account the student presage factors which relate directly to the outcomes for students.

2.6.1.5 Perception

The literature suggests that it was students’ perception of their learning environment which exerted a direct impact on their learning (Diseth, Pallesen, Hovland, & Larsen, 2006; Entwistle,

1989; Kember & Leung, 1998). Bunce and West (1995) addressed the idea that perception is two-fold in a group setting; self-perception and group perception. Self-perception is the individual awareness of one's own characteristics (Bunce & West, 1995). Group perception, on the other hand, is an individual's perception of the others in the group (Hackman, 1987). Volet and Ang (2012) found cultural, language, negative stereotyping and ethnocentric views as the main issues perceived by both domestic and international students in diverse groups. These perceptions are generally based on the individual's past experience with group work (Levi, 2015). Gersick and Hackman (1990) noted that individuals tend to be habitual in their behaviours in groups. If their individual behaviour was negative and they were left ungoverned by the group, they perceived these behaviours as the correct ones and would continue these behaviours in future group interactions (Gersick & Hackman, 1990).

2.6.1.6 Summary

Learning takes place through the active behaviour of the learner (Biggs & Tang, 2011) and consideration of the student presage factors is essential for constructive alignment (Biggs, 2003a). The literature reviewed around student presage factors focused predominantly on language and culture, expectation, prior knowledge and perception. Whilst the literature pertaining to international student interaction in groups and language and cultural differences is vast, the complexity of the impact of a student's individual characteristics in the 3P Model, from the student perspective, appeared largely absent. Individual students' differing starting points or predispositions influence how they will approach learning, given the teaching context (Freeth & Reeves, 2004). If Hackman's (2012) notion of 'conditions in place' is applied, diverse student groups have differing starting points for each individual student. Prominent organisational behaviour literature has continually concluded that the characteristics of the individuals within a group are directly linked to predicting the effectiveness of that group (e.g., Campion et al., 1993; Hackman, 1987; Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997; Luciano et al., 2014). Further to this, language and cultural differences have a direct relationship to Chinese international students' abilities to interact in groups (Chan & Ryan, 2013); expectations of group members vary, the level of prior knowledge may vary and perception of not only each member of the group but the teaching context also vary and a student's motivation is directly related to their academic commitment. As Arkoudis et al. (2013) contended, education practice which positions culture as detached will continue to reinforce the conceptualisations which hinder meaning in cross-cultural interactions.

Yet, the 3P Model appeared to fail to recognise the intricacies of language and culture as a critical presage factor.

When group work is the teaching method, these ‘conditions in place’ appeared at odds with Biggs’ (1999) notion that diversity should be dealt with in the teaching context. He noted in teaching a diverse cohort of students the focus should be on the similarities between students rather than the differences, but in doing so, it should not be denied that differences exist.

Organisational behaviour literature would suggest, group work may not be an effective vehicle for the development of teamwork skills in all students. The next section reviews literature framed around the teaching context of the 3P Model.

2.6.2 Teaching context

The teaching context is the environment which is set by the university lecturer given the program structure, curriculum content, methods of teaching, assessment and teaching, and the requirements of the institution (Biggs, 1987). The cultural context in which teaching and learning occurs is an important consideration (Smith, 2016). Cultural values impact on the perception of the teaching and learning outcomes (Becher & Orland-Barak, 2017) for both student and lecturer, and influence the practice of assessment (Smith, 2016). The focus of this research is to understand the individual experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students in group work in an Anglo-Western teaching context, the context is therefore shaped by and influenced in the western cultural context. Han (2014) adapted the 3P Model to the contextual factors specific to his research, by including the lecturers’ characteristics in the teaching context. Freeth and Reeves (2004) also adapted the contextual factors in their study and included lecturer’s perceptions or approaches. Given the focus of this research, group work, the teaching presage factors adapted for the discussion below are the lecturers’ approach to teaching, the methods of assessment and methods of teaching.

2.6.2.1 Lecturer’s approach to teaching

The way in which a lecturer creates the teaching environment is critical as it shapes student learning (Kember & Kwan, 2000). A growing body of evidence suggests variations in the ways in which lecturers approach their teaching (e.g., Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi, & Ashwen, 2006; Mälkki, & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012; Postareff, Virtanen, Katajavuori, & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012; Prosser & Trigwell, 2014; Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999). These variations are due to differences in the views of lecturers of what it is students should learn (Martin, Prosser,

Trigwell, Ramsden, & Benjamin, 2002), understanding of the subject matter being taught (Prosser, Martin, Trigwell, Ramsden, & Lueckenhausen, 2005), and their view of leadership in teaching (Martin et al., 2002). As the lecturer creates the teaching environment, their own approach becomes critical in the context by shaping student learning (Kember & Kwan, 2000).

Research in relation to university lecturers' approaches to teaching identifies variations (Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006). These approaches can be categorised as teacher-centred (transmission of knowledge) and student-centred (knowledge construction) (Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006). Kember and Kwan (2000) categorised these as transmissive and facilitative, where the approach to teaching was either content-centred or learning-centred. The transmission approach focused on the material to be taught, while a learning-centred approach focused on ensuring appropriate student learning. The lecturer's approach influences assessment (Kember & Kwan, 2000), and student learning outcomes (Trigwell et al., 1999).

Prosser et al. (2005) noted the relationship between a lecturer's understanding of the subject matter and their approach to teaching. Lecturers have variations in understanding of generic skills (Barrie, 2007). Shannon and Swift (2010) found a gap between what lecturers expected from their curriculum and requirements for assessment of generic skills. As Bath et al. (2004) also noted, development of skills are often from the teacher's perspective and "may not align with what the students both experience and perceive" (p. 325). This is supported by other research that found discrepancies exist between what lecturers intended and what students actually gained (e.g., Ang, D'Alessandro, & Winzar, 2013; Barrie, 2007; Su, 2014). Many assessments attached to development of generic skills such as teamwork are based heavily on knowledge of the discipline or technical aspects (Shannon & Swift, 2010), or on product (Messick, 2013). This suggests there may not be effective alignment of teaching, practice or assessment.

2.6.2.2 Methods of assessment

Assessment is designed to measure student learning outcomes through various tools (Liu, 2011). In constructive alignment, the elements of the teaching and learning process including assessment are critical to achieve intended outcomes (Biggs, 2012a). To support appropriate student learning, Biggs (2012a) suggested the teaching method and assessment should align to the objectives of the learning activities. Alignment requires lecturers designing assessment to set the criteria for the assessment, selecting evidence to be submitted and making judgments about the extent to which the criteria have been met. Assessment which supports learning outcomes should clearly define

what the intended outcomes are so the students understand what is expected in terms of what they have to learn, and how they are going to learn it (teaching method) (Biggs, 2012a).

Boud and Falchikov (2007) suggested assessment rather than the method of teaching has a profound influence on student learning. The assessment draws attention to what the students perceive as important and it is an incentive for how and what they do in the learning process. For example, perception of inappropriate assessment pushed students to take attempt tasks in a passive manner and rush to cover the material (Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002). As Brown and Knight (1994 cited in Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 2013) stated “assessment is at the heart of the student experience” (p. 7). The method of assessment is critical to student learning. As Biggs (2003b, p. 3) detailed in explaining the perspectives (and shown in Figure 2.2):

To the teacher, assessment is at the end of the teaching-learning sequence of events, but to the student it is at the beginning. If the curriculum is reflected in the assessment, as indicated by the downward arrow [shown in the model], the teaching activities of the teacher and the learning activities of the learner are both directed towards the same goal. In preparing for the assessments, students will be learning the curriculum.

In planning assessment tasks, the intended outcomes of teamwork skills should form part of the assessment as students are focused on the assessment (Biggs, 2003a; Brown et al., 2013). Biggs’ demonstrated this in the following model:

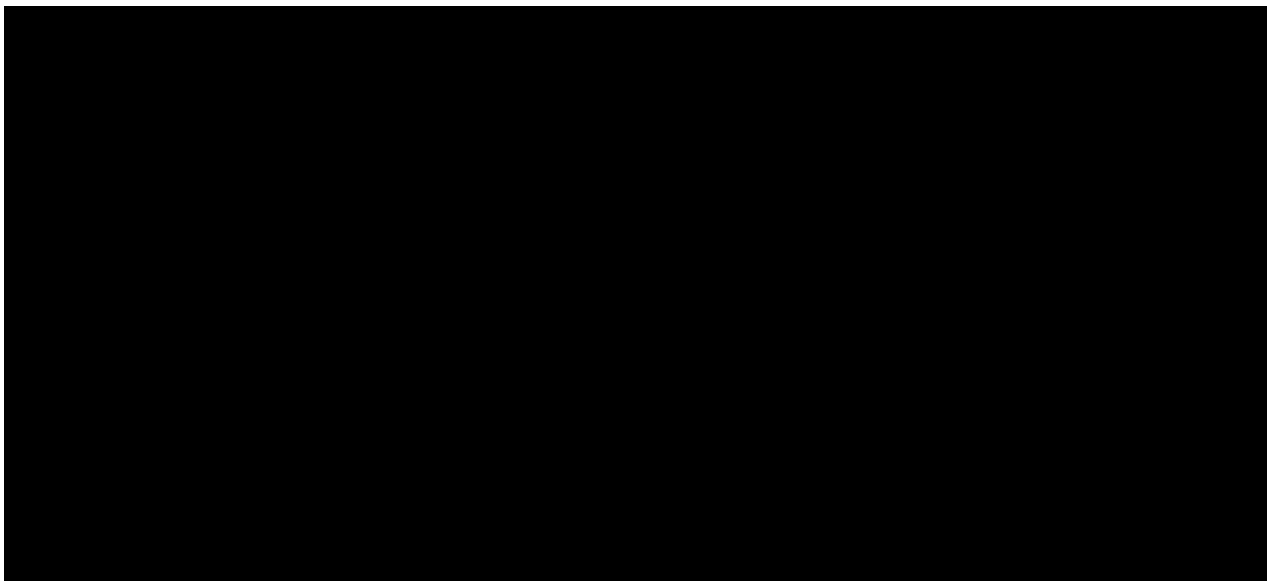


Figure 2.2: Aligning Teaching for Constructing Learning (Biggs, 2003b, p. 141)

Assessment of generic skills is a complex issue (Hughes & Barrie, 2010). With the increased focus on students gaining personal skills such as teamwork, Messick (2013) noted the importance of developing performance-based assessment as this is where these skills are obtained.

Competence in generic skills, such as teamwork, should be shown by actions and not just in knowledge and theory (Messick, 2013). As assessment is the central outcome in the view of students, lecturers need to understand this when designing assessment tasks to measure teamwork skills.

2.6.2.3 Methods of teaching

Methods of teaching at universities have traditionally been restricted to lectures and tutorials (Biggs, 2012a). A tutorial with smaller student numbers opens an opportunity for teaching methods that involve small groups or group work. Not all groups are the same and individuals join groups for different reasons (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Groups can be defined by their reason for existence; for example, a group that comes together to share knowledge and experiences, such as a group of undergraduate business students, is defined as a learning group (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Group work is what the learning group as a collective undertakes and provides the context in which the development of teamwork skills occur. It is a teaching method used in collaborative and cooperative learning (Barkley et al., 2014; Toohey, 2002; Wee & Kek, 2002).

Collaborative and cooperative group work as teaching methods which positively contributes to student learning is widely advocated (Gibbs, 1992; Kriflick & Mullan, 2007; Mutch, 1999). As Toohey (2002) suggested, students need the opportunity to analyse, utilise critical enquiry and gain feedback to develop knowledge that may not be gained through approaches such as lectures or print material. Group work is seen from a curriculum design perspective as offering students a forum to network with their peers (Dickinson, 2000), develop and refine interpersonal and communication skills (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004), explore and apply theories in an authentic way (Stein et al., 2004), and as a means to develop the skills employers seek (Blickley et al., 2013). From a teaching perspective, it is also a means of dealing with large student numbers cost-effectively (Burdett, 2003). Group work is seen as a teaching method of great relevance to Anglo-western undergraduate business higher education, as organisational structures in business are increasingly team based (Nicholas, 2013).

Cooperation is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). Collaboration, on the other hand, is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respecting the abilities and contributions of their peers (Panitz, 1996). Cooperative learning occurs in a more structured environment in which the teacher has control (teacher-centred), whilst collaborative learning is less structured allowing for the students to make their own decisions (student-centred) (Raitman, Zhou, Nicholson, Corbitt, & Fong, 2003). Cooperative learning allows students to develop skills required to participate in collaborative learning (Panitz, 1996).

Cooperative group work enables students to develop higher-level thinking skills (Duren & Cherrington, 1992), understand important concepts of the course (Toohey, 2002) and develop interpersonal skills (Mierson & Parikh, 2000). It is based on the principles that working together will result in a greater understanding than when working alone and that interactions will contribute to understanding (Panitz, 1996). Students interact to develop individual and mutual understanding. Cooperative group work is social in nature, and communication is highly important (Cecez-Kecmanovic & Webb, 2000; Zhu, 2012).

This may be the case in a perfect world, but as Johnson and Johnson (1994) stated, collaboration between students who celebrate each other's successes, encourage others and learn together regardless of diverse attributes, are rare. Students rarely work well collaboratively. Duren and Cherrington (1992) found there are large differences between the potential and reality of cooperative groups. Students' experiences with cooperative group work are multi-dimensional (Kimmel & Volet, 2009). Cooperative group work activities involve students working towards a common goal (Kriflick & Mullan, 2007) but as Johnson and Johnson (1994) noted this 'sink or swim' together dependence is one of the most important aspects of both cooperative and collaborative learning. Strategies that appear to be beneficial to student learning in theory may not develop teamwork skills. For cooperative group work success, dependence needs to form part of the lesson so that the goal is both working together and learning the assigned material.

Both the positive and negative impacts of group work are widely discussed in research literature (Bass, 2007; Cohen & Lotan, 2014; Comell & Macken, 2003). Johnson and Johnson (1999) note that some kinds of learning groups facilitate student learning, whilst others hinder student learning and task accomplishment. Group work is viewed as allowing for interaction among a diverse student base; however, it has also been found to be associated with problems (Cohen & Lotan,

2014; Zeff & Higby, 2002). Some examples of this include self-limiting behaviours such as *social loafing* and time coordination. Diverse views may also result in destructive conflict between group members (Zeff & Higby, 2002). The use of group work in situations where the group members have diverse cultural differences has implications for student learning (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). Biggs (1999) suggested the impact of cultural differences may be reduced by aligning teaching methods to extract appropriate learning behaviours from all students.

Cooperative group work is also seen as a flexible mode of instruction for a diverse classroom (Sharan, 2010). Understanding the social and cultural factors and the interplay of these is important to understanding students' experiences in cooperative group activities (Kimmel & Volet, 2009). Research on cross-cultural group work suggested that both domestic and international students are open to working in diverse groups. For example, Montgomery (2009) noted in her comparative study (1998/2008) that students' attitudes to working in diverse groups had changed; they were also more open to the idea and showed levels of cultural sensitivity. Students still found there was a level of negativity when the assessment task had a high grade value and there was some evidence of stereotyping and prejudice (Montgomery, 2009). Volet and Ang (2012, p.25) claimed that domestic and international students both preferred to work with their "own people" when the group activity involved an assessment task. The competing views discussed have shown the importance of assessment. In these cases, if there was not an assessment task, the students were happy to work in diverse groups.

2.6.2.4 Summary

The review of literature has investigated the teaching context using the 3P Model. The 'conditions in place' highlighted were the lecturers approach to teaching, methods of assessment and methods of teaching. As assessment is central to the students' learning experience (Biggs, 2003b), assessment is the most prominent 'condition in place'. The presence of an assessable task dictates the climate for group learning and also influences the potential of the group.

The two presage contexts, student and teaching, with the student context characteristics directly impacting on the way students choose to engage in group tasks, and the teaching context factors influencing the way students perceive and interpret the learning environment and the interaction, indicate the potential for these factors to impact on student learning (Biggs & Tang, 2010; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). These factors are the 'conditions in place' for Australian

domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students when undertaking group work activities. The next section focuses on the task processing phase of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) or as Hackman (2012) stated, when a group will ‘chart their own course’.

2.7 Process phase

From the originating work of Marton and Säljö (1976a), and later work of Biggs, the students’ approaches to learning (SAL) theory has emerged as a meta-theory for the conceptualisation of teaching and learning (Biggs et al., 2001). SAL theoretical background is contained in Anglo-western research into teaching and learning (e.g., Biggs, 1999; Entwistle, 1991; Marton & Booth, 1997), and describes ways in which students engage in learning activities. An approach is not a fixed attribute so students may engage in the tasks within different learning environments with different approaches (Entwistle, 1991). The student’s approach to learning is the two-way interaction between the stimulation of the learning activity and the academic orientation of the student (Biggs, 1999). An approach to learning is utilised in the process phase of the 3P Model, when a student engages with a task and surface, deep or strategic learning occurs (Biggs, 1987, 1989; Entwistle, 1991).

A surface approach to learning is often described as temporary learning (Beattie, Collins, & McInnes, 1997). This approach to learning is characterised by students memorising content of the teaching material and accepting facts and ideas without question (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). Students do not distinguish between any underlying principles or patterns, mainly because they are seen as concentrating on rote learning of the material (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). This learning approach is also influenced by the method of assessment (Beattie et al., 1997).

A deep learning approach, on the other hand, implies that students’ learning is a cognitive process for understanding (Beattie et al., 1997). Students seek to interact with the contents of teaching materials to critically evaluate, examine logic of material, present conclusions and relate ideas to previous knowledge and experience (Biggs, 1987; Beattie et al., 1997; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). Much of the knowledge of deep learning strategies has come from research concerning the nature and way in which individuals learn in the higher education setting (Toohey, 2002).

In addition to surface and deep learning approaches, Cunningham (1999) suggested individuals employ a strategic approach to learning. Taking a strategic approach, students adapt their approach to learning to achieve what they have to, given the student and teaching presage factors (Salili & Lai, 2003; Richardson, 1994). The strategic approach is employed by students to obtain

maximum possible results from minimum effort (Cassidy & Eachus, 2000), given the time constraints (Baeten, Struyven, & Dochy, 2013). Scouller (1998) on the other hand, concluded an instrumental or strategic approach to learning is based on assessment requirements and the students' abilities. The teaching context for this research assessment is therefore critical, as the relationship between approach and the learning environment impact on outcomes (Entwistle, 1991). If students are employing a strategic approach in group work when the lecturer has designed a deep approach, then this may contradict the intentions and intended outcomes may not be achieved (Entwistle, 1991). Individuals adopting this approach to learning, based on their student context factors and the teaching context, do what they have to do; it is sometimes called the 'well organised' surface approach (Entwistle, 1991).

The 3P Model and the term approaches have been used to analyse student learning in many studies (e.g. Ellis & Bliuc, 2016; Wang, Su, Cheung, Wong, & Kwong, 2013). Wang et al. (2013) noted that individual students will take a different approach depending on how they view the objectives of the course, whilst Ellis and Bliuc (2016, p. 971) stated:

Just because students within a single cohort experience the same inquiry-based learning activities, experience the same teaching and the same aspects of the learning environment, does not mean that they will all achieve the same quality of outcomes. Instead, the outcomes are likely to vary depending on key factors such as how the students approach inquiry, what strategies they adopt and with what intent.

It seems each individual student may adopt a different approach in the teaching environment, given the same learning activity. Originally, Marton and Säljö (1976) regarded it as entirely contextual and situational, but Schmeck (1988) argued students' learning approach is unchangeable regardless of teaching context and task.

Reid (1987) noted that the ways in which international students learning differed due to culture, age, education and time in other countries occurs because of experience and the academic environment. As Ramburuth and McCormick (2001) discussed, Asian students are more likely to use surface strategies, but are deeply motivated. Kember (1996) also noted that limited ability in the language of instruction can influence the ways in which Asian students approach learning. This aligns with the work of Salili and Lai (2003) who noted that language and motivation to learn English impacts on a student's approach to learning. Similarly, in their study of Australian and Asian students, Ramburuth and McCormick (2001) found there to be no statistical difference

between the two groups in approaches to learning. Wang et al. (2013), in their analysis of changes in learning approaches of students in Hong Kong, found students in units which adopted constructive alignment adopted deep learning approaches.

Howie and Bagnall (2013) argued that the concept of deep and surface learning approaches is over-simplistic in the language used and the assumption that one is good (deep) and one is bad (surface), is flawed. They suggested this assumes students have inherently fixed characteristics and aids in stereotyping students, particularly those from Asian countries. Ryan and Louie (2007) agreed that binary terms such as deep and surface are, in practice, misleading. Biggs, Kember, and Leung (2001) took the middle ground and argued students had both a preferred approach and a contextual approach. This reinforced Biggs' earlier notion which suggested students may choose or have a perceived orientation towards a surface approach to learning in one teaching context and may adopt a deep approach in another teaching context (Biggs, 1999). Biggs et al. (2001) described these as a preferred learning approach and a situational approach. The preferred learning approach is determined by the students' individual characteristics, whilst a "situational approach or the on-task approach to learning is relatively unstable as it is determined by how students modify their preferred approaches to fit the requirements of the teaching context" (Wang et al., 2013, p. 479). In the context of this research, the teaching context is group work.

Central to groups in organisational behaviour are the characteristics and interplay of the individuals who form a group. This process is known as *group dynamics* (Hackman, 1987). Lewin first discussed the term group dynamics in his social research in 1947 (Lewin, 1947) and it has been widely researched since (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Group dynamics are the actions, processes and changes which occur within the group itself (Forsyth, 2009). Importantly, they are the behaviours of the individuals who make up the group and how this interplay impacts on the group as a whole (Forsyth, 2009). The individual interplay and group processing is when a group acquires the characteristics of a team. This is discussed further in the next section. Lecturers need to be aware that diversity in the student cohort affects the dynamics of group work and as such becomes more complex (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). Biggs' model inferred an individual will adopt an approach to learning in the process phase, yet organisational behaviour literature suggests the dynamics of the group may impact on the approach a student takes to learning. To develop teamwork skills students need to engage actively with the group using a deep approach. If the teaching conditions are not favourable, then students will adopt either a surface or strategic

approach. The students approach will influence outcome or product, the final phase of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b).

2.8 Teamwork skills as the product

The *product* phase of the 3P Model depicts the desired or intended outcomes of the teaching and learning environment. This phase of the 3P Model suggests that the learning approaches employed by students are directly related to their learning outcomes (Biggs, 1987, 1989). If the intended outcomes (product) of a teaching activity require higher order cognitive skills, then the combination of factors in the teaching activity should encourage a deep learning approach and produce high quality outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Development of teamwork skills in an internationalised undergraduate business education requires students to adopt a deep learning approach to group activities (Staehr & Byrne, 2011).

Why are groups and teams not the same? If teamwork skills is the intended outcome or product of group work activities, this needed further investigation. Often, the terms group and team are confused and the differences between a group and a team are often unclear (McKee, Kemp, & Spence, 2012; Robbins et al., 2013). All teams are groups but not all groups are teams. Teams begin as groups but display higher order processing and outcomes (Argote et al., 2001; Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Lussier, 2002; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cohen, 2012). The following discussion looks at what a group is, how this differs from a team and how group dynamics may in fact cause the group to display characteristics of an ineffective team. Hackman (2012, p. 429) provided this definition of a group. “A group is an intact social system, complete with boundaries, interdependence for some shared purpose and differentiated member roles. This means that it is possible to distinguish members from non-members”.

A group generally consists of a small number of people who come together for a shared purpose (McKee et al., 2012). Group dynamics then come into play. The development of a team is a transformational process. Importantly, if the group does not develop characteristics of a team, it will remain a group (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002).

2.8.1 Group transformation

The transformational process from group to team occurs through key aspects of group dynamics, including roles, norms, status, power and diversity (McKee et al., 2012). *Roles* refers to the set of behaviour patterns anticipated by individuals occupying certain position/s in a group (Robbins et

al., 2013). In organisational behaviour, roles, for example, leadership, are usually assigned to the individual and they tend to be orientated towards either the task or maintaining satisfaction within the group (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). These roles impact on the efficiency and productivity of groups (McKee et al., 2012). In workplaces, problems generally arise when members of a group are faced with a different set of expectations of their role than they originally thought and leadership is the predominant role within any group (McKee et al., 2012). Oakley, Felder, Brent, and Elhajj (2004) found that student groups often have issues when the roles are not clarified or students do not take on their assigned roles. This leads to decreased productivity and causes conflict (Oakley et al., 2004).

Norms are regular patterns of behaviour that are relatively stable and expected in the group (Birenbaum & Sajarin, 1976). Norms are the acceptable standards or expectations shared by a group's members (Robbins et al., 2013). When individuals first enter groups, they may be constrained not only because of their uncertain feelings about the group, but because these acceptable standards or expectations are not yet defined (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Norms provide an important mechanism for social control of individual behaviour. At the inauguration of a group, these individual norms play a part in the behaviours of individuals, as group norms have not yet been established (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). All groups expect patterns of behaviour to be established within the group and these come about based on each person's individual norms. Individuals define their self-concept in terms of their membership in social groups, and this is provoked and activated in other group situations, depending on the characteristics of others who are present in the group (Chatman & Flynn, 2001).

Status within a group is referred to as the grading, position, or rank within the group (Robbins et al., 2013). A dilemma of working in groups is status ordering, when a hierarchy develops within the group. In organisations, status in groups may come about based on age, skill, education and experience, and if perceived individual status is in line with the formal organisational system, then problems do not usually arise (Robbins et al., 2013). With respect to students, Cohen (2000, p. 272) stated:

Students may have status within a group based on academic ability, peer status or societal status based on social class, race, ethnic group or gender. Students placed within high status categories are expected to be more competent, while low status students are more likely to hold back and not contribute as much.

Status within a group can also influence the acceptance of others and therefore the relationships that develop within the group (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). The relative or perceived status of an individual within that group may determine the level of that individual's participation in group work (Cohen, 1994). Status within a group based on cultural background has been found to influence the way decisions are made within groups and therefore participation of group members (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Scheepers, Ellemers, & Sassenberg, 2013). This is viewed as status heterogeneous, which may impact on participation by individuals (Fisek, Berger, & Norman, 1991). Chrzhik's (2001) research found individual differences, such as culture, impact on status within a group, but the social constructs, such as cultural may, in fact, not influence participation in a group to the extent that Cohen and Lotan (1995) report.

Status and *power* within groups are intrinsically linked. Power within a group can be bestowed from the outside or earned from an individual's actions within the group (McKee et al., 2012). Power within groups does not merely exist but influences actions, relationships and learning (Barker & Quennerstedt, 2016). Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, and Pullen (2014) found that power, diversity and the context of the group interaction are connected. They highlighted that power relationships are not equal in culturally diverse groups and can cause diversity discourse.

McKee et al. (2012) argued *diversity* within groups is a group dynamic. Their justification of this is that all groups are diverse in nature and this is a 'fact of life'. By placing diversity outside the realm of group dynamics is somehow attempting to 'manage' rather than learn and make the most of diversity (McKee et al., 2012). Group diversity can be defined in terms of culture, race, age, gender and personality, among others (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). Depending on how group diversity is defined, groups are either homogenous or heterogeneous. A homogeneous group is a group in which the individuals know or are familiar with each other (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004), and display real or perceived similarities. Heterogeneous groups are ones in which there are differences in attributes, for example, Australian domestic and Chinese international students, create a heterogeneous, cross-cultural group (Popov et al., (2012).

Research into culturally heterogeneous groups in organisations is extensive (de Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Meerwald, 2013; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993). Meeussen, Schaafsma, and Phalet (2014) noted that studies vary in the findings of functioning of culturally homogenous and heterogenous groups. Findings showed two areas in which culturally heterogenous groups performed better than homogeneous groups if, (1) group members valued diversity; and (2) the group itself valued being in the group (Meeussen et al., 2014).

Curşeu and Pluut (2013) considered heterogeneous groups are a necessary condition for collaborative learning, as negotiating the complexities of diverse groups assists in both individual and group learning. Heterogeneous groups potentially provide a rich learning environment (Bacon, S, 1988; Slavin, 2011), yet research into student groups suggested diversity impacts on this potential, in particular on learning (De Vita, 2001) and communication (Jackson et al., 2014), creating both verbal and non-verbal misunderstandings. The interplay of group dynamics occurs within the group itself (McKee et al. 2012). This is the process whereby a group will either develop the characteristics of a team or remain as a group. Oakley et al. (2004) argued that students are not born with the skills required for teamwork and therefore these skills need to be carefully developed in undergraduate business students.

2.8.2 Product: Team characteristics

The definition of a team emanated from sport, the military and business and varies in the literature (Thomas & Cordiner, 2014). A team is defined as a matched group that comes together to accomplish a task they would not have been able to complete individually (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). A team maximises its resources, is highly functioning, its members are committed to a common purpose, and hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004; Thomas & Cordiner, 2014). According to Hackman and Wageman (2009) a team, and its effectiveness, can be explained by whether the team delivers a quality product on time, the teamwork processes foster members' capacity to function well together, and the team enhances members' learning and sense of well-being. A group does not display these characteristics and a group may also develop negative characteristics which leads to ineffective teams.

If undergraduate business students are expected to develop teamwork skills, then the teaching method needs to develop the characteristics of a team, not a group. If the outcome is teamwork skills, understanding what this means is essential. The following discussion looks at the critical functions and processes of groups and teams using literature from organisational behaviour and group behaviour. The discussion is divided into these characteristics and used to develop a working comparison of the differences between groups and teams and includes previous research on undergraduate student groups. Characteristics covered include accountability, goal focus, leadership, skills and abilities, communication, collaboration, and the outcomes for the group.

2.8.2.1 Accountability

Accountability is the “implicit or explicit expectation that one may be called on to explain one’s beliefs, feelings and actions to others” (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999, p. 255). Accountability in groups influences decision-making, sense of purpose, positive interdependence, communication and interpersonal relationships in the group (Liu & McLeod, 2014; Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004; Robbins et al., 2013). Accountability is also the key to a group’s ability to accomplish a common goal (Tsay & Brady, 2012).

One common characteristic of groups and teams is accountability, but it varies between the two. Accountability is an individual feature in groups but can be both individual and mutual in teams (Robbins et al., 2013). Liu and McLeod (2014) suggested that individual accountability has a stronger impact on groups than group accountability, as this increases the individual’s concern for procedure to get the task done. This implies that group members are concerned with, and measure their experience by individual accountability. Both groups and teams have a sense of shared purpose but in teams, the members hold themselves to be mutually accountable (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

Accountability is a central element of group learning (Johnson et al., 1991) and requires each individual student to be accountable to the group to develop teamwork skills (Tsay & Brady, 2012). With positive interdependence, the group is reliant on one another to achieve a common goal and promote each other’s efforts to achieve that goal (Tsay & Brady, 2012). Whilst the group may have positive interdependence, and mutual accountability, individual accountability also reduces the likelihood of over or under-reliance of some members (Tsay & Brady, 2012). Weinstein, Morton, Taras, and Reznik (2013) suggested mutual accountability is a critical factor for students if they are to be taught teamwork skills. Their research found if students are mutually accountable to each other, their attitude to group activities were more positive and the students displayed a higher level of self-awareness, which was beneficial in cross-cultural groups.

Accountability is a significant issue for undergraduate students working in groups (Maiden & Perry, 2010; Vickery & Hunter, 2008). Accountability, and issues associated with accountability, occur when the students are interacting in the group (Liu & McLeod, 2014). Issues with accountability generally occur when students view others as not engaging in group activities or ‘pulling their weight’; this may be real or perceived (Brooks & Ammons, 2003). Discussion on accountability in student groups often accompanies research on *social loafing* and *free-riding*

(Maiden & Perry, 2010). These terms encompass the individuals within a student group who do not share the load of the work and who, whether real or perceived, do not hold themselves accountable to the group (Bacon, Stewart, & Silver, 1999).

On the other hand, the seminal work of Latane, Williams, and Harkins (1979) found that these behaviours can be caused by others in the group. When individuals within a group believe that some other members are not as competent as themselves and individuals have a pre-existing belief that others are lazy, their behaviours may cause others to disengage from the group (Latane et al., 1979; Simms & Nicols, 2014). Students often avoid confronting issues surrounding accountability (Maiden & Perry, 2010). Avoiding accountability is one of the indicators of a dysfunctional team (Lencioni, 2012). Leadership within the group also impacts on the potential of free-riding behaviour (Börjesson et al., 2006). The manner in which individual members of the group interact may force free-riding to occur (Börjesson et al., 2006). Positive leadership encourages students to engage in group activities, whilst negative leadership increases conflict and may also cause students to disengage (Börjesson et al., 2006).

The lack, or avoidance, of accountability highlighted by students as an issue when working in groups suggested these groups have the characteristics of a group, not a team, and implies students are not developing teamwork skills in these learning environments. Mutual accountability also impacts on, and is significant to, how the group reaches their goals (Bacon et al., 1999), which is discussed next.

2.8.2.2 Goal focus

The focus, or outcome of a group, can also highlight the difference between a group and a team. Groups work together on a common goal or outcome (Sharan, 2010), share information as a goal, but do not have the goal of collective performance or outcome (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Teams share a common purpose and everyone in the team should be able to articulate what the purpose is (Bannister, Wickenheiser, & Keegan, 2014). The common goal of a team requires all the members to have input and for the outcome to be a collective product, not an individual one (Sharan, 2010). Common purpose in teams is an outcome which is a collective product and requires mutual accountability (Sharan, 2010). Student groups who simply share information do not have a collective product and are not necessarily mutually accountable to each other. This has implications for the design of assessment as it would suggest that without a shared assessable task, student groups will simply remain that, a group.

Very early work on group performance highlight the importance of clarity of group goals (Raven & Rietsema, 1957). Students must understand the goals of working collectively (Weinstein et al., 2013) and goal clarity plays an important part in the success of diverse groups (Popov et al., 2012). Different expectations by individual group members or individual goals can cause serious problems in student group work (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003). If the clarity of a group's goal is minimal, there is more likely to be disinterest in the task and hostility between group members (Raven & Rietsema, 1957). If the students have not understood the material or the requirements of the assessment, this can also contribute to a lack of accountability (Börjesson et al., 2006). Coherence and clarity of goals impact on student learning (Seidel, Rimmele, & Prenzel, 2005). High goal clarity has a positive effect on student motivation, the perception of the learning environment and importantly, increased cognitive learning activities for higher order learning (Seidel et al., 2005). The role of the lecturer in ensuring the goals of the group are communicated appears to be critical for the group's success in completing the task. If the group goal is to develop teamwork skills, this should be communicated to the group by the lecturer, as students often do not make the connection between group work activities and teamwork skills (Vickery & Hunter, 2008).

The importance of goal clarity becomes imperative for a number of reasons if students are to develop teamwork skills. Firstly, Brown et al. (2013) suggested students are assessment focused. Lecturers, therefore, need to clarify the intended outcomes to students so they clearly understand the requirements of the course including the acquisition of teamwork skills. Secondly, if students do not understand the teaching method of group work as a vehicle for the development of teamwork skills (Vickery & Hunter, 2008), this may hinder the development of these intended outcomes. Thirdly, if the group is one which is culturally diverse, it is critical lecturers ensure all members of the group understand the goals of the group, particular if language and culture are the sources of diversity (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003). Goal focus can also be influenced by the leadership within the group (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004).

2.8.2.3 Leadership within the group

There is a wide range of research on group *leadership* and leadership theories (Northouse, 2015). There are also a multitude of definitional ideas about leadership. Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences other individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2015) ensures accountability (Lencioni, 2012), collaboration, goal focus (Northouse, 2015), and communication (Jaques & Salmon, 2007).

There are many theories and measures of group leadership styles taught in undergraduate business education. One of the simplest models used to define leadership orientation is the Situational Leadership Model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). This model considered initiating structure (task) and consideration (relationship), the two most important dimensions to polarise leadership style (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). This model of leadership is still used in research and taught in organisational behaviour (e.g., Nel, 2011; Northouse, 2015; West, 2013).

Appropriate or effective group leadership is a characteristic of a team (Robbins et al., 2013; Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006). This differs to the ad-hoc nature of roles (including leaders) in groups (Tannenbaum et al., 2012). Hackman and Johnson (2013) suggested that leadership defines the difference between a group and a team. Primarily, this is due to the role of the leader promoting and ensuring accountability (Lencioni, 2012), collaboration, goal focus (Northouse, 2015), and communication (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). Teams with appropriate leadership, increases other members' confidence, enables team members to realise their full potential and overcome resistance by group members, known as *inertia* (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003; Gersick, 1989; Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). A leader has the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of a goal (Evans, 2015).

Often in student groups there is no assigned leader (Fenton, 2015). Instead, leaders in student groups have emerged due to gender (Kent & Moss, 1994), perceived intellectual competency (Rubin, Bartels & Bommer, 2002) and personality (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). This style of leadership is termed emergent leadership. Emergent leadership is an evolutionary process (Kent & Moss, 1994). Emery, Calvard, and Pierce (2013) defined leadership emergence as a part of group interaction which is also dependent on the social process which occurs with all group members. Emergent leaders are “group members who exercise influence over the group” (Pescosolido, 2002, p.585). The key distinction between emergent and formal leadership is emergent leaders do not have formal power (i.e. allocated) rather they lead a group by influencing group processes (Li, Chun, Ashkanasy, & Ahlstrom, 2012; Pescosolido, 2002, 2003). Pescosolido (2002) described this as managing the emotional state of a group.

A student's background and experiences shape their ideas about what constitutes group leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011). Many undergraduate student ideas about leadership come from sport and the media, whose characteristics may not allow students to differentiate what constitutes good or bad leadership qualities, as this is an external view (Jackson & Parry, 2011). Oliveira, Boz, Broadwell, and Sadler (2014) examined leadership structures that emerge in small student groups

and found that leadership impacted on the levels of cognitive engagement in groups. Emergence of an unproductive leadership structure in student groups is likely to create potentially unproductive group dynamics, in which the process and actions of the group leads to poor outcomes (Oliveira et al., 2014).

Emergent group leaders tend to be more task focused than relationship focused (Carli & Eagly, 1999). Cogliser, Gardner, Gavin, and Broberg (2012) demonstrated that undergraduate students favour emergent leaders who are task focused. Yet Oliveira et al. (2014) found effective functioning of student groups required a leadership structure in which members had friendly interactions and relationships. This suggested students function better in a group with a relationship focused leader. It seemed they function better with one, but prefer the other. Students prefer a leader who will assist with getting the assessment completed (Cogliser et al., 2012) not one who focuses on relationships; but relationships are at the core of teamwork and the way groups interact. More than one individual can attempt to assume the role of leader in a group (Côté, Lopes, Salovey, & Miners, 2010). Students in groups are often dissatisfied with one or more individuals trying to dominate the group and their discussions (Sharan, 2010). Emery et al. (2013) believed this occurs due to the group dynamics involved in leadership emergence, mainly due to two factors:

1. The personalities of the group members in determining if there is one leader or more, or indeed no leadership in the group (Emery et al., 2013), and;
2. The critical factor of influence in leadership (Northouse, 2015). How a leader influences others in a group will determine the outcomes of the group; without influence there is no leadership and without leadership, a group may struggle to achieve their outcomes and therefore never achieve team status (Emery et al., 2013; Northouse, 2015).

Gudmundsson and Southey (2011) found undergraduate business students in groups lack empathy, and can be self-interested and uncooperative. Their concern was raised due to the emergence of destructive leadership in the business world. They argued contemporary organisations need individuals with greater leadership skills. This begins with the way students develop these skills at university and highlights the need for lecturers in undergraduate business units to build capacity in student leadership skills (Gudmundsson & Southey, 2011). Lack of leadership skills in graduates is not helped by the fact many business schools are transactional in their way of teaching (Heller & Heller, 2011). Podolny (2009) suggested that business schools are

teaching the analytical skills but failing to assist in developing group leadership and accountability in their students. The presence of emergent leaders within group work activities influences the way in which a task is performed and the experience of each of the group members. This does not guarantee the development of teamwork skills within the group, particularly if the emergent leader is highly task focused.

Undergraduate student groups identified leadership as one of the main influencing factors in their perception of group work activities (Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Northouse, 2015; Vickery & Hunter, 2008). Whilst the presence of emergent leadership rather than appropriate leadership suggests these groups are not teams, there appears to be little development in curricula to assist in developing leadership skills in undergraduate business students (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). For these reasons, emergent leaders or managers are a factor in groups not teams. Whilst leadership is a skill, all members of the group come together with a set of skills and differing abilities.

2.8.2.4 Skills and abilities

Skill sets of the individuals may be random and varied within a group, but are chosen, either externally or internally, to be complementary in teams (Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Markova, Mateo, & Roth, 2012). Barach and Cosman (2015) suggested diversity of team members with complementary skills is the hallmark of effective teams. This has implications for the ability of student groups to develop teamwork skills. As Biggs (1999) proposed, teaching methods should be organised to focus on the similarities rather than the differences when teaching in an internationalised context. This should highlight the skills and abilities which allow students to manage interactions in cross-cultural group settings (Eisenberg et al., 2013). One of the most important skills for teamwork is communication. Communication skills are critical to both groups and teams, and teams that operate effectively have excellent communication, mutual respect and the right skills to deliver a quality product or outcome (Hackman, 2012; Lencioni, 2012; Liu & McLeod, 2014; Robbins et al., 2013).

2.8.2.5 Communication

Communication theory defines communication as a message passed to a receiver from a sender (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). The message is sent through some medium to the receiver who decodes this message (Robbins et al., 2013). Communication is considered to be the transference and understanding of meaning (Robbins et al., 2013) and the most essential and powerful tool in a

group setting (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003). Any disturbance known as ‘noise’ can interfere with or distort the communication process creating miscommunication (Robbins et al., 2013). Cultural differences and language can lead to ‘noise’ problems in cross-cultural groups, affecting the way in which each individual interprets meaning (Robbins et al., 2013).

Good communication is essential for effective learning in collaborative group work (Oakley et al., 2004). Communication issues play a prominent role in students’ perceptions of group work (Smith et al., 2011). Students noted positive group experiences when they considered the group’s communication to be good (Vickery & Hunter, 2008). Poor communication issues in groups are noted as one of the main reasons some students prefer to work individually (Smith et al., 2011) and poor communication hindered the development of teamwork skills.

Cultural diversity can lead to other communication issues in group work (Taras & Roney, 2007). Language and non-verbal communication can impact on group interactions, cause confusion and misunderstandings. This in turn can impact on the learning outcomes for both individuals and the group as a whole (Taras & Roney, 2007). Addressing cross-cultural communication should be a focus for student groups (Taras & Roney, 2007) because this benefits both the international and domestic students. It is essential for group or team members to be able to work together productively (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Communication is one of the major issues for students when working together in group learning (Smith et al., 2011) and can impact on how the group collaborated.

2.8.2.6 Collaboration

Collaboration is the ability for a group to work together (Robbins & Barnwell, 2002). It is distinct from cooperation. Collaboration introduces the notions of *synergy* and composition of the group (Taggar, 2001). Synergy within a group occurs when individuals come together to collaborate and group synergy is a process (Larson, 2010). It is the potential ability of the group as they come together (Stumpf & Zeuschel, 2001). The potential and process are influenced by the clarity of goals (Tony & Oluwasegun, 2013), leadership (Larson, 2010), diversity (Miura & Hida, 2004) and communication (Chan & Liebowitz, 2006). Group synergy can be termed in three ways:

1. Positive: highly functioning group;
2. Neutral: where individuals within the group are either engaged or not, but the group was able to function in some way collaboratively (Uher & Toakley, 1999), and;

3. Negative: where the process within the group does not require the group to collaborate collectively (Larson, 2010).

Positive synergy suggests that the group will have a greater ability and be more successful as a group than individuals (Larson, 2010). Often synergy in a group is neutral or negative; but in a team it is positive, as each member is contributing and has more gain than loss from being in the experience (Hackman, 1987; Robbins & Barnwell, 2002). This suggests that an undergraduate student group would need to develop positive synergy to acquire teamwork skills. Undergraduate student groups experiencing problems with group leadership, communication, accountability and unsure of their goals may potentially not be able to develop positive synergy within the group and therefore are a group not a team.

Collaboration on its own is not teamwork; it is a part of teamwork (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). Collaboration is essential to effective teamwork, it is one of three essential characteristics of teamwork, defined by Stoner (2015) as collaboration, coordination and cooperation. Collaboration is working together to create something new in support of a shared vision. Stoner (2015) highlighted that it is not through individual effort something new is created, it is created through collaboration and that the glue is the shared group vision. Coordination is sharing information and resources so that each party can accomplish their part in support of a mutual objective (Stoner, 2015). It is about teamwork in implementation, not creating something new. Cooperation is important in teams where individuals exchange relevant information and resources in support of each other's goals, and a shared goal (Stoner, 2015). Something new may be achieved as a result, but it arises from the individual, not from a collective team effort.

2.8.2.7 Outcomes

Outcomes for groups and teams differ (Robbins et al., 2013). The outcomes for groups are not dependent on their members' ability to function effectively together, while teams are dependent on their ability to function together (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Outcomes for groups are based around individual products while the outcome for a team is a collective product. In student groups, this difference in outcomes suggests groups that come together to share knowledge without an assessable task remain groups, while groups that come together with an outcome or task that is assessable, function as a team.

The outcome for group work, when used as a teaching method, requires students to develop knowledge of the discipline and interpersonal skills such as communication in order to develop

teamwork skills. As Kirby (2011, p. 37) noted: “Teaching at university has often been equated with cooperative group learning but this is not an adequate methodology for teaching teamwork”.

The previous discussion has highlighted the difference between groups and teams and the issues students identify. Groups have lower order outcomes, focus on individual products, share information, have individual goals, allow emergent leaders, and produce outcomes which are not dependant on the ability of the group to work together. Whilst groups have a place in undergraduate business students’ learning, a group with these characteristics does not usually assist in the development of teamwork skills. Whilst a group may have characteristics such as independent accountability and information sharing, the group outcome is not dependent on the ability of the group to function together. Hence, the group as a whole may be able to produce an assessable product without developing the intended outcome of teamwork skills. This raises questions as to the acquisition of unintended outcomes.

2.8.2.8 Dysfunctional team: Ineffective teamwork

In a learning environment, undergraduate business students are expected to develop teamwork skills. Recent research has looked not only at the difference between groups and teams, but the negative behaviours and characteristics of dysfunctional or ineffective teams (Hsiung, Luo, & Chung, 2014; Lencioni, 2012; Troth, Jordan, Lawrence, & Tse, 2012). If a student group shows signs of an ineffective team, the benefits of group learning is lost (Hsiung et al., 2014). As Hsiung et al. (2014) suggested, lecturers should be aware of the characteristics of ineffective teams to ensure students are discouraged from exhibiting these characteristics.

Lencioni’s (2012) work has been used in research extensively to analyse the characteristics of dysfunctional/ineffective teams as well as a tool for evaluating a team’s susceptibility to dysfunctional behaviours (e.g., Babcock, Bedard, Charness, Hartman, & Royer, 2015; Kumar, Deshmukh, & Adhish, 2014). As such, Lencioni’s work is used here to discuss ineffective teamwork in relation to domestic and international undergraduate business students. He noted five distinct characteristics of an ineffective or dysfunctional team:

1. absence of trust;
2. fear of conflict;
3. lack of commitment;
4. avoidance of accountability; and,
5. inattention to details/results.

Even though these issues can be addressed in isolation, they are interrelated and potentially destructive to a team and a team deteriorates if a single dysfunction is allowed to flourish within the team (Lencioni, 2012).

The first dysfunction, absence of trust, stems from members being unwilling to be genuinely open with each other (Lencioni, 2012). With student groups, Hall and Buzwell (2012) observed an absence of trust, leading to accountability issues. Accountability was seen as a major issue for students working in groups. This suggests many student groups, where accountability is an issue, are in fact showing the characteristics of an ineffective team. Gagnon and Roberge (2012) also noted the absence of trust impacted on group dynamics, particularly during interpersonal interactions. As such, a lack of trust impacts on learning and the development of the intended outcome of teamwork skills. Lencioni (2012) considered a failure to build trust the precursor to the next four dysfunctions.

Fear of conflict is the second dysfunction. A lack of trust makes a group incapable of engaging in productive debate, while personal feelings are hidden and the group as a whole avoids discussion of its own maintenance (Lencioni, 2012). Jauch et al. (2014) found that students would rather avoid conflict than address it, including asking to change groups. This characteristic also impacts on communication within the group and as noted, good communication is essential for learning (Oakley et al., 2004). This suggested that student groups who display this characteristic are developing the unintended outcomes of an ineffective team.

A lack of healthy conflict or conflict avoidance within a group leads to the next dysfunction; lack of commitment (Lencioni, 2012). Without ever discussing their opinions in debate with other group members, they rarely 'buy in' and commit to the team (Lencioni, 2012). A lack of commitment impacts on the ability of student groups to collaborate affecting the outcomes for the group (Tsay & Brady, 2012). Without commitment to the group activity, accountability also becomes an issue. This is problematic as accountability occurs during the process phase, when students are interacting (Liu & McLeod, 2014), and is a central element of learning in groups (Johnson et al., 1991).

Without any real commitment to the group, the fourth dysfunction, avoidance of accountability is likely to occur (Lencioni, 2012). Avoidance of accountability can lead to some students carrying more of the load of work than others (Bacon et al., 1999) and behaviours such as social loafing or free-riding (Maiden & Perry, 2010). These are major issues highlighted in research of

undergraduate business student groups (Freeman & McKenzie, 2014; Owens, 2015; Scotland, 2014). This suggested these groups are displaying the characteristics of ineffective teams.

The fourth dysfunction, failure to hold one another accountable, creates the fifth dysfunction, inattention to detail or results (Lencioni, 2012). This occurs when group members place their own needs above the collective needs of the group (Lencioni, 2012). Collective goal focus is a characteristic of a team (Bannister et al., 2014). Without a focus on collective goals, groups are easily distracted, fail to grow and develop in skills and focus on individual goals (Lencioni, 2012). It appeared student groups lack attention to detail when the collective goal is the development of teamwork skills.

In each of these findings, the role of the leader is critical in how the group will address and overcome potential dysfunctional behaviours (Lencioni, 2012), yet in undergraduate student groups leaders are emergent (Judge et al., 2002; Rubin et al., 2002), and tend to be task focused (Cogliser et al., 2012). Table 2.1 summarises the main characteristics from the previous discussion, including the students' perceptions previously highlighted and compares them with the characteristics of groups, teams and ineffective teams. This has implications for the skills being developed by students. They could be developing skills, or an unintended outcome, relating to an ineffective team.

Table 2.1: Comparison of characteristics of groups, teams and ineffective teams

Group characteristics	Team characteristics	Characteristics of an ineffective team
Come together to share information and get others perspective	Come together for discussion, decision-making, problem solving and planning	Group avoids discussion of its own maintenance
Concern with one's own challenges	Concern with the challenges of everyone and the team	Personal feelings are hidden Criticism may be present, but it is tension-producing or hostile
Emergent leader	Appropriate leadership Increases members confidence and helps all realise their potential	A few people tend to dominate There is a dominant figure in the group who seeks to gain and retain power
Individual accountability	Mutual accountability	Disagreements are not generally dealt with by the group
Negative or neutral synergy	Positive synergy	The atmosphere is likely to reflect indifference, boredom or tension
Independent collaboration	Interdependent collaboration	Actions are taken prematurely, not all opinions are considered
Outcomes not dependent on the ability to function together	Outcomes dependent on ability to function together	There are one or more members who do not carry their fair share
Focus on individual goals	Focus on collective product	Low unity of purpose

The previous discussion has highlighted the difference between a group, a team and an ineffective team. This raised questions as to the ability of group work activities to develop the intended outcome of teamwork skills in a diverse student cohort and suggested a misalignment between the teaching methods and the intended outcome.

2.9 Reflections on Biggs' 3P Model

Reviewing literature through the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) offered a holistic framework to explore the complexities of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students in group work activities. The exploration illuminated some important aspects of the group learning process. First, it highlighted the inter-related and social nature of learning in groups and the inter-relationship between the teaching and learning processes. Second, it identified that for diverse students to develop teamwork skills in group work activities they need to engage in higher order processing or take a deep approach to learning during the task processing phase of the model. Third, the model showed the interaction between the student and the teaching context to produce a learning approach which impacts directly on the quality of learning outcomes or product.

However, there appeared to be a number of limitations in seeking to utilise the model to explain the complexities of the student, diversity and task processing interactions, when the teaching method is group work and the intended outcomes are teamwork skills. The literature relating to the student presage factors is vast, as are the differences faced in international students studying in Anglo-western frameworks (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2013; Byram & Hu, 2013; Cummins, 1979, 2013; Shaw, 2005), yet the complexity of these individual characteristics or differing starting points influence how they will approach group work as a teaching method. This is significant, as organisational behaviour literature acknowledges these individual characteristics as a predictor of group effectiveness (e.g., Campion et al., 1993; Hackman, 1987; Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997; Luciano et al., 2014).

Biggs and Tang (2011) contended that diversity be dealt with through the teaching context and that good teaching closes the gap. This is done through appropriate learning activities, but the discussion had a focus on individual learning and individually-based teaching methods and does not appear to acknowledge the complexities of group dynamics. Both Biggs (2003b) and Ramsden (1992) agreed that, from the students' perspective, the assessment is the curriculum. When the assessment is a group task, it creates issues in diverse groups (Volet & Ang, 2012). Exacerbating this is Messick's (2013) suggestion of performance based assessment, which focused on the end product of group work. For students to develop teamwork skills they need to apply a deep approach to group work activities. As Hughes and Barrie (2010) state, if generic skills are not correctly assessed, they will not be taken seriously by students. Faulty assumptions about

assessment and assessment practices do more damage in misaligning teaching than any other factor (Biggs, 2003b).

Students apply an approach to learning during the task processing phase of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b). An approach is not a fixed attribute (Biggs, 2003b), yet there appears to be a lack of critical examination of the group dynamics and others impact on adopting an approach, when the teaching method is group work. The behaviours of the individuals in the group impact on the other individuals within the group and the group as a whole (Forsyth, 2009). Do the actions of others impact on an individual's ability to adopt an approach in group activities? Investigation of the product – teamwork – in the model, showed team characteristics are developed and displayed in the process phase. The model does not allow fully for the exploration of components of group behaviour, for example, group leadership, which are critical for the success of groups and developing the intended outcomes of teamwork skills. The following model is a conceptualisation of the areas in which further interrogation is required. The blue areas highlight the concepts covered in this chapter through Biggs' model. The green areas flag concepts which require further examination through the field of organisational behaviour to extend what has been developed in the 3P Model.

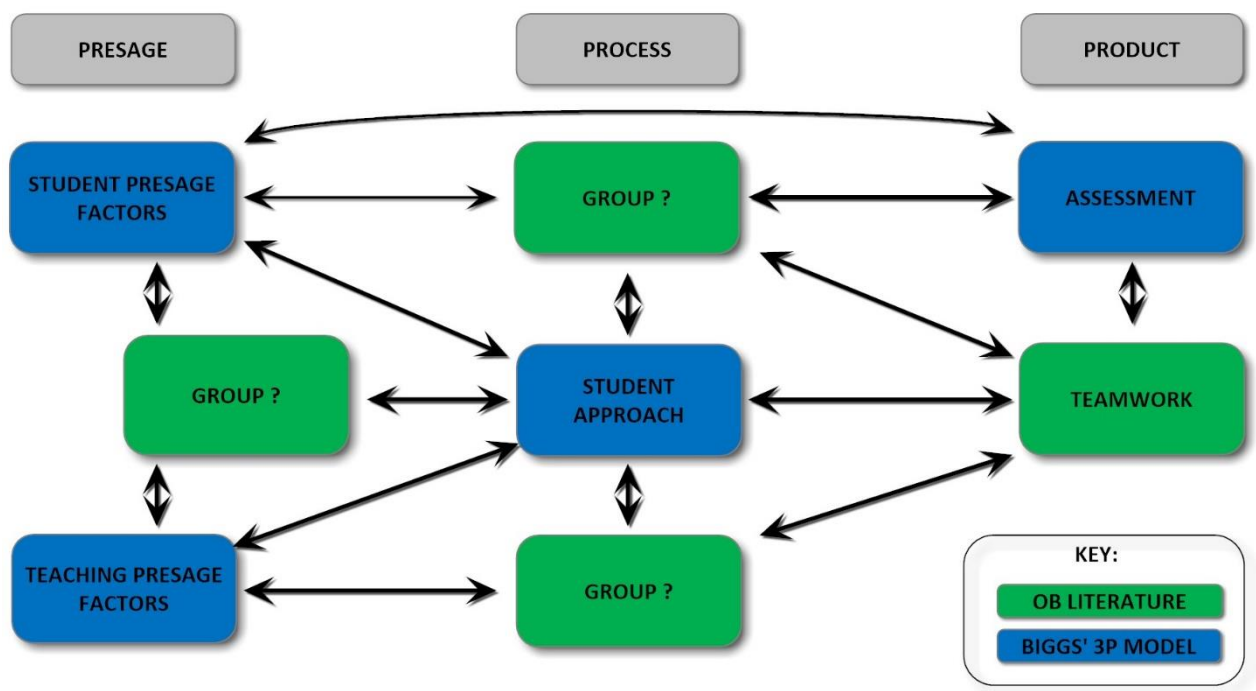


Figure 2.3: Conceptualisation of Biggs' 3P Model and organisational behaviour literature

2.10 Conclusion

The difficulties international students faced when studying in Anglo-western countries such as Australia is well-documented (Egege & Kutieleh, 2008; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Straker, 2016). With the emphasis of employers on generic skills, such as teamwork, the challenge for lecturers is to develop teaching methods which enable Australian domestic and Chinese international students to engage in activities which progress these skills (Jackson, 2012), and promote intercultural interaction (Volet & Ang, 2012). Biggs and Tang (2011) suggested this be done by aligning objectives and teaching methods with intended outcomes and assessment, through constructive alignment. Hackman (2012) proposed research should focus on the 'conditions in place' in groups as they 'chart their own course' to understand what conditions, increase the likelihood of the intended outcomes of a group are being achieved.

Reviewing the literature, through the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b), it was found that for Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students to develop teamwork skills, the student presage factors and the teaching presage factors need to be considered, but for the unique nature of group work, as a teaching method, the model does not account for the complexities of group dynamics and their impact on the ability for students to engage in group activities as the group 'charts their own course'. The literature suggested students need to apply a deep approach to learning in group activities to develop teamwork skills. Yet, the group interactions during task processing, when teamwork skills are the intended outcome, are more complex and critical, as it is during the process phase when teamwork skills are developed. Further to this, students are assessment focused (Biggs, 2003b), which is the product of group work. This suggested students will be focused on product, not the process. These complexities are explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The time is right to rethink how we construe and study groups because the balls are in the air and in ways that pose direct challenges to traditional conceptual models and research methodologies. (Hackman, 2012, p. 428)

3.1 Introduction

Organisational behaviour encompasses individual behaviour, group dynamics and team effectiveness in organisations (Quick & Nelson, 2011). A large body of research pertaining to groups and teams is embedded in the discipline and is known as group behaviour (Lidgren, Rodhe, & Huisingh, 2006). In Chapter 2, areas which required further exploration were highlighted. This chapter begins with an exploration of two models, The Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) (Hackman, 1987), and the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) (Gersick, 1988) in order to extend the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. These models provide insight into seminal theories that are commonly used and widely accepted in organisational behaviour teaching and research in Anglo-western organisations and universities (Gersick, 1988, 1989; Hackman, 1987; Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). The chapter also presents the research questions and a conceptual framework developed out of the literature.

3.2 Hackman's Group Effectiveness Model (GEM)

Hackman has a long research background into the processes and interactions of groups (Hackman, 1968, 1987; 1990; 2012; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Hackman & Wageman, 2004). He is considered one of the most influential researchers into group and teams, over the past 50 years. Hackman's work has formed the basis of other work, for example, The Group Behaviour Model (Robbins et al., 2013) and The Group Development Model (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

In 1987, Hackman published the Group Effectiveness Model (GEM). The focus of the model was to draw together his previous research and develop a framework which assisted in moving individual group members from group characteristics to a collective body or team, through improving *effectiveness* (Hackman, 1987). Effectiveness was outlined by Hackman (1987) as the ability of a group to accomplish goals and objectives, build capacity in other group members, with

the experience of working together satisfying, rather than exasperating the personal needs of each member.

The GEM breaks down the major components that determine a group’s effectiveness, as well as the satisfaction of the group, during and after the group experience (Hackman, 1987). The model has an input-output focus which depicts three input components, the organisational context, group design and material resources available to the group. These contextual components encompass the predispositions of the group members, the systems in which the group operates, task and reward, and group norms (Hackman, 1987). The focus and structure of these components appeared to somewhat align with the student and teaching presage factors included in the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b).

As with Biggs’ 3P Model, the GEM depicted a processing phase. Making up this phase are the process criteria and *group synergy* (Hackman, 1987). These two components are the critical social processes which dictate if a group will become a team (Hackman, 1987). Finally, the GEM represented group effectiveness as the product or output. This paralleling is represented in Figure 3.1 (Hackman, 1987).

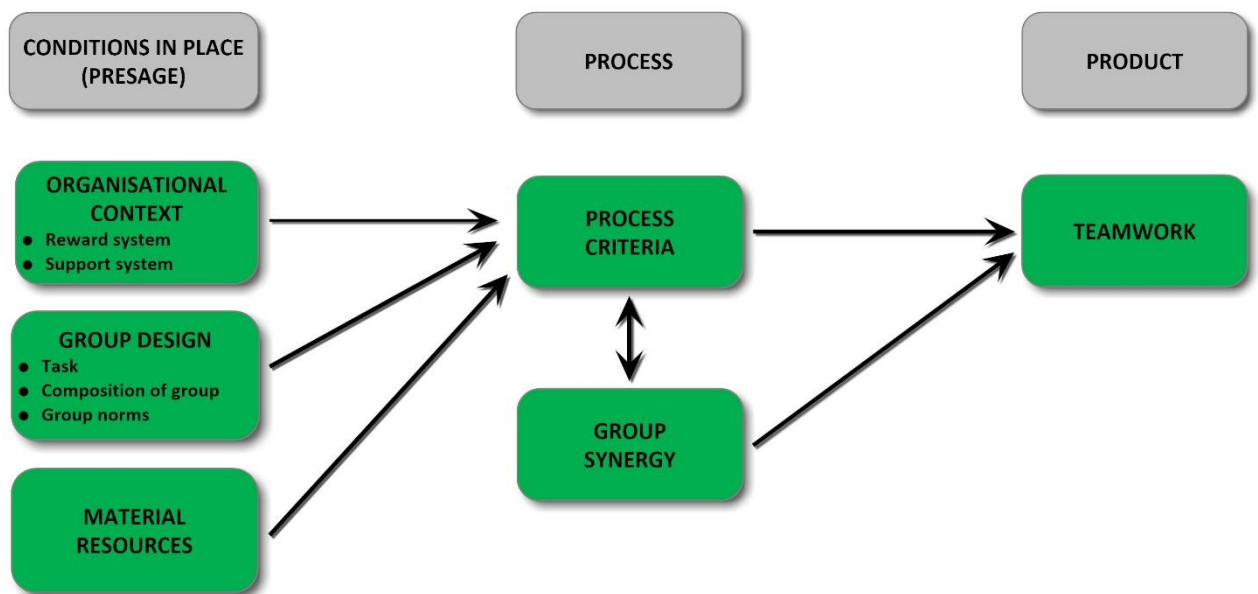


Figure 3.1: Adapted components of the Group Effectiveness Model (Hackman, 1987. p. 331)

3.2.1 Contextual ‘conditions in place’ for group effectiveness (Presage)

Groups come together as part of a larger system (Hackman, 1987). The organisational context component of the GEM acknowledges this larger system and the impact these components may have on the effectiveness of the group. The organisational context supports and reinforces the task via the rewards system, the education system, the information system, and support (Hackman, 1987). These mechanisms, or components, are deemed to impact on what the group does and how it does it. These components were highlighted in the teaching context of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) as assessment and a lecturer’s approach to teaching.

Hackman (1987) considered rewards to be of critical importance to effectiveness, which directly influence the effectiveness of a group (Tohidi, 2011). Rewards are the benefit received by the individual performing the task (Robbins et al., 2013). Hackman (1987, p. 325) noted that the reward system should reinforce the benefits of the group performing well in the task and ought to have three features:

1. Challenging, specific performance objectives;
2. Positive consequences for excellent performance; and
3. Reward and objectives that focus on the group, not individual behaviour.

The interdependence of rewards and group effectiveness has been long researched (e.g., Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Sawyer, 2017; Wageman, 1995). Rewards change the behaviours of an individual within a group depending on the perceived value of the reward (Hackman, 1987). As illustrated in the teaching context of the 3P Model, assessment is central to the student experience (Biggs, 2003b; Brown et al., 2013). Assessment is therefore a critical ‘condition in place’ in developing teamwork skills in both Australian domestic and Chinese international students.

Hackman (1987) also identified how the level of support a group received during group interactions impacts on effectiveness. If a group perceived themselves to be externally supported they were more likely to develop behaviours which led to effectiveness (Hackman, 1987). The students’ perceptions of their lecturers and the degree to which they feel that their lecturers provide an atmosphere for learning exerts important influences on their approaches to learning (Ramsden, 1979). It is also the lecturer’s job to organise the teaching context in such a way that students are more likely to use higher order processing (Biggs, 1999) required to develop teamwork skills. Hackman (1987, p. 324) noted that groups will most likely work hard on a task when:

1. The task is motivationally engaging;
2. The organisational rewards system provides challenging performance objectives but reinforces their achievement; and
3. Interaction among members minimises social loafing, instead promotes shared commitment.

The lecturer's approach to teaching and the support given to the students' when undertaking group work activities is, therefore, another critical 'condition in place'. The next part of Hackman's model is the group design. This is the structure of the task, the composition of the group and the group's norms which influence the process criteria and group synergy (Hackman, 1987).

Tasks are the reason a group comes together, they are specifically what the group has to think about, work through and achieve (Jaques & Salmon, 2007; Walker, Doerer, & Webster, 2014). Hackman (1987) noted that task design should require the group to use a variety of higher order skills, be a meaningful piece of work and ensure the group 'owns' the task. To do this requires an environment which creates the understanding that the group is responsible for the outcomes and the opportunity for regular feedback is generated in the task (Hackman, 1987). Chatman and Flynn (2001) documented that group cooperation and therefore, effectiveness, may be determined by the characteristics of a group's task. Biggs (1987) suggested the input factors of the teaching context and the student context affect how students approach the task, and Ramsden (1979) concluded students' perception of a particular learning task influences the level at which they attempt it. Napier and Gershenfeld (2004) also noted that individuals within a group may have different perceptions of a task. This is why task definition is critical not only in organisations (Robbins et al., 2013), but in teaching practice (Nespor, 1987). It is the role of the lecturer to define the group work task for the students. The lecturer should also make their roles in the task explicit (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). Task and task definition are therefore a critical 'condition in place' which should be included in the teaching context.

Norms were discussed in Chapter 2 and were defined as the acceptable standards or expectations shared by a group's members and an important group dynamic (Robbins et al., 2013). When individuals first enter groups, they may be constrained not only because of their uncertain feelings about the group, but because these acceptable standards or expectations are not yet defined (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). When a group is formed, each individual member's norms play a part in their behaviour (Hackman, 1987). As *socialisation* occurs, expected patterns of behaviour are established within the group itself (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Socialisation is the process

of assimilation within a group and allows an individual to successfully interact with others in the group, based on their norms (Petrova et al., 2016). Situational norms can lead to stereotyping and negative trait attributions (Leung & Morris, 2015). Volet and Ang (2012) found that stereotypes were a major hindrance in student groups and that domestic and international students had stereotyped perceptions of each other.

Hackman (1987) considers the composition of the group to be one of the most important conditions affecting the effectiveness of a group. Composition combines the individual factors of group members as well as the design of the group, when these individuals come together. The individual components were highlighted in the student presage factors of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b). Hackman (1987, pp. 326-327) showed that well composed groups have the following design characteristics:

1. Individual members have high task-relevant expertise;
2. Members have interpersonal as well as task skills;
3. Membership is moderately diverse; and
4. The group is an appropriate size.

Characteristics listed as 1, 2 and 3 are components related to the individual student presage factors, whilst size is a component specifically related to groups. Hackman (1987) suggested that the most efficient way to ensure a group will be effective is to assign talented individuals to the groups who have the skills and abilities necessary to apply to the task. The analysis of the student presage factors in the 3P Model showed undergraduate business students bring a diverse set of skills and abilities. Hackman (1987) also suggested that interpersonal skills impact on group effectiveness. Brown et al. (2013) found undergraduate students are task focused and place emphasis on the assessment and in group activities and do not tend to focus on the development of interpersonal skills. Oakley et al. (2004) noted undergraduate students' are not born with the skills to negotiate the complexity of group dynamics. The skills and abilities and interpersonal skills of Australian domestic and Chinese international students are therefore another critical 'condition in place' for group effectiveness.

Hackman (1987) proposed the design of groups should be moderately diverse. He noted that excessively homogenous groups may get along, but tend to not do well in tasks, as they are all too similar in skills set and replicate each other. Excessively heterogeneous groups, on the other hand, may not do well either as they may be too diverse in skills and perspective to get along (Hackman,

1987). Striking the balance is the key to potential effectiveness of a group (Hackman, 1987). Volet and Ang (2012) suggested fostering interactions between domestic and international student requires careful planning and monitoring. Whilst the teaching context of Biggs' 3P Model articulated group work as a teaching method, the complexities in diverse groups require further investigation and should be considered as a critical 'condition in place' in its own context.

Group size affects overall group behaviour in terms of relationships, productivity and self-awareness (Robbins et al., 2013). Group size is a factor in group relationships because as a group increases in size the number of potential relationships increases (Kephart, 1950; Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). A variety of literature exists about the effectiveness of smaller groups (Arrow, McGrath, & Berdahl, 2000; Hoegl, 2005; Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). If a group becomes too large, it may break into *sub-groups* which impact on both productivity and self-awareness and the opportunity for all group members to contribute is diminished (Hoegl, 2005).

Marchant (1999) concluded that the size of the group impacted on performance and outcome. Her research suggested an odd number is better than an even one, with five or seven being the optimum numbers. This is in line with other researchers (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003; Nosenzo, Quercia, & Sefton, 2013), who suggest five is the optimum number and an odd number, allows for a group to avoid a stale-mate. The size of the group is seen as an important component which determines group process, for example collaboration and communication (Hoegl, 2005). Group size is an important 'condition in place' that needs to be included to extend the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b).

The next component of Hackman's (1987) model is the *material resources available to the group*. This impacts on the process criteria and therefore effectiveness. Put simply, any group must have the resources available to it to perform the task. For undergraduate business students, this may include access to computers and internet during group activities and any resources needed to complete the task.

The previous discussion has shown similarities and differences in the input, or student and teaching contexts, when group work is the teaching method. Future research needs to explore the complex set of interacting factors which impact on the formation of diverse groups of students (Volet & Ang, 2012). To summarise, these conditions included, teaching context; assessment, lecturer support and task definition, and student skills and their abilities. The discussion showed

that for group work activities, a group context needed to be integrated to include size and group diversity.

3.2.2 Group process: 'Chart their own course'

Chapter 2 concluded a greater focus is required on the process phase of group interaction. The 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) referred to the process phase as task processing, when a student adopts an approach to learning. Organisational behaviour literature has shown this process is more complex when the teaching method is group work. This required further exploration by interrogating the process which occurs when student groups 'chart their own course' (Hackman, 2012). Group process is highlighted in the GEM as a two-fold concept: group process criteria and group synergy, which are dependent on each other (Hackman, 1987).

Group process criteria is the amount of knowledge in the group and how is utilised, the skills of the group and how they are applied to the task and the level of effort of the group members and these components are apparent in the appropriateness of the task performance strategies of the group (Hackman, 1987). Group process criteria is the coming together of individual group members and how each individual, given their attributes, interacts with other group members (Hackman, 1987).

The process criteria are Hackman's (1987) evaluation of what is more commonly termed group process. Group process is widely researched; it is the interaction which occurs once members come together as a group (Robbins & Judge, 2012). Group process is seen as communication, exchange of information, group decision process, power dynamics, and conflict interactions in all the group dynamics that occur within the group itself (Robbins et al., 2013). It is the process of an identifiable sequence of events which take place over time (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). These events are instrumental in achieving group outcomes (Johnson & Johnson, 1994) or effectiveness (Hackman, 1987). Group process, in terms of the individual and the group, are intertwined (Stahl, Law, Cress, & Ludvigsen, 2014). The interactions which occur in group process may not be able to be attributed to any one individual because of the interactions in the group, but it can be analysed through the behaviours, or perceived behaviours, of individuals in their group interactions (Stahl et al. 2014). Haley-Banez et al. (1999) noted diversity within a group impacted on all aspects of group work and the nature of diversity became more obvious to the group members during the group process.

Group process is the route to not only developing the higher order skills of teamwork, but also how they are demonstrated. The task processing phase of the 3P Model is when students perceive and interpret, given the student context and the teaching context, and choose an approach to learning (Biggs, 2003b). This is not a fixed attribute and students will choose to approach a task with the intention to understand the material and seek to evaluate, critically analyse and to interact (deep learning) or by merely 'regurgitating' the material (surface learning) (Biggs, 2003b). Students may indeed apply a strategic approach to get through the group process phase, rather than dealing with group process.

The next component of the GEM is group synergy. Hackman (1987) highlighted the importance of group synergy as being an essential condition for group effectiveness. Synergy occurs during group process and is the reduction of process loss (negative factors) and the promotion of process gains (positive factors) (Hackman, 1987). When synergy is positive in a highly functioning group, that group shows the characteristics of a team (Robbins et al., 2013). Positive synergy is a necessary condition for collaboration, and through this a group will develop the characteristics of a team (Larson, 2010). This suggests to develop the intended outcomes of teamwork skills in undergraduate business student groups, positive synergy is a necessary condition. Hackman (1987, p. 327) suggested the following to promote positive synergy which leads to effectiveness:

1. Minimising inappropriate weighting of member contributions; and,
2. Fostering collective learning.

Hackman (1987) argued that group members often have difficulties in acknowledging differences in knowledge and skills of other members, but these ideas depend on irrelevant considerations such as demographic attributes or the way the other members behave and communicate. This can lead to process loss (negative synergy). The knowledge and skills of group members can be wasted when this occurs (Hackman 1987). Negative synergy occurs through the group not being accountable to each other and therefore not developing into a team (Hackman, 1987).

The other factor which Hackman highlighted was required for positive synergy is to foster collective learning. This requires each group member to take the time to interact and learn from one another. If this occurs they increase the 'pool of talent' available within the group for the task (Hackman, 1987). Collective learning occurs during the process phase of group development and is influenced by the leadership within the group. This suggested leadership within the group is the driver to foster interpersonal relationships as well as getting the task accomplished. This is

perhaps an ad-hoc process, as the nature of leadership within undergraduate student groups is generally emergent (Carli & Eagly, 1999; Judge et al., 2002; Kent & Moss, 1994; Rubin et al., 2002).

Leadership is considered the pivotal role in a group and is interactional (Stahl et al., 2014). Leadership drives group process (Hackman, 1987) and moves collaborative efforts forward (Stahl et al., 2014). Critical to creating effectiveness in groups is leadership, and leadership is the driver for teams to develop (Hackman, 1987). In his research on effectiveness, Hackman (1987) concluded the distribution of authority can vary from group to group. He offered three separate configurations for leadership in groups; manager-led groups, self-managing work groups and self-designing work groups. These configurations should be based on what will improve the effectiveness of the group, the skills and abilities of the group, and the outcomes required. These configurations are shown as Figure 3.2.

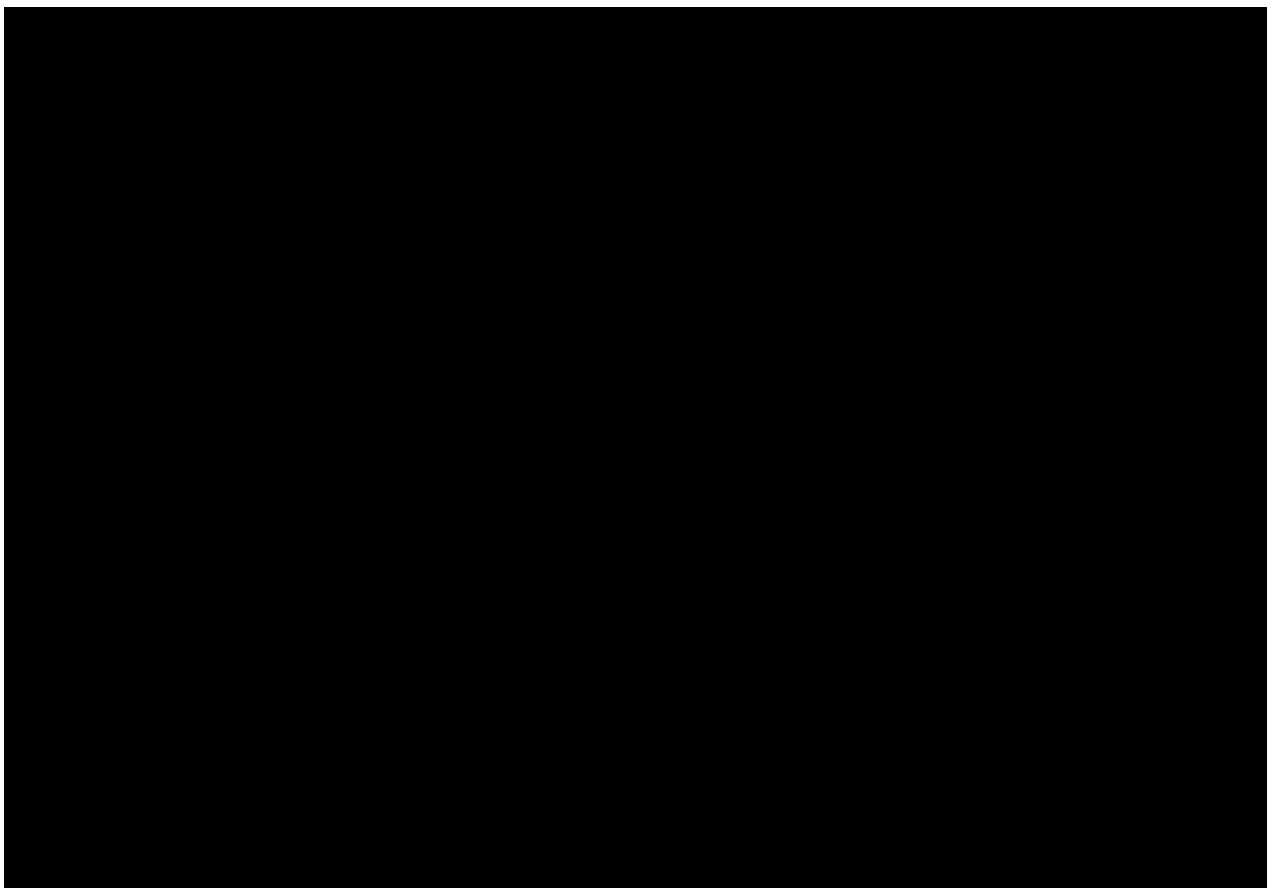


Figure 3.2: Structure of Hackman's three types of work groups (Hackman, 1987, p. 334)

Manager-led work groups only have responsibility for the actual execution of the task and how well these groups perform is dependent on the way in which a manager (someone external to the

group) designs the group, monitors performance and the organisational context (Hackman, 1987). Self-managing work groups take responsibility for managing their own performance, as well as the task. How well these groups perform is dependent on the quality of the group design and the organisational context (again in control of an external manager) (Hackman, 1987).

In self-designing work groups, the manager only takes responsibility for the organisational context, the group itself is responsible for the design of the group, evolving their own norms and decision-making about processes, management and structuring the task (Hackman, 1987). The success of self-designing work groups is more dependent on the group itself, rather than the external manager. This offers interesting insight into student groups. Many student groups appear to have the characteristics of self-designing groups, but as Hackman (1987) noted, these groups are generally a mature team which has worked together for an extended period of time. These groups are rarely found in lower levels of organisations or learning groups, for example undergraduate business students (Hackman, 1987). He also suggested leadership authority, however it is distributed, should create conditions that support effective group behaviour. Leadership can be seen as a process (Stahl et al., 2014) or an external condition (Hackman, 2012). For this research, leadership needs to be examined further to understand the impact emergent leaders have on student groups and on the group's ability to develop teamwork skills; as such leadership is considered a 'condition in place'.

3.2.3 Group effectiveness

Hackman (1987) posited that the internal social processes within a group are critical to effectiveness and team development. When a group remains intact and shows the ability to work as a collective, effectiveness is displayed through *team cohesion*. Team cohesion is recognised as the bond which links members of a group, strong cohesion within a group is a characteristic of an effective team (Hackman, 1987). The GEM offered insight into the components required for groups to develop into effective teams by extending the 3P Model (see Figure 2.1). The conceptual model, shown as Figure 3.3, highlights the conditions which need to be considered for student groups. These include leadership, composition of the group, support and task definition, as these conditions will dictate the behaviours and potential in the group (Hackman, 1987). The way in which individuals behave in the group will be shown through group process and synergy. To achieve group effectiveness there needs to be positive synergy with the group (Hackman, 1987). Positive synergy relates to positive process gains and an effective team. In undergraduate student

groups, issues with accountability, diversity, leadership and communication (discussed in Chapter 2), equated to process losses and therefore negative synergy.

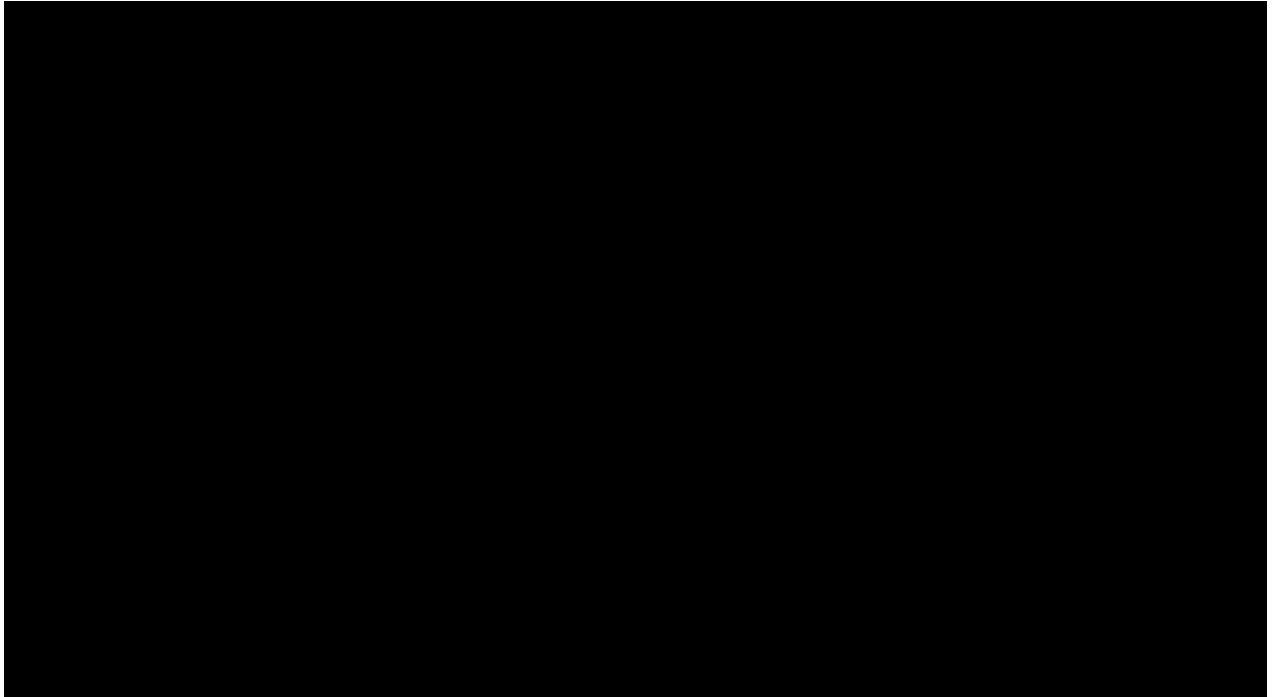


Figure 3.3: Conceptual model of student groups **integrating** 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) and the Group Effectiveness Model (Hackman, 1987)

Whilst the GEM broadened the conceptual framework for undergraduate student groups, the impact of assessment on group process remained unresolved. As previously noted, assessment is the core of the student experience (Biggs, 2003b). An assessable task for group work has time constraints. Time constraints can complicate the success of a group (Kennedy & Maynard, 2017). Jaques and Salmon (2007) referred to group process as the group in motion. The relationship between time and group process is explored in the following discussion.

3.3 Gersick's Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM)

Connie Gersick's research moved away from the traditional input-output models of group behaviour and investigated the life span of work groups (1988). Her research questioned the theoretical sequencing portrayal of groups, moving through stages of development, such as Tuckman's Group Development Model (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Gersick's concerns developed

out of others' continued focus of research work, which conceptualised group dynamics as a unitary sequence, which is patterned and inevitable (1988). Gersick queried these theories and recognised how many groups have a time constraints to accomplish a task (Gersick, 1988, 1989). The major findings showed that groups did not develop in a universal sequence as other models had indicated. The Punctuated Equilibrium Model consists of three phases; phase 1, phase 2 and completion (Gersick, 1988, 1989). Gersick (1988) termed these phases or temporal periods, which were not bounded as with stages used in group development.

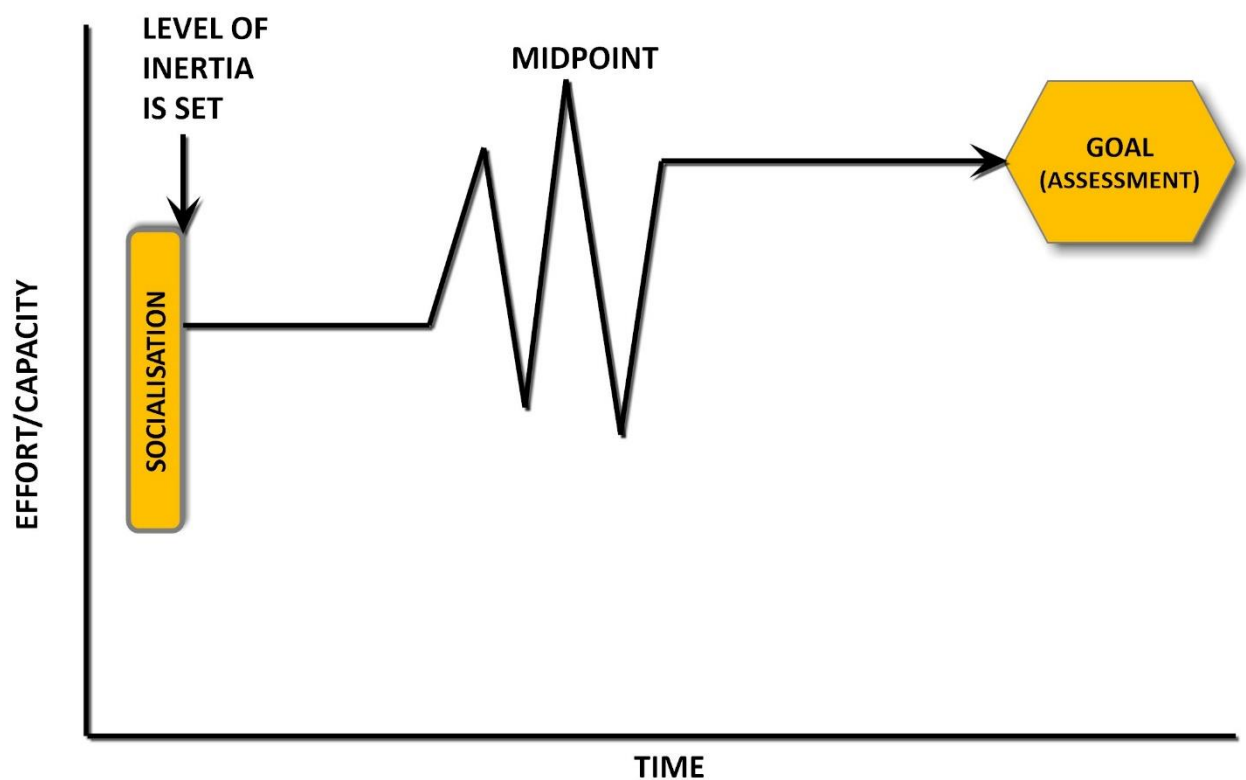


Figure 3.4: Adapted Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988)

The Punctuated Equilibrium Model concluded that the first meeting of the group will set a level of *inertia* in the group. Inertia within a group is the level of resistance of the group influenced by group dynamics and group processes (Gersick, 1988). A low level of inertia will be positive for a group, whereas a high level of inertia may be negative. In phase 1, socialisation occurs. Very soon after a group initially meets they will set on a certain path which shapes the way they interact. A group may follow this path for sometime until, as Gersick (1988) found, they hit a temporal midpoint. This midpoint, or phase 2, is a defining moment which relates to a fundamental change in how they operate (Gersick, 1989). This may be increased performance in the velocity time context, which Gersick referred to as groups doing what they have to 'to get the task done'

(Gersick, 1988). This may impact on an individual's engagement in the process phase, influencing the outcomes for the group (Gersick, 1988, 1989), and how the group performs the task. The temporal midpoint was also shown as a time of great anxiety for group members and often behaviours previously displayed in the group change (Gersick, 1988). These behaviours could be positive and displayed positive aspects of group process or negative, displaying negative process aspects.

The level of inertia in a group is determined not only by their first meeting but also by the group design. The size, individual characteristics of the group, and reasons for joining the group will influence the socialisation process and hence the level of inertia in the following phases. But it is at the midpoint when the group makes comparisons with each others' individual, characteristics, which she termed internal influences, and the use of resources as an external influence. Gersick's (1988) initial research also found leadership to be a major contributing factor to group success, inline with Hackman's (1987) work.

The influence of leadership on her initial research, instigated further testing of the model. She highlighted groups can be influenced by outside stakeholders or persons of interest to the group (Gersick, 1989), particularly, if the leadership in the group was ineffectual. Contact from these people sometimes enabled groups to move forward. In student groups, this would suggest that contact by the lecturer when the group was having difficulty moving ahead or making choices, could initiate success. This phase links to areas highlighted by previously discussed models such as the teaching context in the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) and support in the Group Effectiveness Model (Hackman, 1987).

Gersick's model suggested that task accomplishment is about the product, as suggested by Biggs (2003b), not effectiveness, as referred to by Hackman (1987), as the motivator when deadlines are to be met. This would indicate that the process phase of groups is not significant in getting the task done as individuals within the group, will simply 'do what they have to', to get the task done. The intended outcomes lecturers require for domestic and international undergraduate business students are teamwork skills which are only acquired through the interaction of the input (context) and process phases highlighted in these models.

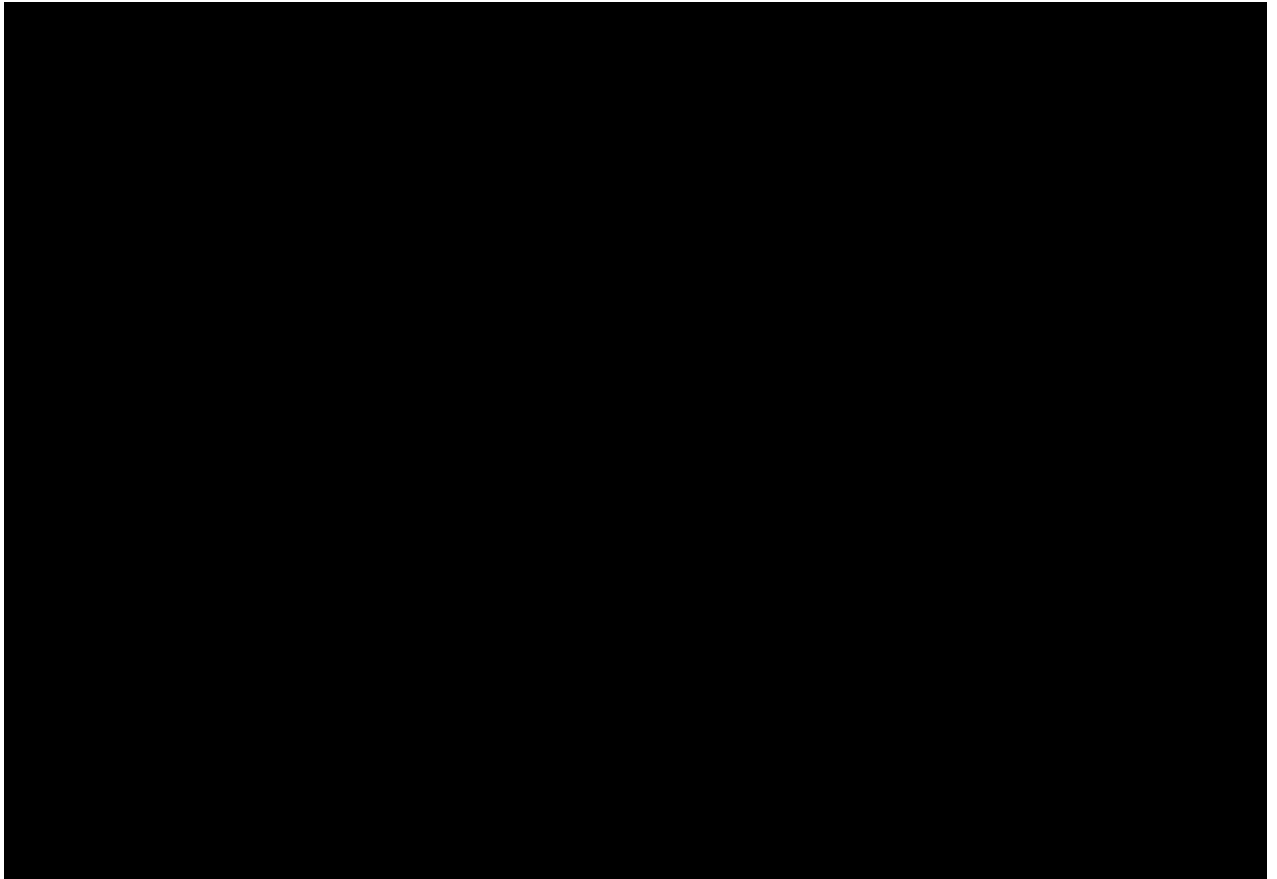


Figure 3.5: Conceptual model of student groups using 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) Group Effectiveness Model (Hackman, 1987) and Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988, 1989)

The review of the 3P Model and the group behaviour models of organisational behaviour have shown the input factors, and the process phases which directly impact on the outcomes for groups. Significantly, the events when groups interact, task processing (Biggs, 1987), process criteria and group synergy (Hackman, 1987) are critical in how undergraduate business student may engage in group activities. This directly influences the development of intended outcomes of the group. Gersick's (1989) research suggested that student groups may bypass these stages simply to get the task (assessment) completed on time. Without engagement by students in the process, groups cannot develop into teams and a lack of trust, commitment and accountability may lead student groups to display characteristics of unintended outcomes, such as ineffective teams (Lencioni, 2012). This suggests probing the experiences of undergraduate business students during the process phase is critical to researching the development of teamwork skills.

3.4 Reflections on organisational behaviour model

Group outcomes can be measured in various ways, and as previously discussed, the 3P Model referred to outcomes as product (Biggs, 2003b). Outcomes or effectiveness can also be measured if the group appears to be performing as a team (Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997). Bogenrieder and Nootboom (2004) suggested that the aim of a learning group should be good performance for the assigned task and Hackman (1987) also noted the effectiveness of a group can be measured by the quality of the product. The question I faced was, in the case of student groups, can it? Gersick's Model (1988) would suggest not, given the time in motion theory of groups; that is, individuals will do what they have to just to get the task done (Gersick, 1988). Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Kukenberger, Donsback, and Alliger (2015) also showed product is not a measure of effectiveness. They suggested through analysis of team composition models, adaptability, awareness, leadership, relationships and communication, among others, should be measures of effectiveness, which is a group process measurement. The literature reviewed also suggested that measurement by product alone, is not a sound indicator of teamwork skills as engagement is required in the process phase. This implied that a reward (good grade) for an assessable group task based on product for Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students is not an indicator of effectiveness and therefore, not an indicator of the development of teamwork skills.

As Biggs (1999) suggested, to develop intended learning outcomes, teaching methods should maximise the chances of students using a deep approach and minimise the chances of students applying a surface or strategic approach. The literature reviewed highlighted two major issues when using group work activities to develop teamwork skills in Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. Firstly, a group and a team are not the same, whilst all groups begin as groups, the behaviours, interactions and characteristics of the group during the process phase dictate if the group develops into a team. The literature reviewed indicated that deep learning is not a fixed attribute and the individual student decides, given the teaching method, how they will approach learning. During group process, the literature suggested the individual students' learning approach may be impacted on by other members of the group. Biggs' 3P Model, highlighted that a student must engage with the learning material, yet Hackman (1987), and Gersick (1988, 1989), showed the individual student must engage with other members of the group to develop teamwork skills.

Secondly, the existence of comprehensive research on the major issues students identified when participating in group work activities, such as accountability (Maiden & Perry, 2010), goal focus (Börjesson et al., 2006), leadership (Oliveira et al., 2014), and communication (Smith et al., 2011), suggests, the potential for the development of ineffective or dysfunctional teams (Lencioni, 2012). Whilst a group may remain a group and not develop teamwork skills, an ineffective team may develop negative unintended outcomes. This has consequences for both prospective employers and the students, as these learned characteristics may impact on the student's ability to become an effective team member in their future employment. As Hackman (2012) argued, a group will 'chart their own course', but it is when this is occurring each member of the group will or will not develop teamwork skills. A conditions-focused approach to constructive alignment would assist in developing a framework of what 'conditions were in place' (context) to increase the likelihood of the intended outcomes of teamwork skills being developed in Australia domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students, in Anglo-western teaching.

Constructive alignment suggested that lecturers should make deliberate alignment between the way they construct the teaching context (teaching methods and assessment) and the learning outcomes (intended outcomes) (Biggs, 1996a). Yet, the intricacies of the diverse characteristics of students and the complexities of group interactions appears largely absent. As discussed in Chapter 2, Biggs (1996a), suggested that learning occurs from the student's perspective of their learning environment. The current lack of clarity and ambiguous use of 'groups' and 'teams' shows lecturers need to understand 'what the student does' when they 'chart their own course' in groups in order to assess teamwork skills effectively. Constructive alignment from the view of the student may be different to the view of the lecturer. It follows that more information is needed about how group process aids or impairs the development of teamwork skills in a diverse cohort.

3.5 Research questions

Through the organisational behaviour lens, Hackman (2012) suggests groups will 'chart their own course' based on the group members, the system they work in, and the group will create their own strategies, for their own purpose. The review of literature and models indicate that this is problematic, as student groups may 'chart a course' which leads to unintended outcomes. Hackman's (2012) notion of investigating the 'conditions in place' when researching group behaviour suggests the need for lecturers to develop a well-aligned teaching context (Biggs, 2003b), which meets the needs of both Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. To develop a well-aligned teaching context, lecturers should not

only understand who the students are, but also ‘what the students do’, in the process phase of group interactions. It is during the process phase where teamwork skill acquisition occurs. My research is guided by the question: “How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students’ experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?”

The cross disciplinary review of literature has explored the contexts in which group work occurs, the participants in group work, and the complexities of the processes involved. The effective development of teamwork skills in Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students is questionable in existing group work models, given the issues which have been highlighted in this and the previous chapter.

Shaw (2005) suggested the concept of the lecturer as the voice of learning should be challenged. The students’ knowledge should be valued, sought and applied in the learning environment and taken account of in student-centred learning (Shaw, 2005). The experiences of the individual student in group work situations impacts directly on the outcomes for both the group and the individual student (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). The telling of the experience of both Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students will allow them to discuss their experiences and perceptions in group work (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010). The students’ voice, as a contributor to constructive alignment is largely absent in the articulation of theorising about learning in groups for Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. The students’ stories can articulate their perception of the ‘conditions in place’ (Hackman, 2012) and the process events as they ‘chart their own course’. My research may contribute in developing teaching methods which align with intended outcomes rather than reinforcing existing methods. By using a cross-disciplinary approach, these contextual factors combined can help develop greater understanding, from the students’ perspective, regarding what conditions were in place in both positive and negative experiences.

Further to this, if students are going to engage in group activities in such a way to evoke a deep approach, the literature suggests there needs to be more process gains than losses in the experience. The events which occur during the process phase are therefore critical as to how, or if, undergraduate business students develop the intended outcomes. Privileging the stories of outcomes from the individual student will shed light on how well these outcomes align with the intended, perceived, actual and unintended outcomes. To explore this more fully, I developed a set

of sub-questions to assist with the development of this study. These sub-questions are intended to shed insight into the gaps in the literature. The three sub-questions posed in my research are:

1. What have been Australian domestic and Chinese international student experiences with group work?
2. What are the critical context factors and process events influencing these experiences?
3. How do critical events impact on students' ability to develop teamwork skills?

The next section reflects on the literature review process and outlines the conceptual model which emerged during the literature review and further investigate student group behaviour.

3.6 Conceptual model of student group behaviour

During the literature review, I had been building a framework from the vast and varied pool of literature which combined both the educational and the organisational behaviour perspective. This framework was a useful guide for me to explore and organise my own thoughts. During the process of reviewing the literature, I read the following statement from Rae (2005, p. 323). He asked in his narrative research on entrepreneurial learning: “Are there significant processes and experiences in their learning which can be related to existing learning theories?”

By extending the work of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) through the Group Behaviour Model (Hackman, 1987) and the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988, 1989), I developed a conceptual framework from the existing bodies of literature, which could align with the methodology applied in my research. As a means of undertaking my exploratory research, the model derived out of the theory, assisted in focusing the research on Hackman's (2012) conditions-focused approach. The question for me was, could this framework be useful when applying a methodology grounded in narrative inquiry?

I thought about my original research focus which was to develop my own teaching practice. I had viewed group work as a valuable teaching method, but in reviewing the literature, I found the complexities had complicated the process, to the extent where I thought ‘group work will never function as a teaching method for teamwork skills’. The models I reviewed recognised diversity in groups as a critical ‘condition in place’, yet offered little on the actual ‘nuts and bolts’ of group process in diverse groups.

Exploratory research is primarily concerned with discovery (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and narrative inquiry offered a methodology to explore the actual individual stories of the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international students in group work. Approaches to narrative inquiry often differ (Riley & Hawe, 2005). Frank (2000) points out that stories are what people tell and narratives come from the analysis of their stories. I considered this and extended the works for Biggs (2003), Hackman (1987) and Gersick (1988, 1989) through a framework to assist with the telling of the students' stories and the thematic analysis of my data. It provides a framework which aligns epistemology and ontology with a suitable methodology justified in Chapter 4. The conceptual model I have developed is shown as Figure 3.6.

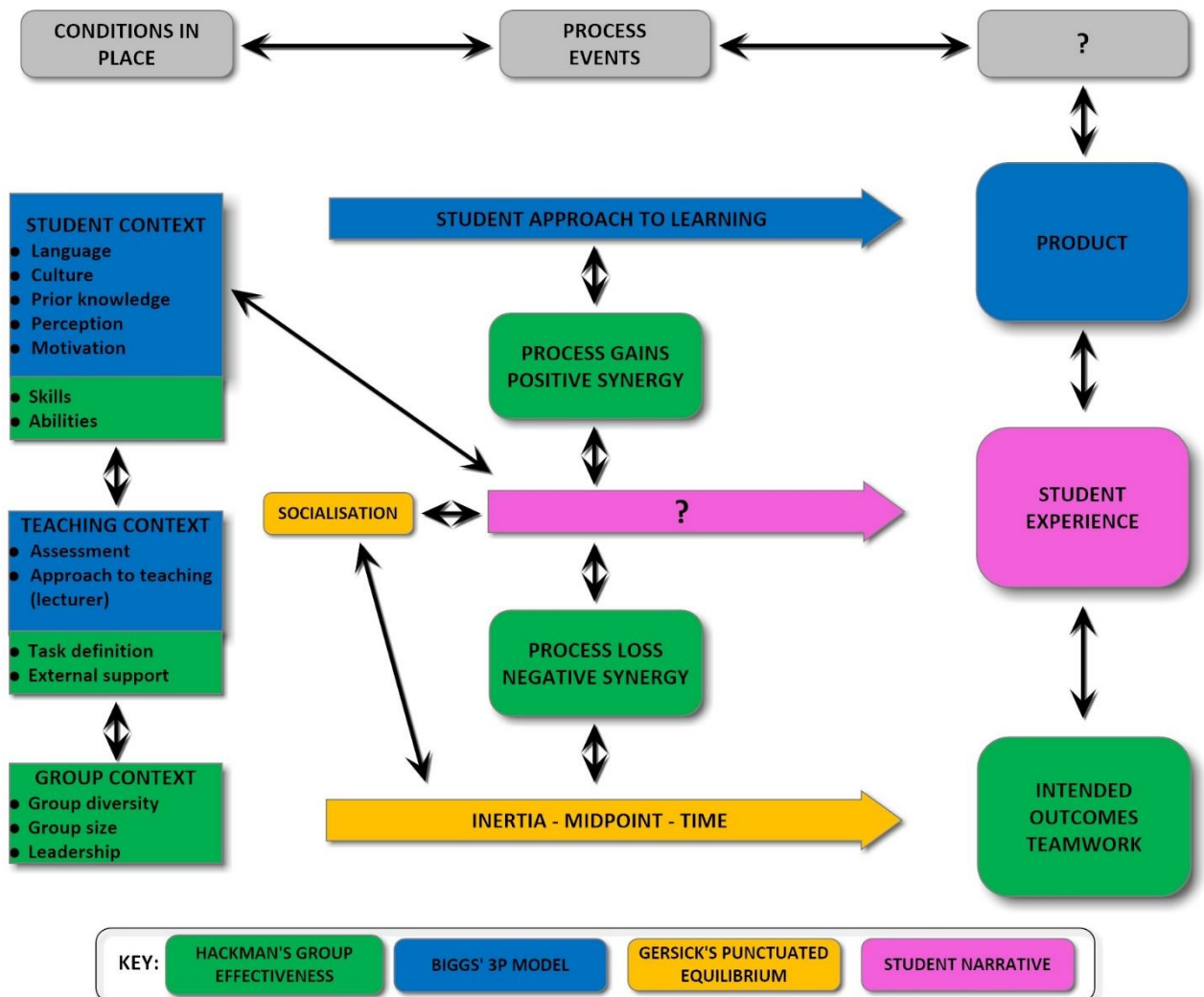


Figure 3.6: Conceptual model for my study: The Student Group Experience Model

Hackman's (2012) advice is to keep things simple when researching groups and their behaviour. The first step is to understand what 'conditions were in place' when a group is effective by asking what conditions were important to the group and how much of a difference did those conditions make (Hackman, 2012). As he suggests in researching group phenomena, it is important to identify the conditions that are most powerful in fostering group effectiveness, but not all conditions. With this in mind, three contexts were developed to form the 'conditions in place'. These are: the student context, the teaching context and the group context.

3.6.1 Conditions in place

Any robust understanding of groups requires attention to the individual attributes of the group member or members (Hackman, 2012). The student context, component of the model includes the student presage factors discussed from Biggs' 3P Model and the individual student attributes, highlighted in Hackman's Group Effectiveness Model. The student context recognises, as with narrative inquiry methodology, that the individual who is telling the story is important (Trahar, 2009a; Webster & Mertova, 2007), as each individual student's story is unique (Polkinghorne, 1988). This part of the model gives a background to the student who has had the experience, based on their individual attributes such as cultural background.

The teaching context considers the method of assessment highlighted in the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b). Broadening this, are the components Hackman (1987) refers to as task definition and support. These factors influence what the group does and how it does it, which in turn impact on the process phase and the intended outcomes also enunciated in Biggs' 3P Model.

Differing from the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) the group context has been included as a separate context. The group context of the model draws from the group design component of Hackman's Group Effectiveness Model (1987). Group composition shows diversity and group size are important variables in determining group effectiveness (Hackman, 1987). Diversity for my research is defined by enrolment status of either Australian domestic or Chinese international students, and described as either heterogeneous or homogeneous (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Leadership is also included in this context as this role in the group is the most critical as it drives group process (Hackman, 1987) and moves collaborative efforts forward (Stahl et al. 2014).

3.6.2 Process events: 'Chart their own course'

The process events component intends to develop deeper understanding of 'what the student does' during the process phase as the group 'chart their own course'. These are the critical events, from the perspective of the student, and this part of the model combines Biggs' 3P Model, Hackman's Group Effectiveness Model and Gersick's Punctuated Equilibrium Model. The 3P Model contends it is during the task processing phase where students adopt an approach to learning and group work as a teaching method, which allows for students to apply a deep approach. Yet, the intricacies and complexities of diverse groups are not fully explored in the 3P Model. This suggests when group work is the teaching method, the process phase is far more complex than task processing.

As highlighted previously, group process in the GEM, is a two-fold concept; group process criteria and group synergy, which are dependent on each other (Hackman, 1987). Group process criteria directly influences group dynamics which are the actions, processes and changes which occur within the group itself (Hackman, 2012). These actions, processes and changes create either positive or negative synergy within the group (Hackman, 1987, 2012). Positive synergy is a necessary condition for a group to develop into a team. This occurs when individuals within the group have more process gains than process losses (Hackman, 1987; Larson, 2010).

Gersick's Punctuated Equilibrium Model (1988; 1989) is also included to further extend the task processing phase. Students tend to be assessment focused (Biggs, 2003b; Brown & Knight, 1994; Brown et al., 2013), and assessments are overly based on product (Messick, 2013). This creates concern because to develop teamwork skills, students need to actively engage in the process phase. Gersick's (1988;1989) work highlights the importance of socialisation in creating a low level of inertia, which will move the group forward. Her work also allows for the investigation of the influence of time on the way a student group will approach learning, given the assessment requirements.

3.6.3 Intended outcomes

The goal of my research is to develop my own teaching practice through better understanding the meanings Australian domestic and Chinese international students construct in their experience of group work. These meanings are conceptualised using the literature and models which form my Student Group Experience Model. The final phase of the Student Group Experience Model is used to analyse these intended outcomes and answer the sub-questions for my research. This part of the

model focuses on the sub-questions guiding my study and is broken down into three sections for the purpose of analysing specific experiences within the process events.

1. What have been Australian domestic and Chinese international student experiences with group work?
2. What are the critical context factors and process events influencing these experience?
3. How do critical events impact on the students' ability to develop teamwork skills?

Although perception is based on one's own opinion or how an experience appears to the individual, the experience or perception of an experience, impacts on the outcomes for that person. The experiences of both Australian domestic and Chinese international student may differ, individually or collectively, and their own experience impacts on their outcomes. It is therefore relevant to understand how that student felt about the experience in terms of it being a positive or negative experience. This part of the model offers a pathway to discovering students' perceptions of their outcomes from group work and what process events contributed to the experience that made it positive or negative.

My Student Group Experience Model, also provides the framework for looking at the experience the student had in group work and the theoretical literature to ascertain if the teaching method allows for the development of teamwork skills. The model allows for analysis of process events (process) and the 'conditions in place' (context) to determine if the actual outcomes align with intended outcomes. This is relevant for answering the third sub-question, 'how do critical events impact on students' ability to develop teamwork skills?' My research sub-questions assist in developing an understanding of a more diverse range of perspectives about what the use of groups as a teaching method has produced in terms of teamwork skills for Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students and therefore, my teaching practice.

3.7 Conclusion

Biggs (1999) espoused it is what the students do which is important. What the students do when engaging in group work activities is complex as the group 'chart their own course'. The processes appear to influence the approach a student can adopt and this is shaped by positive and negative process gains. This in turn, leads the group to outcomes, either remaining as a group, transforming to a team or unintended outcomes of a dysfunctional team. As a diverse student group is a social entity which will operate outside the control of the lecturer, the students' knowledge should be valued, sought and applied in the learning environment and into taken account. Interpreting the

students' perspective and experiences of group work situations assists in dissecting and evaluating 'what the students do' (Biggs, 1999). This could assist in progressing group work teaching methods around the conditions which encouraged the development of teamwork skills in Australian domestic and Chinese international students. The next chapter outlines my research process and presents the methodological rationale for my research.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH PROCESS

Storytelling engages an audience in an experience. Narrative invites us as listeners, readers and viewers to enter the perspective of the teller. (Riessman, 2008. p. 9)

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research questions which were designed to explore Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' experience of group work. The central question for my research "How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?" was developed out of a cross-disciplinary examination of the literature. This chapter presents the rationale and justifications for decisions I have made during the course of undertaking my investigation. It outlines the theoretical foundations for the methodologies selected, and the methods employed, to guide the gathering of research data and exploration of the research question posed.

4.2 Theoretical foundations of the research

All research begins with a general area of concern (Crotty, 1998). My previous experience as a lecturer of undergraduate business students had created an interest about their interactions in group work activities, the individual experiences of both Australian domestic and Chinese international business students, and whether group work provided a framework to develop teamwork skills. As a lecturer, I saw group work as a valuable teaching method. I felt exploring the individual experiences of students in group work could inform my teaching practice.

Philosophical ideals influence the practice of research. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2013) stated a research program requires six elements: paradigm, ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspective and framework, methodology and methods. These are the necessary elements and are applicable to quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches. Nonetheless, in qualitative research these fundamental concepts are sometimes defined and used differently by different scholars (Jones et al., 2013). For example, Creswell (2009) used the term 'worldwide views' to encompass the meaning of the basic set of beliefs that guide the actions of a researcher; Crotty (1998)

referred to these as epistemological and ontological assumptions. Ontological assumptions are worldwide views based on our perception of knowledge and the way we make sense of that perception (Crotty, 1998). Epistemological beliefs are fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge and learning (Johannes, 2004). These assumptions lead researchers to embrace either a qualitative, quantitative or a mixed methods approach or paradigm (Creswell, 2009).

Exploring the experiences and outcomes of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students required me to identify a research paradigm that would guide and give meaning to my research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) offered a series of three questions for researchers to contemplate in understanding a research paradigm:

1. The ontological question: what is there to be known?
2. The epistemological question: what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known? and;
3. The methodological question: how can the inquirer go about finding whatever they believe can be known? (p. 12)

The answers to these questions define the paradigm of the research and hence constrain the research to that paradigm. This establishes rigor in the research (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested that the methodological question is constrained by the answer to the epistemological question which is constrained by the ontological question.

I spent time exploring methodological stances and research methods and felt I needed a research program which would satisfy Denzin and Lincoln (2011) conditions and enable me to explore the relationship between the researcher as knower and what I can know. My research interest was sparked by wanting to inform my own teaching practice and what I could learn from my research. My research program used Crotty's (1998) structure as a guide, to operationalise Denzin and Lincoln's questions as the research framework assisted in defining the research methodology and methods, based on my ontology, epistemology and theoretical perspective. How this guided me is depicted in Figure 4.1.

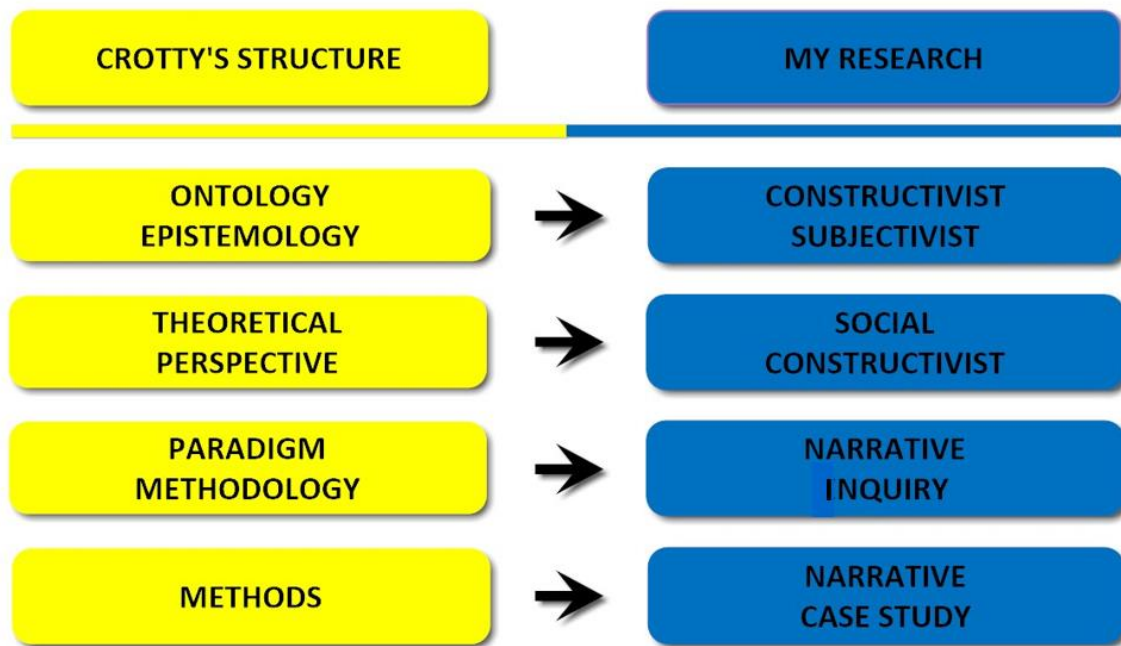


Figure 4.1: Research Framework (Adapted from Crotty, 1998)

4.2.1 Ontological and epistemological position of this research

The ontological position or perspective defines the nature of a phenomenon and the essence of a social reality being studied (Mason, 2002); that is, it is the nature of the reality (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). It is the set of beliefs that a researcher holds and influences the way in which a researcher approaches the world and research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). I reflected on Denzin and Lincoln's (2011, p.12) question "what is there to be known?" to think about how my set of beliefs (ontological position) would influence my research. It was also crucial to reflect at this point on the questions central to my research and my reasons for undertaking this study. When considering this, I believed that individuals assign meaning to the world around them through what occurs in their environment and the interactions they have with others in this environment, and this influenced the framing of the question: "How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?" As a lecturer, I had always seen the value of group work from the outside, but my review of literature made me question my assumptions. My ontological position would suggest that what I wanted to know could only be answered by asking the individuals involved in the experience of group work and through this, my teaching practice can be informed.

Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical basis for determining what the knowledge is, the way it can be utilised and how that knowledge is justifiable and sufficient (Maynard, 1994). As a starting point, Crotty (1998) offered three predominant positions in which the epistemological position for my research can be identified; objectivism, constructivism and subjectivism. In determining an epistemological position for my research, the question posed “what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known?” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12) was central in my mind.

The epistemology of objectivism holds that meaning and reality exist apart from any consciousness (Crotty, 1998). Bernstein (1983) stated that this epistemological position distinguishes between the subject and the object, and that what is out there (objective) is presumed to be independent of us (subject). This assumption denotes that knowledge can only be obtained if the subject represents objective reality. Thinking about this position and Denzin and Lincoln’s assertion, it became clear that exploring the experiences and subsequent outcomes Australian domestic and Chinese international students have had with group work, their perceptions could not be presumed to be objective and independent. The students’ experiences, whether real or perceived, are their own experiences; knowledge of the experiences does not represent objective reality.

Constructivism as an epistemological or philosophical point of view which can be seen as a counterpart to objectivism (Ratner, 2002). The epistemology of constructivism holds that there are no objective truths; rather truth emerges from our engagement with socially constructed realities within the world in which we exist (Crotty, 1998). This point of view aligned more closely with that of my own answer to the question posed by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). As students engage in group work activities, they construct an emerging reality. I felt that this viewpoint was very closely aligned with my research, but felt deeper investigation of the epistemological perspective would shed further light.

Subjectivism is the other epistemology and, as described by (Crotty, 1998), is one that does not assume meaning comes from interplay between subject and object. Rather it sees meaning as coming from sources other than the interaction of the two. In other words, that reality is what we, as individuals, perceive to be real and that there is no underlying ‘true’ reality that exists independently of this perception. Subjectivism has had a profound influence on education as it is more concerned with groups of people and interpersonal relationships (Yu, 2011) than objective truth. I felt this point of view also aligned closely with my research. The reality of the group work

situation and experiences for students as individuals was what they perceived to have occurred in their experience.

It is acknowledged that the three aforementioned epistemologies above are a selection of the topology of epistemologies and represent a less than comprehensive list. Reflecting again the question posed by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 12), “what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known?” I felt that this cross-section was sufficient to determine one which is appropriate for my research. In the context of my research, it was clear that understanding the experiences of students in group work does not fit with the objectivist notion that truth and meaning exist in the object independent of any consciousness. The diversity of individual perceptions based on students interviewed makes objective truth one which is hard to imagine. The nature of the relationship between the knower (students) and what can be known (experience) is not that of an objective truth. Therefore, meaning about the experiences students have had in group work situations was more likely to become apparent from either a constructivist or subjective epistemological position.

Epistemologies generally fall into categories, but there is no ‘one-size fits all’ answer to epistemological choice (Smithson, 2010). K. He (2010) advocated a constructivist viewpoint is in its epistemology, subjectivist. Smithson (2010) suggested the answer to this is hybrid epistemologies and noted that they tend to be more robust and rigorous. Therefore, the theoretical foundation for my research was framed using both a constructivist and subjectivist perspective as a hybrid epistemological position; this position is the philosophical ideal that was used to further inform the methodology and methods.

The relationship between the knower and what can be known can be informed by the constructivist notion that meaningful reality is based upon human practice being constructed from an individual’s interactions with other human beings and the world in which they exist (Crotty, 1998). My research focus was the student (subject) and the interplay within the teaching method of group work (object) in the business higher education context. Further to this, the meaning of student perceptions of the experience in groups, within the group work context may be informed by the subjectivist notion of the student (participants) as they construct meaning as they engage in the situation they are interpreting (group work). Yet, the underlying reason for my interest in conducting this research was to inform my teaching practice and moves forward from simply asking what the relationship is between the knower and the known, and to ask what I, as the

researcher, know and what I can learn. This was foremost in my mind as I pursued a process of discovery for the theoretical perspectives, the methodology and methods for my research.

4.2.2 Theoretical perspective of this research

The preceding section established the rationale for my adoption of a mixed epistemological position with its foundation in constructivist and subjectivist meanings. This section now moves to further the discussion of the philosophical stance that lies behind the choice of methodologies and methods for my exploratory study. The discussion on the theoretical perspective allows for the philosophical ideals to become apparent and their influence on my research explained.

In further reading of theoretical foundations and perspectives, I considered the social constructivist approach. Social constructivism is a view that the goal of the research should rely as much as possible upon the participant's view of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2009). This position deems that subjective meanings are formed through interaction in the world and these meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage in the world they are interpreting (Creswell, 2009). Individuals make sense of the world based on historical and social perspectives; they are born into a world of meaning bestowed on them by their culture and meaning arises out of interaction with the human community. This theoretical perspective aligns with the epistemological position of this research as meaningful reality is being constructed from the students' interactions with other students and the world in which they exist (constructivist) (Crotty, 1998). This gives meaning to the situation they are interpreting (group work). The students give meaning to the group work experience in their business education based on cultural perspectives, their previous experience with group work and their interaction within groups.

This raised the question for me with regard to the differences between the epistemological position of constructivism and the theoretical perspective of social constructivism. Researchers have sometimes conflated constructivism with social constructivism (Hall & Callery, 2001). Constructivism is an epistemology that is systematic in its approach and focuses on the patterns of interactions (Hall & Callery, 2001). Social constructivism, on the other hand, is a perspective that examines these interactions in a particular social, cultural or historical context (Crotty, 1998). Social constructivism is part of the constructivist family (Biggs, 1996a). As my research focus was with Australian domestic and Chinese international students' experiences of group work and their interactions which occur within a social context, a social constructivist perspective aligned with the intent of my study.

Crotty (1998) identified the assumptions of social constructivism and its intent in research to make sense or interpret the meanings that others have about the world. These assumptions are framed into four areas:

1. That this perspective is such that it is typically seen as a qualitative approach to research;
2. Constructivist researchers address the process of interaction between individuals;
3. An interpretation can be shaped by the researcher's own experience and background; and
4. The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, generating meaning from the data collected in the field (Crotty, 1998).

The theoretical perspective of social constructivism allowed me to explore the nature of human experience and how it is influenced by others within group work activities. These experiences occurred in interactions in the social context, and this perspective notes the overlying cultural context of these interactions. This was important for the subtle and sensitive area of study that requires individuals to discuss experiences that may have been difficult for them given their cultural differences. A social constructivist's view is that participation in dialogue can be a catalyst for examining one's own reality in new ways and the process itself can create awareness of one's own self as well as encouraging openness to cultural differences (Lee & Greene, 1999).

4.3 Methodological rationale

The next section outlines the design of my research and presents the rationale for the methodological decisions taken. First, the characteristics of narrative inquiry are discussed in relation to its potential for informing my research. The next section explains the research design process using Creswell's (2009) Narrative Inquiry Research Process and an adapted framework from Webster and Mertova (2007). The final section identifies the principles underpinning the approach to my data analysis.

“Research which is focused on discovery, understanding and insight from the perspective of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the practice of education” (Merriam, 1988, p. 3). Given the research focus was exploring the group work experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students, a methodology based in the qualitative paradigm seemed the most appropriate. Minichiello and

Kottler (2010, p. 16) stated: “Qualitative researchers believe that there is no fixed way of thinking about the world and that different people can experience the same events but think about them and interpret them differently”.

This view aligned not only with the research focus on the student as an individual and their perception of group work, but also with the social constructivist ideal that the goal of the research should rely as much as possible upon the participant’s view of group work. One of the strengths in using a qualitative methodology is examining the behaviour, phenomena and experiences of individuals in a social context that take into account various perceptions (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010).

Qualitative research emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It also acknowledges the close relationship between the researcher and the topic. The researcher becomes the teller of the experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The research interprets the experience of the teller and every interpretation is based in a context or background of beliefs (Schwandt et al., 2007). At this point I contemplated the development of a research program and debated the answers to Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) questions.

This process and the answers to these questions defined the paradigm of the research and hence, illustrate the appropriateness of adopting a research process in the qualitative paradigm tradition. Several major methodologies are used in qualitative research (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010). I went about exploring these methodologies to find the distinct advantages that would allow me to match a method with my research focus. I wanted to explore my own teaching practice and to find a paradigm of inquiry that would allow for the consideration of the dimension of cross-cultural research (Trahar, 2009b), as well as a mechanism for critical reflection (Riley & Hawe, 2005). Hence, for me, the question also became ‘what can I know?’ as an educational practitioner and researcher. The choice of narrative inquiry as a research methodology grounded in qualitative design was the result of the exploration.

4.3.1 Narrative inquiry

The use of narrative inquiry can be defined into both the framework or methodology of research and the method of data collection (Moen, 2006). Narrative is human-centred and captures and analyses life stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Gough (1997) argued that the collection of narratives in education is one way of approaching the divide between theoretical and practical

issues in education. Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested that narrative situates itself in practice and is therefore learner-centred. This approach appeared congruent with my research focus.

Narrative inquiry is a methodology for studying the lived experience (Clandinin, 2006) and is based on the premise that we make sense of our lives through narrative (Bruner, 1990). At the core of the narrative framework are the themes of human-centredness and the complexity of the human experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry possess a number of characteristics which make it a good methodological fit with the central concern of my research.

First, narrative inquiry is suited to addressing the complexities of the human experience in teaching and learning (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The narrative inquiry approach has been used predominately in the fields of education, cognitive sciences and organisational studies as it is sensitive to the unique characteristics of human existence (Polkinghorne, 1988). It provides a rich framework to investigate the way humans experience the world depicted in their stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 2) stated, narrative inquiry:

...is increasingly used in studies of the educational experience...humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. Thus the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world...the view that education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, lecturers and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and others stories.

The use of narrative inquiry attempts to understand how individuals view and perceive certain events and what they value (Riley & Hawe, 2005). The focus of my research was to understand how students perceive the process events which occur during the phenomena of group work as the group 'chart their own course' using Hackman's conditions-focused approach. The students are characters in their own story of group work experience and through their experiences, assist me in developing my own teaching practice. As a lecturer, I am not 'part of the group'. The stories of the students allow for me, as a researcher, to gain greater insight into what they value as part of the group experience and ultimately to understand how those process events impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills.

A second characteristic of narrative inquiry is, that it does not attempt to predefine variables, but seeks to understand phenomena through the storytelling of the participants (Trahar, 2009a). It holds with the social constructivist view that meaningful reality is based upon individuals' ways

of being constructed from these individuals' interactions with other human beings and the world in which they exist (Polkinghorne, 1988). A narrative approach acknowledges that different meaning may be attributed to the same events at different times, consequently, the students' stories are not treated as an objective truth, but rather a reflection of their own perception at the time of the interview (Casanave, 2010). This is consistent with the motivation for my research, to study the particularity of the students' experiences rather than an interest in seeking general truths.

A third feature of narrative inquiry which endorses it as a research method for my research is its sensitivity to focus on the individual and the role of their experience in the construction of knowledge. Webster and Mertova (2007), noted the move towards the use of a narrative inquiry approach as being influenced by interest in the individual and acknowledgment of the influence of experience and culture on the construction of knowledge. Narrative inquiry's potential for accessing the issues in individual students' experiences in group activities and exploring the 'particularity' of these experiences is well-suited when the participants' are culturally diverse.

A fourth feature of narrative inquiry is its focus on gathering stories across cultures and contexts and connecting these stories (Trahar, 2009a). It is holistic in nature and the capacity for both cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary research (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Researchers exploring across cultures can make direct cross-cultural comparisons (Trahar, 2009a). Lawlor (2000) highlighted the importance of eliciting stories of experience in cross-cultural research and the nature of narrative inquiry is conducive to this. Narrative inquiry was considered an appropriate choice, as an important criterion for the research approach was to yield insights into Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' own perspectives.

The narrative approach adopted in my research relied on interviews with the students as the sole sources of information on their experiences. The rationale for not seeking others' perspectives, such as lecturers, was both principled and practical. First, as a researcher, I was committed to privileging the Australian domestic and Chinese international students' perspective. I felt that if their stories were not paramount in the research, it could undermine the trust established between myself and the students. Second, it was considered that gathering and analysing the data from additional perspectives would threaten my ability to do justice to the data within the constraints of the research.

In the Narrative Inquiry Research Process, Creswell (2009), noted that researchers seek to understand events through the stories of the participants. This aligns with my research focus on

students who are enrolled as either Australian domestic or Chinese international as undergraduates in business related program, through their experiences in a unit level group work experience. Narrative inquiry provided a nuanced means of exploring the personal experiences to elicit stories about the same phenomenon; group work. The Narrative Inquiry Research Process is shown in Table 4.1. The Table outlines the research phases as highlighted by Creswell (2009) and the way in which my research was undertaken using this process as a guide.

The phases of the research process which had been undertaken to this point included identifying the research problem, which for me was to understand and represent the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. Taking a cross-disciplinary approach in the literature review allowed for the development of a theoretical framework, my Student Group Experience Model, to assist in answering the research questions. The final two phases of the process, collection of qualitative data and analysis of the data are outlined later in the chapter.

Table 4.1: Adapted Narrative Inquiry Research Process (Creswell, 2009 p. 56)

<i>Phases of the research process</i>	<i>Characteristics of qualitative research</i>	<i>Characteristics of narrative</i>	<i>My Research process</i>
Identify a research problem	A qualitative problem requires exploration and understanding.	Narrative researchers seek to understand and re-present experiences through the stories that individual(s) live and tell.	Understand and re-present Australian domestic and Chinese International undergraduate business student's experiences in group work.
Review the literature	The scholarly literature plays a minor role. Qualitative researchers use the literature to justify their research problems.	Narrative researchers foreground the participant's story and background the scholarly literature. For example, they may find direction or underlying structure for their research reports through the participant's story rather than through a conventional literature review or theoretical framework. The scholarly literature may offer guidance for how to interpret the participant's stories (i.e., find deeper meaning or new understandings through them).	The cross-disciplinary scholarly literature from education and organisational behaviour provided guidance into group work as a teaching methods and teamwork skills as the intended outcome. A theoretical framework provided an underlying structure for the student's story.
Develop a purpose statement and research questions	The qualitative purpose statement and research questions are broad and general and seek participants' experiences.	Narrative researchers seek to explore the meaning of the individual's experiences as told through a story or stories.	Explore the meaning of the individual student's experience of group work during the process phase of group interaction.
Collect qualitative data	Qualitative researchers collect data following protocols developed during their studies. Data collection involves gathering text or image data. It also involves studying a small number of individuals or sites.	Narrative researchers collect field texts that document the individual's story in his or her own words (e.g., interview transcripts, letters, and journal entries).	Interviews which document the individual student's story in their own words.
Analyse and interpret qualitative data	Qualitative data analysis consists of text analysis. Qualitative data analysis consists describing information and of developing themes. Qualitative interpretations situate findings within larger meanings.	Narrative researchers analyse the participant's stories by retelling or "restorying" them into a framework that makes sense (e.g., chronology, plot). This often involves identifying themes or categories of information within the participant's stories (e.g., time, place, plot, scene). Researchers may then rewrite the participant's stories to place them within a chronological sequence (beginning, middle, end) and/or a plot that incorporates a main character who experiences a conflict or struggle that comes to some sort of resolution.	Analysis of the student's stories through the process of 'restorying' to identify the major themes via a thematic analysis. Further analysis through a critical events analysis of the process phase of groups.

As suggested in the adapted Narrative Inquiry Research Process, when narrative researchers identify a research problem the focus is seeking to understand and re-present experiences through the stories that the individual(s) live and tell. Can the research question: ‘How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students’ experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?’ effectively be answered through asking the questions that make up the sub-questions of my research:

1. What have been Australian domestic and Chinese international student experiences with group work?
2. What are the critical context factors and process events influencing these experiences?
3. How do critical events impact on students’ ability to develop teamwork skills?

These questions are designed to understand the phenomena of group work, from the students’ perspective of the experiences they have had. Through these stories, the process identifies themes within their lived experience for reflection and development in my own teaching practice for the purpose of assisting students in developing teamwork skills.

4.3.2 Limitations of narrative inquiry

All research methods have limitations and narrative inquiry is not suitable to all research inquiries (Duff & Bell, 2002). Behar-Horenstein and Morgan (1995, p. 148) highlight one of the most accepted limitations of narrative inquiry by stating:

...the study of a story as case descriptive material usually involves the view of only one individual...these are open to multiple meanings. The complexities portrayed in narrative descriptions, along with the possible inaccuracies, sometimes lead to confusion...because there are many interpretations inherent to a complex story. The possibilities for different interpretations are also a function of the perspectives and experiences...

Stories are inherently ambiguous and multi-layered and when these stories are co-constructed in nature, the meaning can be subjective (Duff & Bell, 2002). Whilst quantitative methods are characterised by measurability, inference, generalisability and are systematic with large numbers of participants, narrative inquiry also differentiates itself from qualitative methods (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Qualitative methods are characterised by the human element, logical deduction and narrowing of the analysis. Narrative inquiry deals with the human experience to convey and understand the knowledge by broadening the analysis of data (Webster & Mertova, 2007). My

exploratory research focus is the experience of Australian domestic and Chinese international students in group work activities which conveys the stories through both a broadening analysis through the thematic analysis, and a burrowing analysis in the critical events analysis. The close collaboration between the researcher, the participant and time commitments of analysis make it unsuitable for a large number of participants (Duff and Bell, 2002). Therefore, stories were drawn from twelve participants; six Australian domestic and six Chinese international students.

There are both advocates and critics of narrative inquiry as a research methodology. The literature suggested it should not be judged with the same criteria as traditional quantitative methods, nor should it be treated in the same light as traditional qualitative methods (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008). From a positivist perspective, the major criticism and limitation of adopting narrative inquiry as a research method is the validity and reliability of the research data. The concept of validity refers to the aim to produce certainty and is an objectivist notion employed in quantitative methods (Creswell, 2009), through the strength of the data analysis, whilst reliability denotes the dependability of the data (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry does not establish the truth. It reports past events, on reflection, and each participant's story is important (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Riessman, 2008). As Polkinghorne (1988) noted, in narrative research a finding is significant if it is important to the teller, and it is not fitting to apply previous criteria of traditional approaches to narrative inquiry. A narrative framework provided a meaningful path to develop the design of my research. It also afforded measures in which the research criteria could be embedded into the research design.

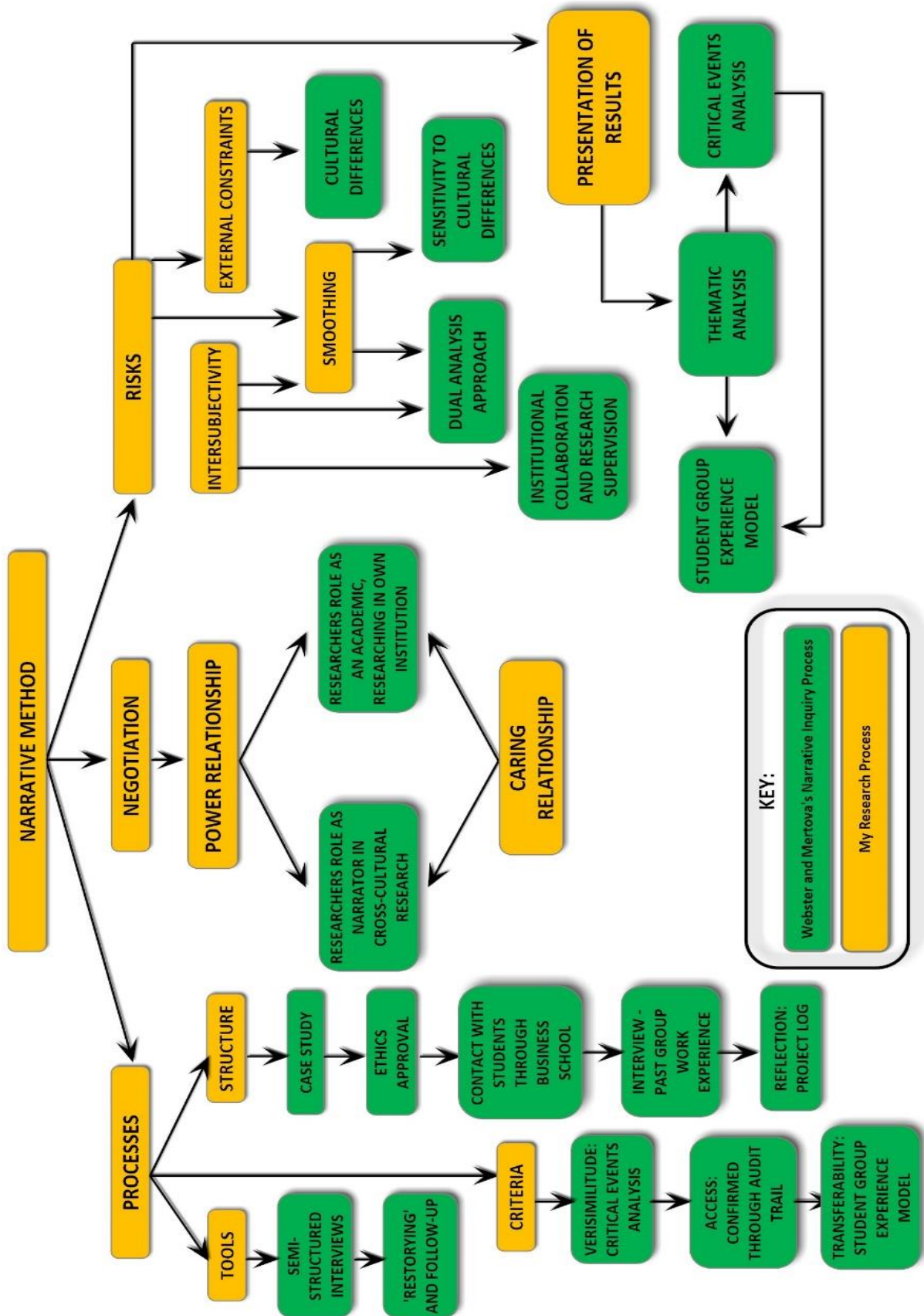
4.4 Research design

The previous discussion has established the theoretical foundations of my research by way of making explicit the epistemological position, theoretical position and the methodology that have informed my research program. Riessman (2008) discussed the importance for narrative researchers to keep a diary or project log to encourage methodological awareness, fostering ongoing reflexivity and the impact of decisions along the way. During the course of my research, I kept a project log. The project log was organised into three sections, observational notes, analytical notes and personal notes. This log recorded my thoughts as I worked on my research. This became my personal history of research process, and assisted in making critical decisions, such as the sampling of my participants. The log helped me to organise my thoughts, reflect on my position in the research and concerns with embarking on a new research paradigm in a cross-

cultural realm. Excerpts of my thoughts recorded in the project log are included in the research design section.

As with other research methods, narrative approaches need to be organised to achieve the researcher's aims (Riessman, 2008). Webster and Mertova (2007, p. 104) stated in narrative inquiry "the methodology contains four constituent parts: research *processes*, *negotiations* that occur, *risks* that may arise and preparation and auditing of *results*". These constituents drive the research process. An outline of my research design, adapted from Webster and Mertova's framework is shown in Figure 4.2. This framework is used in the following discussion on my research process, to expand the Narrative Inquiry Research Process shown previously in Table 4.1. As suggested by Webster and Mertova (2007), it is useful to provide a visual representation.

Figure 4.2: Adapted Research Framework from Framework for Narrative Inquiry Research Methodology (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 105)



4.5 Research processes

The process is broken down into three parts; tools, criteria and structure (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Tools refer to the data gathering instruments. Criteria, ensured the research established a system within the research process which confirmed *verisimilitude* (trustworthiness), *apparency* (credibility) and *transferability* and was interwoven into the data collection process (Riessman, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Finally, the structure portrayed the setting and context in which my research was conducted.

4.5.1 Research tools

Narrative data can be gathered through various methods such as audio or video transcripts, field notes, diaries, simulated recall or extended interviews (Bleakley, 2005). Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested appropriate methods should be selected on their relevance to the research question. In answering the research question: “How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students’ experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?” a method needed to be selected to best privilege the stories of the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students and various methods of data gathering were considered.

The use of focus group interviews appeared to be problematic as the group dynamics and interactions were the focus of my research. Kaplowitz and Hoehn (2001) questioned the use of individual interviews as opposed to focus group interviews. They concluded that each yielded different perspectives and noted, individuals feel more comfortable revealing information, particularly of a sensitive nature, in an individual interview. Individual behaviour is influenced by the presence of others (Crano, 2000). Group dynamics tended to encourage speculation about information when collecting data through focus groups (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001). Stokes and Bergin (2006) agreed, noting that individual in-depth interviewing has advantages relating to the quality of research data, due to the influence of group dynamics, but may not be representative of an individual views. Studies of group process from the perspective of individual group members are varied in organisational behaviour (e.g., Eby & Dobbins, 1997; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Knight et al, 1999; Liu & McLeod, 2014). Eby and Dobbins (1997) utilised quantitative surveys from individual to assess their perceptions of group cooperation and performance. They suggested for future research “the use of structure interviews based on critical incidents” (1997, p. 290) to uncover information regarding the complex relationship between individuals and groups,

particularly in cross-cultural groups. Ely and Thomas (2001), used individual interviews and group observations. They proposed group process and the individual experiences are linked to group diversity and these perspectives required further investigation.

Narratives captured in interviews have become a principal tool for data collection in qualitative research (De Fina, 2009). Qualitative interviewing typically relies on open questions and/or closed short answer questions (Riessman, 2008). With narrative interviewing, the goal of the interview is to generate a detailed account of the phenomenon (Riessman, 2008). The interview is especially important in qualitative research but the goal of the narrative interview is not to ask questions in which the interviewee simply answers, but rather for the interviewee to describe 'chunks' of their world (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). The interview process should also be interactive, meaning that information and interpretation flows both ways (Gudmundsdottir, 1996; Marton, 1981). Selecting interviews as a data collection method allowed for interaction between the researcher and participants' in a collaborative relationship (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and the telling of past experiences in group work (Clandinin, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the data collection method. Not only did I want to privilege the stories about the experiences students had whilst being involved in group work activities, I also wanted to gather information from the students based around the contexts I had identified in developing my theoretical framework, the Student Group Experience Model. To develop the student context in this model, a short questionnaire regarding their background information was completed by the students prior to the interview process. The unit in which the group experience occurred was noted and the generic descriptor checked for teamwork skills. This is attached as Appendix 5 (part of the Human Research Ethics approval).

There were a number of issues I wanted to address, given my inexperience with narrative inquiry. The role of the researcher and the participant is complex and more significant in intercultural research (Trahar, 2009a). I had previous experience interviewing in both a structured and semi-structured manner, where the participants' were both Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate students but I had not previously attempted research based in narrative inquiry. Prior to commencing the interview process, I had reflected on my concerns in regard to representing the voice of the students authentically, in particular the students' from mainland China.

Narrative research depends on the relationship established between myself and the students. There are a number of issues with this. Firstly, I do not share the same status as the students being a lecturer, this potentially could equate to them telling me 'what I want to hear'. The other is representing the voices of international students in a way in which is meant. (Project Log, August 2010).

Talmy (2010) claimed that researchers need to be more reflexive about the interview process in which the interview is viewed as a social encounter, rather than a research instrument. With this in mind, I wanted my research to foster a non-academic relationship with the students and for the interview process to not be a one off event. The goal of this focus, which is outlined in the negotiation section, was to avoid power relationships (Webster & Mertova, 2007) and adjust the traditional interview structure by including a follow up conversation.

The further creation of meaning from narrative can be called *restorying* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Restorying of narratives is the process of arranging the original story into a general framework to create a coherent narrative, as participants' interviewed may not have presented their story in a consistent manner (Creswell, 2007). Restorying has been used in research with international students (e.g., McKamey, 2011). Once the interviews were transcribed and a vertical reading of the individual narrative was undertaken and a follow-up meeting with each of the participants was organised and the restoried interview transcript were discussed to ensure the student's meaning was reflected in the narrative. Allowing students to confirm their reported stories of experience created trustworthiness in my research. The research tools are integral to ensuring credibility in the research process, (Webster & Mertova, 2007) through the criteria of the research process, which is discussed next.

4.5.2 Research criteria

As with other qualitative methods, narrative inquiry relies on other criteria than generalisability, reliability and validity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry does not construct conclusions of certainty, as Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested, making researchers unable to utilise an experimental design and reliability of data (Behar-Horenstein & Morgan, 1995). One way to address the problems of justifying interpretation is by applying trustworthiness (Schwandt et al., 2007). Applying strategies for credibility, transferability and dependability in narrative requires researchers to carefully follow a methodical path to ensure the coherence of the participants' narratives and the researcher's interpretation of those narratives (Riessman, 2008).

By employing a trustworthiness criteria the comparisons can be made to conventional quantitative notions (Schwandt et al., 2007). These are:

1. Internal validity: the notion of credibility,
2. External validity: the notion of transferability,
3. Reliability: the notion of dependability, and
4. Objectivity: the notion of neutrality.

Qualitative research findings must be as trustworthy as possible and this is achieved by applying the criteria of credibility, transferability and dependability as objectivity is neutral (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). These concepts combined are used to describe the trustworthiness of the research. They should be viewed as interrelated and intertwined (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the concept of internal validity comes from the assumption that there is a single tangible reality to be researched. If this assumption changes to multiple realities then a researcher must represent the multiple realities revealed by the participants, or tellers of the reality; this is the notion of credibility. In narrative inquiry, the multiple realities are at the core of the research methodology and rigour must be displayed in the research process to ensure credibility, this is known as verisimilitude (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The process of restorying the original narratives and a dual process of data analysis, through both the thematic analysis and critical events analysis, was designed to ensure rigour in my research approach.

In quantitative research, external validity refers to the ability to generalise from the sample of the study into the larger population (Payton, 1979). In qualitative research this is referred to as transferability and the criterion is addressed when the findings fit into contexts outside the research situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They also argued that if the researcher of the original study presents sufficient descriptive data to allow for a comparison then they have addressed issues pertaining to transferability. Riessman (2008) suggested a pragmatic view to test the external validity of narrative inquiry. She proposed that narrative inquiry is a form of case-centred research and therefore the following question should be asked. Does a piece of narrative become a basis for others' work? (Riessman, 2008). My Student Group Experience Model was developed through the critique of cross-disciplinary models, outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. The model could be utilised in other research in higher education settings.

In quantitative research, reliability is referred to as stability and consistency of the data (Webster & Mertova, 2007) or dependability (Schwandt et al., 2007). This is the third criterion of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A person might not be completely representative of a group but their experience is considered important. An audit strategy that considers this process is one that is ongoing throughout the research process and includes aspects such as data, research findings, interpretations and recommendations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In narrative inquiry, this is referred to as apparency and one criteria to ensure rigour is through access. As Webster and Mertova (2007, p. 94) stated, access can be viewed in two ways:

1. access by readers of the study to the participants, their cultural context and the process of construction of knowledge; and
2. the availability and representation of the data.

My research was undertaken in an Anglo-western university in which the framework under scrutiny was very much based in Anglo-western teaching practices. The participants' in my research were both Australian domestic and Chinese international students, a sense of grouping I was never really comfortable with. The data is presented using an audit trail, coding from the restoried interview transcripts. The structure of my research process will now be outlined.

4.5.3 Research structure

The narrative case study method gains rich layers of information and understanding about the participants' experiences and seeks out the meanings in those experiences (Etherington & Bridges, 2011). A case study investigates a phenomenon in a real world context and it is a research method commonly used in education when the research focus is attempting to understand a social phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Flyvbjerg (2006) suggested case studies as an appropriate method for studies on human learning. The structure of both the context and setting (Webster & Mertova, 2007) is required to combine, forming part of the research process in narrative. A narrative case study approach may, as with Etherington and Bridges' (2011) study, view the context and setting in one geographical place and the individual stories as cases. My research was conducted at one university in Australia, with Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students.

Ethical standards for research are well documented (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Formal ethics approval was granted for my research by the University's Ethics Committee. This approval is attached as Appendix 8. Participants' rights to anonymity and confidentiality are an issue for

researchers to address (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The identity of my participants was kept confidential by the use of pseudonyms that were attached to both the transcripts and the restored interviews. The original data is kept in a locked cabinet, which only my supervisors and I have access to and will be destroyed after seven years in line with the requirements of the HREC ethics approval. First contact was made with the lecturers by way of a letter regarding the research (attached as Appendix 2) in order to access the students.

4.6 Research negotiation

The central themes in narrative inquiry are human-centredness and the complexity of the human experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A number of studies have critiqued the tendency of qualitative researchers to “take the participant at their word” (Block, 2000, p. 757), without problematising the interview process or the roles of participant and researcher in the interview (Pavelenko, 2007; Richards, 2009). The interview process involves complex power relations reflecting that the researcher has control over the way information is produced in the interview, and how it will be used (Briggs, 2007). Webster and Mertova (2007) described this as negotiation, and it is represented in the pathways of communication between the researcher, participants and the research context.

4.6.1 Role of the researcher

Gudmundsdottir (1996) suggested narrative is the tool of practitioners to make sense of experience and to arrange these experiences into a body of practical knowledge. This was my aim, to develop my own teaching practice. I recognised that my role as a lecturer, researching in my own institution, may have presented problems for my research. I considered this in terms of both my status as the researcher and my role in the interview process. Webster and Mertova (2007) described these relationships as power relationships, which involve a chain of authority and various practices adopted or exhibited in the research context and can have substantial influence on the research process. It was important for my research that no students interviewed had ever been taught by me, or indeed be aware that, at the time, I was teaching in the business school. The family decision was made for me to take time off from working in the business school and my office was moved to another school within the university under the supervision of my principal supervisor, where I remained for two years.

Language and cultural background were also sources of power relationships. I am a native speaker of English, but my international case study group were non-native speakers of English, from mainland China. Whilst, “researchers travelling among cultures can make direct cross-cultural comparisons” (Cortazzi & Jin, 2009, p. 39), as Cortazzi (1993, pp. 102-103) discussed, “the structure and function of narrative stories can vary enormously across cultures”. I was again concerned about my status as the researcher as both a lecturer and a native speaker of English. I felt my initiative to leave the business school would assist in any power relationships based on my lecturer status, but I was asking myself constantly the question ‘how do I represent the voices of the narratives authentically?’ Cortazzi and Jin (2009) noted the way in which East Asian speakers, particularly Chinese speakers, use a cultural trend of establishing identity in narratives. Narrative researchers need to think about their own cultural expectations in the interview and analysis process (Cortazzi & Jin, 2009).

Webb (2009) suggested the need to make transparent the cross-cultural research process and the impact of cultural differences in cross-cultural research. He suggested the way to address this is by being aware of one’s own culture and to take into account the cultural expectations of participants. My position differed from all of my participants in terms of age and culture. I immersed myself in learning about Chinese cultural expectations, in particular, the nature of *quanxi* and the impact of the cultivation of relationships.

I had been concerned about the power relationships, without thinking about caring relationships. Caring relationships in the research context are those which involve “elements of collegiality, community and collaboration or are valued by those participating in the research” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 107). As mentioned above, there were important power relations which included differences in age, language, nationality, gender and academic experience, yet during the interview process the participants appeared to become increasingly relaxed. It would be naïve to suggest they felt completely unconstrained by the interview process. However, there was positive evidence that the relationship forged, particularly with some of the Chinese international students, reflecting genuine feelings of trust and a caring relationship. For example, by the time I had finished the third interview, all three interviewed Chinese students and I were regularly meeting and I encouraged all three to join a student group I was involved in.

4.6.2 Role of the teller

My exploratory research initially involved purposeful sampling as the intentional strategy of selecting individuals was anticipated as appropriate. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) advocated a purposeful sample of more than ten and fewer than twenty. A sample of this size was deemed appropriate as the level of information could become too large and case orientated (Sandelowski, 1995). The sampling approach reflected the intent of my narrative study to provide an in-depth exploration of the research problem, in line with Patton (2002). The sample selected was Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate university students completing a bachelor degree in business or business related programs, during their third year of study. The criteria of my sample were as follows:

1. They were a full-time, on campus, undergraduate student.
2. They were in their third year of study at a tertiary institution.
3. They were completing a business or business-related degree.
4. I had not taught any of the students prior to the interview.
5. During the course of their degree the student had been involved in some level of group work activity that had involved an assessable component.
6. The sample was divided into sub-sample groups of:
 - a) Domestically enrolled undergraduate business students
 - b) Internationally enrolled undergraduate business students from mainland China.

From the criteria, a total of twelve participants were interviewed, six Australian domestic and six Chinese international students. Participants are viewed as knowledgeable individuals who are actively engaged in creating meaning during the interview process when the interview is regarded as a social process (Talmy, 2010). The researcher's task is not one of 'prospecting' for the true facts but rather centres on creating an atmosphere in which the participants feel comfortable about sharing their experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). The accounts are interesting not only for what they contain but also how they are developed in collaboration with my questions and their responses.

The conversations that occurred during the interview were considered to be "situationally contingent and discursively co-constructed" (Talmy, 2010, p. 132). Indeed, it is even possible that some of the participants might have exploited the interview for their own purposes, such as an opportunity to speak English, or as a platform to express their discontent with group experiences.

The students were asked to ‘tell the story’ of their experiences of being in group work activities since being at university in Australia. Students were encouraged to talk about more than one experience if they wanted. All students were encouraged to discuss their experiences in their own way, in terms of a positive or negative experience. The interview process is further explained in section 4.8.

4.7 Research risks

Trustworthiness in narrative inquiry cannot be assessed without consideration of research risks, the third constituent of narrative. Webster and Mertova (2007) referred to these risks as intersubjectivity, smoothing and external constraints. Whilst smoothing and intersubjectivity are intrinsic risks associated with narrative inquiry, external constraints are extrinsic (Webster & Mertova, 2007). External constraints and smoothing, are risks associated with cross-cultural research (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Intersubjectivity is the “easy slipping into a commitment to the whole narrative plot and the researcher’s role in it without any appropriate reflection and analysis” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 108-109). The use of a project log for reflection and a dual analysis process, through a thematic analysis and the critical events analysis, were procedures put in place in my research to establish integrity and trustworthiness. Intersubjectivity was also addressed by internal institutional collaboration within the university and research supervision procedures.

Smoothing is the “tendency to invoke a positive result regardless of the indications of the data” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 109). The thematic analysis was conducted to analyse reoccurring themes within the data. A critical events analysis was then conducted using the approach outlined by Webster and Mertova (2007). This approach was utilised to not only burrow into the process events highlighted by the participants but to ensure the risks associated with smoothing were alleviated by analysis of ‘other events’. This analysis is explained in section 4.9.2.

Cortazzi and Jin (2009) identified the problems associated with researching across cultures as obtaining and understanding the interpretations between cultures as these can vary substantially, particularly when the researcher’s culture is contextually in the phenomena being researched. As a native speaking Australian, ensuring the meaning given by the participants from mainland China was paramount. This created strong external constraints in the research. Procedures implemented in my research process included a follow-up meeting and discussion. Students were also encouraged to bring along a friend if they felt they could not portray meaning in their interview.

One student from mainland China arrived at the interview with a friend, who remained mostly silent during the interview. She also came to the follow-up meeting and was more helpful in ensuring the transcribed account was accurate. Another Chinese international student offered to assist in the interview process, if needed.

4.8 Interview process

After consideration of research risks, there were a number of issues I wanted to ensure I addressed given my inexperience with narrative inquiry. Given the critical nature of the relationship of myself with the research and participants, I wanted to practise my interview technique with both Australian domestic and Chinese international participants, through the procedures I had put in place.

4.8.1 Pilot interviews

Pilot studies are a crucial element of good research design (Teijilingen & Hundley, 2001). The pilot study is a stage of the research in which a small amount of data is collected to ensure the procedure in the method of data collection is satisfactory to the intent of the study and to identify any possible problems (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Holloway (1997) also suggested pilot interviews can be conducted if the researcher lacks confidence in the research technique, particularly in interviewing. I decided I would conduct pilot interviews to practise my technique.

After each interview was completed I spent time reflecting on the interview and writing my thoughts into my project log. I wanted my thoughts and the immediate interpretations from the stories of the participants to be recorded because narratives we collect and interpret have shifting meanings over time (Riessman, 2008).

A broad interview prompt schedule was designed to enable me to direct if needed towards areas of issues for the research without interfering in the narrative of the participants. Six students were recruited through lecturers currently teaching undergraduate business units; three of these students were domestic students in their third year of university study. The other three students were international students from mainland China in their third year of study but their first year studying abroad. The students were not told that these interviews were a pilot study, to ensure they were treated the same as participants from the main part of the study.

Each of the six participants adhered to my sampling criteria. I felt that the nature of the interview should be casual and time needed to be taken before the interview to 'have a chat'. I was aware the trustworthiness of my research could be affected by the development of relationships with my participants. For each of the interviews I spent time asking the students about their homes and making general conversation. I allocated approximately one hour for each participant's interview. I did not want a time limit to reduce the quality of data, so some interviews went for over two hours. Length of interviews and time taken to build a relationship is critical to developing credibility in qualitative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I wanted each student to privilege the lived story of their experience to the fullest extent.

The procedural process for my research technique was ensuring place and time for the participant (Riessman, 2008). A colleague who had experience in narrative interviewing suggested participants find it easier to discuss specific times and focusing them on a particular experiences helps. To ensure they were only discussing group work experiences at university, the first question asked was, 'Tell me the story of why you came to University' to bring them into their present experiences. I then asked them to 'Tell me about your experiences with group work at university'. It was also important in my role as the interviewer to ensure that with each part of the story the participant was not interrupted before they had finished their story. As individuals tended to stop and think about the story as it unfolded, and went back and forward in their recount of time, it was important to ensure all events be included and noted in my research project log. Each student was encouraged to discuss more than one experience with group work and to begin with how they felt about it in positive or negative terms.

Each interview was recorded as Riessman (2008) suggested. Given the participants were usually prompted by questions framed by me, it was important that my contributions to the conversation were also recorded. The conversation began briefly by going over the printed copy of the Information Sheet for Participants and the Consent Form for Participants (Appendix 6). I explained to participants they would be quoted in the research, but their identity would remain confidential as any quotes would use pseudonyms. They were also reminded they could ask to stop the interview at any stage, or ask for the recorder to be turned off if they felt the discussion was sensitive.

After each individual interview my project log was kept and updated by me, with my thoughts on the interview process, the participant, and any reflections on the experience. The use of a project log and diary form part of my reflexive analysis to ensure trustworthiness in my research (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985). My reflections from the project log once the six interviews were completed is below:

My decision to conduct practice interviews has been a good one. Despite my concerns I am delighted in how active my role is in this process. My empathetic responses to their experiences and my willingness to share information appears to have helped me develop a good rapport with all six participants. (Project Log, December 2010)

At the end of each of the interviews, I found myself and the participant talking about different aspects of life aside from being an undergraduate student. The Chinese students in particular compared their lives in Australia and discussed their home life in China. At the end of my first interview we discussed how the student found it difficult to practise listening and speaking English with a native speaker. I offered my services; we met once a week for coffee and only spoke in English. Although initially my sample selection was purposeful, some of the Chinese international students who participated in my research were encouraged to do so from the first student I interviewed, which reflected a snowball sampling approach (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005).

Once the interviews were completed and recorded, they were transcribed. To ensure the criteria of my research was being met, the interview transcripts were returned to each of the participants for verification. Once these transcripts were approved by the participants, they were then returned to me. When the transcripts were finished I spent time going over each of the transcripts to ensure the meaning was correct and if they had anything to add. Once this occurred I began the process of restorying each of these. I then met with each of the six participants again, and discussed their story and how I had narrated it, to ensure these experiences of group work were given meaning by them.

The nature of the relationship between myself and the students appeared to go beyond the traditional researcher-subject relationship. My role during the interview process consisted of asking questions, seeking clarification and when invited by the student to do so, sharing personal experience. Another indication that the participants viewed the interviews as more than an opportunity for me to gather data, was that three of the participants commented once the interview was completed that they had enjoyed the interview process and one suggested it had been the first opportunity she had for reflection on her own role in group work activities.

The question then arose if the data I had collected in the six interviews could be used as part of the main research. Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) advocated the use of pilot tests as the data may be

of value. They noted that this should only occur if the data collection is not used to test a hypothesis or the research tool is modified. In consultation with my supervisors, it was decided that as no procedure changes in the research process would occur, the pilot study would form part of the data for my main research.

4.8.2 Continued interview process

A further six interviews of undergraduate business students were conducted. The same procedure was followed as in the pilot study. In total twelve interviews were conducted. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and again returned to the participant for clarification. When the interviews were approved and returned, I restored the interviews and returned them again for verification as I had done in the pilot interview process. All of the participants involved were happy to meet again and go over their transcript. I asked the participants if I could contact them via email if I had any further questions in regards to their meaning in the transcripts. Each were happy for me to do so.

4.9 Research analysis

With the transcripts entered into NVivo (a thematic data analysis software program), I began to analyse the data. To ensure that data analysis procedures would also show themes emerging from the data, and rigour in the analysis, I sought the assistance of a well-known qualitative researcher familiar with analysis using NVivo. This assisted in the process, particularly in keeping the contextual data organised which I reflected upon during my data analysis process. This allowed me to frame the three contexts I had identified in my Student Group Experience Model as well as display the story of the experience through the process events, reflected in their stories. The following discussion outlines the two data analysis approaches employed in my research.

4.9.1 Thematic analysis

A strategy to ensure credibility in qualitative data is the importance of identifying recurring patterns in data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A thematic analysis is the most common method of narrative analysis used in applied settings (Riessman, 2008). It is also the suggested form of analysis for narrative 'first timers'. I employed a thematic narrative tradition to guide my data analysis with each of the twelve interviews. A thematic narrative analysis differs from traditional qualitative research as there is a focus on keeping the story intact for interpretative purposes (Cain, 1991; Ewick & Silbey, 2003; Riessman, 2008). This means that each case is important as it

is the life story or the story of an experience. Using theory to identify common themes or elements across cases has a long history in qualitative research; the subtle difference with narrative thematic analysis is preserving the story of each participant (Riessman, 2008). Using Riessman’s approach, I considered both the Ewick and Silbey (2003) and Cain (1991) approaches as follows:

Table 4.2: Comparison of approaches for consideration of thematic analysis: (Adapted from Riessman, 2008).

	Ewick & Silbey (2003)	Cain (1991)	My research
Definition of narrative	Bounded segment of interview text about an incident	Life story of the speaker or writer	Broadly bounded segment of interview text about group work
How data were represented: attention to form and language	Brief interview excerpts: cleaned up speech	As written documents; reconstructed from memory; summaries of interviews	‘Restoryed’ brief interview excerpts: some cleaned up speech
Unit of analysis focus	Acts of resistance reported in personal narrative	The narrative primarily (recurrent episodes across narratives); the narrator second	Students’ experiences of group work reported in personal narrative, the primary focus, the narrator second.
Attention to contexts	Local: minimal Societal: considerable	Local: minimal Societal: considerable	Local: minimal Societal: considerable

The definition of the narrative defines the unit of analysis, ranging from entire life biographies to segments of a single incident (Riessman, 2008). In Ewick and Sibley (2003), the definition of their narrative was bounded or framed tightly around the incident they were researching, not large biographical accounts as with Cain (1991). Ewick and Sibley’s (2003) approach appeared to align more closely with my research objectives. I felt my research should allow for the narratives to be bounded less tightly. This allowed students to discuss their experiences such as involvement in lectures or other information they wished to impart which influenced their group work experiences and displayed in the context factors of my Student Group Experience Model.

The next part of the framework for consideration describes the way in which the data are represented (Riessman, 2008). Both Ewick and Sibley (2003) and Cain (1991), presented the data to preserve the teller’s story, Ewick and Sibley (2003) utilised brief excerpts with cleaned up

speech. Cain (1991) on the other hand, presented large written documents from biographic accounts, due to the nature of the data. Initially, in my research, the restoried interviews were presented in full, to preserve the story with some cleaned up speech.

The unit of analysis focus is distinct within individual research (Riessman, 2008). Ewick and Sibley's (2003) primary interest was that of generating thematic categories, with the stories remaining intact. Their work used theory as a resource and linked the actions individuals engage in, during every day events, in their case, insignificant events which involved resistance. Cain (1991), also investigated themes across stories. She presented the data as long narrative interviews, and she ended up with a large amount of data which she presented as synopses of the interviews in the appendix. In my research, the analysis focus is the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students in group work and the thematic summaries or synopses are presented in Appendix 7. The contextual information is based on the local audience or the societal focus, making connections with larger social structures such as inequalities or relationships (Riessman, 2008). The primary interest is generating themes which will assist in developing understanding of the contextual factors required to foster teamwork skills, in the process events and their connection to the context factors.

Boje (2001) discusses the risks associated with attempting to code and analyse data in the same way as grounded theory. He suggested analysing the data in a framework based on models and theories as a method of thematic analysis. As such, an analysis was based on the conceptual framework I developed: the Student Group Experience Model. In line with the thematic approach, I wanted to preserve each individual story told to me by the students, but I also needed to frame the context factors and the process events, identified in the Student Group Experience Model. The interviews were firstly separated into positive and negative experiences, in line with the way the students were asked to categorise their experiences in the interviews. By using the model, themes that emerged in the stories were highlighted. To give meaning to the stories and the framework, direct quotations which allow the reader to examine the language and give context to the stories were used. As I analysed my data, I constantly referred to my project log. I would consult these notes in conjunction with reading the restoried transcripts as well as listening again to the original interview transcripts. This became part of my analytical process and thematic analysis. With twelve interviews preserved and coded, there was a great deal of data. Themes had emerged which assisted in answering my sub-question: "what have been Australian domestic and Chinese international students experiences with group work?" Analysis of the themes through my Student

Group Experience Model, highlighted process events and context factors to answer my second research sub-question: “what are the critical context and process event factors influencing these experiences?” Reflecting on the research sub-questions and the research question, I felt that whilst the thematic analysis would answer these 2 research sub-questions in terms of what significant themes emerged, the inter-relationship between these themes would not be fully retold in this type of analysis. As Mello (2002, p. 233) states: “Organizing, analysing and discovering theoretical meanings from storied data can be challenging due to the nature of the narrative because, like qualitative inquiry itself, it is iterative and evolutionary”.

I sought to analyse these themes further to understand how significant factors, brought to light in the thematic analysis, could be confirmed through the occurrence of related events, and go beyond the surface themes which had emerged. This would assist in answering the third research sub-question: “how do critical events impact on students’ ability to develop teamwork skills?”

4.9.2 Critical events approach

I reflected on the development of my Student Group Experience Model and the themes that had emerged during the thematic analysis. I noted that significant events which students had reflected upon, occurred in their telling of the stories during the process phase of group experience; I had called these ‘process events’ in the model. I considered Webster and Mertova’s (2007) use of critical event narrative analysis as a framework for burrowing further into the process events and for my data presentation. This approach to narrative is event driven and captures the critical events contained within the stories of experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In response to the need for the reader to have insight into the critical events of the student’s experience, a sketch or framework of process events was one way to contextualise the stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). With my thematic analysis completed, I approached my data analysis again, focusing on the critical events, as told by the story-teller, with my research sub-question in mind.

An event is labelled critical if it impacts on the performance of the story-teller, is a change experience, and can be positive or negative in the way the event impacts the story-teller (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Critical events may not be extraordinary but have a profound impact on the story-teller. While narrative uses scene and plot, this type of analysis focuses on the place and event (Webster & Mertova, 2007). They used this approach for professional practice for lecturers and noted that a critical event is an unplanned and unstructured event that significantly impacts on practice. Understanding the critical events the participants’ identify allows for reflection on my

past teaching practice and also future development in fostering teamwork skills in Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. The data are presented in the following chapter using both the thematic analysis and critical events approach.

4.10 Overview of data presentation

The data is presented in the following two chapters. Chapter 5 displays the students' stories in the thematic analysis. Chapter 6 exhibits the critical events analysis. All twelve interviews were thematically analysed by a vertical reading of the restoried interviews. These stories were categorised and analysed based on the students' perception of the group work experience, either positive or negative. The following table (Table 4.3), outlines the participants involved in my research. The table shows each of the participants and how they categorised their experiences.

Table 4.3: Outline of categorised experiences

Participants Pseudonym	Cultural Background	Positive Experience	Negative Experience
Amber	Australian		1
Cooper	Australian		1
Hayley	Australian		1
Jiao	Chinese	1	
Laura	Australian		1
Lian	Chinese	1	
Melanie	Australian		1
Nadia	Australian	1	1
Ning	Chinese		1
Xiu	Chinese	1	1
Wen	Chinese	1	
Zhen	Chinese	1	

The thematic analysis was conducted on all of the participants' interviews in a case-centred way to identify recurring patterns (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which also allowed for the preservation of the story (Ewick & Silbey, 2003). This analysis showed emerging themes in the process phase shown in my Student Group Experience Model as process loss and process gain events. A focus of narrative is keeping the story intact for interpretative purposes. The thematic analysis had created a large analysis, which could not be fully displayed within the requirements of this thesis.

Two interviews were chosen to show a representative sample. These two interviews were chosen as the participants were reflective of the sample in two ways. Firstly, the selection displays one Australian domestic student and one Chinese international student. Secondly, both of these students described two group experiences, one positive and one negative. The stories are depicted in a narrative summary based around my Student Group Experience Model to enable deeper exploration of the lived experiences of the participants. The remaining ten stories are depicted in table form based on the students' representations of a positive or negative experience. This assists in the thematic analysis by way of identifying points where each individual's account or story converges, as well as any points where they may diverge. This is to develop trustworthiness in the presentation of the data (Riessman, 2008).

As Webster and Mertova's (2007) framework enables, I wanted to further 'burrow' into the data and identify process events which had influenced either positively or negatively on the way in which the students' engaged in group work activities. The critical events analysis is presented in line with Webster and Mertova's (2007) critical, like and other representation. The critical events analysis highlights the major process event which impacted on the students' experience.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the ontological and epistemological perspective framing my research. That is, the students construct meaning as they engage in the group work situation. This epistemological position developed the theoretical perspective of social constructivism which gave basis to distinguishing the methodology for my research. This chapter also discussed the research methods I employed to conduct, analyse and present my data based on my methodology. The theoretical framework I developed from Chapter 3, the Student Group Experience Model, was used to guide my interviews, and as a framework for the thematic analysis employed. This guided my narrative study to develop understanding of the experiences of undergraduate business students engaging in group work. The model allowed me to build on my three sub-questions which were developed out of the literature. These sub-questions assisted in answering my research question "How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?" The following chapter presents data from the thematic analysis and the critical events analysis.

CHAPTER 5: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

...like a chain with just one link broken, teamwork deteriorates if even a single dysfunction is allowed to flourish. (Lencioni, 2012, p. 189).

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodology and methods employed in my research. The data presentation for the two analysis chapters was briefly outlined. Data were collected from twelve participants, six of these participants were Australian domestic undergraduate business students, and six were Chinese international undergraduate business students. Each student was asked to tell more than one story of their experience of group work. All students were encouraged to discuss their experiences in their own way, in terms of a positive or negative experience. This chapter presents the thematic data analysis of the data collected. The restoried data collected from the twelve interviews was analysed using thematic case-centred data in line with Ewick and Silbey's (2003) approach.

The thematic analysis was conducted on all of the participants' interviews. This was done in a case-centred way to identify recurring patterns. The analysis showed emerging themes in the context factors and process events shown in my Student Group Experience Model. Two interviews are depicted in this chapter as a representative sample. As discussed in Chapter 4, these two interviews were chosen as the participants' were reflective of the sample in two ways. First, the selection displays one Australian domestic student and one Chinese international student. Second, both of these students described two group experiences, one positive and one negative.

The stories are depicted in a narrative summary based around the Student Group Experience Model to enable deeper exploration of the lived experiences of the participants. The remaining ten stories are depicted in table form based on the students' representation of a positive or negative experience. Three of these are displayed in the critical events analysis in Chapter 6, the remaining seven tables are shown in Appendix 7.

5.2 Thematic data presentation

Presenting narrative data is complex (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In order to preserve the integrity of the individuals' stories, the reader is introduced to the participants of the selected narratives in an introduction, which includes a brief description of the demographics of the individual, the context in which they came to be studying at university, the degree they are studying and the reasons they are studying the particular degree. The focus is on their individual experience; what happened and how these experiences made them feel. All statements are supported by direct quotations from the interviews using the participant's own words. Each of these quotations is written in italics, followed by the pseudonym of the participant. These restoried narratives have been reproduced as they were narrated by the participants and capture the essence of the events. Given the reconstructive nature of memories, the researcher cannot determine whether or not they are real facts in the events or reconstructed by the participants from the memory of these events (Cotterall, 2011). Given that the participants are recounting events from relatively recent times, the participants seemed convinced they were describing events that had actually happened to them in reality.

Rae (2005) advocated the use of models in narrative inquiry. The model developed in his research was used to interpret the case data, extract themes and making sense of individual's story. The Student Group Experience Model, developed as a conceptual framework in Chapter 3 and reproduced in Figure 5.1, provided a context for interpreting the data and the relationship between concepts in my research. What 'conditions were in place' and how the group interacts based on this will impact on what the outcomes for the group are. This assists in understanding the contextual factors that help or hinder in group work situations, which may or may not assist students to develop teamwork skills. The model is presented as three 'conditions in place' when students come together: the student themselves (student context), the group about which they narrate their experience (group context), and the contextual factors in which the group operates (teaching context). These contextual factors come together and are unfolded through the narratives of the students. The narratives are then considered in terms of process events which students highlighted within their narrative. The positive process events are above the narrative arrow, the negative events below the narrative arrow. These are also analysed through the Student Group Experience Model and discussed using terms imported into the model from the literature. This includes approach to learning (Biggs, 2003b) and inertia (Gersick, 1988). The students' perspective of the internal characteristics which define the differences between a group and a team

are also incorporated. It is acknowledged that the data is very much a representation of one individual's experience in the group work situation.

The model provided a framework for me to analyse and tell the narratives as they happened from beginning to end, opening inflection points to highlight the reasons the experiences were positive or negative ones. It also assisted in giving me a conceptual framework with which to analyse the participants' stories by retelling or 'restorying' them to makes sense (e.g. chronology, plot) (Creswell, 2007). The narrative also contains the story of the process itself given the student, group and teaching 'conditions in place' contexts. The presentation of these stories illuminates process events that occurred for students involved in group work. Whilst this model describes areas for the contextual frames and the story to be explored, it is not a tool to stop the flow of the story.

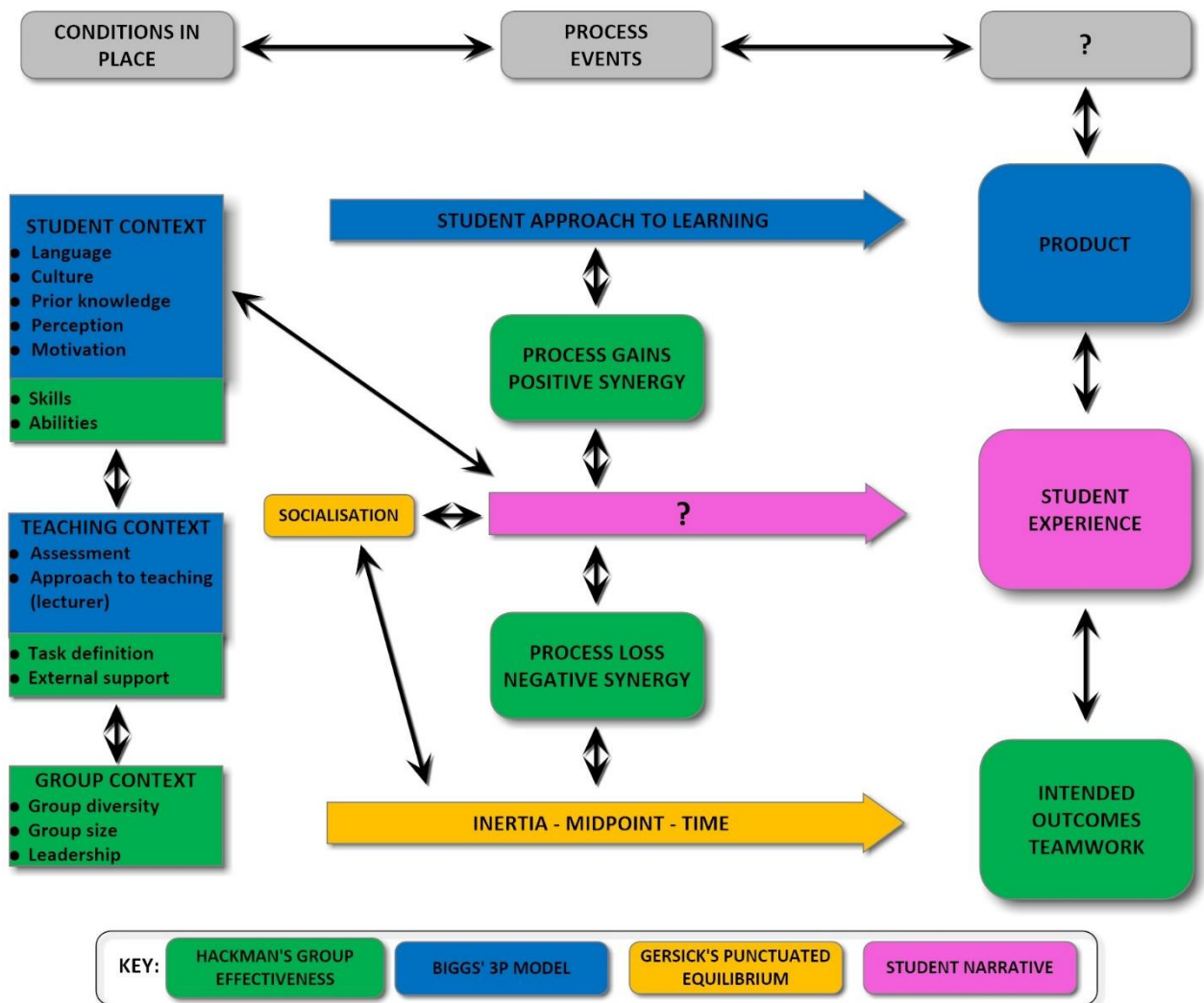


Figure 5.1: Student Group Experience Model (SGE)

Each individual's story is important in the telling; therefore, a model for each story is represented individually. To apply a conditions-focused approach, the analysis was broken down into two sections, using my Student Group Experience Model as a framework. The first section shows the process events identified in both the positive or negative experiences. The second section highlights the conditions which were present in both the positive and negative experiences.

5.3 Data analysis of positive experiences

As discussed in Chapter 4, the students were asked to categorise the experience into a positive or negative experience. The full table with the twelve participants was displayed in the previous chapter (in Table 4.3). The participants who categorised their experience as positive are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Positive group experiences

Participants Pseudonym	Cultural Background
Jiao	Chinese
Lian	Chinese
Nadia	Australian
Xiu	Chinese
Wen	Chinese
Zhen	Chinese

The thematic analysis asks the question of 'what' themes are occurring. The restoried data collected from the interviews was analysed using thematic case-centred data in line with Ewick and Silbey's (2003) approach. Once the thematic analysis was conducted on all of the participant's interviews in a case-centred way to identify recurring patterns, the analysis showed emerging themes in the process phase shown in my Student Group Experience Model as process loss and process gain events. For illustrative purposes, two of these interviews are presented as a representative sample, with the remaining interviews included in thematic tables.

5.4 Australian domestic students positive experiences

The following section displays the thematic analysis of one Australian domestic undergraduate business student. Nadia was the only Australian domestic student to categorise a positive experience. Nadia also reported a negative experience, which is displayed in Section 5.7.1. Her

interview is presented in the thematic analysis, but contains no comparative interviews to add to the analysis.

5.4.1 Nadia's story

Nadia is a 22-year-old female student. She is enrolled as an Australian domestic student. Nadia is currently in the third year of her five year combined Bachelor of Business/Laws degree. Her business major in the degree is management. Her native language is English and the only language spoken at home. Nadia came to university to study to get a job, and chose a regional university because she had lived in the town as a child and knew people. Since being at university she has involved herself in many student activities. She describes two separate scenarios involving group work whilst she has been at university, one positive and one negative.

Nadia had volunteered to be interviewed when a lecturer had asked the students in her tutorial if they would like to be part of a study on group work and the development of teamwork skills. Nadia was a very outgoing young woman. She liked to be involved in all aspects of university life.

I'm in a leadership position at college and a member of a number of student organisations. I like getting involved and meeting new people. [Nadia]

She said university had offered her far more than just an academic degree and felt it had been to her benefit to be involved in any opportunity that came her way. We moved to discuss her involvement in academic life at university. I asked her to describe herself and what she thought about her academic ability.

I'm a fairly dedicated student, I always go to lectures and I like to get good grades. [Nadia]

As Biggs and Tang (2011) noted, prior declarative knowledge through lectures can form a firm foundation for functioning knowledge in group work and assist in the abilities of the student. This suggested that Nadia would apply a deep approach to her learning.

I see the task and I see what we have to achieve and I always get there. Like I would never do anything halfway or incomplete, so I guess that's one thing. And I suppose leadership to a certain extent. And I'm also not an aggressive person and so if I disagree with

something I'm not likely to cause a fight, so I suppose I facilitate relationships in that respect as well. [Nadia]

We then moved to discuss group work activities she had been involved with. She stated she had had a number of group experiences at university, some positive and some negative. She then said she had not been involved in any group work with international students and said:

I have seen other people in classes that had international students in their groups that really struggled with the communication aspect, but me, not a single time have I been in a diverse group. [Nadia]

5.4.2 Group context

Having never been involved with a heterogeneous group has not allowed Nadia to collaborate with international students. This in itself was interesting, given she was in her third year at university. She said she could talk about two of her experiences, I asked her to begin with her positive experience.

The first marketing unit that I did group work, and that was a reasonably positive experience. We got to select our own groups and I knew everybody in the group, we were all at college together and I knew that all of them had a very good work ethic and dedicated to getting a high mark. So we worked really well together; it was effective, there was no... I don't think there was any negative about that experience in itself. [Nadia]

The groups were self-allocating and she already had a relationship with the individuals who made up the group. Nadia's perception of the experience suggested the group worked collaboratively and had a goal focus, which is reflected in their desire for a high grade.

From Nadia's perspective, the group showed a level of mutual accountability even before the group was given the task. Socialisation is a predictor of group effectiveness and Nadia's comment suggested the socialisation process had occurred prior to the group formation for this task. This also showed in the group context, from Nadia's perspective, the individual members had similar characteristics such as language, culture, motivation, and perception of their experience. We then discussed teaching context factors, beginning with the lecturer's approach.

The lecturer had a reasonably good rapport with the students, I don't think it was necessarily anything out of the ordinary. [Nadia]

In the teaching context, the lecturer's approach to teaching is considered an important predictor of group success and it would appear in Nadia's experience, she felt she had support from the lecturer. We then moved on to discuss the task and assessment for the group activity. Nadia commented:

The lecturer made the task really clear. The assessment was a group presentation, I thought it was going to be fun and it was. We actually had a good time developing our product. [Nadia]

Task definition is an important component of the teaching context and a clearly defined task allows students to avoid ambiguity and conflict. I asked her if she felt this had made a difference and she replied that it had. The group understood the task that was required of them and felt supported by the lecturer. I asked her how many people were in the group, she replied:

With the Marketing unit it was, this group was six. [Nadia]

She said she preferred groups to be smaller and this is in line with research on groups in that smaller groups function more effectively (Napier & Gershenfeld 2004). We then moved on to discuss the events which occurred during task processing.

5.4.3 Process events

Nadia said generally she enjoyed working with other people and this group had been fun. From Nadia's perspective the group appeared to have positive synergy. I then asked her to talk about how the group organised themselves and the task.

We sort of had roles I did, I guess less obvious because all of us had fairly similar personalities and knew each other very well so I suppose it wasn't as obvious that people were taking on certain roles. Everyone just did what they needed to. You never had to ask if someone had completed a task. [Nadia]

Again, this showed the importance of the socialisation process on creating positive synergy (Hackman, 1987) and inertia (Gersick, 1988), within a group. The interactions of the group were process gains for Nadia. She spoke about how everyone had been involved and the communication in the group had been collaborative and constructive, with mutual accountability. We then discussed leadership within the group. Nadia stated:

I guess our leader was defined pretty early on and then everybody else just ...I suppose didn't form a specific role, they just agreed and talked about how we were going to do things, then let the leader make the decisions and then did what they had to do. [Nadia]

The nature of leadership in this experience was emergent. The leadership within the group appeared to have a positive effect on the group and the communication within her group experience. Whilst it appeared the leader of the group was task focused, they also involved everyone in the decision-making process. I asked Nadia, what role she felt she had taken in the group. She smiled and replied:

I was probably...you know the leader. [Nadia]

It would appear that Nadia had emerged as the leader in the group. The process events for Nadia in this group experience had been positive. I asked her about the outcomes for the group. She said:

We received a really good grade for the assessment and I was really happy about that. [Nadia]

In Nadia's recount of her experience, the process events had been positive with process gains and, from her memory, no process losses, suggesting positive synergy within the group. Interestingly, Nadia had emerged as a leader in the group, as this is her version of the events, other members of the group may have reported the events differently. The product had not been the focus of her discussion up until later in the interview. I asked her if she felt the good experience had been effective and if she thought they had been a team. Nadia replied:

I guess we were a team, it was really good and not sure if it's necessarily effective (laughs) but it's an enjoyable experience and it worked. [Nadia]

The assessment for this task was based on the group product. The outcome for Nadia which was important to her was the grade, showed her assessment focus. Nadia appeared to be able to apply a deep approach to learning as she engaged in the task and with the group, as she did not have to negotiate group process. The outcomes for Nadia were also positive; the group also received a high grade for the assessment.

We got a HD and we worked together well. [Nadia]

From Nadia's perception the experience was positive because of the process gains. These included socialisation, communication and task processing. It would also appear, the leadership in this group experience was appropriate.

5.4.4 Nadia's group experience

The following discussion provides a summary of the thematic analysis of Nadia's positive experience. The discussion is broken down into two sections the conditions in which the group operated and the process events which Nadia identified in her story. The major themes which emerged are then discussed in terms of the characteristics of a team. The representation of Nadia's positive experience is shown below.

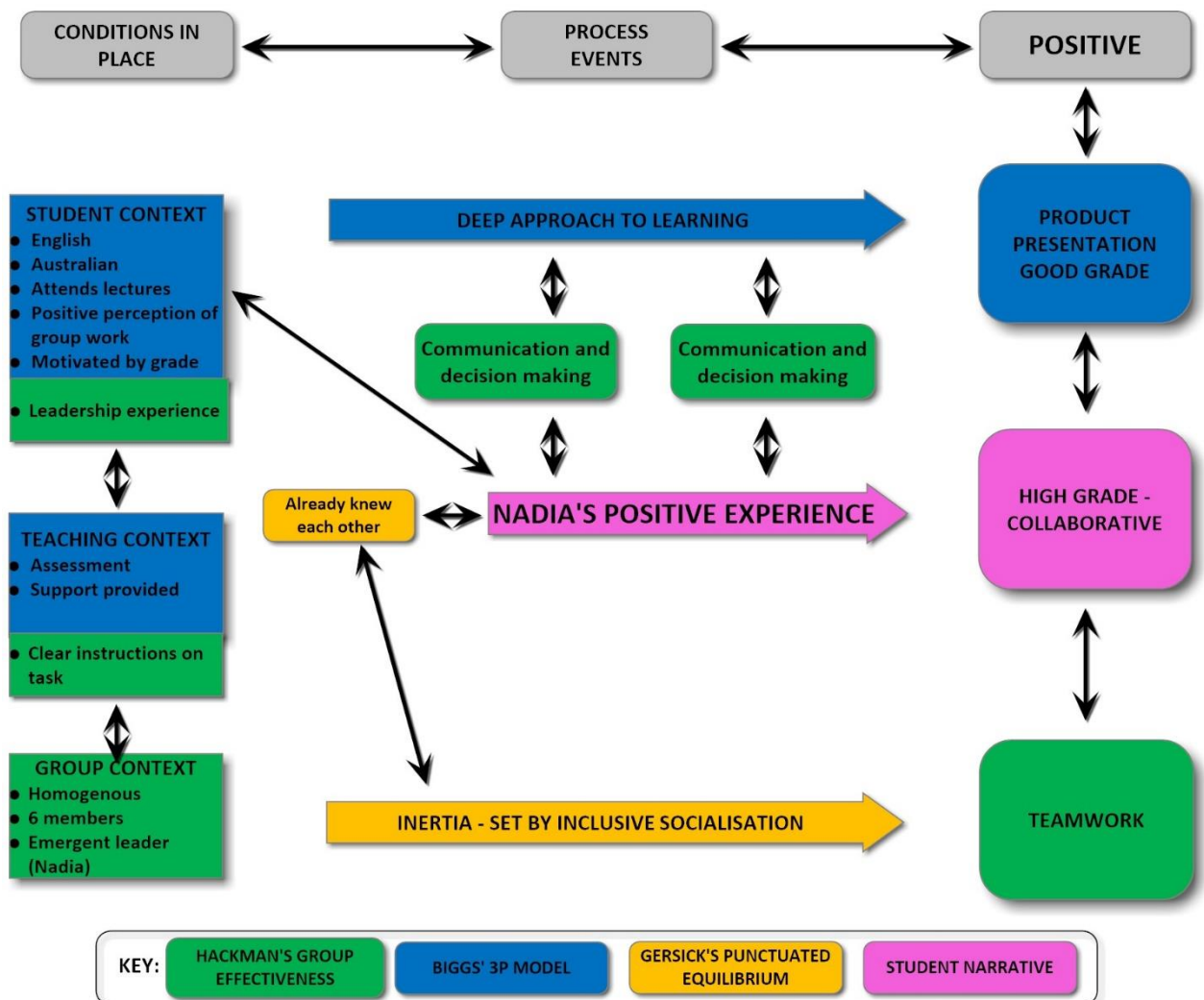


Figure 5.2: Nadia's positive group experience

5.4.4.1 Group context conditions

The conditions in which a group operates are shown in the Student Group Experience Model in three contexts; the student, teaching and group. Nadia is an Australian domestic undergraduate student who considers herself motivated and has a positive perception of working with others. Her story showed the task was clearly defined to the group, which was a presentation assessment task. She felt the group was supported by the lecturer. The group was a small homogenous group of Australian domestic students. The leadership was emergent and Nadia acknowledged this was her.

5.4.4.2 Process events

The major process event was the formation of the group. The group had been self-selecting and had already known each other prior to the group experience. From Nadia's perspective, the group displayed mutual accountability; they had come together for discussion, had a group decision-making process and a mutual plan. They worked collectively towards the goal of a good grade. Nadia felt the group had similar characteristics, such as motivation, skills and abilities. In Nadia's case she was able to engage with the group and the task as the process events showed more gains than losses. From Nadia's perspective, the group, given the socialisation process, positive communication, collaborative task processing and leadership, had not only gained a high grade and, according to Nadia, also appeared to display the characteristics of a team. On investigation from the 'background information sheet for participants' the unit in which Nadia's experience occurred had in the descriptor, teamwork skills.

5.5 Chinese international students positive experiences

As shown in Chapter 4, the interviews were categorised by the perception of the individual students' experience. A number of students categorised their experience as positive. Interestingly, the remaining positive experiences are all Chinese international students. The quotations by the students, describing the positive experiences, are shown below in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Reason for positive experience

STUDENT	Reason for positive experiences
Zhen	<i>We got a really good mark and I appreciated all the work he did</i>
Lian	<i>My performance in the group presentation and the grade. The people in my group said my performance was good, they were saying it was a success</i>
Wen	<i>My group was very kind and I liked working with them</i>
Jiao	<i>There wasn't many Chinese students and you got involved with lots of local students. I was really good because you got to practise your English and see how they work things out</i>

Each of these experiences show the student identified the experience as positive for a combination of reasons. The students received a good grade for the assessment task, the group was inclusive or in the case of Jiao, she was able to practise her English. Zhen's reasoning is interesting as she attributes her reason for the positive experience as someone else doing the work. Xiu, a Chinese international student's story is presented in the following section.

5.5.1 Xiu's story

Xiu is a 23-year-old female from southern China. She is fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese and English. She came to Australia to study by choice. She had completed one year of a degree in China and didn't want to complete it. Her parents suggested she look at studying overseas. A lecturer at her university helped her investigate her options and she considered Canada and Australia. She decided on Australia because of the weather. Xiu is the oldest of three children. She considered her family to have quite a high socio-economic status in China, but she stated this should not make a difference to how she approaches her study.

I found Xiu to have a very friendly and confident personality. She was very outgoing and had involved herself extensively in university life. Xiu discussed the process involved in applying for university and the English testing through the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

...I had to do IELTS test. At that time I didn't have any time to revise and I didn't even know how the system worked so I just did exam...so I will be able to come, but not worrying about my language skill because I am quite confident with my English. [Xiu]

Xiu, unlike the other Chinese international students I had interviewed, was studying a program of her own choosing. This suggested Xiu would be more intrinsically motivated and that she would be inclined to adopt a deep learning approach to her studies. Xiu was enjoying her program and experience in Australia; she was living at a residential college and found a lot of support from fellow students and the staff at the college.

Our college is amazing, and I've been encouraged a lot by the head of college. [Xiu]

Although Xiu felt quite confident in her ability to use English in social situations, she continued to take English lessons as she felt that she required more skills for academic activities.

I am quite confident with my English background. But ... in terms of doing university work, I need to do language so that the university believes that I have the ability to do it. Because of the teaching style, I think it involves a lot of group work. [Xiu]

From speaking with Xiu, it seemed she had a good level of 'basic interpersonal communicative skills', but she suggested she needed to improve her English skills for academic purposes, or as Cummins (1979) termed, her 'cognitive academic language proficiency'. Upon clarification, Xiu was concerned she would not be able to communicate well with Australian domestic students, particularly in group work, but she wanted to be involved to practice her English.

I asked her if she had been involved in many groups whilst at university. Xiu replied that she had and has had both positive and negative experiences with groups whilst at university and she wanted to discuss an example of each. Xiu's positive experience is reported here whilst her negative experience is reported in Section 5.7.5.

5.5.2 Group context

The first group experience described was very positive for Xiu. She smiled a lot during the retelling of this experience. Prior to the group assessment, lectures were conducted to cover the material required for the group assessment, with whole class discussions at the end of each session. As Biggs and Tang (2011) noted, prior declarative knowledge through lectures can form a

firm foundation for functioning knowledge in group work, and assist in the abilities of the student. Xiu said that this lecturer had been aware of her language difficulties and she said:

The lecturer tells me, Xiu, whenever you want to answer a question just give me a wink ... and the lecturer, she was real helpful every time, like, Oh, wait, wait, wait. Everyone, Xiu has something to say. That sort of encouraged me a lot. [Xiu]

This also showed the importance of the approach to teaching by the lecturer as a component of the teaching context. The lecturer had also encouraged the students to get to know one another through the class discussions prior to the formation of the groups and the setting of the task. As Gersick (1988, 1989) noted, the socialisation process sets the level of inertia in the group. In Xiu's experience this appeared to be a low-level of inertia. Hackman (1987) concluded that socialisation created positive synergy which is essential for group effectiveness and the development of teamwork skills. Xiu's comment suggested the socialisation process was considered important by the lecturer in the teaching context, and for Xiu, this was significant. She gave a further example of one of the events during one of the whole class discussions.

I was really willing to say something but I was waiting for a chance because Australian do this quite – very active in a lot of ways... especially when they're talking about something they're really interested in, so I was just waiting. And then suddenly the lecturer, she asked me, "Oh, would you like to say something Xiu?" and I actually said all of my ideas about culture differences and everything and all the students were really happy because they thought, "Oh, that's a very different perspective. It's our benefit to have you in the class. [Xiu]

This excerpt highlighted cultural differences in the interactions in the class influenced Xiu's confidence in being involved. The lecturer had acknowledged these differences and applied a teaching approach that was inclusive. The initial socialisation process also gave Xiu a positive expectation about the potential of being involved in the group activity and was a process gain. The approach the lecturer had taken in the teaching context had influencing factors in the group context. We discussed how the groups were formed and Xiu commented:

We were randomly put in a group. Even at the beginning I can feel the environment is quite different [from her negative experience] because they're friendly. [Xiu]

The consideration of the socialisation process by the lecturer had allowed the students time to get to know each other which created positive synergies in the cohort. I asked her if it was a small group and she replied there were five people in the group. She was the only Chinese international student in the group. The group was a heterogeneous group. Again, as Hackman (1987) noted the composition of the group is one of the most important aspects influencing effectiveness of a group. In line with research on group size, this group was potentially the optimum number (Hoegl, 2005; Marchant, 1999). Therefore, from the size and structure of this group, there was the potential to communicate and collaborate, more effectively than the larger group in Xiu's negative experience (discussed in Section 5.7.3). Xiu's comment appeared to agree:

In a group of five, you can rely on each other a bit. I think it's was a good number. [Xiu]

The group was a heterogeneous group with four domestic students and Xiu. Although Xiu felt this was a positive experience she noted:

If it's possible, don't put a single one [international student] in a group. I'm the only international student. So I don't mind but sometimes it's harder. [Xiu]

We then discussed what happened when the group first came together, she said:

The lecturer said, "Now, don't worry about the task yet; just get to know each other. It may help you to work well. [Xiu]

Again this showed the lecturer's consideration of the importance of the socialisation process as part of the teaching context and for Xiu a positive process event. Xiu noted that most of the students already knew her name and the group as a whole was positive about the group assessment. This shows that even prior to the process phase of the group, the low-level of inertia (Gersick, 1988) or synergy (Hackman, 1987) had already been set. The following themes emerged about positive experiences in the group context from the other participants.

Table 5.3: Lecturer support in positive experiences

STUDENT	Lecturer support in positive experiences
Zhen	<i>The lecturer was kind but he shouldn't have been. You need to treat Chinese students like kids, one-child policy has made them spoiled, in China they don't need to do anything</i>
Lian	<i>Sometimes I ask for help from the lecturer to understand what we are doing. she also helps the group</i>
Wen	<i>The tutor and the lecturer are very kind and helpful to the international students</i>
Jiao	<i>The lecturer and the tutor are different people. The tutor is more helpful</i>

In each of the experiences, the students found the lecturers kind and helpful. In Wen and Jiao's experience, the lecturer had not been the same person as the tutor during the group work experience. This shows the importance of the lecturer's approach in the teaching context. The other participants also discussed the assessment component of the group experience is shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Assessment in positive experiences

STUDENT	Assessment in positive experiences
Zhen	<i>It was a group presentation, but we did not present</i>
Lian	<i>We received a very good mark, I was happy</i>
Wen	<i>My group had responsibility and some very splendid ideas for the presentation, we got a good grade</i>
Jiao	<i>Our mark was good, because the students are all really nice and we pull things together</i>

In each of the positive experiences the assessment task had been a verbal presentation as the end product. In Zhen's case, she did not participate in the presentation as she felt her English language abilities were poor. In the other experiences, the Chinese international students all presented in

English. Jiao was very comfortable in doing this. For both Wen and Lian, it was their first presentation in English and they were excited and nervous before, but happy they had done it afterwards. In each of these experiences a leader had emerged in the group.

Table 5.5: Leadership in positive experiences

STUDENT	Leadership in positive experiences
Zhen	<i>The native speaker was the leader</i>
Lian	<i>The person who leads, lets everyone speak their ideas, when someone feels they cannot speak in the group, she asks their ideas</i>
Wen	<i>I know I need to practise my English, but sometimes I do not know what the native speakers mean. A girl in the group, she leads and she helps me</i>
Jiao	<i>A girl in the group was really, really good. She knows what we are going to do</i>

In Lian, Wen and Jiao’s positive experience, they felt the leader in the group had been supportive and helpful. They found the leader had helped them with both the task and communication issues in the group. Zhen, on the other hand said the leader was nice, but tended to do the work himself rather than helping her understand. The next section moves to the process events in Xiu’s story.

5.5.3 Process events

The process events for Xiu in this experience had, so far, been process gains. We moved on to talk about the socialisation process with the small group, once they had formed. Xiu noted:

In that group, everyone is so relaxed at the very beginning, you need to know each other and everyone talks about their experience in groups. And then ... my turn to introduce myself, they actually are quite interested because of my background and they are interested to listen to my perspective. So then I mentioned that bad experience. One girl said, “Oh, don’t worry, we don’t do that”. So I actually got really involved in that group.

[Xiu]

The internal characteristics of the group from Xiu’s perspective, appeared inclusive. The group took an extended time to get to know each other and reinforced the low-level of inertia within the group, and acknowledged the diversity within the group. As Gersick (1988) found, this sets the

level of inertia in the group and impacts on the way in which a group will interact in task processing. We then moved on to discuss the task and the process events in the group experience.

She talked firstly about the leadership in the group and the way the group communicated. She stated that one female within the group got everyone talking, and when the group communicated:

Everyone is trying not to be the leader while someone else is talking. We listened to everyone and then discussed and picked up the best one we think and everyone just – maybe not every time we agree with everything but ... even though ... I didn't think of that at the beginning ... after your explanation I think, "Oh, yeah, that's not a bad idea. So it's like combined, so it's harmony. [Xiu]

A leader had emerged in this group who, it appeared, had positively influenced communication with Xiu within the group in the process phase. As Jaques and Salmon (2007) noted, this is critical to groups. The leader also helped Xiu's confidence as a member of the group and maintained the low-level of inertia and positive synergy in the group from the initial socialisation process. Xiu spoke of how they interacted together by making group decisions and setting goals, which suggested a collaborative effort and mutual accountability. We discussed how they approached the task. Xiu explained:

We had this plan – still we were doing it in a plan – so planned it and then everyone did a bit of – the good thing is we actually involved everyone and then separate the work in different parts so you do this part and I did that part. [Xiu]

This showed through effective leadership, the group had come together for discussion and all members were actively involved in decision-making and planning. This allowed Xiu to actively engage in the group and adopt a deep approach to the learning activities. We discussed the way the group had worked together. When asked 'did everyone do their task?', she replied 'yes' and went on to say:

When I'm doing group work I pay attention because you need to be responsible to everyone because its group work. So you need to organise everything and then check if we are on the right track. [Xiu]

Xiu appeared to hold herself accountable to other members of the group. As Liu and McLeod (2014) suggested, individual accountability has a strong impact on a group being successful and Xiu felt she had to ‘do a good job’ for the rest of the group. I asked her what her outcomes were from this experience. Xiu said:

I really enjoyed it and our group got the highest mark out of all. It was only because our group is very talkative, thought very deep, and then had really good communication. [Xiu]

Even though English was Xiu’s second language, she felt the group had communicated well and had been very inclusive of her in discussion. The level of positive communication in the group had been a process gain for Xiu.

The assessment for this task was based on the group product. The group, given the socialisation process, positive communication, collaborative task processing and leadership, had not only gained a high grade but displayed characteristics of a team, such as collaboration and positive communication. In each of these positive experiences the socialisation process was explored through my Student Group Experience Model. The representative quotations from the students are shown below.

Table 5.6: Socialisation in positive experiences

STUDENT	Socialisation in positive experiences
Zhen	<i>The leader tried to introduce us but the language was so difficult</i>
Lian	<i>The lecturer asked some native speakers to join us in a group. There were two native speakers and two international students. I was happy because they wanted us to practise English and introduced themselves</i>
Wen	<i>The group was small, we get to know each other, and they all talk to me. We get to know each other</i>
Jiao	<i>They are all fantastic, I think probably the females in the group, more so than the males. They all introduced themselves and were interested in what I had to say and where I was from</i>

In each case, the socialisation process had been a process gain for the students. The Chinese international students had described their difficulties with English language, but when the other

members of the group had attempted to communicate the experience was positive and each student felt included in the group. The socialisation process had set the level of inertia within the group. Language and communication was a concern for the Chinese international students and this is highlighted in their quotes.

Table 5.7: Communication in positive experiences

STUDENT	Communication in positive experience
Zhen	<i>We found that was quite difficult because the language varies and it is hard for us to communicate with the native speakers. They all tried hard to understand me</i>
Lian	<i>Sometimes we need to write something...because English is not our mother language, So the native speakers help us, they write down the ideas on paper so we can understand them. It was very helpful</i>
Wen	<i>We discuss together and communicate our ideas. I find some of the males speak too low and too quickly and with an Australian accent. I found the females sound good, they speak more clearly and are very kind</i>
Jiao	<i>Communication in our group was good. I didn't just sit back and listen. I mean you have to contribute, no matter how little so other people know you are a part of it</i>

In each case there had been language difficulties, but the group or a member of the group had helped and for all of these students, this was a process gain. In Zhen, Lian and Wen's stories, the Australian domestic students had found ways to assist them and this was a process gain for them. Zhen found it very difficult to communicate with the group as she had been taught English, whilst at school in China, but used it rarely. Jiao, on the other hand, felt she needed to be active in the discussions, her spoken language skills were very good as she had been to an English school, prior to attending university in Australia. The socialisation process and the communication within the group had influenced the way in which the Chinese international students engaged in the group. This was then reflected in the way the group went about the task.

Table 5.8: Task processing in positive experiences.

STUDENT	Task processing in positive experiences
Zhen	<i>In the end, the native speaker done most of the job for us. We just got a little bit of information or materials for him and he did all the work. He stood up and gave the presentation</i>
Lian	<i>We have discussions with the native speakers about our workshop. We found information for the questions from materials and the case study</i>
Wen	<i>I get ideas from my group and write down points and give them back to them. They took my plans give me some advice and we get a final idea together</i>
Jiao	<i>You do your part and another part and them we combine all the information. They did more of the presentation because they can say things better</i>

The positive experiences showed the students involvement in the way the group processed the task. In Zhen's experience, a member of the group worked on the majority of the task. She tried to assist but her difficulties in understanding the Australian domestic students limited her involvement. For her this was a process loss as she wanted to be more involved. The other students all found ways to assist, despite communication difficulties and felt included in the way the group went about the task, for them, this was a process gain. The thematic analysis of the preceding positive experiences indicated the students had more process gains than losses in the group experience. The following discussion looks at the conditions in which each of these positive experiences occurred. The main conditions identified from the students' stories included lecturer support, assessment and leadership. The following provides a summary of Xiu's experience and shows this experience framed into my Student Group Experience Model.

5.5.4 Xiu's group experience

The following discussion provides a summary of the thematic analysis of Xiu's positive experience. The discussion is broken down into two sections, the conditions in which the group operated and the process events which Xiu identified in her story. The representation of Xiu's positive experience is shown in Figure 5.3.

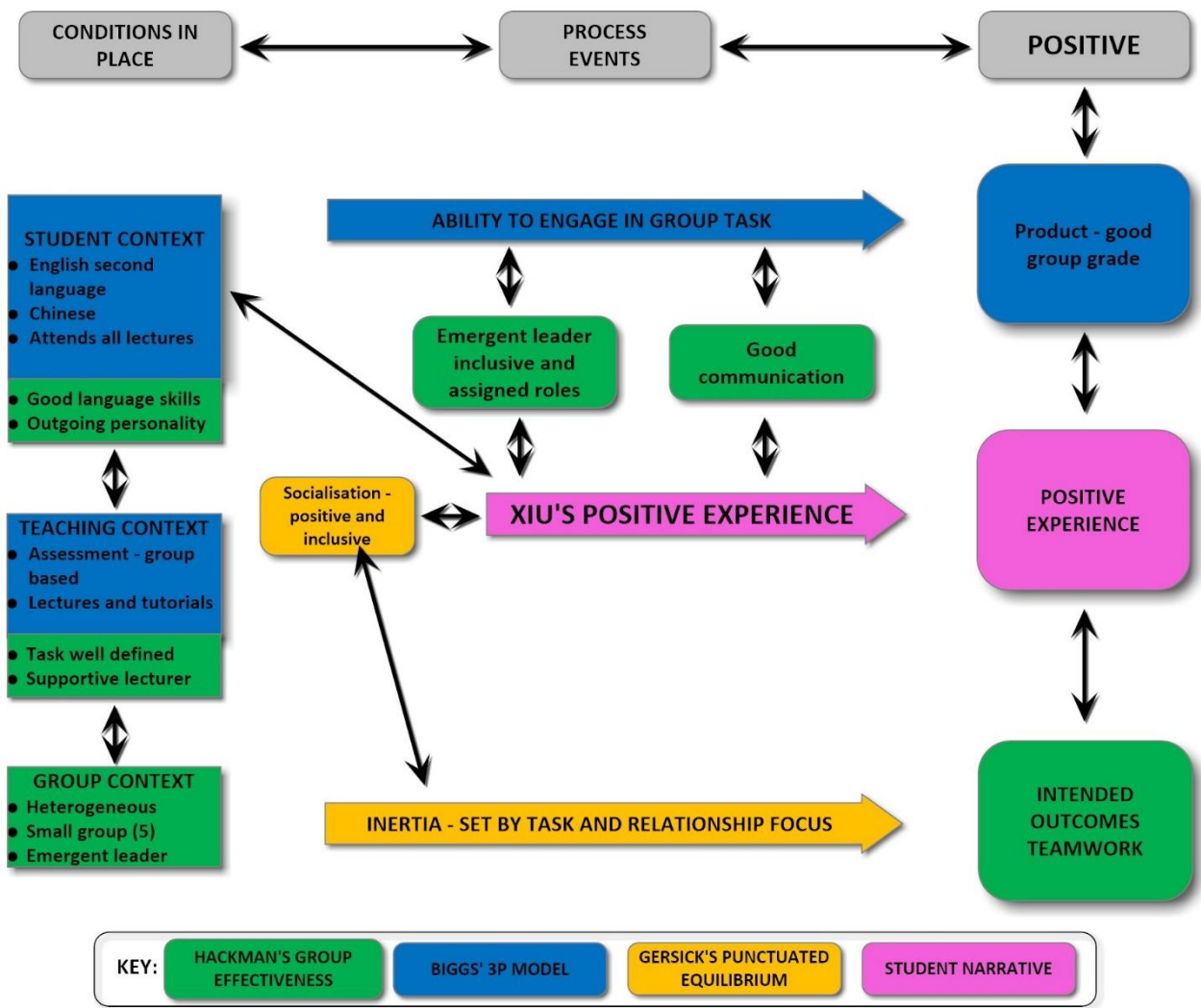


Figure 5.3: Xiu’s positive group experience

5.5.4.1 Group context conditions

The conditions in which a group operates are shown in my Student Group Experience Model in three contexts; the student, teaching and group. Xiu is a Chinese international undergraduate student who considers herself motivated, but her level of English language proficiency concerns her in group activities. In Xiu’s positive experience, the group had come together randomly and the leadership was emergent and effective. The task had been well defined by the lecturer, there was an assessment component which involved the group giving a report presentation. As part of the teaching context, the lecturer had allowed students to develop relationships prior to giving the group the task and had been supportive to the group throughout the task.

5.5.4.2 Process events

The major process event shown in my Student Group Experience Model, was the formation of the group. The group had taken the time to get to know one another. From Xiu's perspective, the group displayed mutual accountability; they had come together for discussion, had a group decision-making process and a mutual plan. They worked collectively towards the goal of a good grade. The group had individual roles and showed concern for others to overcome the challenges faced. The purpose, goals and approach to the task were shaped by both a leader and the group members. In Xiu's case, she was able to adopt a deep approach to the development of teamwork skills during the process phase.

The group, given the socialisation process, positive communication, collaborative task processing and leadership, had not only gained a high grade but, from Xiu's perception of the process events, the group had displayed characteristics of a team. On investigation from the 'background information sheet for participants' the unit in which Xiu's experience occurred had in the descriptor, teamwork skills.

5.6 Themes in positive experiences

The previous section presented the data from the students' interviews, in which they categorised their experience as positive. Only one Australian domestic student reported a positive group work experience. Analysis of her story through the Student Group Experience Model revealed similar themes to the Chinese international students. The Chinese international students however, spoke of these process events in terms of how they related to their ability to engage in the group. Language and cultural difficulties are well-documented as barriers to international students studying in Anglo-western universities and resonated in the stories from the Chinese international students.

Both Nadia and Xiu had reported the reason for their positive experience was, from their perspective, that they felt the group showed internal characteristics such as accountability, collaborative effort, inclusive communication, appropriate leadership, and goal focus, all of which are indicators of an effective team. The thematic analysis, through my Student Group Experience Model, identified process gains and process losses during the process events, in the case of Nadia and Xiu's positive experience, there were only process gains. Other students who reported positive experiences displayed similar themes. The process events which contributed to the

internal processes of the group, and a positive experience included the socialisation process, communication and the inclusive and collaborative effort during task processing. The next section presents the data from the students who categorised their experience as negative.

5.7 Data analysis of negative experiences

As discussed in Chapter 4, the students were asked to categorise their group work experience into a positive or negative experience. The full table with the twelve participants was displayed in the previous chapter (see Table 4.3). Table 5.9 represents the students who categorised their experience as a negative one.

Table 5.9: Negative group experiences

Participants Pseudonym	Cultural Background
Amber	Australian
Cooper	Australian
Hayley	Australian
Laura	Australian
Melanie	Australian
Nadia	Australian
Ning	Chinese
Xiu	Chinese

Both Nadia and Xiu also had negative experiences, which are presented in full in the following section. The remaining students identified varying reasons for their negative experience. Both Nadia's and Xiu's two experiences of group work contrast each other. Both students brought with them to each group experience the same student presage factors. Their perception of group work changed during each experience, one positive and the other negative.

The following sections presents the two participants negative experiences of group work. Included in the analysis of their experiences are the quotes of the other participants who categorised their experience as negative. The Australian domestic students are presented in Nadia's story, whilst the Chinese international students are presented in Xiu's story. The reason participants who categorised their experience as negative are shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Reasons for negative experiences

STUDENT	<i>Reason for negative experiences</i>
Amber	<i>My worst memory of being in any group, being in a horrendous situation was with that boy. Like I remember I just... I don't like him now. I just don't like him. He's been in my classes after that and I just never liked him after that.</i>
Cooper	<i>I just didn't like the unit or the others in my group</i>
Hayley	<i>We had a very opinionated leader</i>
Melanie	<i>So I end up doing all the work and it's a group mark then everybody is getting the same mark although it's mainly my work</i>
Ning	<i>There was not a very good part for me [in the group]; I could not take a role in it.</i>
Laura	<i>We didn't receive a very good mark and we could have if everyone had pulled their weight</i>

5.7.1 Nadia's story

When Nadia began to speak about her negative experience, she immediately said she felt frustrated even thinking back about it. The experience had been in her third year at university and was an elective unit. For this reason, there were a number of students at different stages of their academic career, including first year and fourth year students. We began by discussing the group context.

5.7.2 Group context

I began by asking her how the group was formed. She said the group had been allocated by the lecturer and:

I was put in a group with people I didn't know and who were a lot younger than what I was, first year of university, whereas it was my third year and the attitude towards the group was very much...awkward. [Nadia]

In her positive experience, Nadia had noted that the composition of the group had been with those who she considered similar students. She already felt that this group had different characteristics to her, which influenced her perception of the group work activity:

I didn't feel confident about the whole thing from the get-go. [Nadia]

Even though Nadia had expressed she enjoyed working in groups, the initial meeting of this group had changed her expectations about the experience. I asked her if they had spent time getting to know one another and she replied that everyone just started on the task. She also noted:

Well everybody dominated and wanted to have their say and it was very, it was just not constructive. [Nadia]

This suggested the group had limited socialisation and were task focused. As Gersick (1988) suggested, this sets the level of inertia in the group and will influence how they perform the task. The initial conflict within the group created negative synergy and, as Hackman (1987) noted can impact on communication and effectiveness of the group. I then asked Nadia how many people were in the group and the composition of the group members. She replied:

in [my bad] experience it was the same size, actually as my positive experience. [Nadia]

Group size influence group effectiveness, but it would appear, in this case, the size of the group had not been a major influencing factor on Nadia's perception of her group experience. She then noted:

There were two boys and four girls. There was myself and one other student both of whom were in ... I was in my third year and he was in his fourth year, and then all the others were first year students and the boys soon formed their own group. [Nadia]

This suggested the group had divided into sub-groups early in the process. As Hackman (1987) notes, sub-groups are an indicator of an ineffective group, who will not develop into an effective team. Lencioni's (2012) work also shows the absence of trust and lack of commitment as an indicator of a dysfunctional or ineffective team. We then moved on to discuss the task and I asked Nadia to reflect back on how the lecturer had defined the task and supported the group in the initial stages.

The negative aspect was initially when I didn't know what to expect or what I was supposed to be doing and felt that the expectations that I had didn't coincide with the expectations of the people I was working with. [Nadia]

This comment shows that, the task was perhaps not clearly defined by the lecturer in such a way that all group members understood what they had to do. Task definition is a critical condition in the teaching context. It appears that this had not been done. I asked Nadia about the lecturer. She stopped and appeared to falter with what she was going to say, and finally she stated:

The students didn't like the lecturer. [Nadia]

I asked her if she felt that this made the situation worse and she replied that it did. I reminded her that this was confidential and she then said:

It was one of those situations where if I had of gone to her it wouldn't have made any difference. Like it wasn't that the task wasn't being done, it was just that it was not ... it was just not a good experience to have and the attitude that the students had towards her would have meant that they wouldn't have taken anything she said seriously anyway. I personally felt I could have approached her but I just didn't think that it would make any difference. [Nadia]

The lecturer's approach to teaching is considered important to the teaching context. Contact with others outside a group may help it move forward (Gersick, 1988, 1989). Yet in this case Nadia felt this would not help. Following in Table 5.11 is a representation of the context factors in the negative experiences of the other students.

Table 5.11: Lecturer support in negative experiences

STUDENT	<i>Lecturer support in negative experiences</i>
Amber	<i>I actually said something to the lecturer, but at the end of the day she acted like we were children. But I would put it down to we were just being children but in saying that now, I really wouldn't want to be in a group with that guy again</i>
Cooper	<i>I didn't really see any point [in reference to seeking the support]</i>
Hayley	<i>He was not really involved once he explained the task</i>
Melanie	<i>The lecturer is there watching and sort of supervising, this person is really not leading the groups</i>
Laura	<i>During the times we were doing group work in class, he would try and involve the international students, but they were very reluctant, he did try but it didn't work very well</i>

In these cases, the students reported varying degrees of involvement by the lecturer once the task had been defined. Cooper, Melanie and Hayley all reported that the lecturer was not involved with the group once the task had been explained. Laura, on the other hand, said the lecturer had tried to assist with the communication in the group, but this had not helped. Amber's story is interesting as she approached the lecturer, but appeared to be told to fix it themselves. Each of the students in the negative experiences were happy if they received a good grade. Their comments are reported in the following table.

Table 5.12: Assessment in negative experiences

STUDENT	<i>Assessment in negative experiences</i>
Amber	<i>We did the report, it went well, we were all relieved, we were happy, but it was a fluke</i>
Cooper	<i>I failed the assessment because of the marks given to me by the other members of the group. At the beginning we were asked to appraise the other group members. I gave them all full marks because they did the work</i>
Hayley	<i>It was a really hard task because it was over a long period of time. There were many aspects to it and it was a major assessment, so there was a lot of pressure on us</i>
Melanie	<i>For me it was a satisfying feeling if you've come up with results. We got a good mark and the lecturer was happy with the answers</i>
Laura	<i>We had to do a presentation and the group worked well, except for the three members who didn't do anything</i>

Apart from Cooper, each of the students reported that the assessment had made them more anxious about being involved in groups. The weight of the task also had an influence on how they felt about their experience. Both Melanie and Laura felt they had done more work than other members of the group and this had been a process loss for them. Cooper, on the other hand, had disengaged from the group and failed the assessment due to the peer evaluation score given to him by the other group members. Their responses are reported in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13: Leadership in negative experiences

STUDENT	<i>Leadership in negative experiences</i>
Amber	<i>I wouldn't say maybe a dictator; maybe he was trying to take on the leader role but he just was going about it all wrong</i>
Cooper	<i>I just didn't like the way she was going about the work and did like the subject so I was really up against it from the get-go</i>
Hayley	<i>We had a very opinionated female and she became the leader of the group</i>
Melanie	<i>We did have a bit of a personality problem and it was me and one of the other girls. It was mutual between the two of us and that really was imposing on the whole group</i>
Laura	<i>I'm an extroverted person, so I take charge of groups</i>

The leadership in each of the negative experiences varied. Amber, Hayley and Cooper all experienced conflict with the group leader and this had been a process loss for each of them. Melanie and Laura, on the other hand, reported they were the leaders of their groups. Melanie spoke about another student who was also trying to lead the group and this had been a cause of conflict for her. Conflict between two individuals attempting to lead a group can cause process losses for both the students and the group. Laura reported that she was unable to get the international students to be involved in the group. For her, this was also a process loss.

5.7.3 Process events

Nadia's group was a homogenous group of Australian domestic students, which had split into factions. From the limited socialisation process and the initial conflict, the group appeared to display negative synergy. We moved on to discuss the roles in the group and how they had handled the task. I asked Nadia if there was a leader in the group. She replied:

Definite roles. There was a leader that became clear early on and there were people who. It was sort of task specific, like making a timetable to complete the task, no one agreed on how, so each group were just doing their tasks themselves. [Nadia]

I asked her to clarify what she meant by each group, she said:

It became boys against the girls and to a certain extent first years against the older students as well. [Nadia]

The conflict in the group was a process loss for Nadia, as she felt continually frustrated by the lack of coordination and apparent lack of trust in the group. It appeared the group was focused on the product not on the process of how they were going to get there. She then continued on to say:

I know we had the common goal of wanting a good mark but we all had different ideas about how that should be achieved and what that actually meant. [Nadia]

This appeared to relate to her earlier discussion in regard to the task definition. It seemed the group had varying ideas on the assessment and Nadia had previously noted that this had not been explained well by the lecturer. She went on further to say:

So that just created a lot of conflict and some people did become excluded and a lot of problems. [Nadia]

I asked Nadia about the leadership in the group. She felt that the initial leader had not been able to get the group focused on the task. Because of this, many of the group members had begun to try to lead the group which had caused issues with communication and created a great deal of conflict.

We spent a lot of time arguing and people felt that their opinions weren't heard, so that was probably the worst experience I've had. [Nadia]

From the initial socialisation there had been conflict in the group. They had not moved on from this and it was impacting on the way the group went about the task. There were more process losses than process gains, suggesting negative synergy. The level of inertia within the group had been set at the original group formation and the group was still operating the same way as they were in the beginning. I asked her to continue, she said:

We spent a lot of time disagreeing and I tended not to necessarily say that I disagreed. More because there was enough people already doing that and it was just going round and round in circles. [Nadia]

The conflict within the group caused issues with the way the group was approaching the task. Lencioni (2012) noted that a lack of trust and unhealthy conflict were the indicators of a dysfunctional team. For Nadia, the conflict was a process loss and she felt the conflict was causing members of the group to withdraw from the discussions and said:

I think some people just accepted whatever everybody else said just to keep the peace. I think to a certain extent people are forced to do that. [Nadia]

In Nadia's view, the actions of some group members were impacting on the ability of others to engage with the group, and the task. Simms and Nichols (2014) suggested the actions of others in a group can cause individuals to disengage. Those members who disengaged may not be able to apply a deep learning approach to the task. Nadia continued discussing the conflict:

people started to disagree and so that became a problem and then it was a clash of personalities and people were just disagreeing with other people because they didn't like that person or have a problem with them which initially when we didn't know each other that wasn't an issue. [Nadia]

The lack of initial socialisation had continued to cause problems within the group. The ongoing conflict remained a process loss for her. Nadia then said, after approximately four weeks of getting nowhere, the group:

On one occasion we did lay it all out and everybody said what their issues were. [Nadia]

I asked her about how it came about that they 'laid the cards on the table', she replied:

It just kind of happened by accident. [LAUGHS] It was just after a particularly hard session and one person just laid it all out and then everybody else felt that they could as well, and I didn't instigate it; it wasn't me who started that one. [Nadia]

The group had worked in their established pattern for some time. The group was characterised by conflict and members had been working separately on the task. The group had come to the temporal midpoint, in which, the panic to get the task done, as the deadline approaches, instils a change within the group as suggested by Gersick's (1988, 1989) work. Nadia explained:

I suppose we got to a point where all of us recognised that if we didn't get over it, it was just not going to get done and we weren't going to get a good mark. [Nadia]

I asked her how this had occurred. Nadia said:

I'm unsure how it started but we just found a way to get over it and some people consequently just kept their mouths shut. [Nadia]

I asked if these people had previously been the group members who had caused the conflict. She smiled and replied 'yes'. From this moment Nadia had decided to confront the group:

I guess, I had enough. Although I didn't start it. I became more assertive and I suppose there's more urgency in completing a task and often I do feel like I have to take on a leadership role as well. [Nadia]

In this instance Nadia felt she had to take on a leadership role to get the task done. Gersick (1988) noted that members of groups will do whatever they feel they have to, to get the task done. I asked Nadia if she felt taking on the leadership role was positive for her, she replied:

I feel almost guilty because I should be able to just cope and deal with it and often it's too late to then turn around and fix the problem anyway, but at least we got moving on the task and the conflict stopped, so I guess yes. [Nadia]

This suggested a process gain, as they moved on with the task, but Nadia was obviously uncomfortable with her actions. Nadia admitted the deadline for the assessment was getting closer and had become more of a motivator for her. I asked her to comment further and she discussed the weighting of the assessment as a contributing factor.

Assessment can be a good thing but as soon as you start to put a large amount of the assessment on the group work it can become problematic, like with this unit. When it was worth 40% like this unit, it becomes a problem because people who want to do well in the unit can't necessarily. [Nadia]

I then asked Nadia what the outcomes were for the group and how she felt the assessment presentation went:

We got through it in the end but it was pretty all over the place. We ended up with a distinction, but I don't know how. [Nadia]

Whilst she said a distinction was a good grade, Nadia felt the group could have done better.

I'm used to getting high distinctions, which I could have done if I had completed the task on my own. [Nadia]

The following table shows the responses for each of the Australian domestic participants, who considered their experience a negative one.

Table 5.14: Socialisation in negative experiences

STUDENT	<i>Socialisation in negative experiences</i>
Amber	<i>We just started the task, I think it would have helped if we did we may have been more comfortable with each other</i>
Cooper	<i>No-one really introduced themselves, apart from names. I didn't know the people in the group and I didn't pull my weight</i>
Hayley	<i>We were all high achievers from the way everyone spoke and used to getting a certain grade. So we really just started the task</i>
Melanie	<i>Sometimes with international students, some people just struggle more with the language. You need to be patient and it takes more effort sort of thing. The rest of us tried</i>
Laura	<i>We had 10 minutes just to go around and find out others names, we didn't waste time and went straight to the task</i>

In each of the negative experiences, there had been either no, or in the case of Laura, limited time taken for the socialisation process. The socialisation process sets the pattern for the group and the behaviours they will exert. Interestingly, none of the students identified this as an issue, suggesting a task focus. The socialisation process will set the level of inertia within the group and impact on the communication process which is shown in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15: Communication in negative experiences

STUDENT	<i>Communication in negative experiences</i>
Amber	<i>I got along with two of the group members but not him and that was really why...I think it was just a difference in opinions all the time. He kind of wanted his way and I kind of... I wouldn't say I wanted my way but I just wanted him to consider everyone else when he wouldn't</i>
Cooper	<i>I made some suggestions and they were dismissed by the others, as far as they were concerned they thought my ideas were incorrect</i>
Hayley	<i>Some situations where I shut my mouth where normally I would have spoken up; there were some situations where I fought for something that I think was fighting on principle where normally I would let it go. I think I was much more ... I definitely changed; I don't know if I was much more forceful. I think I was more reserved on the whole, but there was bits where I was just like nah, and said my mind</i>
Melanie	<i>It was hard, if you have only one person that is brave enough to talk and to discuss it, that can be quite a lot of work. There were two, no three really quiet people in the group and I was trying to get them to participate</i>
Laura	<i>We couldn't communicate with the international students. They sat there with their heads down and that was a bad experience</i>

In each of the negative experiences, the students reported patterns of communication which reflected issues with communication such as conflict, in particular for Hayley, who had mentioned previously that the reason for her negative experience was the leader of the group. She and an international student had formed their own sub-group as a response to this. Melanie and Laura both spoke about their inability to communicate with the international students. They both reported this as a process loss.

Cooper's ideas had been dismissed by the group and from that moment on, he disengaged from the group. This had been a process loss for him. Amber also spoke of the communication in the group in terms of conflict with the leader. The communication within the group impacted on the task processing which is shown in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16: Task processing in negative experiences

STUDENT	<i>Task Processing in negative experiences</i>
Amber	<i>What we did was we split work up. So we did work like together and we got our ideas down together but we split it up so we could go into further detail on our own and then I mean you just had to meet up, we just had to do it</i>
Cooper	<i>The others in the group were all details people and wanted to compile lists and issues responsibility and get a whole bureaucracy going. Not really my style</i>
Hayley	<i>An international student and I rebelled against the others. Both she and I tried to get our opinions across and the others wouldn't listen. The international student and I just worked on our own parts together</i>
Melanie	<i>What we did is we split up the contents and she did hers and I did mine but we met up before and mixed it sort of thing to make it look even and make it look one presentation</i>
Laura	<i>The more dominant people of the group definitely did all the work. The international students weren't doing any work or not really having any group input</i>

In each case, the students reported that the task had been divided up and brought together at the end. This suggests, from the students' experience, the group was not collaborative as they did not engage in the task as a mutual group. For Amber, Melanie and Laura, this was a process loss as they felt they were doing more of the work. Cooper, at this point, was not engaging in the group task at all. Hayley, on the other hand, enjoyed working with the international student, rather than with the group as a whole. Gersick's (1989) work suggested a group 'will do what they have to, to get a task done'. In these cases, the students all reported they exerted effort in the task, in whatever manner they could, based on the grade they wanted to receive.

5.7.4 Nadia's group experience

The following discussion provides a summary of the thematic analysis of Nadia's negative experience. The discussion is broken down into two sections; the conditions in which the group operated and the process events which Nadia identified in her story. The major themes which

emerged are then discussed in terms of the characteristics of a team. The representation of Nadia’s negative experience is shown in Figure 5.4.

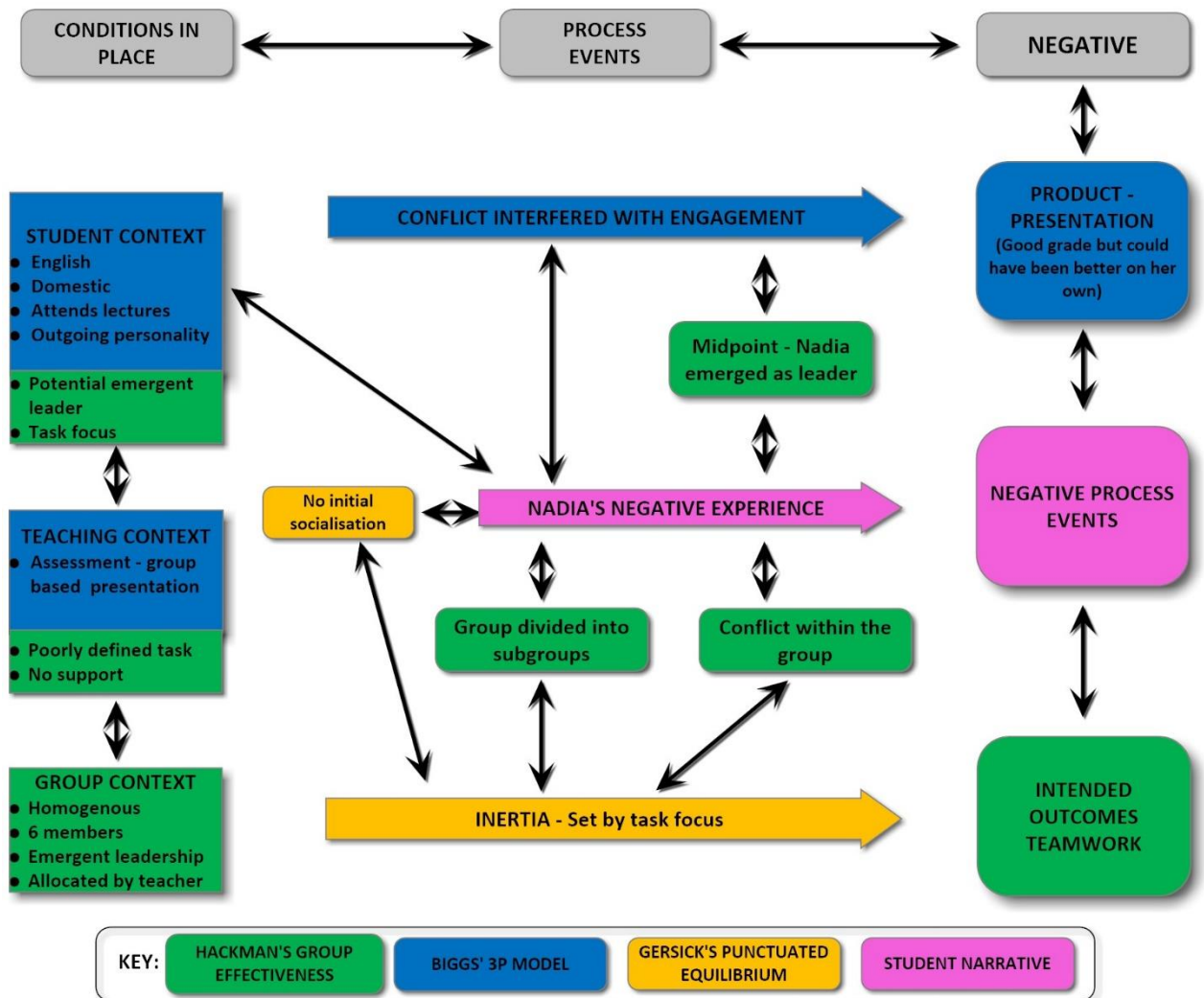


Figure 5.4: Nadia’s negative group experience

5.7.4.1 Group context conditions

The conditions in which a group operates are shown in my Student Group Experience Model in three contexts, the student, teaching and group. Nadia is an Australian domestic undergraduate student who considers herself motivated and has a positive perception of working with others. In this case, she felt very early on, that the experience was going to be difficult. The group was a small homogenous group of Australian domestic students, ranging from first year to fourth year. The task was not defined well, as Nadia noted that the understanding of various members of the

group had caused conflict. Nadia did not feel that the group had support from the lecturer. The group became two sub-groups very early in the process and the leadership was not discussed until Nadia emerged as the leader during the process events.

5.7.4.2 Process events

From Nadia's perspective, there was limited or no socialisation and the group immediately set about the task. The group had been allocated by the lecturer and no-one knew each other previously. The process events were dominated by the conflict within the group, which represented a continuous process loss for Nadia. The group reached a temporal midpoint in which Nadia emerged as the leader. From Nadia's perspective the group had a lack of trust and a lack of mutual accountability, given the presence of sub-groups. The group did not display characteristics of a team and may have developed characteristics of a dysfunctional team. On investigation from the 'background information sheet for participants' the unit in which Nadia's experience occurred had in the descriptor, teamwork skills. I reflected on Nadia's two experiences of group work and wrote in my project log:

Nadia was a very likeable young woman and obviously very dedicated to her studies. This interview showed the interaction of two different groups and how the same student can be affected by the actions of others. This interview was conducted after Xiu and there were many similarities in their stories, even though there are cultural differences. (Project Log, November, 2010)

The following section presents Xiu's negative story, which I spoke of in my project log. As with Nadia, themes emerged in the nature of the way a student who is motivated and dedicated can be impacted on by others in groups.

5.7.5 Xiu's story

As shown in her introduction in the previously displayed positive experience, Xiu is a 23-year-old female from southern China. The interview began with Xiu's negative experience. This was in a management course in her third year at university. Xiu commented:

I actually had one bad experience from that experience – very bad. [Xiu]

5.7.6 Group context

We began by discussing the context of the group. I asked her how the group was formed and she said it was just who you were sitting with at the time and had no input from the lecturer. The way in which this group was formed potentially influenced their ability to be effective as they moved through the group process phase. I asked her to explain the composition of the group. Xiu said:

In our group most of the students had very strong background 'personalities', and they came with a very strong desire of contribution. [Xiu]

The group was heterogeneous, made up of both Australian domestic and Chinese international students. Hackman (1987) considered the composition of the group to be one of the most important conditions affecting the potential of a group. This includes the size of the group. The group was a large group with nine members. Napier and Gershenfeld (2004) suggested, a group of this size may break into many sub-groups with the likelihood of all members being able to contribute diminishing. This in turn, may impact on self-awareness and communication within the group which may impact on accountability. A group of this size has potential issues which can arise in the process phase and this appeared to be the case, as shown later in the interview. I asked her about the task the group had to complete; it was an assessment task in which the group had to produce a report collectively. I asked her if she understood the task and if it was explained to her well. She replied that it had been.

5.7.7 Process events

I asked Xiu if any time had been taken for each of the group members to get to know each other. In this case, the group had not even taken time for introductions, which suggested a limited socialisation process. This set the level of inertia within the group, which was task focused. A lack of socialisation can also create negative synergy and from this negative process events. Potentially, this will also influence the way in which Xiu can approach the group task. The group immediately began the task, while Xiu was still reading and understanding what they had to do. This was the first process loss for Xiu. She said:

I personally didn't even look at the question yet because it was like a slow process for me doing it, everyone else was already discussing it. [Xiu]

Not only had the group not taken time to get to know each other, which, according to Gersick (1988), is critical for groups, but individuals within the group started the task before all members were ready. Again, this set the level of inertia within the group and impacted on the way in which the group moved through the task. I asked Xiu to talk about what had happened during the experience and how the group had gone about the task. She replied:

There was one student, everyone is just starting to know about the task, then the student spoke up, she had this whole layout about what we're doing and what we need to do. "We need to do it this way", that's what she said, and we were all "ok". But that put me back a bit. [Xiu]

There was one person who had become the emergent leader within the group. This person had organised what the group members were doing and how they were going to do it, without consultation with the other members. As Oliveira et al. (2014) suggested, effective functioning within student groups requires a leadership structure that contributes not only to the task but to interpersonal relationships. This emergent leader appeared not to consider this. Leadership impacts on communication, and the ability for a group to achieve its goal. The role of a leader is to guide the group through communication to achieve the group goals (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003). Yet, when we discussed the way the group communicated, Xiu said:

Three of us, we were being ignored because – it was a big surprise but there was a few of them; they really were strong and had a really strong view of the task. [Xiu]

This suggested the group of nine had broken into two sub-groups, which is a condition of an ineffective team (Hackman, 1990). I asked her if the other two students were international students. She replied that they were domestic Australian students. Sub-groups may appear if there is a perceived inequality with regard to the abilities of certain members which is indicative of a lack of trust and a characteristic of an ineffective team. The leader who emerged in this group appeared to impact on the level of engagement. Whilst other members of the group were encouraged to engage, Xiu was not encouraged to participate. This process event was another a process loss for Xiu.

While within our discussion, we are not quite welcome to be involved, or they didn't really involve or encourage us. They just discuss. Because they want to achieve this high score, that's understandable. [Xiu]

Assessment task has a profound impact on student learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). The assessment task had become the focus of the group, without consideration of relationships within the group (Oliveira et al, 2014). Although Cogliser et al. (2012) found students prefer a leader who will assist in getting the assessment done, this emergent leader affected Xiu's experience. I asked her if she had tried to be involved in the group discussions and she said:

I tried a few times and it's very hard for me especially as a second language speaker. I think Australian people are more brave to talk and good at talking. Well, I think I am good at talking but I'm not like jumping into conversation. I'm really not that sort of person, even though in class I have experienced that. I want to say something but everyone's being too quick and they don't – in China, when you want to answer a question you ... put your hand up, but now here you don't so I don't have the chance. [Xiu]

The inability for Xiu to communicate with the group was a process event and a process loss for her. The cultural differences between interaction in groups in China and Australia was shown here, as Kimmel and Volet (2009) discussed, the social and cultural factors which interplay in groups impact on students' experiences in groups. For Xiu, the lack of cultural understanding by other members created a process loss. As the group continued to work on the task, conflict amongst the group began to influence the way in which they communicated. The behaviour of others in the group influenced how Xiu perceived her experience.

I can see the conflict because they all come from – have very strong individual opinions. [Xiu]

Simms and Nichols (2014) suggested the actions of others in a group can cause individuals to disengage. This is directly caused by negative leadership within the group (Simms & Nichols, 2014). If a student disengages from group activities in the process phase they will revert to a surface or strategic approach to learning. This suggested that Xiu had adopted an approach to learning based on the situational context. Xiu withdrew from the group discussion and worked on the task on her own. She felt if an opportunity arose in which she could contribute, she would.

So I had a lot of ideas in the beginning so I wasn't really prepared to tell the group because I thought if I'm not saying anything it doesn't matter to them. [Xiu]

This opportunity did not happen and eventually she completely withdrew from any further discussion with the group which for her, was a process loss. The focus of cooperative group work

is to develop higher-level thinking and interpersonal skills (Duren & Cherrington, 1992; Meirson & Parikh, 2000). In Xiu's experience, the group had not given her the opportunity to do this. She then noted:

I was observing all the time, even they don't notice. They probably think, oh, she's not doing anything. [Xiu]

I asked Xiu what she observed about how the group continued to interact. I asked her how this made her feel. She replied:

Very bad, It put me back a lot because I thought these students are just a little bit crazy because – and, actually, after that, I discussed that with my lecturer and he was like, yes, because ... that might be the only time they have to show their ability so they tried really hard. [Xiu]

It appeared, the lecturer was aware of the conflict within the group but made no attempt to deal with the issue the group was having. As Hackman (1987) noted these characteristics highlight the importance of the organisational context, in particular the authority structure in manager-led groups. Hackman's (1987) model would suggest this group required someone external to assist the group in performing the task and to monitor the group, which in this case could have been the lecturer. Gersick (1989) also suggested that an external influence can help a group move forward. I asked Xiu about the lecturer. She felt there had been no external support in saying:

I think the lecturer in group work is there for guidance, especially because it's their subject, they should notice that group, how they function, and say in this group if he stood there and listen for five minutes he could easily observe that I wasn't involved at all; I wasn't welcome. Maybe it's just my feeling I wasn't welcome, but they forgot my existence. So if the lecturer could notice that then gave a bit of instruction how to involve everyone, that would be excellent; I won't feel that bad. [Xiu]

We finally discussed the outcomes for her from this group experience, she said:

I had a really bad experience because, eventually, I just can't participate and I know they are doing a great job. Then I just let them go because it's a group mark and I just can't do anything. [Xiu]

Xiu noted that the group received a good grade for the assessment. The assessment for this course was based on the product, not the process. Xiu, herself received a good grade for the assessment, even though she felt she was unable to participate. She commented:

This group everyone is jumping onto each other. So it's still very strong group because we got a very high mark, but it's not a very pleasant environment – very tense. [Xiu]

In Xiu's case, she was not able to adopt a deep approach in group activities during the process phase. Due to the actions of others in the group, she was unable to engage in high levels of cognition in the process phase. For her the intended outcome of teamwork skills could not be achieved. This experience influenced the way in which she felt about group activities.

Ning was the only other Chinese international student to report a negative experience. His comments in regards to the three areas of the group context are reported in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17: Group context in negative experiences

STUDENT	NING
Lecturer Support	<i>No, we just worked in the group</i>
Assessment	<i>The others did the work. I just read the text book But this thing, I think I must get through it because I must get past the course</i>
Leadership	<i>They just say what they want to say and we haven't got any leader in the group</i>

Ning's reported in his experience that he enjoyed group work. In China, he had taken leadership roles in groups. He had entered the experience with a positive outlook. The group had been a small group with both Australian domestic and Chinese international students. Ning found the group experience very stressful and upsetting. This was reflected in his emotions when retelling the story. He felt he had no support from the lecturer and the group did not have a leader. He received a low grade for the assessment, but he could not engage in the group activities. For Ning, the experience was very negative as he was excluded from the group. This is discussed in the process events. Table 5.18 represents the process events for Ning.

Table 5.18: Process events in negative experiences

STUDENT	NING
Socialisation	<i>No-one introduced themselves. Because they already know the [others] names before and they just don't care what my name is</i>
Communication	<i>They just talk amongst themselves and speak very fast and it's very hard for me to get with them and I know it's really hard for them to realise what we need and what we've got. I disagreed with them and I say it. But I am not sure whether they get it or not</i>
Task Processing	<i>So, for example when we read this paper, they just get through it very quickly and turn it over and I'm just here in the middle of the page</i>

The socialisation process was the first process loss for Ning. No one introduced themselves to Ning and he felt ignored by the Australian domestic students. It appeared that from the moment the group came together, the lack of introductions in the socialisation process of the group had set the level of inertia and negative synergy. Gersick (1988) suggested that the group had already shaped a path which they will follow for some time, and the negative synergy created by the socialisation process is a condition of an ineffective group (Hackman, 1987). Ning had attempted to involve himself in the group discussion. He felt he had a good understanding of what the task required. He felt he was dismissed by the rest of the group. During the interview I found Ning's English to be very easy to understand, yet he was unsure if the group understood him. As he did not involve himself in the group, he sat and read the textbook.

5.7.8 Xiu's group experience

The following discussion provides a summary of the thematic analysis of Xiu's negative experience. The discussion is broken down into two sections: the conditions in which the group operated and the process events which Xiu identified in her story. The representation of Xiu's negative experience is shown in Figure 5.5.

5.7.8.1 Group context conditions

The 'conditions in place' for Xiu's narrative are broken down into the three contexts of my Student Group Experience Model which is shown at the end of the summary. In the group context in Xiu's negative experience, the group had formed randomly. The group was a large heterogeneous group of nine which broke into two sub-groups of six and three, although Xiu was the only international student. In the teaching context the task was explained well, and it had an

assessment component. The lecturer, although acknowledging that the group did not function well, did not intervene during the group completion of the task.

5.7.8.2 Process events

The process events for this experience occurred from the formation and lack of socialisation process in the initial meeting of the group. The group did not take the time to get to know one another and the level of inertia was set from this (Gersick, 1988, 1989). The group became two sub-groups, which did not interact with each other. The emergent leadership within the group was highly task focused, therefore, for Xiu, the relationships did not develop. Xiu had difficulty communicating, even though her English language skills were good because of the cultural differences in the way the group operated.

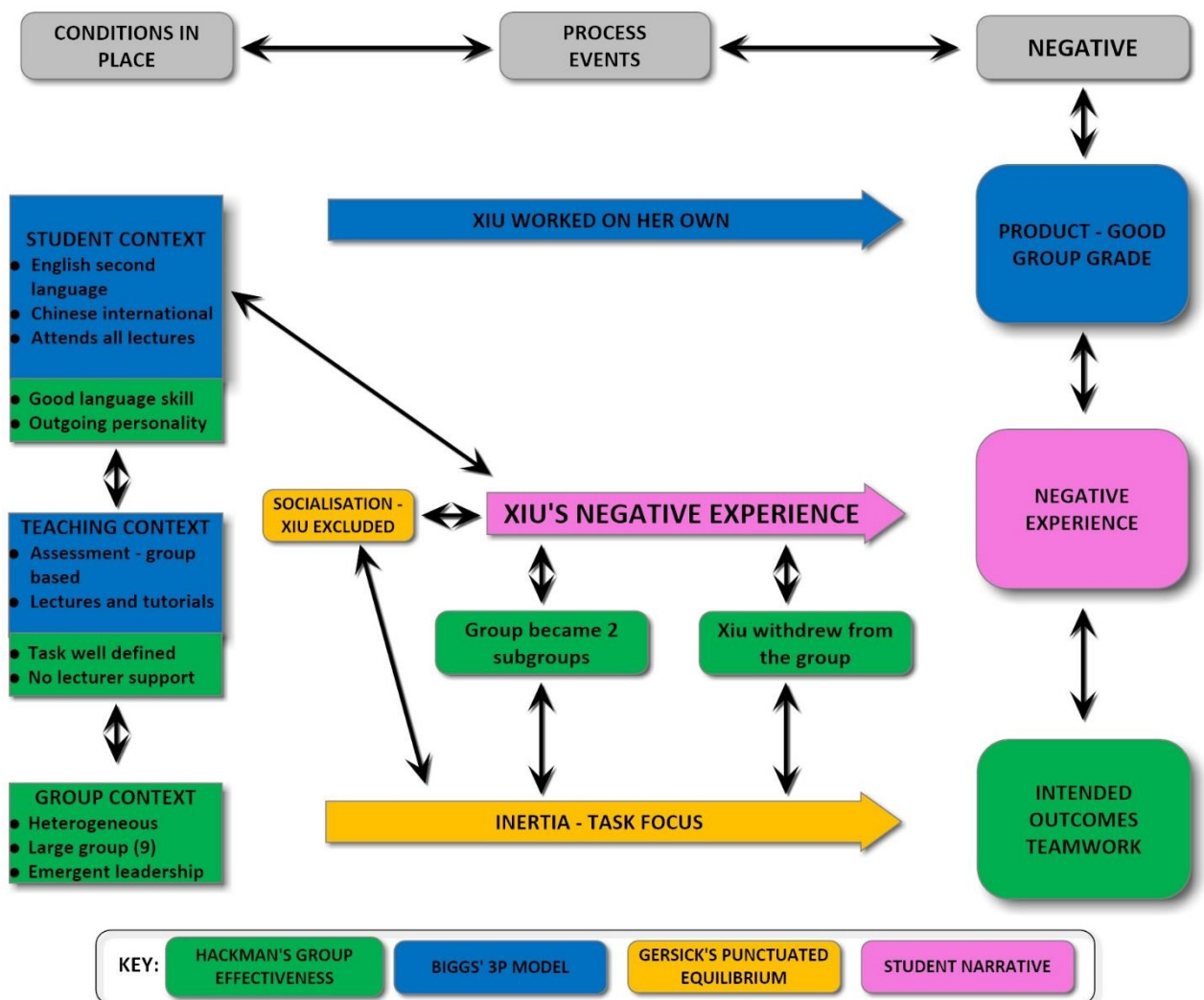


Figure 5.5: Xiu's negative group experience

Xiu's English language skills were very good. She was a friendly and confident young lady, who laughed a lot about the experience and appeared to be pragmatic about the negative experience. In my project log I wrote:

To me, this interview highlights the nature in which group members can impact on the ability for others to engage in tasks. Xiu was a very friendly young lady and my impression is she would work very hard on her assessments, but culturally it is difficult for her to interact in groups with domestic students. The two stories are worlds apart and show the importance for me as a lecturer to ensure groups engage in team-building prior to giving them the task. (Project Log, November, 2010)

In Xiu's negative experience of group work the descriptor for the course showed teamwork as being taught, practised and assessed. For the assessment the students were required to present their report as a group. The actions and behaviours of the group did not allow Xiu to engage in a way to develop teamwork skills. Xiu was not able to adopt a deep approach during the process phase as a result of process events resulting in her disengagement from the group.

5.8 Themes in negative experience

As with the positive experiences, to apply a conditions-focused approach (Hackman, 2012) to thematic data, the process events must first be understood. The thematic analysis represents the individual perception of a group experience. Both Nadia and Xiu had reported the reason for their negative experience was, from their perspective, the group was characterised by conflict, poor communication and other members of the group were not inclusive. In both cases, the group formed sub-groups. The thematic analysis through my Student Group Experience Model, identified process gains and process losses during the process events. In the case of Nadia and Xiu's negative experience, there were more process losses than gains. Other students who reported negative experiences displayed similar themes. From analysis through my Student Group Experience Model, the process events which contributed to the internal characteristics and a negative experience included an inappropriate or no socialisation process, poor communication and conflict. Often the language and cultural differences were not addressed within the group, and the Chinese international students felt excluded from the group. The task processing was characterised by individuals performing tasks and 'doing what they had to, to get the task done'. This suggested a situational strategic approach to engagement with the task.

5.9 Discussion on thematic analysis

The previous section presented a section of the data analysed through the thematic analysis. Of the twelve undergraduate business students who participated in my research, the experiences of two students have been depicted in full. The thematic analysis of all twelve stories of the students portrayed a wide variety of experiences for both the Australian domestic students and the Chinese international students. For both groups, the themes which emerged were presented in my Student Group Experience Model in terms of process losses and process gains and these themes were, the socialisation process, communication and task processing.

Whilst each of these were highlighted by both Australian domestic and Chinese international students, there appeared to be a variation in how these impacted between the two groups. The Australia domestic students were more inclined to note these process events as having an influence on the way they produced the assessment. The Chinese international students however, spoke of these process events in terms of how they related to their ability to engage in the group. Language and cultural difficulties is well documented as a barrier to international students studying in Anglo-western universities and this also resonated in the stories from the Chinese international students.

The stories varied in terms of positive or negative, based on their ability to engage in the group. Both Nadia and Xiu's story had highlighted this in particular. Their two experiences had been vastly different, given they entered the group with the same student context factor. The group context factors had also influenced the way in which the students categorised their experience. The themes which emerged included lecturer support, assessment and leadership in the group. The degree to which lecturer support influenced the students experience varied. Xiu and Lian both reported support from the lecturer had assisted them in their positive experience.

A 'good grade' in the assessment was seen as a positive by many of the students, who expressed their experience as negative. In these cases, the students reported that the group divided up tasks and brought their information back together at the end. Apart from Ning, who felt there was no leader in the group, the students all highlighted the emergent nature of leadership. In each of the positive experiences, the students said the leader had been supportive and inclusive. The exception being Nadia, who had emerged as the leader. In the negative experiences, there had been conflict in the group.

The nature of emergent leadership made me reflect on my analysis process for two reasons. First, it appeared emergent leadership was a process event in itself. Organisational behaviour literature such as Hackman's Group Effectiveness Model (Hackman, 1987), show leadership as a contextual factor, predetermined prior to the group forming. Therefore, I had categorised leadership in the group context. The students' stories had reported that unlike the theories and literature around groups and teams, leadership had emerged as part of the socialisation process, (in the case of Zhen) or had been an on-going emergence (in the case of Melanie). In cases where there had been no socialisation process, the leader had started on the task, for example Xiu. This evidence would appear to place leadership in student groups as a process event. Lencioni's (2012) work on dysfunctional teams also noted the role of the leader as critical to how a group will overcome and address dysfunctional behaviours. Yet it appeared if the emergence of leadership was considered a process event in itself, it may be the reason for dysfunctional behaviours. To establish trustworthiness in narrative data, smoothing and intersubjectivity need to be considered (Webster & Mertova, 2007). To do this I felt I needed to re-analyse the data, to confirm events.

Second, a thematic analysis assists in answering 'what' questions. My analysis had brought to light themes which could assist in addressing the research sub-questions, "what have been Australia domestic and Chinese international student experiences with group work?" and, "what are the critical context factors and process events influencing these experience?" The final sub-question, "how do critical events impact on the students' ability to develop teamwork skills?" still remained unanswered. Webster and Mertova's (2007) critical events approach offered a framework in which I could classify themes into critical and supporting events. Critical events may be both positive and negative and are unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This resonated with the data analysis in the thematic analysis, and allowed for deeper analysis of leadership as a process event. The critical events analysis goes deeper into the emerging themes from the narratives to enable analysis of significant process events and is presented in Chapter 6.

5.10 Conclusion

Chapter 5 has presented the thematic analysis for my research. The stories privileged from twelve undergraduate business students have revealed emerging themes, which influence their perception of their group work experiences. These experiences were categorised as positive or negative and showed context factors and process events. Analysis through my Student Group Experience Model showed these factors impact on the way a student can engage in group work and this has

implications for the development of teamwork skills. The following chapter presents the data analysed using a critical events analysis.

CHAPTER 6: CRITICAL EVENTS ANALYSIS

Critical events are 'critical' because of their impact and profound effect on whoever experiences such an event. (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 77)

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the thematic analysis of my data, which was conducted on all of the participants' interviews in a case-centred way to identify recurring patterns (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In line with Ewick and Silbey (2003), the focus was the preservation of the story from this, displaying emerging themes through my Student Group Experience Model. Process events were shown to have significant impact on a student's ability to engage in group work. As Webster and Mertova's (2007) framework enables, I wanted to further 'burrow' into the data and the themes in the process events to understand how leadership influenced either positively or negatively, the way in which the students' engaged in group work activities. Leadership had initially been framed as a context factor, yet the themes which emerged from the students' stories, showed that, unlike organisational behaviour theory, leadership was a process event. The following chapter presents the data which was re-analysed using a critical events analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Re-analysing the data using this method enables for trustworthiness in the data analysis and confirmation of the themes which emerged in the previous chapter.

6.2 Presentation of critical events data

Reporting critical events of narratives is not easily summarised into data tables; rather there is a need for the context for the reader (Webster & Mertova, 2007). As stated in the data analysis procedure, it became apparent that the process events in the students' stories had impacted on their learning experiences. A narrative sketch was one way Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested for presentation of critical events. A narrative sketch is influenced by two criteria; broadening and burrowing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Broadening, as the name suggests, places emphasis on generalisations and wider focuses, whereas burrowing places emphasis on actual events, the qualities in those events and reflects on the meanings for future considerations (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Webster & Mertova, 2007). By analysing and reporting the

narratives with a burrowing focus, it allows a human-centred focus and encourages theory-practice relationship in educational issues (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Webster and Mertova (2007) provide a framework for presenting a narrative sketch for critical event data with a burrowing approach. This framework is a conceptual map which identifies three sequences; critical, like and other, which can be adapted and applied to narrative studies (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The adaptation for my research is shown in Figure 6.1.

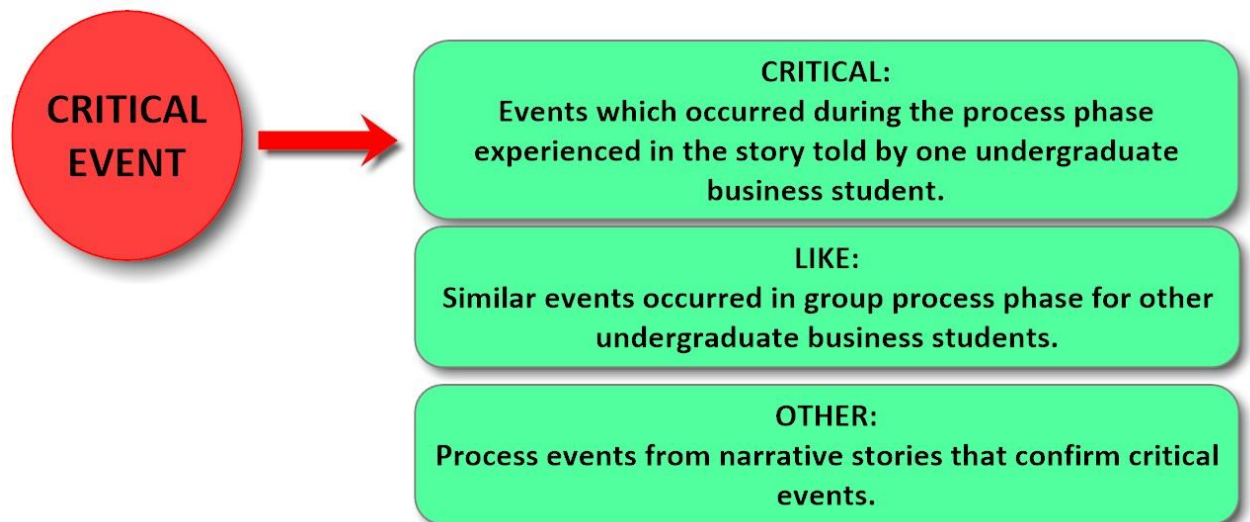


Figure 6.1: Presenting critical events data. Adapted from (Webster & Mertova, 2007)

The *critical* represents an event in the story that impacted on the individual student. This event may have changed the perception of the student of the phenomena being studied and can be internal or external in nature (Webster & Mertova, 2007). These critical events are identified as having an impact on the outcomes on the student telling the story. *Like* represents similar events which occurred to other students. A review of these events is useful in confirming and broadening the issues which arise from the identified process event (Webster & Mertova, 2007). *Other* events are interwoven into the critical and like events and represent the process events which confirm the critical event. The critical events analysis uses the literature from Chapters 2 and 3 to weave the story.

Although Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested narrative data is not easily represented in tables, for my analysis I felt it would be useful to summarise these events into tables to develop a clear picture in my mind of the context factors and process events students identified in their narratives. Using the thematic summaries, the data is presented by taking an excerpt from the experiences

displayed in full in Chapter 5 and confirming events through ‘like’ stories from ‘other’ experiences.

The thematic analysis had revealed the socialisation process, group communication and task processing as process events which had impacted on their experience and outcomes. In thinking about my research sub-question, “how do critical events impact on students’ ability to develop teamwork skills?” I noted that these were significant themes. The over-arching theme appeared, but not confirmed to be emergent leadership. Therefore, the critical event under scrutiny is emergent leadership and the influence on process events. As emergent leadership is an internal process event, it may have changed the perception of the student in their group work experience. I felt, as with the thematic analysis, the critical events analysis should be categorised by a positive and negative experience.

6.3 Leadership as the critical event

During the thematic analysis it became apparent events as told by the students had changed their own perceptions of their experience. As Webster and Mertova (2007) noted, a critical event represents an event which impacted on the performance of the student as well as their understanding and experience; this will inform future behaviours and understanding (Webster & Mertova, 2007). I reviewed the process events from my model including emergent leadership as a process event and framed my analysis around the sequence of events once the critical event, emergent leadership, had occurred. As previously mentioned, the critical represents an event in the story that impacted on the individual student. A like event is classified if it is repeated in the context and method used but with different people. Other represents events that take place at the same time as the critical and like events. This is shown in Figure 6.2:

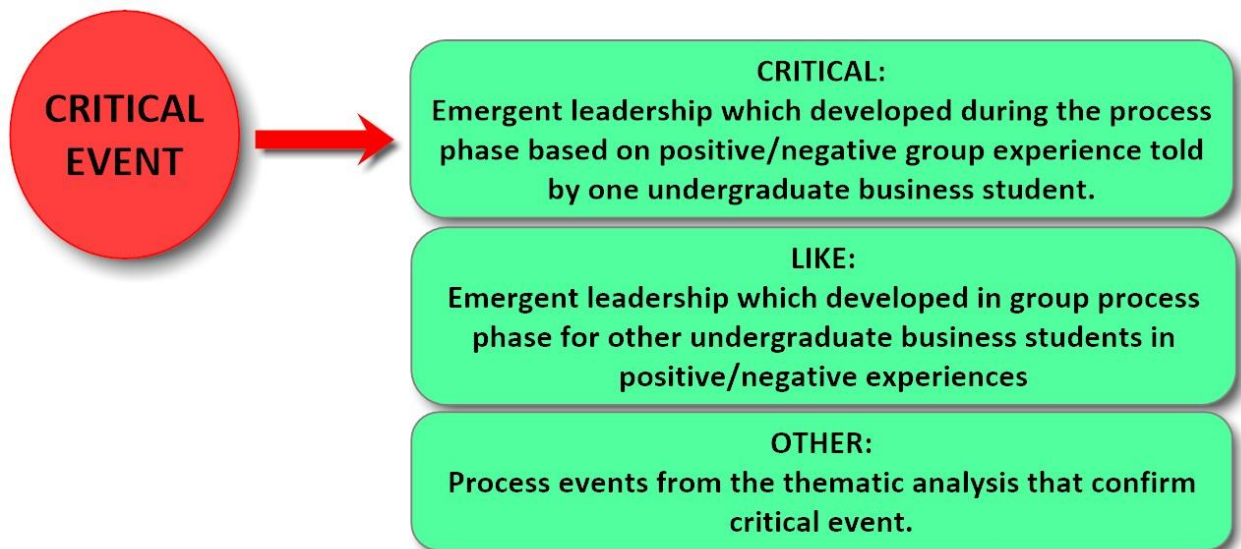


Figure 6.2: Critical Events Analysis (Adapted from Webster & Mertova, 2007)

A critical event discussed by a student in the thematic analysis in Chapter 5 is displayed to add context to the reader. These critical events are identified as having an impact on the outcomes of the participant telling the story. Like represents similar events which occurred to other students and a review of these events is useful in confirming and broadening the issues which arise from the identified critical event (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Other events are interwoven into the critical and like events and represent the impact the critical and like events had on the themes which emerged in Chapter 5. I then grouped the experience into positive and negative. In developing the framework for the critical events analysis I referred back to my thematic summaries. These thematic summaries provide an outline for the reader. The summaries of the representative data in the critical events analysis are presented at the beginning of each discussion. The thematic summaries created for the critical events analysis are attached as Appendix 7.

6.4 Critical events analysis

In the thematic analysis, these process events were displayed in my Student Group Experience Model as process gains and process losses in line with Hackman's (1987) Group Effectiveness Model. These process gains or losses influenced the student's perception of the experience and their ability to engage in the group activity. That emergent nature of leadership as not a context factor, but a process event, was evident.

Leadership within groups is critical to the success and effectiveness of a group (Hackman, 1987). All of the students interviewed noted that there was no assigned leader to their groups and

leadership within the group had emerged, with the exception of Ning, who reported no leader in the group. Previous literature on leadership acknowledges that leadership influences the socialisation process (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003), communication (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004) and task accomplishment (Northouse, 2015). The following represents a sample of the way in which I conducted the critical events analysis. The sample presents two students, referred to as like students' positive stories and one like student's negative story.

6.5 Narrative sketch: Positive experiences

In the thematic analysis in Chapter 5, Xiu had spoken of a positive experience in which the emergent leader had been supportive. For Xiu in this experience, she had been made to feel welcome by the group in the socialisation process. Therefore, she was able to work collaboratively with other group members and felt communication with the group had been effective.

In that group, everyone is so relaxed at the very beginning, you need to know each other and everyone talks about their experience in groups. And then my turn to introduce myself, they actually are quite interested because of my background and they are interested to listen to my perspective. So then I mentioned that bad experience. One girl said, "oh, don't worry, we don't do that", so I actually got really involved in that group. [Xiu]

The lecturer had been supportive of Xiu and had allowed time for the socialisation of the group to occur. Socialisation was shown as a critical factor in my Student Group Experience Model. In the initial socialisation, the leader in the group showed a relationship focus by initiating introductions and acknowledging diversity in the group. From Xiu's reflection on the experience, she felt the group had a focus on group goals, they were accountable and collaborative. Xiu had been made feel part of the group. The leader of the group had built positive synergy in the socialisation process which created the low-level of inertia reflected in Xiu's recount of the experience. Not only had Xiu been able to collaborate with other members of the group, she could engage actively in the task, which equated to process gains for Xiu during the experience. This also suggested she had been able to adopt a deep learning approach.

The leadership in this group experience appeared to be appropriate. The leader had been both task focused and relationship focused which allowed Xiu to perform effectively within the group. The thematic analysis showed the positive process events of socialisation, communication and task

processing occurred. This was shown in Xiu's outcomes as a positive experience and a good grade. The outcomes for Xiu in this experience had been positive and the group also received a high grade for the assessment. A like event further illustrates and confirms the experience of the critical event (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A like student's positive experience with group work was that of Lian.

6.5.1 Lian's like story

Lian is a 21 year old female international student from southern China. She speaks Mandarin and English. She came to Australia through a partnership program with her university in China. She had completed two years of her degree in China. She came to Australia to complete her Bachelor of Business. She was encouraged to study abroad by her parents. Lian felt confident speaking English in a one-on-one situation, but found difficulties in groups. She also found the Australian accent hard to understand.

Lian had attributed her positive experience to both the grade received for the assessment and the ease with which this group had worked together. The thematic analysis of Lian's narrative showed the positive nature of the socialisation process, communication and the way the group went about the task, this narrative sketch is shown in the thematic summary in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Thematic Summary: Lian

LIAN	Positive Experience	Examples from Narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Good grade & Group process events	<i>My performance in the group presentation and the grade. The people in my group said my performance was good, they were saying it was a success</i>	Good grade and the group were supportive PEM: Low-level of inertia	Enjoyed being in a heterogeneous group
Socialisation	Inclusive - group took time to get to know each other	<i>The lecturer asked some native speakers, we joined with the native speakers because as one group we needed two native speakers and there were two international students, I was happy because they wanted us to practice English and introduced themselves</i>	PEM: Level of inertia set, Lian felt all members involved. GEM: Positive synergy	Positive: Lian's English was quite poor. She felt that being in the group would help her practice her English
Communication	Issues with second language worked through by group - practiced English	<i>Sometimes we need to write something... because maybe the English isn't our mother language we can't spell, so the natives will help us to spell, then they write the ideas on the paper so then we understand the ideas and then we know how to write the report. It's very helpful</i>	PEM: Level of inertia had been set in socialisation phase, group inclusive	Positive: Even though there were language difficulties the group found ways to include Lian
Task Processing	Group worked together on task	<i>We have discussion with the native speakers about our report workshop. We found information for the questions from materials and the case studies. There's a native speaker, maybe sometimes they speak very quickly and very long lasting; very, very long, and then I can't understand them sometimes. I asked the students in the class to put these ideas together so we know how to write it</i>	PEM: As the group had set positive inertia in the socialisation phase. Lian was able to work collaboratively with the group	Positive: Interdependent collaboration - positive synergy
Leadership	Emergent	<i>The person who leads, she lets everyone speak their ideas maybe someone feels they cannot speak in the group, she asks their ideas</i>	PEM: Leader and group had set level of inertia in the socialisation process being task focus and ensuring all members were included. GEM: build positive synergy	Appropriate leadership - overcome inertia, increase members confidence
Group Size	Small Heterogeneous	<i>It was a good group because it was a small group; I think a small group is better</i>	In line with literature on small groups - contributed to positive group outcomes	Suggests small groups assists with communication, this was the case in this narrative. Process events positive for Lian
Assessment	Presentation	<i>We received a very good mark, I was happy</i>	PEM: Goal focus	Positive outcome and grade
Lecturer Support	Supportive	<i>Sometimes I ask for help from the lecturer to understand what we are doing. she also helps the group</i>	PEM: suggests group required outside assistance to move forward. This assistance had enabled to group to move forward	Lecturer supportive and had assisted Lian

The critical events analysis showed the positive effect the emergent leadership had on this group experience.

The person who leads, she lets everyone speak their ideas and maybe someone feels they cannot speak in the group, so she asks their ideas. [Lian]

The group had been a small heterogeneous group and Lian had felt this was a good size. I asked Lian how the group had formed and she replied:

The lecturer asked some native speakers, we joined with two native speakers and two international students. [Lian]

Lian was also very happy to be able to practise her English. One of the Australian domestic students took the role of leader. The group socialisation had been inclusive for Lian and she felt very positive about the experience. At times during the experience Lian had difficulties understanding what the others in the group were saying or the meaning behind it.

Sometimes we need to write something, because English is not our mother language we can't spell. There's a native speaker, maybe some times they speak very quickly and very long. Then I can't understand them. [Lian]

From Lian's perspective, this was not a process loss as the group and the female leader of the group in particular, assisted:

The native speakers help me. If I can't spell they will write it down for me. It's very helpful. The girl who leads, she asks me if I understand and asks me my ideas. [Lian]

In Lian's experience, even though she had difficulties at times, the leader of the group had found ways to include Lian and assist her. For Lian this was a process gain. A low-level of inertia (Gersick, 1988) in this group had been set in the inclusive nature of the socialisation. Although Lian had difficulties understanding the Australian domestic students at times, she felt included in the task processing. She said:

I read the textbook and research some information on the internet and bring to the group. [Lian]

The outcomes for Lian from this experience were positive, she received a good grade for the assessment and also felt supported by the group. The assessment was a group presentation which Lian participated in. She said the group had congratulated her after the presentation:

Most of the people [in my group] feel my performance is good. They were saying it was a success. [Lian]

The leadership in this group experience appeared to be appropriate, the leader had been both task focused and relationship focused which allowed the Lian to feel included and supported in the group experience. Communication issues were acknowledged, and the group, in particular the group leader, found ways to assist Lian to perform effectively with the group. The thematic analysis showed these positive process events occurred of socialisation, communication and task processing. This was shown through Lian's outcomes as a positive experience and a good grade.

6.5.2 Wen's like story

Wen is a 21-year-old male from southern China. He speaks Mandarin and English. Wen came to Australia through a partnership program with his college in China. He had completed two years of his degree in China. He came to Australia to complete his Bachelor of Business. He was encouraged to studying abroad by his parents. Wen felt confident speaking English in a one-on-one situation, but found difficulties in groups. He also found the Australian accent hard to understand.

Another like student experience was that of Wen. His thematic summary is shown as Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Thematic Summary: Wen

WEN	Positive Experience	Examples from Narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Good grade & group was supportive	<i>My group was very kind and I liked working with them</i>	Group involved Wen in the socialisation process, worked through the communication issues and worked on the task together	Positive: Enjoyed being in a heterogeneous group
Socialisation	Inclusive - group took time to get to know each other	<i>This group it is small we get to know each other, they all talk to me</i>	PEM: Low- level of inertia set, Wen felt all members involved GEM: Created positive synergy	Positive: Focus on outcome and relationships
Communication	Issues with second language worked through by group - practiced English	<i>We discuss together and communicate our ideas and I find some male speak too low or too quickly and with an Australian accent, so it's hard to understand I think. And the females may sound very good; they speak more clearly and are very kind, yeah</i>	PEM: Level of inertia had been set in socialisation phase, group inclusive	Positive: Even with language difficulties Wen felt he could be part of the group.
Task Processing	Group worked together on task	<i>I have a talk to my group and get ideas from them and then I will choose which one is best and write down the points and give back to them and they look at the plans and they give me some advices and we get the final idea and do like this plan. Yeah, we just discuss the idea</i>	PEM: As the group had set positive inertia in the socialisation phase did not reach a midpoint of change, work continually on task	Interdependent collaboration, suggests wen could apply a deep approach
Leadership	Emergent	<i>I know I need to practise our English, but we sometimes do not know what the native speakers mean. A girl in the group; she leads us and helps me.</i>	PEM: Leader and group had set level of inertia in the socialisation process being task focus and ensuring all members were included. GEM: Positive synergy	Appropriate leadership overcomes inertia, increase Wen's confidence
Group Size	Small heterogeneous	<i>this group it is small we get to know each other</i>	In line with literature on small groups contributed to positive group outcomes	Suggests small groups assists with communication, this was the case in this narrative. Process events positive for Wen
Assessment	Presentation	<i>my group had responsibility and some very splendid ideas for the presentation, we got a good grade</i>	PEM: Goal focus	Good grade - positive
Lecturer Support	Lecturer support	<i>The tutor and teacher was very helpful and very kind to the international people.</i>	PEM: suggests group required outside assistance to move forward. Not required as group worked on tasks together	Lecturer supportive and influenced group process

Wen also described his experience as a positive one due to the inclusive nature of the group and the grade the group received for the task.

I know I need to practise English, but we sometimes do not know what the native speakers mean. This makes it very hard, a girl in the group; she leads us and helps me. [Wen]

He said that the other members of his group had asked his name and had talked to him about what part of China he was from. This created a positive experience for Wen during the socialisation process of the group, which set a low-level of inertia (Gersick, 1988) within the group. This created positive synergy within the group. As Wen noted:

This group it is small we get to know each other, they all talk to me. [Wen]

The group was a small heterogeneous group with both Australian domestic and Chinese international students. The influence of positive leadership and socialisation made Wen feel included in the group. Wen was anxious about his language abilities, which can often cause international students to put up barriers. Yet, when he had difficulties understanding, the domestic students in the group found ways to assist him.

We discuss together and communicate our ideas and I find some male speak too low or too quickly and with an Australian accent, so it's hard to understand I think. And the females may sound very good; they speak more clearly and are very kind and help me. [Wen]

Poor language abilities in international students is well-documented yet the leadership had assisted with communication in the group. Wen enjoyed this group experience because of his inclusion in the group. He was able to engage with the group and assist with the task:

I have a talk to my group and get ideas from them and then I will choose which one is best and write down the points and give back to them and they look at the plans and they give me some advices and we get the final idea and do like this plan. Yeah, we just discuss the idea. [Wen]

The leader of the group had built positive synergy in the socialisation process which created a low-level of inertia in the group. Wen appeared to collaborate in the task processing and was able to engage with both the task and the group.

6.5.3 Leadership as a critical event

Positive process events in the socialisation process, communication, and task processing, were the common themes to emerge as positive experiences from the thematic analysis, displayed in Chapter 5. Re-analysing the data through the critical events approach added to the thematic analysis by confirming and burrowing into the connections in these positive process events. The occurrence of the number of related events (like events) showed, in these experiences, the significant event which influenced these positive process events was emergent leadership. Other events, confirmed the positive process events relationship with outcomes for the students. This is displayed in Figure 6.3.

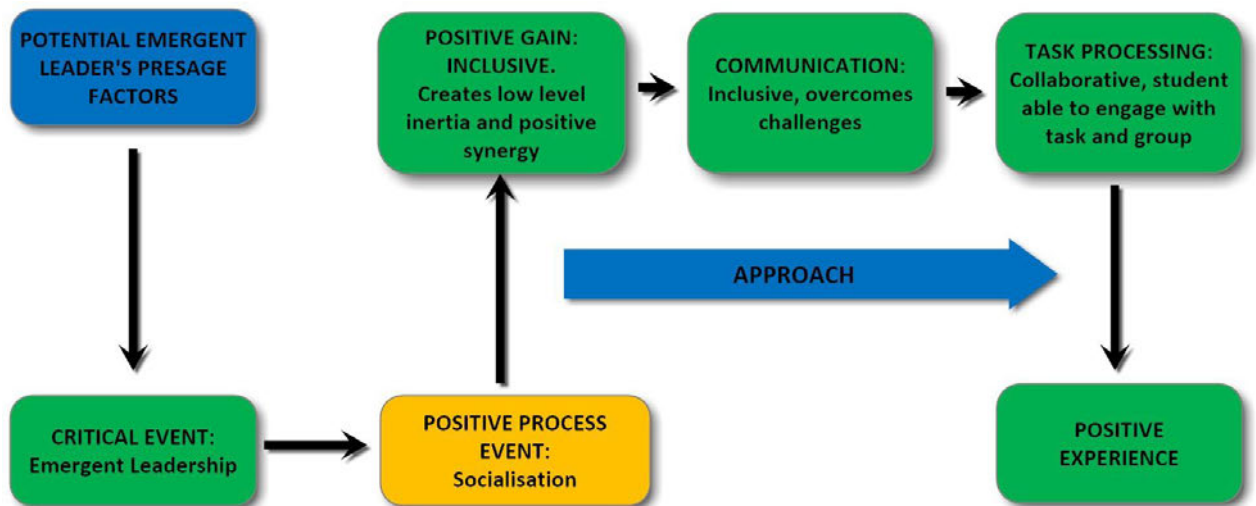


Figure 6.3: Leadership as the critical event in positive experiences

6.6 Narrative sketch: Negative experiences

The next section of the chapter, provides a representation of the critical events analysis for negative experiences. In the thematic analysis, a number of students categorised their experience as negative. Interestingly, most of these students were Australian domestic students, with the exception of Ning and Xiu. In the thematic analysis in Chapter 5, Nadia had described one of her experiences as negative. Initially, in her experience the leader in the group emerged.

There was a leader that became clear early on and there were people who... It was sort of task specific, like making a timetable to complete the task, no one agreed on how, so each group were just doing their tasks themselves. [Nadia]

But as the group moved to task processing, other members of the group had begun to try and assert their dominance. She attributed this to a lack of leadership and conflict with in the group:

Well everybody dominated and wanted to have their say and it was very ... it was just not constructive. [Nadia]

The leadership in this group experience appeared to be inappropriate, the leader had been task focused, but ineffective in the socialisation process, communication and task processing. Nadia eventually took a leadership role in the group, but this was not until the group had confronted each other of their issues. The thematic analysis of process events in in Section 5.7.3 and Section 5.7.7. showed these as negative process events for Nadia. The outcomes for Nadia in this experience had been negative even though the group had received a good grade, she felt she could have completed the task better on her own. A like event further illustrates and confirms the experience of the critical event (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A like student's negative experience with group work was that of Amber.

6.6.1 Amber's like story

Amber is a 22-year-old Australian domestic student enrolled in a combined degree, Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Laws. Her business major is Human Resources Management. She was born in Australia of second generation migrants from India and speaks English and Punjabi fluently. She chose to come to university because her sister was enrolled at the same university. Amber did not want to be on her own as she was moving out of home for the first time. She also chose a regional university because she felt she would be safer.

Amber had initially described her experience as one which had both positive and negative elements. On investigation, it was ascertained the reasons she had attributed these was the grade she had received as positive.

We did the report, it went well, we were all relieved, we were happy, but it was a fluke.
[Amber]

Amber's thematic summary is included as Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Thematic Summary: Amber

AMBER	Negative Experience	Examples from narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	The emergent leader in the group	<i>My worst memory of being in any group, being in a horrendous situation was with that boy. Like I remember I just... I don't like him now. I just don't like him. He's been in my classes after that and I just never liked him after that</i>	GEM: Inappropriate emergent leadership	Negative: Conflict with leader
Socialisation	The group did not take time to get to know one another	<i>We just started the task, I think it would have helped if we did we may have been more comfortable with each other</i>	PEM: Lack of socialisation, set the level of inertia in the group	Negative: No time taken for socialisation
Communication	Poor communication	<i>I got along with two of the group members but not him and that was really why...I think it was just a difference in opinions all the time. He kind of wanted his way and I kind of... I wouldn't say I wanted my way but I just wanted him to consider everyone else when he wouldn't</i>	GEM: Conflict within the group, causing group to break into sub-groups. Negative synergy	Negative: Conflict within the group had caused sub-groups to form
Task Processing	Group divided up tasks	<i>What we did was we split work up. So we did work like together and we got our ideas down together but we split it up so we could go into further detail on our own and then I mean you just had to meet up, we just had to do it</i>	PEM; Group 'did what they had to do' to perform the task. GEM: Minimal collaborative effort.	The task was performed by two sub-groups. Lack of collaborative effort.
Leadership	Emergent leadership	<i>I wouldn't say maybe a dictator; maybe he was trying to take on the leader role but he just was going about it all wrong</i>	GEM: Leader did not overcome inertia, or build positive synergy	Negative: Inappropriate leadership shown by the lack of socialisation, level of conflict and development of sub-groups
Group Size	Small group	<i>It was a small group.</i>	GEM: In line with research on small groups, did not appear to assist group	Group size did not assist in creating positive events
Assessment	Presentation	<i>We did the report, it went well, we were all relieved, we were happy, but it was a fluke</i>	PEM: The outcome was not dependent on the group performing the task together	The grade was a positive for Amber regardless of the negative process events
Lecturer Support	Lack of lecturer support	<i>I actually said something to the lecturer, but at the end of the day she acted like we were children. But I would put it down to we were just being children but in saying that now, I really wouldn't want to be in a group with that guy again</i>	PEM: Lack of support to assist the group	Negative impact as the group continued to have conflict

When asked about why it was a negative experience, Amber spoke about the group and in particular the leader in the group.

Yes. I think he was... I wouldn't say maybe a dictator; maybe he was trying to take on the leader role but he just was going about it all wrong. [Amber]

The group was a small heterogeneous group. Amber felt the leader of the group had made it difficult to engage in the task. The leadership influenced the way the group went about the socialisation process. When asked about the initial introductions, she said the leader of the group had started on the task. He spoke about how they were going to approach the task without consulting the other members of the group. Amber felt:

It was annoying that he couldn't see past himself to the group and that was probably just what irritated me most of all. [Amber]

The initial socialisation process had been a process loss for Amber. This had created the level of inertia within the group, which continued throughout her experience. This created negative synergy. She then added:

I think it would have helped if we did we may have been more comfortable with each other. [Amber]

I asked her about communication within the group. She said that there had been a lot of conflict in the group. Amber had disagreed with the way the leader made decisions in the group and the way he treated other members. For her, this was also a process loss.

He kind of wanted his way and I kind of... I wouldn't say I wanted my way but I just wanted him to consider everyone else when he wouldn't. [Amber]

We then spoke about how the group organised the task. Due to the negative synergy within the group, the group divided up tasks. This created a negative experience for Amber which appears to be explained in the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988; Gersick, 1989). As the first meeting is considered critical, this group had defined the parameters of their situation early and set the level of inertia early. Amber's experience had been one of process losses. The level of inertia within the group had caused them to reach a temporal midpoint in which a change occurred (Gersick, 1989). Due to the negative synergy within the group, they eventually divided up the

tasks and came together at the end, given the time constraints on the assessment. The group ‘did what they had to do’ to get the task done. This suggested the nature of the leadership in this group was inappropriate. Amber explained:

What we did was we split work up. So we did work like together and we got our ideas down together but we split it up so we could go into further detail on our own and then I mean you just had to meet up, we just had to do it. [Amber]

The conflict within the group and the leader had caused the group to engage a strategic approach to getting the task done. A strategic approach is based on assessment requirements and students’ abilities (Cassidy & Eachus, 2000). In this case group process through the nature of the emergent leadership and the leader’s influence on the group’s approach and level of engagement had interfered with their ability to perform the task. This was through the nature of the emergent leadership and the leaders influence on the groups approach and level of engagement. The way in which this group went about the task suggested they did not engage as a group in the process phase and therefore Amber could not develop teamwork skills. Given the students received a good grade for the assessment it seems the outcomes were not based on their ability to work together.

6.6.2 Cooper’s like story

Another like student response was Cooper who described his experience as a negative one. The reason for this negative experience had been the process events and his poor grade due to the peer evaluation associated with the task.

Cooper is a 24-year-old Australian domestic student enrolled in a Bachelor of Business degree. His business major is accounting. Cooper worked overseas after leaving school and then came to university as a 20-year-old. He felt he often had differing opinions to other students as he had ‘lived a life’ before coming to university. Cooper was very involved in College activities, in which he had taken leadership roles.

Cooper said he had many experiences of group work at university and mostly enjoyed working with others. He said in most group experiences he would take a leadership role. Cooper was also dedicated to his study and the way he described his study program suggested he would apply a deep learning approach. The experience which stood out most in his mind and the one he wanted to discuss, was a negative experience. Cooper’s thematic summary is shown as Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Thematic Summary: Cooper

COOPER	Negative Experience	Examples from narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Process events poor grade due to his lack of engagement	<i>I just didn't like the unit or the others in my group</i>	PEM: Set by emergent leader during socialisation/ forming	Presences of individual accountability. Focus on individual goal of grade
Socialisation	Limited as leader was task focused	<i>No we didn't really introduce ourselves, apart from names. I didn't know the people in the group and I didn't really pull my weight</i>	PEM: Level of inertia set, task focus, and lack of all members involved	Negative: No socialisation process
Communication	Withdrew from group as his ideas were dismissed	<i>I made some suggestions and they were dismissed because as far as the merits of the subject matter were concerned they thought they were incorrect it was their opinion that wasn't going to help us achieve the mark</i>	PEM: As inertia was set, group continued on same path with Cooper feeling excluded	Negative: Ideas were dismissed therefore Cooper withdrew from the group
Task Processing	Agreed with leader separated tasks and conformed	<i>The others in the group were all details people and wanted to compile lists and issue responsibilities and get this whole bureaucracy going in a group of four people and that's just not my style</i>	GEM: Lack of interdependent collaboration - negative synergy	Negative: Not all members of the group could engage in the task
Leadership	Emergent	<i>I just didn't like the way she was going about the work and didn't like the subject so I really was up against it from the get go</i>	PEM: Leader had set level of inertia being task focus and not ensuring all members were included. GEM: Ineffective leadership, negative synergy	Inappropriate leadership - did not overcome inertia, increase members confidence or (GEM) build positive synergy
Group Size	Small - homogeneous	<i>The group that I was working with was allocated, I think there was three other people in the group, and it was a pretty small group.</i>	In line with literature on small groups - yet did not contribute to positive group outcomes	GEM: Suggests small groups assists with communication, this was not the case in this narrative. Process events caused condition to not be effective
Assessment	Presentation	<i>I failed that assessment because of the others in the group. At the beginning of the exercise we were asked to appraise our other group members I gave all my other group members full marks because they did the work</i>	PEM: Did not engage in group activities due to level of inertia	Outcome not dependent on the group's ability to work together
Lecturer Support	Not supportive	<i>I didn't really see the point.</i>	PEM: suggests group required outside assistance to move forward. This did not occur, group divided up tasks. GEM: Need for a manager-led team not self-directing team	Cooper dis-engaged with the group and did not feel the lecturer was supportive

The group was a small homogenous group of Australian domestic students. Cooper spoke about his negative experience and the actions of the emergent leader.

I just didn't like the way she was going about the work and didn't like the subject so I really was up against it from the get go. [Cooper]

The group had a limited socialisation which set the level of inertia in the group. He said the leader of the group had organised the group immediately and did not even ask everyone's name. He said:

I didn't really know the people in the group, so I didn't really pull my weight. [Cooper]

He said at the second meeting, there was more of an effort to know each other:

We didn't really introduce ourselves, apart from names. [Cooper]

During this second meeting the actions of others within the group had caused him to disengage.

I made some suggestions and they were dismissed because as far as the merits of the subject matter were concerned they thought they were incorrect it was just an opinion that wasn't going to help us achieve the mark. [Cooper]

The process event which caused Cooper's disengagement occurred when Cooper attempted to communicate with the group, but his ideas were dismissed by the leader of the group. This was a process loss for Cooper. From this point, Cooper did not engage further with other members of the group. Cooper read the text book during the group activities, not actively engaging in task processing and therefore could not develop teamwork skills.

The critical events analysis showed the impact the emergent leadership had on Cooper in the socialisation process, communication and the way in which the group approached the task, without his input. From this Cooper said:

I failed that assessment because of the others in the group. At the beginning of the exercise the tutor asked us to appraise our other group members. I gave all my other group members full marks because they did the work. I didn't like the unit and the others did the work. [Cooper]

The experience for Cooper was one of process losses. The initial meeting by the group had set a level of inertia within the group. The emergent leader in this group had not built positive synergy

in the socialisation process which further influenced the communication within the group and created negative synergy. Cooper had not, collaborated, cooperated or coordinated tasks and objectives with other group members. Even with a peer evaluation as part of the assessment, this did not encourage Cooper or the group to engage in the task or the group.

6.6.3 Leadership as a critical event

As with the positive events, the stories of negative events in the socialisation process, communication, and task processing, were the common themes to emerge in negative experiences in the thematic analysis, displayed in Chapter 5. Re-analysing the data through the critical events approach, added to the thematic analysis by confirming and burrowing into the connections in these negative process events. The occurrence of the number of related events (like events) showed, in these experiences, the significant event which influenced these negative process events was the emergent leadership. Other events confirmed the negative process events relationship with outcomes for the students. This is displayed in Figure 6.4.

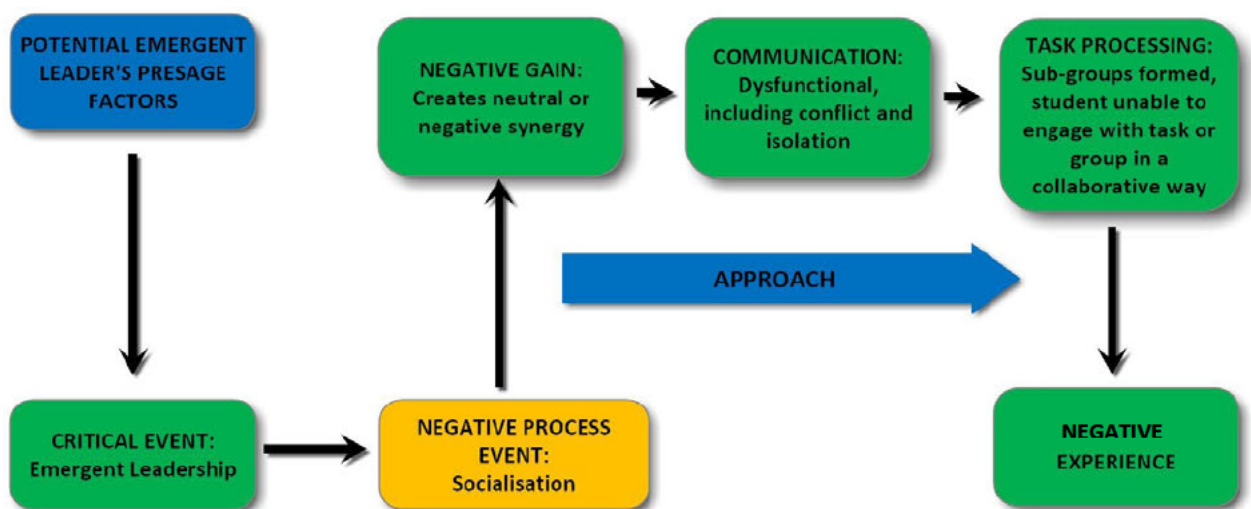


Figure 6.4: Leadership as the critical event in negative experiences

6.7 Conclusion

The thematic analysis had shown the socialisation process, communication and task processing as the major themes influencing the experiences of both Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students experience. This chapter has represented the data from my critical events analysis by 'burrowing' into the 'condition in place'; leadership. The following chapter draws together the outcomes from the two analysis chapters and my reflections

on my research. It also considers the strengths and weaknesses of my research and evaluates the conceptual framework applied to the data.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Indeed, many key leadership functions are fulfilled, for better or for worse, by the time a team is only a few minutes old. (Hackman, 2012, p. 439)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section of the chapter presents an overview of my research findings by drawing together the outcomes from my thematic analysis and critical events analysis to address my research question “How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students’ experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?” This section is divided into four areas. First the research findings are outlined and discussed through the lens of the literature which was utilised to develop the conceptual model for my research. The second area evaluates the conceptual framework applied to the data. The third area considers the strengths and weakness of the research. The final area in the first section discusses the implications of the research.

The next section of the chapter concludes the thesis by discussing contributions of my research, the implications of the research and suggesting practical applications for students and lecturers from the research findings. The chapter presents reflections on my research, through the process and my own teaching practice. Finally, the chapter identifies suggestions for future research.

7.2 Research findings

My research set out to answer the following three research sub-questions from the perspective of undergraduate business students studying at one Australian university. The sub-questions were:

1. What have been Australian domestic and Chinese international student experiences with group work?
2. What are the critical context factors and process events influencing these experience?
3. How do critical events impact of their ability to develop teamwork skills?

The research was based on narrative inquiry. Through interviews with six Australian domestic and six Chinese international students, I gathered rich data on the students’ perspectives. In this

section the major findings of the research, in relation to each of these questions, are summarised and discussed in light of previous research. The section concludes with a discussion on how these questions assisted in answering the overarching research question:

How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?

In Chapter 3, my Student Group Experience Model was developed using three models from education and organisational behaviour to assist in the analysis of my data. The following section reflects on these models and their usefulness in answering the research questions.

7.2.1 3P Model

Biggs' 3P Model (2003b), offered a range of considerations for the 'conditions in place' when group work is the teaching method. The student presage factors referred to the predispositions students bring with them to the learning environment (Biggs, 2003b). These characteristics included language and culture, expectations, prior knowledge, motivation and perception. As Chapters 5 and 6 report, the students who participated had varying student presage factors. The presage factors with the most variability were ability with the English language and the cultural aspects of working in groups. Consistent with previous research involving Chinese international students' participation in Anglo-western education systems (e.g., Chan & Ryan, 2013), these factors had created difficulties for Chinese international students when engaging in group work activities. Some of the Chinese international students in my research reported that often they understood conversations, but it was the cultural differences in the way students interacted in the group that had caused them difficulties. As Arkoudis et al. (2013) found, domestic and international students have cultural perspectives which impact on their ability to engage with diversity. From Laura's perspective, in her negative experience, the group included three international students, and she did not know to 'deal' with their cultural differences.

In situations where Chinese international students had a positive experience and engaged in the group activity, the leader in the group had initiated ways to overcome the language and communication difficulties. Conversely, if the Chinese international students' had negative experiences the leadership within the group either appeared absent or negative. Biggs' 3P Model (2003b) seemed to omit this as an influence on the approach to learning, yet for all participants, including the Australian domestic students, the leadership influenced the way they engaged, or could engage, in the group task and with the group as a whole. For example Xiu, reported on two

experiences in which she had different outcomes based on the leadership, which influenced the communication, synergy and therefore, the outcomes for the individual student. This suggested that the student presage factors related to emergent leaders can influence how a group will perform a task and how a group will engage to develop teamwork skills.

The teaching presage factors of Biggs' 3P Model (2003b), included the approach of the lecturer to teaching and the assessment. The level of support from the lecturer varied in the experiences. In Xiu's positive experience, the lecturer had been very supportive, yet in Nadia's negative experience she felt no support from the lecturer. Invariably, there was a common theme in the stories, if students' felt supported, the experience was more positive.

The stories from the Australian domestic students reinforced the notion that the assessment is central to the students learning environment (Brown et al., 2013) and they are product focused. This is problematic as developing teamwork skills requires students to actively engage with the other members of the group in the process phase. Many of the students, the Australian domestic students in particular, were product focused. They viewed the group experience as negative, but if they received what they considered a 'good grade', they viewed this as a positive. Interestingly, in all of the stories, the assessment task was based on the end product of the group work activity. This, in some cases, was a group presentation, and in others a written group report and the only outcome the group was assessed on. Cooper's story was the only story which reported the use of peer assessment, and this did not positively influence his engagement with the group.

Ideally, the intent of group work is for students to engage with others, to develop and refine interpersonal and communication skills (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004), to explore and apply theories in an authentic way (Stein et al., 2004), and as a means to develop the skills employers seek (Blickley et al., 2013). The task processing phase of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) is when a student will apply an approach to learning (Biggs, 1999). The way in which a student engages with task is categorised as a surface, deep or strategic approach (Biggs, 1987, 1989a; Entwistle, 1991). To develop teamwork skills, students need to actively engage with a deep approach. The 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b), suggested that students may choose an approach, yet the stories from the participants' in my research showed that the process events during group process influenced how they engaged with the group, and therefore the approach they could apply. Wang et al. (2013) referred to the modification of preferred approach to learning due to teaching context as a situational approach to learning. The students' experiences in group work in my research, showed modification of learning approaches based on their experiences. This was particularly evident in

both Nadia's and Xiu's contrasting positive and negative experiences. This suggested student groups are likely to adopt a situational approach, when group work is the teaching method. The critical events analysis showed the influence leadership in the group has on the approach students will take and questions undergraduate business student groups' action when they 'chart their own course'. The impact of this is discussed further through the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988).

The 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) although developed in the Anglo-western sphere, offered insight into understanding the student and teaching presage factors and highlighted many of the 'conditions in place' for both Australian domestic and Chinese international students. It also offered a framework for the development of my Student Group Experience Model, which is discussed further in Section 7.3. The 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b), however, had a number of shortcomings for my research, given the focus on group work activities and the development of teamwork skills in an internationalised business higher education setting. Whilst the task (assessment/product) of group work is important, as it is the reason a group works together, the model focused on task processing, through which students learn, not the interpersonal intricacies of group work where teamwork skills are developed. As noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, groups and teams are not the same. Teams have positive synergy, appropriate leadership, concern for the challenges of every member, collaboration, the ability to function together and focus on a collective product. These characteristics are developed in the process phase of group interactions and cannot be measured or assessed through the product.

7.2.2 Group Effectiveness Model

Extending the Biggs' 3P Model (2003b) with Hackman's (1987) Group Effectiveness Model added to the 'conditions in place' component in my Student Group Experience Model, by developing the considerations of the group context. This allowed for further interrogation of the components of group behaviour, for example leadership, which are critical for the effectiveness of groups to develop into teams. Extending the model created two main considerations for my research; the impact of synergy and leadership within the group. Synergy within the students' stories of group work was created through the socialisation process, communication and task processing, and this was reflected in the appropriateness of the emergent leader. This is indicated in Jiao's positive experience, which emerged due to the nature of the leadership in building positive synergy through the socialisation process, communication and task processing.

Conversely, in the experiences which had negative process events, the students' stories reflected negative or neutral synergy.

Hackman's (1987) authority structure of work groups shows the separate configurations for leadership in groups dependent on the skills and abilities of the group and the outcomes. This work suggested student groups are expected to behave like self-designing teams, yet given the way the groups interacted to 'chart their own course' this requires a manager-led (teacher-centred) framework. In organisational behaviour literature, leadership is the pivotal role in group becoming effective teams (Hackman, 1990). It would appear the role is also pivotal for undergraduate business student groups to develop teamwork skills. As the leader in each of the stories made decisions on how the group would process the task, the leader's approach to the task appeared to be situationally adopted by other members of the group. As with Biggs' 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b), Hackman's model is constructed in the Anglo-western sphere. While Hackman made reference to diversity in the composition of the group, cultural diversity was not dealt with explicitly in his model.

7.2.3 Punctuated Equilibrium Model

During the analysis of the students' stories through the Webster and Mertova (2007) framework, it appeared that the nature of 'what the student does' as they 'chart their own course' in the process phase was best predicted by the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988, 1989). Gersick's work had suggested that group inertia, the level of resistance to group process, is set in the socialisation process and these patterns form early in group development and persist. Each of the narratives from Australian domestic and Chinese international students reflected this. If a low-level of inertia set in the socialisation process had been inclusive, then the experience for the student had been positive. However, if there had been little time for socialisation or it had been exclusive, the experience was described as negative.

In further investigation of the students' experiences, some of the groups reached a temporal midpoint, in which a change occurred. Generally, this change focused on task processing. The groups divided up task's merely to 'do what they had to' given the process events and their focus on the assessment. This was initiated by the leader in the group. This suggested a strategic approach by the group in the way in which they performed the task and as a whole not engaging in the interpersonal processes which are required to develop teamwork skills. Whilst individuals adopt an approach to learning, it would appear groups also adopt an approach, and this requires

further investigation. In many cases, these groups were happy with the grade they received suggesting the outcome was not dependent on their ability to work together.

The socialisation process became even more critical when analysing the Chinese international students as a member of a heterogeneous group. The English language abilities of each of the participants varied, but the commonality was in the socialisation process. If the socialisation process was a positive experience and the emergent leader had been inclusive, the experience was a positive one. In these cases, the group had found ways to overcome language difficulties as in Wen's experience. The opposite also occurred. If the socialisation process had been non-inclusive or avoided, the experiences for these students were negative, as in Ning's negative experience. Xiu's experiences also showed time should be allocated by the lecturer for the socialisation process to occur. The leader of the group, an Australian domestic student, was responsible for the way in which the socialisation process occurred, they became responsible for task processing and communication and therefore, the way in which Chinese international students could engage in the group.

Gersick's (1989) model also offered another consideration for student groups. Defining moments in the group create a fundamental change in the behaviours of both individuals and the group as a whole, due to time and task requirements. Whilst the task (assessment/product) of group work is important, as it is the reason a group comes together, Gersick's model differed from the input-output focus of the other two models by introducing the influence of time. Gersick (1989) suggested the intervention of an external stakeholder would assist in moving the group forward. A lecturer's approach to teaching influences the outcomes for students (Trigwell et al., 1999). The participants' experience suggest a lecturer needs to be active in the workings of the group as they 'chart their own course' if the group is to develop teamwork skills. The Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988) could offer insight into future research into undergraduate business student groups

7.2.4 Summary

The stories from the participants in my research provided a rich framework to investigate the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international students. These stories are not treated as objective truth (Casanave, 2010), but display the particularity of their individual experiences. The students were asked to describe the experience as either a positive or negative experience. These responses varied, in terms of their perceptions of the events within the story.

The process events impacted on the way the participants' engaged in group work activities and with the other members of the group. Groups and teams are not the same and if a group does not develop the characteristics of a team, they remain a group (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002). These characteristics include accountability (Tsay & Brady, 2012), goal focus (Sharan, 2010), appropriate leadership (Northouse, 2015), complementary skills (Hackman & Johnson, 2013), good communication (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003) and collaboration (Robbins & Barnwell, 2002). Whilst the data gathered is the perspective of one individual with the group, their perspectives indicate the presence and absence of team characteristics in their experiences. Other members of the group experience may have articulated a different version of the same group. But as Lencioni (2012, p. 189) advocated "like a chain with just one link broken, teamwork deteriorates". Lencioni's work also has implications for my findings. In some of the experiences, the students' stories depicted an absence of trust, lack of commitment and fear of conflict (2012). The presence of these behaviours suggests the unintended outcome of a dysfunctional or ineffective team and reinforces Bath et al. (2004) that the development of skills from the lecturer's perspective may not align with the students' experiences. This would be interesting for future research.

7.3 Contributions of the conceptual framework

The development of my research was initially framed around two ideas, the constructive alignment framework and application of a conditions-focused approach to group work experiences. A lack of constructive alignment between components such as intended outcomes and teaching methods is a major weakness when the outcomes are skill specific (Borrego & Cutler, 2010). The review of literature in education had shown assessment as critical to the student experience and the emphasis on assessment based on end product (Messick, 2013). Critiquing the literature through Biggs' 3P Model (2003b) highlighted limitations in the model to explain the complexities of cross-cultural group work. To extend Biggs' 3P Model (2003b), literature from organisational behaviour was examined and presented both similarities and differences. The Group Effectiveness Model (Hackman, 1987) and the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1989), were both critiqued to extend the education literature, utilising a conditions-focused approach (Hackman, 2012). The resulting conceptual framework I developed was the Student Group Experience Model. I found the model to be a useful framework to negotiate the complexities of the research I was undertaking. The model was used to interpret the individual stories and to make sense of the events which occurred through previously unrelated theory.

My model used three contexts developed out of the literature from education and organisational behaviour. This considered the group to be its own context and differed from Biggs' 3P Model (2003b) in this way. The 'conditions in place' in the group, and teaching contexts gave insight into the factors present, in the group experiences of each individual student. The analysis of these showed themes which emerged. The model allowed for the identification and analysis of groups beyond the task processing phase of Biggs' 3P Model (2003b). Extending the model through the organisational behaviour literature, allowed for the inclusion of group process and the importance of synergy (Hackman, 1987), and the level of inertia (Gersick, 1988), on how a group will operate. The findings from the two step analysis through my Student Group Experience Model, showed emergence of leadership as the major process event which occurred for students. This suggested emergent leadership was the greatest influence, positively and negatively, on the socialisation process, communication and task processing for both Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. Organisational behaviour literature showed, leadership is critical to a group's success (Hackman, 1987; Lencioni, 2012). Consequently, teaching intentions may not always be actualised because of what the students do as they 'chart their own course' in the development of teamwork skills. This finding has implications for teaching theory and practice.

The socialisation process set the level of inertia within the group (Gersick, 1988). This in turn influenced the communication in the group and the way in which the group performed the task. In cases where leadership was inappropriate, the analysis showed 'they will do what they have to' during task processing to simply get the task done. This suggested the outcomes measured through the assessment task, were not dependent on them being able to perform as a team. Without appropriate leadership, Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students in my study were often unable to engage in group activities in a way which characterised the development of teamwork skills. This suggested a misalignment between teaching methods and intended outcomes. This is critical for assessment design and warrants further investigation.

The English language ability of the Chinese international students varied. Each identified the nature of being a non-native speaker of English as an area of concern for them, which is in-line with previous research. Many found their communicative competency (Kameda, 2001), of greatest concern in heterogeneous groups. Their stories identified the cultural differences in the way Australian domestic students used language, and the interpersonal interactions of the group,

created issues in communication and how to engage with others in the group. If a group was able to overcome these, the experience had been more positive. Again, leadership had directed how the communication process in the group occurred. These findings are significant as leadership, socialisation and communication need to be considered in the constructive alignment of group work activities for the development of teamwork skills for both Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students.

7.3.1 Extending the 3P Model through the Student Group Experience Model

Biggs' 3P Model (2003b) articulates the need for considerations of the student presage factors. These are the qualities which a student brings with them to the learning environment (Biggs, 2003b). Groups are made up of individuals who differ in characteristics and behaviours. The interplay of these individuals impact on the group as a whole (Forsyth, 2009). Hackman (1987), considered the most important condition influencing the potential effectiveness of a group is the composition of the members. This creates a need to extend the student presage factors of the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b) on two levels.

First, heterogeneous group work with culturally diverse group members brings together students with unique and varied presage factors such as skills and abilities, expectations, motivations, prior knowledge and perceptions. Biggs and Tang (2011) maintained ethnic diversity should be dealt with through better teaching, but better teaching comes from understanding how these presage factors may be predictors of outcomes for groups. Biggs' 3P Model (2003b) was developed through predominately Anglo-western research. If the model is going to be useful in an increasing international system of higher education which meets the learning needs of all students, regardless of cultural background (Ryan & Louie, 2007), it requires extending to include the student presage factor of cultural background.

Second, the major finding from my research showed the influence leadership has in group work activities, for both Australian domestic and Chinese international students. Individual students exert personal presage factors which, in some cases, caused them to emerge as leaders during the process phase. Emergent leaders dictate the process events during the socialisation process, how communication occurs, and the way in which the group approaches task processing. These process events determine if a group is effective and the influence of leadership also governs the approach taken by individuals and the group. Assessment of teamwork skills requires the interpersonal workings of the group to occur in the process phase of groups, not just the end

product. These ‘conditions in place’ need to be taken into consideration for aligning teaching methods, intended outcomes and assessment of teamwork skills. Significantly, the students’ presage factors of all group members need to be taken into account and it recognised that the individuals will impact on the way others engage in the group. The Student Group Experience Model for Teaching Practice is presented as Figure 7.1.

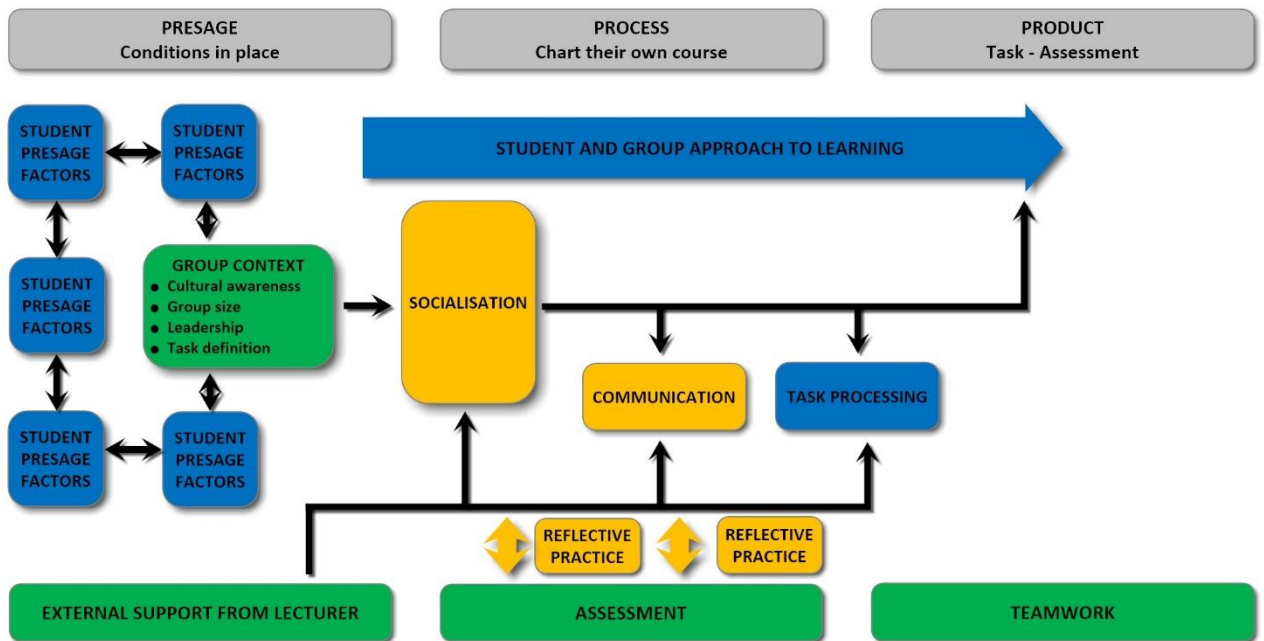


Figure 7.1: The Student Group Experience Model for Teaching Practice

7.3.2 Applying the Student Group Experience Model into practice

As previously noted, my interest in this research was sparked while I was teaching undergraduate business students in the field of organisational behaviour and management. The Student Group Experience Model, which I developed from the cross-disciplinary review of literature, was further expanded using the findings of my research. Using the model, I have implemented a program in my teaching practice I called ‘Who am I, Who are you, Who are we?’

Firstly, I pay particular attention to the formation of groups. Each group is selected by me to ensure cross-cultural interactions. The individuals in each group are given a copy of my Student Group Experience Model, which has been adapted as a group work map, prior to product-based assessment task. ‘Who am I’ asks the students to reflect on their own student presage factors, which are outlined in the model. The students then add to the model by including the presage

factors of the other students in their group in the 'Who are you' sections. A student from each group is asked to introduce, to the whole class, the members of their group and to highlight one interesting attribute of each student. Students who will potentially emerge as leaders in the group are identified. A class discussion is initiated surrounding the idea of 'leadership' through their views of leadership and a discussion on the influence of leadership on the group. 'Who are we' articulates to the students the objectives of the group activity in terms of development of personal interactions, teamwork characteristics and the assessment. The adapted model is kept by each student as a process guide and allows for reflection during group process. I am mindful to ensure I sit with each group in every session and discuss, not only the task, but also engage in conversations with the group. This is currently a work in progress.

7.4 Strengths of the research

A study grounded in narrative inquiry brings to the foreground the stories which the participants wish to tell. The stories from the twelve participants in my research concern their experiences in group work activities in an undergraduate business program. These experiences are similar in some contexts and varied in others. Narrative also reveals the influence of the individual to whom the story is being told. Whilst in some cases the transcripts indicated that while the participants were happy to report events to the researcher, they would be unwilling to share the information with others, including lecturers. Their openness to the researcher contrasts with their reticence with the lecturer, perhaps reflecting power dynamics. Another affordance of narrative inquiry is it provided access to the participants' emotions as illustrated in Ning's story.

A strength of narrative inquiry is the collaboration between researcher and participants. The use of narrative as a research methodology and method allowed me to explore the students' experiences, whilst reflecting on my own teaching practice. The project log which I kept throughout the research assisted in organising my thoughts. Organising the log into three sections, observational notes, analytical notes and personal notes assisted in organising my thoughts, reflecting on the methodological aspects of my research, observations in interviews and recurrent themes in the data.

Cross-disciplinary denotes research that moves across disciplinary borders and was a feature of my research. The review of literature from the disciplines of education and organisational behaviour explored the student context, the teaching context, task processing and product, framed in Biggs' 3P Model (2003b). By applying organisational behaviour literature, the model was

extended to include the consideration of group contextual factors and the intricacies of group process, not specifically highlighted by the 3P Model (Biggs, 2003b). The organisational behaviour literature developed understanding into the differences between groups, teams and ineffective teams, which suggests a lack of alignment in developing teamwork skills in undergraduate business students.

7.5 Limitations of the research

One of the first limitations of the research design was the decision to depend on interviews with six Australian domestic and six Chinese international students in individual experiences of group work activities. This reports the perspectives of only twelve participants. This purposeful sample was fewer than twenty and reflected the intent of my narrative study to provide an in-depth exploration of my research problem. The sample of this size was deemed appropriate as the level of information could become too large and case orientated (Sandelowski, 1995). My research presents the narratives of a small sample group of the thousands of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students enrolled at Australian universities.

However, this aspect of the research design can be a strength. This research offered the possibly to explore the issues from the perspective of six Australian domestic students and six Chinese international students, through narrative inquiry with sensitivity and acknowledges the individual and their cultural background as critical to the construction of knowledge (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Given the intention of my exploratory research to capture the events of group experience, twelve was deemed an appropriate size.

As Talmy (2010) noted, interviews are conditional to the situation and participants can exploit the interview process for their own purposes. The participants' reasons for involvement in the research varied. A number of the Chinese international students initially volunteered as it was an opportunity to practise their English. I assume, but it is not confirmed, that Laura volunteered as a way of expressing her discontent with group work. This also raises another limitation of the research; that the events described by the students, may have been embellished.

It also might be argued that the cross-cultural differences in Australian domestic and Chinese international students may make it difficult to apply findings in a meaningful way. This is an important point which concerns the research goals and my theoretical perspective. It was not my intention to generalise from the findings of the study into the group work experiences of all

undergraduate business students. My aim was to offer insight into the emerging themes of the participants' experiences, which impacted on their ability to develop teamwork skills.

Another limitation relates to the status of the narratives generated in the research. Given that narratives are not simply reports but the stories of experience of the participant and the researchers attempt to make sense of this experience. This would be an issue if the research set out to elicit factual events rather than the participants' perception and understanding of their own experience. Some may argue that the sample size and the selection of demographics of the participants limits the generalisability of the findings. Generalisability, was not a goal of this exploratory research, nor is it a goal of narrative. The research, therefore offers insights into the group work experiences of these twelve participants and the emerging themes which impact on the development of teamwork skills. These themes and findings warrant further investigation.

7.6 Contributions of my research

This research journey has resulted in three significant contributions to the field of undergraduate business higher education based on the drawing together of educational and organisational behaviour theories. These contributions shed light into:

1. The role of leadership in group work;
2. The development of a model to extend current teaching theory; and
3. Suggestions for future research and practice.

7.7 Implications of the research

My research raised a number of issues about the experiences of Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students in group work activities, which point to a need for a change. The implications of these findings are discussed briefly through the central themes in my research, which were discussed in Chapter 1; internationalisation of higher education and teamwork as a generic skill.

7.7.1 Internationalisation of higher education: 'conditions in place'

Employers of undergraduate business students desire skills which will enable them to work in multicultural teams (Horn & Murray, 2012). The narratives provide evidence of the need to improve teaching practices in developing teamwork skills in Anglo-western universities to meet the challenges of an internationalised higher education and to develop the skills employers' desire.

Diversity is a central issue for teaching and learning (Shaw, 2005), as is the promotion of interactions of culturally diverse students (Arkoudis et al., 2013). Group work offers the opportunity for culturally diverse students to network with their peers (Dickinson, 2000), develop and refine interpersonal and communication skills (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004) to explore and apply theories in an authentic way (Stein et al., 2004), and a means to develop the teamwork skills employers seek (Blickley et al., 2013).

The challenges for Chinese international students, studying in a second language were highlighted in the narratives of the six students who participated in my research. This is in line with previous research (see, for example, Bretag, 2007; Chan & Ryan, 2013) and is a ‘condition in place’ which creates obstacles to interactions with Australia domestic students (Arkoudis et al., 2013). Yet, as reported by the participants, if the leadership within the group assisted with communication challenges and was inclusive, the experience was a positive one. Cultural differences between the two groups also created obstacles for successful interaction in terms of the way in which the Australian domestic students inserted cultural meanings to their language, and the way the group interacted. Privileging the stories of the Chinese international students showed that this was because of the actions of the other group members and the group leadership.

The goal of applying a conditions-focused approach to group research is to develop our understanding of the conditions which increase the likelihood that a group will operate naturally to achieve the intended outcomes (Hackman, 2012). The narratives shared by participants indicate that the language and culture of each student in the group is a critical presage factor. The presage factors relating to the emergent leader are also critical for group effectiveness. It is not only important to understand ‘what the students do’ but ‘who the students are’. Attention should be paid to these context factors, by lecturers, through the formation of groups and activities to develop cross-cultural understanding and promote interaction, prior to the students being given an assessable task. This would assist in alignment of group work as a teaching method to the intended outcomes of teamwork skills.

7.7.2 Teamwork skills: ‘chart their own course’

The stories from the participants in my research showed many students focus on the assessment and confirmed previous research that assessment, rather than teaching method, has a profound influence on the student (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). Assessment is the heart of the student experience (Brown et al., 2103). This was particularly the case for the Australian domestic

students. This focus was shown in the way the Australian domestic students articulated their perception of a positive or negative experience. This is problematic as it is in the process phase of groups when the skills required for teamwork are developed and displayed. The Chinese international students, tended to be excited by the opportunity to interact with Australian domestic students to practise their English or to help in understanding of the course material.

The three major themes which impacted on the ability for Australian domestic and Chinese international students to engage in group work activities and develop teamwork skills, included the socialisation process, the way in which communication occurred in the group, and the way in which the groups engaged in task processing. The critical event which linked these process events was the nature of the leadership within the group. The synergy and inertia within the group reflected the way in which the group approached the task and the dynamics of the group. Although, the data collected was from the perspective of one individual within the group, the stories reflected identifiable characteristics which pointed to outcomes varying from remaining a group, teamwork and the unintended outcome of an ineffective team. As Hackman (1987) stated, “for groups to be effective teams you cannot get people together toss them a task and hope for the best” (p. 337). Alignment of teaching methods and assessment, based on the integration of group behaviour literature, would assist in promoting interactions between Australian domestic and Chinese international students. The exploratory nature of my research suggests this requires further investigation.

7.8 Reflections on my research

This was my first experience with narrative research, and looking back the process was at times, overwhelming. Many times I considered, implementing a more traditional qualitative methodology, which I had used in previous research with Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students. However, the more I delved into the personal stories of the participants the more I was excited about the possibilities that narrative explores.

Narrative is the interaction and co-construction of knowledge between the participant and the researcher and importantly, what can I know from the research. For me, the research began as a way of developing my teaching practice, not what I can know about my own cultural awareness and indeed, misconceptions. I had viewed myself as a reasonably culturally aware individual who was empathetic in my teaching practice. As I progressed through the research process, I realised there was so much more I needed to understand and my view had been quite narrow. Narrative

affords the chance for the researcher to not only reflect on the topic being researched but their own role in the world created by the interactions with participants and indeed themselves. For this reason, I am glad I did not change my mind.

7.9 Recommendations for further research

In this section, the research's main finding in relation to the research question are briefly discussed and evaluated before identifying relevant issues for further research. This discussion also includes an evaluation of applying a conditions focused approach (Hackman, 2012).

Given the limitations discussed previously, the research points to key issues which warrant further investigation and consideration for future research. This section identifies the important issues arising from the research and identifies recommendations based on these findings. Based on the findings discussed previously, it is appropriate to recommend:

1. Further research be undertaken into the impact of student leadership within the process phase of group interactions, including the investigation of non-Anglo-western leadership models;
2. Distinctions between the use of group work as a teaching method and the achievement of teamwork skills be clarified in the generic descriptors and articulated through process based assessment; and,
3. Consideration be given to adopting program-wide approaches to culturally aware leadership programs for Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students.

More is required to be done if Australian domestic and Chinese international students are to develop the teamwork skills employers' desire. Extending existing literature on students learning with group behaviour literature assisted in developing my Student Group Experience Model, which allowed for the analysis of context factors and process events during both positive and negative group work experiences. The main finding from the research is leadership within the group impacted on the process events which in turn contributed to the student being able to develop teamwork skills. These events are socialisation, communication and task processing. For both Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students, the emergence of leadership in student groups is the critical event which drives these process events.

Whilst my research has generated insights into the experiences, nature and outcomes for Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students in group work activities, it has not completely unpacked the ‘black box’ of the complex processes of student group learning. The research findings showed the role of leadership as a critical influence on the ability for students to develop teamwork skills, yet it failed to shed light on the other complexities of group dynamics in terms of norms, status and power (McKee et al., 2012). The intricacies of each dimension, could be a doctoral thesis in their own right. Each of these behaviours are identified in organisational behaviour literature and warrant further investigation into the influence of culture on dynamics in student groups. For example, Scheepers et al. (2013) found that cultural background influenced status within groups and therefore participation of group members in organisations. Cross-disciplinary investigation into status in student groups, could yield further insights into strategies to promote interaction in undergraduate business student groups.

The conceptual model I developed, the Student Group Experience Model, for my study allowed me to pull together large amounts of literature and theories to analyse ‘what students do’ when interacting in group activities. This conceptual framework, which supports my research, could be further tested in other studies on groups in higher education. A limiting factor in the models development was the focus on literature, founded in Anglo-western research. Taking not only a cross-disciplinary, but cross-cultural approach would allow for the investigation of non-Anglo-western leadership theories and group behaviour models and extend the model further. My research included only one cohort of international students from mainland China studying at one Australian university. Although, this was the research focus and the scope of my study, further research into the many a varied cultural groups which make up Australian higher education could provide insight into the experiences of those students, promote interactions and assist in meaningful constructive alignment of teamwork skills. Further research might investigate the influence of leadership in through an internationalised lens.

A final thought. Organisational group behaviour literature from J. Richard Hackman, a prominent Harvard academic and staunch quantitative researcher was utilised in my research. Interestingly, in his later research career, he questioned his own views and research methods. The work of Connie Gersick influenced this and he later co-authored with her. For group research, his opinion was that we need to ‘quit pretending’ that the context of the group is irrelevant to understanding what happens in a group. Hackman’s conditions focused approach allowed for the identification

of the most significant conditions in place and how these condition influenced student groups as they ‘chart their own course’. This has benefits for those who create, lead and serve in groups (Hackman, 2012), for undergraduate business student groups, for lecturers, emergent leaders and all group members. For me as a researcher, the approach complemented narrative inquiry methodology in the development of the conceptualised model, extending previous models and reflecting on equifinality of ‘what the student does’ in culturally diverse groups in undergraduate business higher education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of Graduate Attributes (Teamwork) at Australian Universities

University	Descriptor	Exemplar
University of Adelaide	Teamwork & Communication	Our graduates' teamwork and communication skills are encouraged and valued in all aspects of learning.
Deakin University	Working effectively as part of a team	Demonstrate an understanding of, and the ability to apply, the principles of teamwork and collaboration.
University of NSW	Communication, adaptive and interaction skills	
Australian Catholic University	work both autonomously and collaboratively	
Flinders University	Are Collaborative	We expect our students to interact effectively and properly with others in a variety of settings. This includes, where appropriate, working cooperatively and productively within a group or team towards a common outcome. It also includes showing respect to others and to their ideas and perspectives, and learning to negotiate and resolve conflict or difficulties constructively.

(Australian Catholic University, 2015; Deakin University, 2015; Flinders University, 2015; University of Adelaide, 2015; University of NSW, 2015)

Appendix 2: Recruitment letter for Academic Staff



School of Rural Medicine

A partner of the Joint Medical Program

Jo Vickery

Phd Student

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University of New England

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Dear Colleague,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Miss Jo Vickery, one of my doctoral students, who is jointly enrolled in The School of Rural Medicine and the School of Business Economics and Public Policy. Miss Vickery's study for her dissertation is investigating Students' perceptions of the efficacy of group work in an internationalised undergraduate business education. In particular, she is examining what students identify as the major components attributed to group work and how these impacts on performance and satisfaction in the group work experience. Miss Vickery wishes to interview university students in completing third year units of their undergraduate study. Students who volunteer for her study will participate in an interview, which will be audio recorded.

In order to obtain a sufficiently large pool of volunteers, we are requesting your assistance by asking you to allow her to speak for 5 minutes at the end of one of your classes in order to solicit volunteers for her study. If you are willing to consider this opportunity, please contact Miss Vickery on 0267733566 or email jvickery@une.edu.au. If you have any questions about her study, you could also contact me at 0267733720 or by email rsmyth@une.edu.au

Thank you for your assistance.

Dr Robyn Smyth

PhD

Senior Lecturer Academic Developer

Joint Medical Program

School of Rural Medicine

Project Leader: *Leading Rich Media* ALTC Project

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Appendix 3: Background Information Sheet for Participants

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION - LEARNER BACKGROUND

AGE: _____

PROGRAM CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN:

MAJORS IN COURSE:

LANGUAGE SPOKE AT HOME: _____

NUMBER OF YEARS SPEAKING ENGLISH REGULARLY (IF STUDYING IN SECOND LANGUAGE): _____

The following information relates to background information for use in the data analysis. This information is confidential and will be attached to an assigned pseudonym.

INFORMATION ABOUT GROUP EXPERIENCE(S)

ACADEMIC COURSE IN WHICH YOU DESCRIBE YOUR GROUP EXPERIENCE:

Think about the experience prior to it happening, what were your expectations in relation to:

1. Motivation for being in the group _____

2. How you gained knowledge of the material required for the group work experience _____

3. Your expectations about working with others _____

ABOUT YOURSELF:

Do you believe you had/have any special skills that you bring to group work activities?

Appendix 4: Interview prompts

Context	Student
Group Context	
Diversity in Group	
Group Size	
Teaching Context	
Teacher Support	
Task Definition	
Assessment	

Appendix 5: Human Research Ethics Committee Approval



Ethics Office
Research Development & Integrity
Research Division
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3449
Fax 02 6773 3543
jo-ann.sozou@une.edu.au
www.une.edu.au/research-services

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr R Smyth, A/Prof J Fisher, Dr J Hunter & Miss J Vickery
School of Rural Medicine

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: Students' perceptions of the efficacy of group work in an internationalised business curriculum.

APPROVAL No: HE10/149

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 23/08/2010

APPROVAL VALID TO: 23/08/2011

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full.

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: <http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/researchdevelopmentintegrity/ethics/human-ethics/hrecforms.php>

The *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.



23/08/2010

Jo-Ann Sozou
Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

A09/2598

Appendix 6: Information sheet for participants

INFORMATION SHEET for PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: Students' perceptions of the efficacy of group work in an internationalised undergraduate business education.

I wish to invite you to participate in my research on above topic. The details of the study follow and I hope you will consider being involved. I am conducting this research project for my PhD at the University of New England. *My supervisors are Dr Robyn Smyth, Associate Professor Josie Fisher and Dr James Hunter of University of New England. Dr Smyth can be contacted by email at rsmyth@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 3720. Associate Professor Fisher can be contacted by email at jfisher@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 3706 and Dr James Hunter can be contacted by email on james.hunter@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 92906117. I can be contacted by email at jvickery@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 3566.*

Aim of the Study:

The aim of the project is to gain understanding of the factors which impacts on development of communication and teamwork skills in group work, from the stories of the students

Time Requirements:

A face-to-face interview lasting approximately 60 minutes that will be audio taped/electronically captured.

Interviews:

There will be a series of open-ended questions that allow you to explore your views and practices related to group work these interviews will be audiotape recorded or electronically captured. Following the interview, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to see one. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure that you are not identifiable.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent from the project and discontinue at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence if you decide not to participate or withdraw at any time.

It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues but if it does you may wish to contact Student Assist on 02 67732897

The audiotapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's office. The transcriptions and other data will be kept in the same manner for five (5) years following thesis submission and then destroyed. Only the investigators will have access to the data.

Research Process:

It is anticipated that this research will be completed by the end of July 2011. The results may also be presented at conferences or written up in journals without any identifying information.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No.HE10/149 Valid to 23/08/2011)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards

JoVickery

Appendix 7: Summary tables for thematic analysis

HAYLEY: Australian Domestic Student	Negative Experience	Examples from narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Process Events	<i>We had a very opinionated leader</i>	PEM: Set by emergent leader during socialisation/ forming - level of resistance by other members	Negative synergy in group
Socialisation	Limited as leader was task focused	<i>We're all quite high achievers from what I can remember from how they spoke, that they were used to getting a certain grade. So we really just started the task</i>	PEM: Level of inertia set, task focus, level of conflict GDM: Forming	Negative: No socialisation
Communication	Dictated by conflict with leader	<i>Some situations where I shut my mouth where normally I would have spoken up; there were some situations where I fought for something that I think was fighting on principle where normally I would let it go. I think I was much more ... I definitely changed; I don't know if I was much more forceful. I think I was more reserved on the whole, but there was bits where I was just like nah, and said my mind</i>	PEM: As inertia was set, group continued on same path with members forming factions	Negative: Conflict with the emergent leader
Task Processing	Group formed into two factions	<i>An international student and I rebelled against the others. Both she and I tried to get our opinions across and the others wouldn't listen. The international student and I just worked on our own parts together</i>	PEM: Midpoint - group could not move forward working together, tasks divided up GEM: Sub-groups emerged, inappropriate leadership	Lack of interdependent collaboration - negative synergy
Leadership	Emergent	<i>We had a very opinionated female and she became the leader of the group</i>	PEM: Leader had set level of inertia in the socialisation process being task focus and not ensuring all members were included in communication	Inappropriate leadership - did not overcome inertia, increase members confidence or build <u>positive synergy</u>
Group Size	Small - Heterogeneous	<i>There was four of us... five of us, sorry – one international student, one boy and three other girls</i>	In line with literature on small groups - yet did not contribute to positive group outcomes	Suggests small groups assists with communication, this was not the case in this narrative. Process events caused condition to not be effective
Assessment	Presentation	<i>It was a hard task because it was over a long period of time; there was many aspects to it and it was a major assessment, so there was also a lot of pressure on us</i>	PEM: Goal focus created level of inertia	Outcome not dependent on the group's ability to work together
Lecturer Support	Not supportive	<i>He was not really involved once he explained the task.</i>	PEM: suggests group required outside assistance to move forward. This did not occur, group divided up tasks	Need for a manager-led team not self-directing team

JIAO: Chinese international student	Positive Experience	Examples from Narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Good grade & Group was supportive	<i>There wasn't many Chinese students to do that subject and you got involved with lots of local students there, it was really good because you got to practice your English and see how they think to work things out. Yeah it was really good</i>	GEM: Positive synergy in group	Positive: Enjoyed being in a heterogeneous group
Socialisation	Group took time to get to know one another through leader	<i>They're all fantastic I think probably the females in the group more than male, the females all introduced themselves and were interested in what I had to say</i>	PEM: Level of inertia set, Lian felt all members involved. GEM: Appropriate emergent leadership	Positive: The socialisation process had been inclusive
Communication	Issues with second language worked through by group - practiced English	<i>Communication in our group was good, I didn't just sit back and listen to other folk you have got to say something. That is what I mean you have to contribute, no matter what; like a tiny bit so other people will know you are actually being a part of it</i>	PEM: Level of inertia had been set in socialisation phase, group inclusive. GEM: Created positive synergy.	Positive: Even with language difficulties, the good appeared to be able to communicate. Jiao felt included in the group communication
Task Processing	Group worked together on task	<i>You do your part then you do another part and we put everything together and then the guys do presentation. I think I was doing the speakers presentation back then but they are doing more speech because they are more local and then they can say better.</i>	PEM: As the group had set positive inertia in the socialisation phase did not reach a midpoint of change, work continually on task	Positive: Interdependent collaboration - positive synergy
Leadership	Emergent	<i>A girl in the group She is really, really good. Most of the time she lead and she knows what we are going to do</i>	PEM: Leader and group had set level of inertia in the socialisation process being task focus and ensuring all members were included. GEM: Effective leadership	Appropriate leadership - overcome inertia, increase Jiao's confidence
Group Size	Small - Heterogeneous	<i>It was a small group, of five, a very good size</i>	In line with literature on small groups - contributed to positive group outcomes	Suggests small groups assists with communication, this was the case in this narrative. Process events positive for Jiao
Assessment	Presentation	<i>Our mark but because the student were really nice, we pulled things together</i>	PEM: Goal focus	Outcome appeared to be based on groups ability to work together
Lecturer Support	Felt the tutor was more supportive	<i>The lecturer and tutorial is different person. The tutor was more helpful actually. I think lecturer is probably more, busy they are giving briefs and explanations</i>	PEM: suggests group required outside assistance to move forward. Not required as group worked on tasks together	Lecturer supportive but did not influence group process

LAURA: Australian domestic student	Negative Experience	Examples from Narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Process event due to task processing	<i>We didn't receive a very good mark and we could have if everyone had pulled their weight</i>	PEM: Goal Focus PEM: Set by emergent leader during socialisation/ forming	Presences of individual accountability. Focus on individual goals
Socialisation	Limited as leader was task focused	<i>We had ten minutes just to go around and say, "You have to say your name, what you're studying and ... your favourite food" – it breaks the ice and you tell them, "Oh, I like chocolate as well, and we didn't waste time and got to the task</i>	PEM: Level of inertia set, task focus, and lack of all members involved GEM: Created negative synergy	Negative: Laura herself appeared to be the emergent leader and did not allow time for the socialisation process. Focus on outcome not process
Communication	Difficulties with international students	<i>And so that made it really difficult because they'd put their heads down. And that was a really bad experience</i>	PEM: As inertia was set, group continued on same path with members excluded	Negative: Not all of the group was involved in the task due to communication issues
Task Processing	Sub-groups	<i>The more dominant people of the group definitely just did the work, "Right. That's it. I think we'll just do it like this." So they took charge. The international students, they weren't doing any work or really not ... having any group input</i>	PEM: Midpoint - group could not move forward working together, tasks divided up, this occurred early due to socialisation GEM: Outcome not dependent on the group's ability to work together	Negative: Laura believed the group had divided into two – those who did the work and those who did not. Lack of interdependent collaboration - negative synergy
Leadership	Emergent (Laura)	<i>I'm an extroverted person so, I take charge of groups. I don't mind saying, I think perhaps this would be better</i>	PEM: Leader had set level of inertia in the socialisation process being task focus and not ensuring all members were included. Laura herself was the group leader and was not aware of her impact on the group GEM: Ineffective leadership	Inappropriate leadership - did not overcome inertia, increase members confidence or build positive synergy
Group Size	Small - Heterogeneous	<i>four of us and three of them so seven</i>	In line with literature on small groups - yet did not contribute to positive group outcomes	Suggests small groups assists with communication, this was not the case in this narrative. Process events caused condition to not be effective
Assessment	Presentation	<i>We had to do a presentation and we had to get in a group, and the group worked well except for three people who didn't really do anything</i>	PEM: Goal focus	Outcome not dependent on the group's ability to work together
Lecturer Support	Attempted to assist the group	<i>During the times when we were doing the group work in class, he'd try to involve them, but they were very reluctant, maybe because ... they were really shy as well, so I don't think that helped them. But, yeah, he did try but it didn't really work very well</i>	PEM: suggests group required outside assistance to move forward. This did not occur, group divided up tasks. GEM: Need for a manager-led team not self-directing team	Lecturer supportive but did not influence group process

ZHEN: Chinese international student	Positive Experience	Examples from Narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Experience Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Good Grade	<i>We got a really good mark and I appreciated all the work he did</i>	PEM: Goal Focus. Focus on Assessment	Positive: The leader of the group did the work and got a good grade
Socialisation	Inclusive - group took time to get to know each other	<i>The leader tried to introduce all of us but the language was so difficult</i>	PEM: Level of inertia set, communication issues present in socialisation and acknowledged	Positive: Time was taken for the socialisation process but the language difficulties had impacted on the process
Communication	Difficulties with language	<i>We found that was quite difficult because the language varies and it's hard for us to communicate with that native speaker. They all tried hard to understand me</i>	PEM: As inertia was set, group continued on same path with Zhen finding communication difficult due to language	Positive: The group had attempted to overcome language barriers
Task Processing	Leader in the group did all the work	<i>In the end we end up -- that native speaker done most of the job for us. We just prepared a little bit of information or materials for him, then he stand up and gave the presentation in the end</i>	PEM: Outcome not dependent on the group's ability to work together. The leader of the group had 'done most of the work'	Lack of interdependent collaboration – Yet, Zhen found this positive as she received a good grade
Leadership	Emergent	<i>The native speaker was the leader</i>	PEM: Leader and group had set level of inertia in the socialisation process being task focus by trying to ensure all members were included. GEM: Appears to have been appropriate	Suggests neutral synergy
Group Size	Small - Heterogeneous	<i>It was a marketing unit and then we had like group discussions and I was in a group with someone from -- someone who speaks English natively and also another couple of students from China, also one from Thailand</i>	In line with literature on small groups contributing to positive group outcomes of grade, but still the group had communication issues	Suggests small groups assists with communication, this was not the case in this narrative. Process event (communication) condition to not be effective
Assessment	Presentation	<i>It was a group presentation, but we did not present. We get a really good mark that I really appreciated</i>	PEM: Leader had a goal focus and 'did what they had to' to get the task done	Outcome not dependent on the group's ability to work together
Lecturer Support	Not supportive	<i>He should have but no. Sometimes you just need to treat them as kids [Chinese students], because in the one-child policy we've been spoiled because when I was in China I don't need to do anything. Mum and dad just do it all for me</i>	PEM: suggests group required outside assistance to move forward. GEM: Need for a manager-led team not self-directing team	Lecturer supportive but did not influence group process

NING: Chinese international student	Negative experience	Examples from narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Excluded from group	<i>I could not be involved in the group, I wanted to be but they just ignore me</i>	GEM: Poor communication and negative synergy	Negative: Ning felt excluded from the group from the time the group formed
Socialisation	Other group members already knew each other, did not introduce themselves to Ning	<i>No-one introduced themselves. Because they already know the [others] names before and they just don't care what my name is</i>	PEM: No time taken for the socialisation process. GEM: Although Ning felt there was no leader, the leadership, if present appeared to be inappropriate	Negative: Group did not introduce themselves
Communication	Poor communication	<i>They just talk amongst themselves and speak very fast and it's very hard for me to get with them and I know it's really hard for them to realise what we need and what we've got. I disagreed with them and I say it. But I am not sure whether they get it or not</i>	PEM: Inertia set from the socialisation process. Other members of the group worked on the task	Negative: Ning excluded from the communication in the group
Task Processing	Other members of the group performed the task	<i>So, for example when we read this paper, they just get through it very quickly and turn it over and I'm just here in the middle of the page</i>	PEM: Group 'did what they had to' to get task done. Not dependant on the group working collaboratively	Negative: Unable to be involved in the task, read the textbook instead
Leadership	Emergent, but unclear if there was a leader	<i>They just say what they want to say and we haven't got any leader in the group</i>	GEM: Lack of emergent leadership, from Ning's perspective, suggests inappropriate leadership	No leadership to encourage group collaboration
Group Size	Small group – heterogeneous.	<i>It was a group of five</i>	In-line with small group research – did not assist with group process	Even though the group was small, this did not create positive synergy
Assessment	Presentation	<i>The others did the work. I just read the text book But this thing, I think I must get through it because I must get past the course</i>	Ning did not mention grade for this group experience	From Ning's perspective, the group did not work collaboratively
Lecturer Support	Not supportive	<i>No, we just worked in the group</i>	GEM: Suggests the need for a manager-led group. PEM: Outside assistance to help the group overcome inertia	Required greater support

MELANIE: Australian domestic student	Negative Experience	Examples from Narrative	Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) and Group Effectiveness Model (GEM) Analysis	Process Events
Reasons for experience	Melanie felt she did all the work, there was also conflict with another group member	<i>So I end up doing all the work and it's a group mark then everybody is getting the same mark although it's mainly my work</i>	PEM: Melanie's goal focus	Negative: Melanie felt she did more of the work
Socialisation	Limited, Melanie attributed this to the communication difficulties with international students	<i>Sometimes with international students, some people just struggle more with the language. You need to be patient and it takes more effort sort of thing. The rest of us tried</i>	PEM: Minimal socialisation, this set the level of inertia for the group	Negative: Not inclusive of all members
Communication	Language difficulties	<i>It was hard, if you have only one person that is brave enough to talk and to discuss it, that can be quite a lot of work. There were two, no three really quiet people in the group and I was trying to get them to participate</i>	GEM: Inability for all group members to be included. Negative or neutral synergy	Negative: Impact on the ability for all member's to engage in the task
Task Processing	Group did not work collaboratively on the task	<i>What we did is we split up the contents and she did hers and I did mine but we met up before and mixed it sort of thing to make it look even and make it look one presentation</i>	PEM: Group 'did what they had to', to get the task done	Negative: From Melanie's perspective, All group members could/did not engage in task
Leadership	Emergent (suggests Melanie may have been the leader)	<i>We did have a bit of a personality problem and it was me and one of the other girls. It was mutual between the two of us and that really was imposing on the whole group</i>	GEM: Appears to be inappropriate emergent leadership	Conflict with another member of the group
Group Size	Small - heterogeneous	<i>We were in a group of six, two international students</i>	In line with small group development, but did not assist the group with group process	Teaching conditions, did not contribute to positive outcome process
Assessment	Presentation	<i>For me it was a satisfying feeling if you've come up with results. We got a good mark and the lecturer was happy with the answers</i>	Outcome not dependent on the group's ability to work together	Melanie was assessment focused together
Lecturer Support	Minimal support	<i>The lecturer is there watching and sort of supervising, this person is really not leading the groups</i>	PEM: Intervention from an outside source may have assisted the group to move forward more effectively. GEM: Required manager-led	Suggested the need for the lecturer to be involved in assisting the group

Appendix 8: Thesis outline

Research Questions	<i>How do Australian domestic and Chinese international undergraduate business students' experiences of group work impact on their ability to develop teamwork skills?</i>	<i>What have been Australian domestic and Chinese international student experiences with group work?</i>	<i>What are the significant context factors and process events in the students' experiences?</i>	<i>How do significant events impact on the students' ability to develop teamwork skills?</i>
Data Collected from:	<i>Stories of 12 undergraduate business students: 6 Australian domestic and 6 Chinese international students</i>	<i>Stories of 12 undergraduate business students: 6 Australian domestic and 6 Chinese international students</i>	<i>Stories of 12 undergraduate business students: 6 Australian domestic and 6 Chinese international students</i>	<i>Stories of 12 undergraduate business students: 6 Australian domestic and 6 Chinese international students</i>
How data was collected	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i>
Data Analysis	<i>Combination of thematic analysis – what themes emerged? Critical events analysis – how these themes impact on the individual students experience</i>	<i>Thematic analysis of 12 interviews – to find what themes emerged in the stories</i>	<i>Thematic analysis of 12 interviews</i>	<i>Critical events analysis – to find the how. Leadership emerged in the thematic analysis, the critical events analysis was conducted to confirm the thematic analysis</i>
Interpreting the Analysis	<i>Through identifying the themes in the thematic analysis and confirming leadership as a critical factor which impacts on the development of teamwork skills.</i>	<i>A vertical reading of the restoryed 12 interviews, looking for themes through the Student Group Experience Model as a Framework interpretation.</i>	<i>A vertical reading of the restoryed 12 interviews, looking for themes through the Student Group Experience Model as a Framework interpretation.</i>	<i>Through Webster and Mertova's Critical, Like and Other Framework – leadership being the critical event.</i>
Answers to Research Questions	<i>Development of teamwork skills is dependent on group leadership and how the leader initiates the socialisation process, communication and group task processing.</i>	<i>The individual stories varied. The major themes were during the process phase of group events occurred which impacted on students' perception of the experience. This is framed in my research as positive or negative.</i>	<i>The significant factors from the SGE include: Context – language and cultural differences, leadership, lecturer support and assessment. Process – Socialisation, communication and task processing</i>	<i>Emergent leadership is a critical factor. Without effective leadership students will not develop teamwork skills. For International student this is even more critical given the language and cultural differences of studying in an Anglo-western framework</i>