The Co-Construction of Experience during Multicultural Group Encounters

by

Vivette Beuster

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political, International, and Policy Studies
School of Arts, Communication, and Humanities
University of Surrey

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Abstract

Researchers have examined non-native English speaking (NNES) student integration problems and survival strategies in U.S. academic classes mainly from NNES student perspectives. Noticeably scarce or absent are studies investigating the role of U.S. students during multicultural interactions, the impact of NNES students on U.S. students, or the socially constructed nature of group work. Guided by a social constructionist methodology, this study approached group work interaction from both a U.S. and NNES college student perspective. Intensive interview data were gathered and analysed by employing constructivist grounded theory strategies, which exposed behaviours and processes participants reported using in groups. Discourse analysis was used to gain a deeper understanding of what participants tried to achieve with their language. The findings confirm that multicultural interaction is extremely complex and changeable and poses difficult but different interpersonal problems for both parties, though NNES students are more profoundly affected. Analyses suggest that students used a discourse of difference to position themselves and others. In the discourse, U.S. student group work conduct was used as the standard against which NNES student behaviour was measured. The discourse favoured U.S. students and disturbed power circulation accordingly. Positioning acts and story lines anchored in the discourse seemed to be part of changeable substructures, specific to the individual and the situation. The substructures, consisting of needs and expectations, formed the local moral order that determined participants’ rights and duties. Positioning involved complicated decisions about whether individuals should take social risks, leave comfort zones, reposition themselves, revise story lines, perform emotion work, or change ideas and expectations. Consequences of decisions were group inclusion or exclusion, becoming visible or invisible in class, and learning or not learning from group encounters. Trying to alleviate U.S.-NNES group interaction problems involves a broad approach that includes creating institutional commitment to diversity through setting meaningful educational goals and making individuals aware of personal stakes and responsibilities.
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This research project has its origins in personal curiosity and a professional need to understand how teachers can help domestic and non-native English speaking (NNES\textsuperscript{1}) students with international and immigrant/refugee status to succeed in their academic programs in the U.S.A. As an international student, teacher in foreign countries, and U.S. immigrant, I have faced the same issues that NNES students struggle with at a medium-sized two-year U.S. college where I now teach. Functioning in a setting where the hosts know and control rules for integration and cooperation requires exceptional observation and social adaptation skills from outsiders. Social norms are complicated and confusing and often remain invisible to the uninitiated. Some individuals find the challenges of studying in a foreign environment stimulating and grow stronger. Others feel intimidated, become confused, and lose confidence in their social and academic skills. On the other hand, U.S. students do not always know how to interact with foreign students and are not ready for the challenge to explore their personal borders. As a result, they are often not able to maximize their learning opportunities and broaden their perspectives.

1.1. Political, Social, and Educational Context

Soon after the U.S. government declared “The war on terror” in an effort to whip up nation-wide sentiments of patriotism and xenophobia, the administration at the college where I conducted my research announced its intention to globalize the campus in earnest. Even though the college had been attracting and serving small numbers of

\textsuperscript{1} There are several terms in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) to refer to students who do not use English as their first language. There is much controversy over which terms to use as many of them carry stigmas. The term NNES is not ideal because as Anne Lazaraton (2003) points out, the label NNES has a reductionist and essentialist nature; however, it is the best option for my research context because it distinguishes between native and non-native speakers, a key aspect of my study. It should be noted that the NNES student group is very heterogeneous, not only in terms of countries represented, but also personal qualities and abilities.
international students since the early 1990s, and immigrants and refugees long before
that, declining U.S. student numbers and the lure of government grant money in the form
of Title VI\(^2\) brought a greater urgency to activities geared toward ensuring the continued
growth and prosperity of the college. By diversifying its course offerings for local and
overseas students, promoting exchange programs for students and teachers, and
aggressively recruiting larger numbers of international students, the college hoped to
position itself strategically in the global market and reap some of the financial benefits.

As a co-chair for one of the college sub-committees (Institutional Integrity) working
on the April 2003 Accreditation Self Study Report, I interviewed a wide range of faculty
and students to gather perceptions of the institution's level of integrity. A number of
important issues relevant to this project emerged. Many faculty members claimed that the
administration had made decisions to globalize based upon sound financial considerations
but without consulting, planning, or frankly discussing the matter with two of the key
players: the domestic teachers and their students. They admitted that because the
administration had not sought initial buy-in from faculty, the process of globalization had
been plagued by serious problems harming the domestic students, the growing number of
international students, and by association the immigrant and refugee population. Ongoing
comments from colleagues and students lead me to believe that the situation has not
changed. While the college marketers and administration make international students feel
welcome because they want them to spend their money at the college, academic teachers
and domestic students are often unwelcoming and distant because they have to deal with
the consequences of having NNES students in their classes.

U.S. teachers and domestic students told me informally that they often do not see
immediate or personal advantages of working with a diverse population and have not
been introduced to broader educational goals that would enrich the lives of all. According
to them, they have experienced mostly the bad. Teachers have seen an increase in

\(^2\) The U.S. Department of Education Title VI program is part of the Federal government's plans to support
its international services. This program provides grants for U.S. colleges and universities to develop
curricula that incorporate foreign languages and international studies. According to the US Department of
Education website, "Title VI programs represent a comprehensive approach to expanding international
education in the U.S. Through numerous initiatives to strengthen international teaching and curricula at the
K-12 level, Title VI helps to open students' eyes to the wider world and engage future area studies
specialists at a young age, increasing the likelihood that students will pursue internationally-focused studies
later."
workload without commensurate compensation because international students often have greater needs than their domestic counterparts have and require more attention after class in the form of tutoring or guidance. Domestic students have had to deal with changed dynamics in their classrooms when half the class participates and the other half just listens. This has made domestic students feel that they are being cheated out of the opportunity to learn through discussion and debate. They also feel let down by the administration and teachers who in their view have a duty to create positive and productive learning environments for all. Teachers report that when there are large numbers of international or immigrant/refugee students in their classes, domestic students drop out for fear that the teacher will have to spend too much time on remedial work.

Add to this the growing impact on domestic students of (a) limited or biased international news creating hostility toward foreigners, (b) false rumours among uninformed students that international students are taking up taxpayer sponsored seats in the classroom, and (c) acrimonious national debates about the utility or desirability of illegal immigrants. These factors have created the two faces of the college, leaving international students perplexed and disappointed. Some feel they are prized for the revenue they bring in but not valued as feeling, thinking, and active human beings.

Another complicating factor is the myth that the U.S. is the perpetual melting pot where all foreigners are embraced, everybody has individual freedom, and all people are tolerant of ethnic/racial differences. NNES students are taken in by this myth and come to the U.S. expecting to be welcomed and assisted, but reality is very different. The ideal of a diverse and classless society requires individuals to share, assist others, and work for the good of the collective, but in many respects, this ideal comes in direct conflict with individuals’ needs to be independent, compete freely, and become the best. Some domestic teachers and students truly embrace principles and values associated with greater tolerance and integration and behave accordingly, but many do not. Several behave in politically correct ways (not offending any special interest group), but feel resentment and frustration underneath the facade. Others fear the loss of jobs or resources such as educational opportunities and more openly show their anger and irritation with the growing number of foreigners. For the most part, there is overt segregation on campus
prompted by covert responses of dislike, discomfort, and disinterest. One of my research participants summed up the situation like this:

... but when you get to the community college ... immediately ... there's that unspoken segregation, I mean obviously ... there's not any open hostilities in class ... there's that immediate separation that you see, or at least that I've seen, and ... that's pretty interesting why that happens, I don't know if that just comes down to just being uncomfortable, or ... a lack of understanding, or possibly, students that ... are primarily involved with themselves, so looking outside of themselves may be ... getting into another person's life a little bit or ... a person's ethnicity, I think that does occur, but I don't think that it occurs on a high level ... what a great place to have a broadening perspective, to be able to ... sit down and have that experience, learn about different cultures, or learn about, different views, especially on hot button topics ... that occur within our society, I mean really, it's an excellent ... platform for it to happen, but I don't think that it does on a wide level ...

From this quote, it is also clear that while some U.S. students know there are valuable opportunities for learning, many do not know how to unlock them because they are too involved with the details of their everyday lives or they are waiting for the institution to create them on a larger scale. They seldom stand back and look beyond their immediate private challenges to see the world as an interconnected whole with new prospects. This inability to take a less personal look at social situations may be one of the factors preventing greater integration.

1.2. Early Explorations and Signs of Problems

It was in this setting that I initially conducted a large quantitative survey (ex post facto design, post-test only) at the college to find out whether teachers, domestic students, and NNES students shared similar educational expectations. During 2002-2003 and with research design and statistical help from an Institutional Research Specialist, I administered survey questionnaires and analyzed responses from 574 students and 96 instructors (representative sample, random selection). ANOVA analyses (α ≤ 0.05, two tailed) revealed statistically significant differences among the expectations of teachers, domestic students, and NNES students.

Further analyses comparing the different groups' responses (percentages) to specific questionnaire items indicated problems with integration of students from different racial or cultural backgrounds and student and teacher appreciation for diversity. A large group
of U.S. students did not value opportunities to work in multicultural groups and did not want teachers to encourage students to work with classmates from other cultures. In contrast, NNES students indicated that they felt marginalized and wanted teachers to help students understand each other's cultures and facilitate interactions. After all, they were paying roughly three times the tuition in-state students were. Results from this survey exposed one of the false premises on which the administration had built its case for globalization: we do not create greater tolerance and integration just by placing diverse student populations together and hoping for the best. We have to prepare teachers and students through agreeing educational goals, providing relevant training, and actively working toward those goals.

The survey further highlighted serious problems with group work. A distinctive set of circumstances seemed to develop when U.S. and NNES students worked together in groups on assignments, often with undesired consequences. Both groups reported that interpersonal relationships were strained. NNES students frequently lacked adequate English skills and were unfamiliar with U.S. college conventions, U.S. students were reluctant, unwilling, or unable to act as hosts and mentors, and teachers and NNES students did not fully understand the difficulties U.S. students faced. To complicate matters, teachers expected students to build cooperative and trusting relationships in unrealistically short times, but provided little guidance on how to work productively.

After doing an extensive literature review, I concluded that the current body of literature has neglected to investigate fully the social construction of circumstances and consequences of multicultural group work in U.S. college environments. It has also failed to address a central concern: the relationship between U.S. and NNES students, and the impact they have on each other.

1.3. Conclusion: The Need for an Improved Educational Environment

Key administrative and teaching staff members at the college now understand that to continue attracting greater numbers of domestic and international students and retain them, they have to address the educational and student adjustment problems outlined

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3 I will use the term *multicultural* throughout my thesis to refer to situations where several cultures are represented and reflect diversity, for example, multicultural group work. I will use the concept *cross-cultural* to refer to instances where one culture is compared to another, for instance, cross-cultural studies.
above intentionally and systematically. It is not educationally responsible to introduce problematic external factors, such as greater numbers of students from different educational backgrounds, and not prepare domestic teachers and students for the changes. It is also not ethical to guarantee students an excellent education and then not deliver on that promise. By being proactive in the future, the college could fulfil its moral obligation to create learning environments where all students could achieve their educational goals, and at the same time, the institution could ensure its financial health. However, before any change could take place, problems between the domestic and NNES student groups need to be investigated and understood in greater detail and hence the need for this project. Fortunately, I initiated this study with the blessing of the Vice President for Instruction three years before decisions were made at an administrative level to start investigating ways to ensure general student success, and I have fruitfully linked my research with various working committees on campus. As a result, I will be able to provide useful research data, suggest possible improvements for implementation, and be part of the implementation taskforce.
PART I
PROJECT CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Chapter 2: Project Origins

The situation at a medium-sized two-year U.S. college provided one set of indicators that multicultural group work needed further investigation, and the initial literature review provided another.

2.1. The Problem Area: Indications of Multicultural Group Malfunction

Personal observations, anecdotal information, and comments made by teachers and students during focus group and interview investigations\(^4\) indicated that multicultural group work was problematic and frustrating for teachers, NNES and U.S. students alike. Some faculty members disliked having NNES students in their classes because they had to make special accommodations. They tried to discourage NNES students from taking their courses by deliberately making classes difficult during the first weeks, and they confirmed Zamel's (1995) observation that many teachers feel the impact of increased numbers of NNES students in their classes reduces their teaching effectiveness.

Furthermore, teachers reported that students from Asia and Africa had difficulties functioning effectively during group work assignments with U.S. classmates. They noticed that U.S. students often resented having NNES students in their groups because they had to spend more time to communicate ideas and deal with social interaction issues when they just wanted to complete the assigned tasks. NNES students reported being disappointed because they sensed they did not fit in, said U.S. students disliked them (some said "they hate us"), feared their grades might be affected negatively, and felt

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\(^4\) I gathered focus group and interview data with faculty and students at the college not for this research project but for three different purposes and in different capacities: (1) as co-chair for the Committee on Institutional Integrity working on the April 2003 Accreditation Self Study Report I obtained faculty and student perceptions of the integrity of the college (2002-2003), (2) as leader of the Intensive English as Second Language (IESL) curriculum overhaul team I gathered information about student and faculty concerns and needs (2001-2003), and (3) as IESL teacher I conduct ongoing interviews with students and faculty to stay abreast of needs and challenges affecting NNES students.
group processes did not facilitate learning. In addition, there was evidence, as a science
teacher’s recent investigation at the college confirmed (K. Clay, personal communication,
January 23, 2003), that NNES students’ grades did not increase after group work
activities while U.S. student grades rose dramatically.

Furthermore, the recent on-campus quantitative research project I conducted in 2002-
2003 (described in Chapter 1) showed that a large group of U.S. students did not value
opportunities to work in multicultural groups and did not want teachers to encourage
students to work with classmates from other cultures. On the other hand, NNES students
indicated that they felt marginalized and wanted teachers to help students understand
each other’s cultures and facilitate interactions.

Disappointment, conflict, frustration, and lack of academic success signalled that
multicultural group work was often not a positive learning experience for U.S. and NNES
students, but the roots were not apparent. The problem appeared to be multidimensional
and complicated and raised suspicions that what occurred during group activities might
be a reflection of what happened outside these situations between different ethnic/racial
groups, and that such experiences were negatively affecting students’ broader college
experiences. Because group interactions create participant behaviours, thoughts,
emotions, and assumptions specific to each situation, I sought an ethnographic research
perspective such as constructionism and a strategy such as grounded theory to gain a
deeper understanding of how individuals participated in and made sense of different
social experiences during group work. By comparing various participants’ accounts, I
hoped to construct a clearer picture of the complex and often puzzling social processes
involved. With a better appreciation of group work components and demands, I felt I
could seek ways to help students turn negative learning encounters into positive ones.

2.2. Gaps in the Literature

The purpose, use, and timing of the literature reviews in grounded theory projects are
different from other ethnographic studies. Whereas some authors (Glaser, 1978; Lincoln
& Guba, 1985; Stern, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a) suggest that a comprehensive
literature review should wait until after researchers have collected and analyzed sizable
amounts of data, others (Chenitz, 1986; Hutchinson, 1993; May, 1986) recommend
strengthening the rationale for the proposed study by reviewing literature initially to identify gaps in knowledge. These views are not in conflict. Chenitz (1986) explains that the purpose and scope of literature review changes as a grounded theory study progresses.

In this study, I used literature at different stages. The initial review established the need for and intent of the study. Later, literature served as sources of data. During the data collection and analysis phases, but only after the emerging category framework was sufficiently grounded in the data, I used literature to verify and elaborate categories, to confirm or disconfirm processes and conditions for the processes, and to discover or learn about other related topics. I constantly compared definitions and findings from literature with those emerging from the research data. I believe investigating others’ work at different stages helped me read with a clearer purpose and sharper focus. Most importantly, postponing the search for literature directly related to my categories helped me focus on my data first to detect the most relevant categories. Part III will contain discussions of literature directly relevant to my category framework. The following section deals explicitly with gaps in the literature.

An initial review of three distinct areas related to my field revealed the need for further research. The first area deals with limitations of past methods used to study cultural images and points to possible alternatives. The second part questions whether group work has universal benefits, and the final segment reveals the lack of research done in multicultural environments particularly from the U.S. students’ perspective.

2.2.1. The misguided construction of cultural images

A large body of research has recently concentrated on the construction of cultural images related to educational goals, teachers and students, and the impact of these images on group processes. Kubota (2001), reviewing this literature, concluded that well-meaning attempts to clarify cultural differences between U.S. and Asian classrooms have resulted in an applied linguistics discourse that essentializes cultures and legitimizes unequal power relationships between the parties. These studies also too often portray idealized cultural images of the U.S. educational system that are in stark contrast to daily reality experienced by students. Based upon experience, I believe that when U.S. teachers and students operate with such limited and one-dimensional cultural concepts, NNES students are set up for failure in the host culture. Not only does the disparity between
reality and the ideal confuse both NNES and U.S. students, but it also causes deeper misunderstanding and further alienation.

Related to this issue, Pennycook (1996, 1998) and Zamel (1995, 1997) point out how the discourse in applied linguistics explaining cultural differences has lead to descriptions that essentialize and polarize cultures. These attempts often result in what Pennycook (1998) terms cultures of "Other" and "Self". Clearly, when this kind of dichotomy is set up, issues of domination, marginalization, and exclusion set in (with concomitant elements such as prejudice, stereotypes, and racism) causing students and teachers from the host culture to behave in unfriendly or unreceptive ways toward foreign students, and foreign students to take inappropriate superior or inferior positions.

Kubota (2001) shows that while some researchers have tried to explain NNES student difficulties in mainstream U.S. classrooms through cultural differences, several ethnographic studies (e.g., Leki, 1999, 2001; Zamel, 1995) have approached this issue more fruitfully from an institutional perspective showing what actually happens in the classroom. More recently, Morita (2000, 2004) has added her work to this small group. Her findings show that academic discourse socialization in the classroom is a constant and complex process of negotiation and not one of simple enculturation. Pictures emerging from these studies correspond to negative representations emerging from research (see Kubota, 2001) of regular U.S. classes without NNES students and challenge the idealized images focusing on cultural differences.

Thus, a small body of ethnographic research is starting to point out problems with focusing on cultural differences while searching for ways schools, colleges, and universities can serve their international students better. By investigating what actually happens in the classroom and institutions, researchers are finding answers and explanations that are more helpful and satisfactory. However, while these studies investigate what happens to NNES students in social settings, they are still only looking at the situation from the NNES students' perspective.

2.2.2. The myth of universal advantages of group work

Prevailing wisdom in higher education is that group work activities provide important learning experiences for students. Yet, the debate over its effectiveness continues (see Underwood, 2003). Abercrombie (1969), Jaques (1991), Mello (1993), and Schwartz
(1995) espouse the many benefits of group work. For example, they claim that group work helps students to gain insights into group dynamics and develops interpersonal skills, groups can develop assignments that are more comprehensive, groups expose students to more different points of view, and discussing issues in groups gives students the opportunity to reflect on assumptions and ideas. In addition, there is the belief that multicultural group work encounters could broaden and enrich learning because groups expose students to a diverse range of opinions represented by their peers (Jones, 1999). Furthermore, some hope that exposure to diversity will allow students to develop tolerance and understanding for different ethnic and racial groups and the opportunity to acquire flexible academic and social skills (for comprehensive literature reviews see Paige, 1990; Underwood, 2003). There is also the suggestion, though the research is scanty, that group work has the potential to promote critical thinking skills leading to superior course work (Cooper, 1995).

However, there is a growing body of research questioning the rosy picture painted of the advantages of group work for NNES students such as enhanced language development opportunities and greater cultural understanding and tolerance (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Jacob, Rottenberg, Patrick, & Wheeler, 1996; Leki, 1999; Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Studies like those by Tomlinson and Egan (2002) are shedding light on the difficulties multicultural group members are experiencing and the sense of disappointment and disillusionment they feel.

The most sobering is a recent longitudinal ethnographic study conducted by Leki (2001). Her research revealed that multicultural group work did not provide positive experiences for a group of six international students. Leki raises doubts about the conclusions previous researchers (e.g. Cohen, 1994; Ford, 1991) reached. She did not find evidence that working with native English speakers enhanced language development or cultivated better cross-cultural understanding and racial tolerance. Instead, she discovered that power differentials prevented NNES students from realizing their potential during group work. Morita (2004) uncovered similar issues in her study. Leki’s study also challenges the idea that East Asian students are more group oriented than individualistic. Even more revealing, she found that teachers might be out of touch with what really happens during group work. Ravenscroft (1997) raises a similar concern.
Furthermore, Leki remarks that learning experiences teachers plan for NNES and U.S. students may not be executed as intended. In fact, many of the negative group work elements may be masked by positive outcomes like good grades or seemingly positive peer evaluations. Finally, Csete, Yan, & Kwan-Liddle (1998) found that group work as a method did not provide significantly better learning outcomes for NNES, and NNES did not immediately recognize group work benefits.

2.2.3. The unexamined impact U.S. and NNES students have on each other in groups

Researchers have neglected the impact U.S. and NNES students have on each other during group work. This literature search found several articles that generally expound the positive (e.g. Bassett, McWhirter, & Kitzmiller, 1999; Hendrix, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1989; Phipps, Phipps, Kask, & Higgins, 2001; Singhanayok & Hooper, 1998; Slavin, 1990) and negative (e.g. Holt, Michael, & Godfrey, 1997; Randall, 1999) impact U.S. group members have on each other in American classrooms. NNES students were not part of these studies. The search further located a body of investigations and theoretical discussions exploring group work from the NNES student’s perspective (e.g. Csete, Han, & Kwan-Liddle, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Fiechtner & Davis, 1992; Houldsworth & Mathews, 2000; Kinsella, 1996; Leki, 2001; Littlewood, 2001; Morita, 2004; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Storch, 2001).

However, no studies directly investigating the influence the two groups have on each other during college-level group work could be found.

Several research articles deal with U.S. student attitudes toward foreign students in various specialized areas. For example, (a) U.S. student attitudes toward foreign students during and after the Iran - U.S. hostage crisis (Matross, et. al., 1982), (b) U.S. student interaction patterns with foreign students related to residence proximity (Marion & Stafford, 1975, 1976), (c) U.S. students and their foreign friends (Dowling & Shaffer, 1966), (d) U.S. student social (not classroom related) contact with international students (Das, 1974), and (e) U.S. student judgements of NNES students’ personalities based on intelligibility and speaking rate (Llurda, 2000). I also found studies that investigated U.S. student perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes toward foreign students in general (e.g. Mehta & Ruby, 1997; Segal, 1994; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001), and related to group work,
there are psychology studies (e.g. Littleford, 2001; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002) about inter-group anxiety involving NNES and U.S. students.

Leki's (2001) and Morita's (2004) studies discuss some of the impact North American students have on NNES students from a NNES student perspective; however, comprehensive studies investigating how U.S. and NNES students influence each other during group work could not be located. More puzzling is the noticeable absence of studies investigating NNES students' impact on U.S. students in group settings from a U.S. student perspective. The lack of research is curious and may be linked to an issue raised in 2.2.1. When one group is the “Other” and not the “norm”, then the “Self” may have little interest in investigating its own role in cross-cultural miscommunication. Another noticeable gap is the lack of studies concentrating on the social construction of experiences. Clearly, both parties play crucial roles during interactions, and the extent to which they contribute to or hinder productive group work needs to be investigated.

2.3. Conclusion

The initial literature review revealed the need to continue searching for answers to questions like “What happens to NNES and U.S. students during multicultural group work?” and “How do NNES and U.S. students affect each other?” A large body of cross-cultural analysis has not produced a meaningful framework to explain NNES student adjustment problems in U.S. classrooms. In fact, the almost exclusive focus on how NNES students are different from U.S. students in some studies leaves the impression that NNES students need to be changed, and that they alone should carry the adjustment burden. On the other hand, ethnographic research focusing on what actually happens in colleges and universities with NNES students has provided promising constructs, but the research is still relatively small, centres mainly on NNES student experiences, and neglects the social construction of experiences. Key aspects such as how U.S. students affect NNES students and vice versa during group encounters have been neglected. These omissions leave important gaps meriting further investigation. To fill them and to shed light on why group work experiences are negative for some students and not for others, this study investigated how both U.S. and NNES students function and how they affect each other in groups.
PART II
RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Chapter 3: Statement of Research Questions

Question formulation was a dynamic process involving several revisions. Sometimes the research questions steered the data gathering and analysis processes and at other times, data analyses helped redirect the study and refine the questions. This flexibility in the research process brought alternating periods of chaos and order that kept me working close to the data and helped me pinpoint deeper issues in the research situation.

3.1. Formulating Research Questions Using Grounded Theory

Grounded theory research should generate and not test theory; therefore, this research project did not start with a completely defined situation, hypotheses based upon previous theories, or final questions about settings, participants, actions, practices, and symbols in the context (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser, 1978; May, 1986; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). It started with a broadly defined problem area as stated in Chapter 2 (2.1) and specific research aims with preliminary questions (Table 1 below), which allowed the problem in the setting to emerge through early data analyses.

The belief that uncovering students’ versions of their experiences would lead to the roots of the problem prompted the overarching question “What happens during multicultural group work in a college setting: How are students’ experiences influenced by the social processes they are exposed to and how do the students in turn influence the social processes?” The related aims were twofold: first, to uncover the processes, such as discourses, linking individuals to the wider social and organizational structures influencing them, and second, to discover how individuals make sense of their experiences during college level multicultural group work interactions.

Through data gathering and analysis, a set of more specific problems inherent in the setting emerged, and the attendant insights helped to shift the focus from a wider inquiry (studying impersonal features of society and immediate interpersonal interaction) to a
much narrower but more intense investigation (involving personal and interpersonal aspects of social interaction only).

3.2. Rationale for a Dual Focus

Even though the exact nature of the problem was not clear initially, it was plain that a key to understanding group interaction lay in studying how both groups affected each other and co-created their experiences. Contrary to what other studies in this field had done, I decided to approach the situation through the perspectives of both groups, not just one. NNES students seemed to be aware that their U.S. peers viewed them differently from how their peers viewed them in their native countries. NNES students’ self-descriptions indicated lack of confidence and confusion over their new positions. If they were confident and productive students before, how did contact with U.S. students affect them now? Why was the effect mostly negative? In addition, U.S. students seemed frustrated with the unexpected and undesired complications NNES students’ presence introduced. What impact did the NNES students have on them? Why was it mostly negative? With more information, I hoped to help both parties to understand how they create reactions in others. Greater insight into their situations might help them see which factors they can control. More knowledge might help them decide whether or how to alter their own behaviour to obtain more favourable results during group work.

3.3. Refining Research Questions

Original, interim, and final sets of questions will illustrate the ongoing process of question development. After demarcating the problem area, I developed the first set of research questions. To allow early data analyses to lead me to the major problem in the research situation, I made the main question broad and developed a set of sub-questions to define the area. As data gathering and analyses progressed, category formation and research question formulation occurred simultaneously. This process involved experimentation and testing until the best fit with the data emerged. Questions emerging from the data allowed constant formulation of hypotheses, which I checked against new data and extant research.
Table 1 illustrates the progression from the original research questions to an interim set. Once the main question materialized, it was possible to create the narrowed sub-questions in sections (a) and (b) in the second column. I adapted several questions from the first column, dropped others, and formulated new ones. The revised questions focused more narrowly on the social and social-psychological group work processes and how participants reported they dealt with their thoughts and emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Research Questions</th>
<th>Interim Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main question</strong>: What is the fundamental psychosocial problem involved in multicultural group work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) What happens during multicultural group work? For example:</td>
<td>Main questions: What are the social and social-psychological processes involved for U.S. and NNES students during group work in college settings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What are the different components and attributes of multicultural group work?</td>
<td>(a) How do U.S. and NNES students affect each other and deal with the contact during college-level group work? (Social processes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What are the different strategies participants employ during group work and what are the consequences of these strategies?</td>
<td>▪ How does the U.S. student affect the NNES student, and vice versa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What impact does the U.S. student have on the international student, and vice versa?</td>
<td>▪ What are the different strategies participants employ during group work and what are the consequences of these strategies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How do group members feel about group work?</td>
<td>▪ What social processes influence their choice of actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How do multicultural group members experience the network of social structures within which they have to operate?</td>
<td>(b) How do the participants process their thoughts and emotions about these interactions? (Socio psychological processes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ In what non-cognitive ways do individuals acquire and assimilate cultural information?</td>
<td>▪ What actions have meaning for whom? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What blocks or distorts acquisition?</td>
<td>▪ How do the different players interpret these actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What existing social processes influence their choice of actions?</td>
<td>▪ How do group members feel, and what do they learn about themselves and other members during group interactions? How does this affect them? How do they process this information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What actions have meaning for whom and why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How do the different players within their given context interpret these actions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) What processes link the individual to social structures that influence them? For example:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What external factors, such as institutional philosophy and teacher competence, influence students’ experiences during group work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How do participants manipulate and develop their existing social structures?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questions in column two became clear toward the end of the initial, purposive sampling stage and steered the project through the first theoretical sampling phase (discussed in Chapter 5).
As May (1986) advised, I continued to refine the questions as the study evolved. The next question refinement phase commenced at the beginning of the second theoretical sampling phases and continued until the grounded theory framework became stable. Question revisions took place deliberately and after thinking deeply about the data and the emerging themes. Whereas the first revision necessitated defining the major problem, the second revision demanded refinement of research purpose and direction.

Table 2 depicts the final revision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main question:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What happens during multicultural group work in a college setting:</td>
<td>How do the social processes students are exposed to influence their experiences and how do the students in turn influence the social processes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social processes as perceived and reported by U.S. and NNES students** (social behaviour patterns—how individuals behave and affect each other)

- What social processes unfold during multicultural group work?
- Which actions have meaning for whom and why?

**Socio-psychological processes as perceived and reported by U.S. and NNES students** (thought and emotional reactions—how individuals make sense of experiences)

- What do the different players think and feel about these processes and actions?

**Sub-questions:**

- How do U.S. and NNES students affect each other?
- What different strategies do they employ to function during group work?
- What are the consequences of these strategies?
- What do U.S. and NNES students affect each other?
- How do they process their reactions to these effects?
- What do they learn about themselves and others?
- What emotions and thoughts prompt them to use these strategies?
- What are their thoughts and emotions about the consequences?

### 3.4. Conclusion

To capture the multifaceted nature of my research situation and the reciprocal effects between individual and social processes, the research questions underwent several revisions. The narrowed and clearer focus allowed me to align the methodology and methods more carefully. The research questions already hint at the underlying methodology, namely social constructionism with special emphasis on individual agency, which I will discuss in the next chapter.
The decision to use a constructivist\(^5\) grounded theory strategy (Charmaz, 1990, 1994, 2000, 2002; Richardson, 1999) stems from a belief that the chosen unit of study can best be investigated through a social constructionist perspective that will illustrate the complex and temporal nature of the research situation. As will become clear, not only does the approach suit the unit of study, it also corresponds with my background and my ontological and epistemological positions. This section will explain the methodological decisions that led to selecting a grounded theory research strategy and related data gathering and analysis methods.

4.1. Researcher Background and Orientation

Grounded theory researchers enter the field with a certain disciplinary perspective, a philosophy, and preformed ideas that could affect their sensitivity to subtleties in data. My background, experience, and perspective are important factors, form part of my theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987), and create a level of empathy and understanding needed during data analysis in this project.

A wide range of experiences has formed my perspective of life and influenced my ideas about the research situation and findings. I have lived on three continents (Africa, Asia, and North America) and received schooling from three different systems (South African, North American, and British) leading me to conclude that there are subtle yet fundamental differences in education processes and cultures that make student adjustment problematic and academic success difficult. Moreover, I have taught a diverse range of students in a variety of educational settings in different countries (white Afrikaans and

\(^5\) Burr (1995) explains that constructivism and constructionism are sometimes used interchangeably. Gergen (1985) recommends using constructionism to distinguish the term used in sociology from Piaget’s perceptual theory and a significant 20\(^{th}\) century art movement. I prefer this term too, but because Charmaz uses the term ‘constructivist grounded theory’ for her specific version, I will use ‘constructivist’ only to refer to it. In other parts of the paper, I will use the terms constructionist or constructionism.
English-speaking high school students in South Africa, postgraduate students in southwestern China, and multicultural graduate and undergraduate students in university and college settings in the United States). Not only have I struggled personally with adjusting to diverse societies and their specific educational settings, experiencing culture shock first hand, but I have also observed and helped my students face and overcome the same issues.

Having experienced the insider and outsider position in different situations, I know that adjustment problems are complex and challenging to understand and deal with. My experiences bring a unique blend of personal and subjective understanding with the ability to look in from the outside and analyze critically.

4.2. Constructionist Thinking

I used Charmaz’s approach to grounded theory (1990, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2002), which she calls constructivist, instead of using the more positivistic versions described by Corbin (1986), Glaser (1978, 1998), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss (1987), and Strauss and Corbin (1998a, 1998b). Whereas all approaches study human experience from a historical and contextual position and aim to describe and explain the social processes and stages of development, a constructionist approach produces rather than discovers data through the interaction with participants. In the next sections, I will discuss constructionism, provide details of the constructionist position taken in this project, and explain how I use constructionism in grounded theory. Finally, I will consider some of the difficulties and limitations of this approach.

4.2.1. Theoretical underpinnings

Although its roots can be determined, the constructionist approach to studying human interaction in sociology and psychology cannot be traced to one particular individual or source (Burr, 1995). The range of ideas and disagreements within the movement is wide. Constructionism refers to a set of interrelated theories challenging empirical realism, objectivism, objective truth, and essentialism (Neimeyer & Neimeyer, 1993; Schwandt, 1994) and has developed through the contributions of authors who have attempted to resolve questions emanating from what Layder (1994) terms the three dualisms in sociology: micro-macro, agency-structure, and individual-society. Recent advances in
psycholinguistics, partly inspired by Wittgenstein’s 1953 work, *Philosophical Investigations*, and the rediscovery of Vygotsky’s 1962 work on developmental psychology, *Thought and Language*, have made major contributions to the constructionist movement (Sabat & Harré, 1999). Through Wittgenstein’s work, researchers have realized the importance of language in creating social reality, and from Vygotsky they have learnt how the acquisition of language and manipulative skills are linked to the organization of thought and experience.

In the broadest sense, constructionists believe that humans do not discover knowledge but construct it through social interaction. Making sense of experience through construction is a continual process of testing and modifying previously formed models and concepts when confronting new experiences. Construction has a socio-cultural and historical nature in which shared understandings and language play a major role (Schwandt, 2000). Constructionism does not only focus on language, but also on social practices and social structures and the discourses associated with them.

In an earlier article, Schwandt (1994) distinguished between radical constructionism as defined by Ernst von Glasersfeld (knowledge is an activity or process and does not exist independently of individuals), feminist standpoint epistemologies (language is more than a transparent representational medium), and social constructionism as defined by Kenneth and Mary Gergen (meanings and knowledge are socially constructed). Harré and van Langenhove (1999) and in a later article, Schwandt (2000) differentiate between weak and strong constructionism. According to Schwandt, both weak and strong versions may accept the idea that knowledge is political, ideological, and not value free, but they depart on the issue of whether there are better or worse interpretations of social reality (weak version) or no valid interpretations (strong version). Harré and van Langenhove explain that the weaker version, to which I subscribe, allows for the possibility of formulating a description of a social event that might seem the most reasonable interpretation of data to informed researchers; however, they acknowledge the possibility of multiple sound interpretations depending upon the vantage points of the describers.

Placing constructionism in historical perspective, Gergen (1985) identifies two competing intellectual traditions that have influenced it; namely, logical empiricists like Locke, Hume, and the Mills who took an exogenous perspective and philosophers like
Spinoza, Kant, and Nietzsche who held an endogenic perspective. Unlike individuals from the exogenic perspective who believe that the source of knowledge can be found in the real world, those operating from the endogenic perspective believe the source resides in processes and is endemic to humans. Social constructionism has developed in reaction to the exogenic perspective as authors have used endogenic perspectives to seek better explanations of how human understandings are developed.

Delanty (1997) maintains that while constructionism originated from the different forms of philosophical idealism associated with Hume, Berkeley, and Kant, philosophers like Weber and Mannheim started opening the door wider by denying that social phenomena should be studied through objective means found in natural sciences. In particular, Mannheim introduced constructionism to social science as a critical methodological issue; however, he still believed that natural sciences and mathematics were not part of the social construction of knowledge. According to Delanty, Mannheim’s ideas are reflected in the symbolic interactionism work of Mead and Berger and Luckmann. These authors from sociology and others from psychology like the Gergens (Burr, 1995) have influenced constructionism. Delanty (1997) lists others who have recently made contributions: Bourdieu who stressed that social science cannot escape its cultural and historical contexts; Unger who advocated making social structures visible so that society can be reconstructed; feminists like Dorothy Smith and Sandra Harding who believe that social scientists, restricted by their social location, need to deconstruct certain constructions so that new possibilities can be realized; and Ulrich Beck who believes that “realism and constructivism are not mutually exclusive” (Delanty, 1997, p. 133) and proposes the notion of ‘constructivist realism’.

Researchers and authors operating within the social constructionist paradigm often have different points of view about individuals and society. Nevertheless, Gergen (1985) lists four assumptions that form themes throughout their collective work. One or more of the following underpinnings are evident in their writing.

1. Radical doubt toward an objective basis of conventional knowledge. For example, Feyerabend, Kuhn, and Taylor’s criticism of positivist-empiricist views of knowledge and Wittgenstein’s work on how our understanding of the world is constrained by linguistic conventions have provided fertile soil for development
of social constructionist ideas. Social constructionists take an anti-essentialist view and question taken-for-granted knowledge. They deny the existence of objective knowledge that can be verified through observation, view the social world as the result of social processes, and believe the exact nature or essence of phenomena cannot be determined.

2. Historical and cultural specificity of understanding. The means through which people gain an understanding of the world are created through social interaction. To social constructionists these understandings are not universal but culturally and historically relative.

3. Socially constructed view of knowledge. The version of reality that prevails is determined through flexible, ambiguous, and ever-changing processes of social relations and not by empirical rules and methods such as observation. Different kinds of interaction, such as language, gestures, and actions, enable individuals to create meaning. Of cardinal interest to social constructionists is language.

4. Incorporation of all forms of negotiated understanding. Social constructions are numerous and take varied forms. Language is but one form of social action. The explanations and descriptions that result from social contact can determine certain interaction patterns and exclude others, and changing an explanation or description may alter existing interaction patterns.

Constructionists do not only differ with regard to which of the principles listed above they believe in, but also to the degree that they subscribe to them. The constructionist field is still evolving and debates are lively.

4.2.2. Critical issues

Two contentious issues within the constructionism movement are relativism and individual agency. They are of particular interest in this project because they presented important challenges during the data analysis and write-up phases.

Discussions in the constructionism-critical realism debate focus on two key questions. One is whether reality is constructed or discovered. While realists stress that social reality is an objective entity, only extreme constructionists would deny its existence (Delanty, 1997). In this regard, it is possible for individuals on both sides of the debate to find common ground. The second question asks, if reality is constructed, does this mean there
is no reality beyond that of each individual, or are there collectively constructed social realities within particular cultures that researchers can identify? For example, Delanty mentions that some realists like Bhaskar endorse the idea that social reality consists of 'generative mechanisms' which produce 'events.' In this sense, some relativists believe there is a common social structure, but the laws and rules that regulate society are contingent not deterministic. Again, realists and moderate constructionists, like me, can find common ground because only extreme constructionists would reject the possibility of uncovering underlying social structures (Delanty, 1997).

The extreme constructionist position raises questions. For example, Delanty (1997) asks, "If all knowledge is constructed, can there be universally valid social scientific knowledge?" (p. 131). I might ask, "If my participants' reality is constructed and I as researcher construct another reality from their accounts and each subsequent reader her or his own, where does construction end? Is any interpretation better than another one? How can we learn anything new?" Various groups view relativism in different ways. Moderate constructionists say that social actors construct reality and that there are many realities. In this sense, they are relativists. However, some, like me, also believe that society is governed by common systems of knowledge and norms (though constantly in flux), and these enable us to decide whether one account is better or more suitable than another one. In this sense, we are realists. This is the view I take in this project. On the other hand, Schwandt (2000) cites authors such as J. Potter, N. K. Denzin, and K. J. Gergen who have side-stepped the debates over extreme relativism by saying that social constructionists are not interested in defining ontological positions but are concerned with how utterances work. Finally, Gergen more recently (2001) argued for shifting the discursive register from disagreement between constructionists and realists to a meta-level of discussion where both parties could find better ways to deal with unresolved issues; however, we are still waiting for clearer answers.

Debate over whether individuals are merely constructed through discourse and therefore have no agency is still alive despite efforts from various authors to address the matter: Are individuals capable of making change or are they locked into a social system that determines everything? Various authors have made the case that individuals are able to create change. Layder (1994), drawing on later works of Giddens, explains that human
beings and social structures are interdependent and mutually constituted. They cannot be seen as separate entities. Sampson (1989), using Bateson’s (1972) ecosystem image, illustrates how individuals and society mutually affect each other and are part of one system. This image makes it possible to understand that individuals are constituted by and are capable of manipulating discourse. Gergen’s (1989) concept of ‘warranting voice’ and Billig’s (1987) notion of individuals as ‘rhetoricians’ further explain how individuals are capable of exercising choice and using discourse to achieve certain social purposes. Finally, there are authors like Sawicki (1991) who interpret Foucault’s idea of a person as someone who can engage in critical historical reflection and therefore make choices and bring about change. The ideas that individuals and society mutually influence each other and that individuals have agency in this context are central to my research.

4.2.3. The importance of discourse

In section 4.2.1, I touched upon language, but it merits further exploration particularly in relation to the importance of discourse in constructionist thinking. The poststructuralist view that individuals are constructed through language comes from the idea that language cannot predate the individual (Burr 1995). Language provides the means through which individuals can communicate, and thus they structure and represent their experiences to make sense of their worlds. It also implies that individuals are created through interaction with others. Harré (2002) points out that “individuals cannot create meanings” (p. 145, italics in original), and that there is no private need for language. Shotter (1993a, 1993b) uses the term ‘joint action’ to make it clear that acts are created in cooperation with others. It is through relationships facilitated by language that we become who we are. Taking this a step further, individuals do not have fixed selves or identities but many different ones, which are brought into being in different situations and contexts. People think, feel, and behave differently with different people and in different circumstances (Burr, 1995). Thus, meanings carried through language are never fixed and always contestable. This is one of the fundamental principles of constructionism.

Authors like Foucault, (1972, 1977), Hollway (1984), and Parker (1992) have investigated how language is structured in different discourses and what people do with their discourses to achieve different purposes. Burr (1995) defines discourse as “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some
way together produce a particular version of events” (p. 48). Discourse helps people construct phenomena they encounter in everyday life, and it is a key factor in helping to form them as individuals with identities, but discourse does not represent people’s opinions or attitudes (explained in 5.2.2). From a social constructionist perspective, discourse cannot provide direct access to people’s private worlds. Burr further explains that what people say and write appear in their discourses, and that the meanings of these discourses depend on the context in which they are used. Furthermore, Wetherell and Potter (1988) say that researchers should not only focus on what people do with their discourses, but they should focus on the wider unintended consequences of their talk to study how discourses can function. Discourses are closely connected to how society operates, and which discourse predominates is often the result of powerful group interests. Foucault addresses this issue extensively. Power as manifested through discourse will be discussed again in Part III. Since discourse provides a way for individuals to interpret the world, it is of particular interest to social constructionists and is used as the entry point to gaining an understanding of human behaviour.

4.3. The Constructionist Position in this Project

One of the tools social actors use to construct meaning and understanding is language. Humans are able to communicate by using general symbols. Even though these meanings are never fixed, there are enough commonalities in human experiences that can lead to developing concepts and frameworks, which can facilitate some form of understanding (Mead, 1934). These concepts and frameworks can reflect a rich and complex variety of perspectives that not only provide similarities but differences, which allow individuals to compare and contrast experiences and interpretations and so make sense of them. This view does not disregard the fact that misunderstandings abound during social interaction, nor does it mean that I subscribe to the idea that there are fixed universal rules and structures. However, it does allow for the possibility that within a given context, humans can co-construct their experiences and that based upon their collective experiences, some interpretations ring truer than others do. Nevertheless, my purpose is not to make judgements about whether some participants’ perceptions are more valid than others’ are; quite the contrary, my aim is to show multiple perspectives and experiences.
This study focuses on the social and social-psychological processes U.S. and NNES students encounter or use during group work in a college setting. The aim is to find out (a) how participants affect each other and deal with contact during college level group work as reported by them and (b) what participants say about how they process their thoughts and emotions about these interactions. The intention is to allow a variety of participants, through intensive interviews, to recount their understandings of their interactions and the effects these encounters have on them.

Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) constructionist paradigm provides a useful means to sum up the position I take in this project. First, the ontological position of a constructionist researcher is based upon relativism. There is not a single determinate reality but many, and these realities take the form of “multiple, intangible mental constructions” that are “socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature” (p. 110). Individuals and groups with similar constructions create content and form, which they can alter. These constructions are “not more or less ‘true,’ in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated” (p. 111). This statement acknowledges the possibility that two independent individuals could interpret the same situation differently even though there are shared elements within a culture or perhaps across cultures. It also means that two separate researchers could use the same data and because of their different backgrounds and perspectives construct interpretations that are not the same though not necessarily contradictory. In that sense, one construction is not the final word or the ‘true’ interpretation. However, this statement does not imply that just any interpretation is acceptable. For different constructions to be credible, they have to show evidence of faithful interpretation of the information in the context. To uncover and examine some of the multiple realities of students during group work and to provide a more complex picture and a deeper understanding of the situation, I interviewed 24 students. Participants’ accounts of their experiences, their observations, and their thoughts and emotions about them were de- and re-constructed through constant comparison to produce a multi-faceted grounded theory report.

Secondly, the epistemological positions are transactional and subjectivist. The researcher and research participant interact and co-create data as the project progresses. This implies that the researcher inevitably influences the inquiry thus creating value-
mediated findings. According to Guba and Lincoln, this position blurs the traditional lines between ontology and epistemology because “what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group” (italics in original p. 110). In this project, I took the position that I was co-creating data with my interviewees. I did not view myself as an objective, cold questioner. The interview questions I asked and my responses to participants inevitably influenced the direction of the study. By interpreting what interviewees said and steering the discussion, I became part of the process of constructing information. When I analyzed and interpreted data, I was inevitably influenced by my experiences and philosophical positions and so added another dimension to the study.

Finally, the methodology is hermeneutical and dialectic. Only through researcher-participant interaction can individual constructions be obtained and processed. I used hermeneutical methods to interpret data and refined them through discussion with others involving comparison and contrast in order to arrive at a more informed and sophisticated construct than any previous ones. I used intensive interviews to elicit information from participants and employed grounded theory methods to analyze the data. Methods included line-by-line and open coding, constant comparison (incidents with incidents in the same interview, incidents with incidents from different interviews, codes with categories, categories with categories, definitions and emerging theoretical framework with extant research), and memoing (to reflect upon and interpret information).

4.4. Suitability of a Grounded Theory Research Strategy

According to Glaser (1978), the goal of a grounded theory study is “to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved” (p. 93). The theory generated through data provides an abstract explanatory schema related to a particular situation. However, such a schema might shed light on similar situations in different settings or indicate areas for future research (discussed in Chapters 13). Grounded theory investigations are especially appropriate for areas that have not been studied before or where researchers wish to gain a fresh perspective on a familiar situation (Stern, 1994). Whereas research has been done to investigate what happens from NNES students’ perspectives during college level group
work, no known in-depth research has been done from the U.S. students' point of view in this setting. There is also no research explaining how both student groups make sense of their experiences in relation to each other.

A grounded theory research strategy is particularly suited to developing substantive (not formal) theories that investigate specific social processes in narrower empirical areas (McCann & Clark, 2003). Social situations in the natural world where change and process predominate and provide the right environments for constructed and negotiated meanings (Morse & Johnson, 1991), as is the case in my study, are highly suitable for research. Further relevant to my research situation, this approach is appropriate for studying "individual processes, interpersonal relations, and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 28). Charmaz explains that by studying what people do and say they do, researchers using interpretive analyses can uncover multiple layers of meanings. These layers include stated explanations of actions, unspoken underlying assumptions of reported actions, and accounts of effects of actions and their consequences. Data in this study are what individuals said during interviews and what they reported they did during group interactions. Since the research aim was to obtain information about their subjective realities and not objective external information, direct observation of actions during group situations was not part of this investigation.

In addition to studying human experiences from a naturalistic, historical, and contextual perspective, other considerations make a grounded theory approach desirable for this project. First, grounded theory strategies enable the researcher to go beyond description and reflexive analysis of social phenomena because they lead to the development of social theory out of gathered data (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Ray (1994) provides a helpful perspective here. She argues that theory cannot provide a complete and fixed picture, but it does reveal possibilities that ring true to the "inner structure of meaning and understanding" (p. 124). Because individuals have shared experiences and therefore have the ability to understand elements of each other's realities, theory formed of reflexive insights can show how individual experiences are a smaller version of a bigger whole. This links up with Hammersley's (1998) plausibility criterion (based on our knowledge of the world, is this situation possibly true?) for judging truth claims. By providing specific details of a particular setting, the researcher is
potentially able to add new material to the existing pool of information thereby moving the discipline forward.

Second, grounded theory provides an open, flexible approach during the initial phases, which allows problems inherent in the socio-psychological setting to emerge. Starting without specific hypotheses or preconceived ideas formed by previous theories can help the researcher take a clean look at the research situation and the emerging data. In this research situation, the symptoms were visible, but the exact problems were not immediately apparent. Part of the investigation involved finding the problems imbedded in the situation and searching for the less obvious but more serious root causes. A grounded theory approach provides a means to facilitate looking at the data from a fresh perspective without compromising interpretation and reflection.

Third, grounded theory has built-in systematic checks in the data gathering and analysis stages that add rigour to the research process. In grounded theory the continuous use of induction (actions that lead to the development of hypotheses), deduction (making inferences and drawing implications from hypotheses), confirmation (procedures to substantiate the inferences and implications), and comparison (developing properties and dimensions) can help with thorough analysis of material and formation of new categories. One strength grounded theory brings to the research process is starting the data analysis process as soon as the first data are in. Immediate and constant analyses help with systematic sorting of data and timely interpretation so that researchers can manoeuvre investigations more carefully to obtain different dimensions of the research situation.

4.5. Difficulties and Potential Pitfalls

While there are distinct advantages to using grounded theory method, there are serious pitfalls to avoid. One potential hazard is lack of depth in research due to fewer cases or insufficient analysis in particular instances (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). This is avoided by carefully investigating cases until categories are saturated and do not reveal any new material. By sampling vigilantly and seeking negative cases, the researcher can ensure depth and breadth in data. However, it is not always easy to determine when saturation point is reached. When studying individuals in complex situations, one could
potentially keep sampling and continue to get new information. I had to confront this problem in my project, and I will address it in Chapter 5 (5.1.1).

An even bigger danger according to Strauss and Corbin (1998b) is discovering the inherent problem and socio-psychological processes but neglecting to develop the social processes conceptually. Obviously, an awareness of this danger and deliberate attempts at perceptive and critical analysis of data until clear theory emerges are ways to avoid this pitfall. More specifically, Strauss and Corbin encourage researchers to be careful to include the theoretical coding phase because “theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 72).

Furthermore, the analytical approach can lead to other problems. Because grounded theory techniques aim to go beyond description to develop theory, another danger is that the researcher could develop a scientific product that has an analytic edge and theoretical sophistication but is removed from reality and lacks human stories (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). When writing reports, grounded theorists may emphasize clarity and precision through defining concepts, developing conceptual properties, and drawing on short sections from different interviews at the expense of portraying a subtle and nuanced picture of the social situation under investigation. Moreover, the development of diagrams, conceptual maps, and core categories may result in a level of abstraction that might lead constructionist researchers to fall into the trap of viewing social concepts as having essences rather than viewing them as human productions. This is a particular danger for novice researchers. To avoid these difficulties, the researcher needs to be (a) clear about the ontological and epistemological foundations of the methodology, (b) understand the nature of the data and know what can realistically be done with them during analysis, and (c) introduce human narratives at appropriate times to illustrate the subtleties, nuances, and complexity of the research situation.

4.6. A Constructionist Approach to Grounded Theory

According to Charmaz (2000, 2002) researchers employing a constructionist perspective in grounded theory accept the temporary and relative nature of data, believe data are created through a partnership involving shared experiences of the researcher and
participants, and recognize that data are derived through an interpretive understanding of participants’ meanings. This is my belief too. Schwandt (1994) further explains that constructionists take a pluralistic (reality can be expressed through a variety of symbol and language systems) and plastic (reality can be moulded and extended by participants to suit their purposes and acts) view of reality. Thus, they deny the existence of a unique, real, and discoverable world and endorse the idea that knowledge is constructed. Like Charmaz, Schwandt contends that constructionists create concepts, models, and schemes to interpret experience, and they then adjust these constructions through repeated testing. I also concur with these ideas.

Grounded theory provides a means for researchers to construct sociological reality. As Charmaz (1990) points out, not only can researchers find out from participants how they construct their worlds by collecting data about their experiences, but in turn the experience of conducting research allows researchers to construct their approach to data gathering and analyses.

While Charmaz’s version of grounded theory follows some of the same general principles for data gathering and analysis described by Corbin, Glaser, and Strauss, it departs on important philosophical and methodological grounds.

1. Discovering vs. producing data. Charmaz (1990, 1995, 2000) describes the data gathering, question formulation, and categorization procedures as dynamic, dialectal, and not passive, where researcher decisions actively shape the process and resulting theory. Researchers do not discover their theories in the data as if they already exist; instead, researchers construct them. In this sense, the research report is a social construction of participants’ social constructions.

2. Researcher perspective. In addition to a philosophical perspective, theoretical orientation, and methodological strategies, researchers bring values, experiences, goals, and motives to the research situation. Instead of denying or suppressing their existence, they use these elements to become sensitive to nuances in the data and to be alert to central issues. This implies that researchers do not only attend to their participants’ meanings but also their own (Charmaz, 1990, 2000).

3. Approach to research. Researchers aim to capture multiple voices and participant perspectives and view the research process as emergent. They do not use research
guidelines as prescriptions or develop predictions from their theories (Charmaz, 2000).

According to Richardson (1999), this version of grounded theory attempts to address what Martyn Hammersley (1989) refers to as the “dilemma of qualitative research”. The interpretive nature of social research and the constructed nature of research participant creations are recognized at the same time.

4.7. Critique of Charmaz’s Version of Grounded Theory

As can be seen from the discussion above, Charmaz has taken many important steps to address some of the criticism ethnographers have levelled at grounded theory strategies, and she has removed many of the original positivistic elements from her version of grounded theory. Nevertheless, some potentially troublesome elements remain.

First, even though the purpose of theoretical sampling is to search for variation in data and not to record frequency of occurring phenomena, data analysis strategies like sorting codes into categories involve placing similar occurrences in specified groups. A possible danger is that the researcher may inappropriately raise a group of codes to core categories based upon the frequency with which certain data appear and not through considering the importance and fit of individual pieces of information in relation to the context and the emerging theory. This may elevate the status of frequency—a positivist principle. Charmaz is not explicit about this aspect in her writing; however, during a grounded theory workshop I attended during The First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on 5-7 May 2005, she explained methods to promote codes to categories that can help avoid this problem (see Chapter 6, 6.2.4 for further discussion).

Second, an element which postmodernists might object to is the need some grounded theory researchers like Charmaz (2004) feel to ‘bracket’ their own meanings when interpreting research participants’ meanings. Husserl promoted the idea of transcendental subjectivity through which the researcher can explore the world by bracketing or suspending presuppositions about it. By studying a phenomenon without presuppositions, the researcher can find pure evidence of the existence of an object. In contrast, Heidegger believed that because the individual is “in” the world, it is impossible to separate the
individual from presuppositions. Disclosure of presuppositions makes possible understanding and meaning. Thus, belonging to the world is an interpretive experience that makes understanding of it possible (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Delanty, 1997; Heidegger, 1962, 1988; Leonard, 1994; Ray, 1994).

Postmodernists who reject both structuralism and the notion that there can be an ultimate truth (Burr, 1995) have influenced constructionism. To postmodernists interpretations of life have to be situation specific. Hence, they stress the co-existence of multiple perspectives. One objection they might have is that by bracketing, the researcher would still be trying to seek pure evidence and the true essence of objects. There is also a growing trend among postmodernists to blur the lines between interviewer and interviewee or analyst and respondent (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001), and another objection here might be that by bracketing, the researcher would be too removed from the research setting. I feel it is important to be aware of my own perspectives and try to stay close to the data to understand the participants’ meanings as faithfully as possible, but I question whether researchers can truly ‘bracket’ personal interpretations. Not that they should, because the point of using a constructionist approach to grounded theory is to acknowledge that researchers by their mere presence influence the direction of the study and interpret data from a personal perspective. They co-construct the theory through interpreting their participants’ social constructions.

Third, the inductive nature of grounded theory exposes the social constructionist researcher to the possibility of focusing too much on the individual and not enough on the social context. For example, Charmaz (2000, 2002) recommends focusing on action when coding line-by-line. Since most of the action coded is described from the participant’s perspective, when analyzing and moving from the specific to the general, the researcher might lose the social construction focus. Specific awareness and continuous focus on how people co-construct their realities can help avoid this danger.

Finally, Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) say “explicit conditions, fine distinctions, discrete boundaries and crisp comparisons move grounded theory works toward establishing causality and prediction” (p. 170, italics mine). I disagree. Positivist scientists, who establish cause and effect relationships about how their studied phenomena behaved in the past, use those relationships to make predictions about future
situations. Thus if the same conditions presented themselves, we could reasonably predict that X would take place. Constructionist social scientists on the other hand, do not try to make predictions about future situations. When studying human behaviour in social situations, too many complicating factors and unknowns influence the situation to enable researchers to make predictions based upon a sample within a specific context at a particular time. However, social scientists can study behaviour to help us understand what happened in the past so that we might gain insights into the nature of phenomena and try to improve our fate in life. Burr (1995) and Harré (2002) point out that causality is a suitable concept when describing elements in the physical world, but that researchers inappropriately use cause-and-effect language when they talk about the reasons why people behaved in certain ways. When giving reasons, researchers merely construct an account of actions within a specific cultural setting. Wittgenstein (1953/1968) maintained that actions are guided by rules but they do not cause behaviour, and Harré (2002) explains that neither story lines (see Chapter 7) nor social structures cause behaviour, but they do help to explain and create understanding about what happened in retrospect.

4.8. From Methodology to Data Gathering Methods

Based on the discussion above, it follows that since the unit of study involves investigating how students experience and make sense of group work reality, intensive interviews to elicit information is the most suitable data gathering method. Interviews are active interpersonal encounters that allow researchers and participants to create rather than discover knowledge (May, 1989). Observation might have revealed action but not students' perceptions, emotions, and thoughts. Observation could have provided information from the outside, but I needed information from the inside. I believe that trying to reconcile these two perspectives would have confused the issues and distorted the study's focus. Most importantly, a constructionist approach to investigating social situations relies upon analysis of discourse, not personal field notes made during observations. Because I wanted to hear directly from students about their experiences, I did not interview teachers and administrators, though they might have provided other perspectives. Participant journals could have elicited explanations and thoughts, but given practical restraints such as time and participant commitment, journals were not deemed

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suitable. Instead, I conducted interviews with a diverse range of students and obtained various perspectives on the same topic to provide a multifaceted study.

4.9. Conclusion

I took a constructionist position toward the accounts participants gave of their reality during interviews; I believe these accounts were socially constructed and do not have an independent existence. I also took a constructionist approach to data gathering and analysis; I constructed a middle range theory based upon my research participants' constructs of reality. In Heidegger's version of phenomenology the focal point is the ontological-existential question of experiencing (Thompson, 1990), and the purpose of hermeneutics is to interpret lived experience through text. Both aspects are relevant to this study. However, the goal of this project is to explain the processes underlying social or social-psychological experiences in the research situation and not to describe psychological structures, which is the aim most often associated with phenomenology (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992). Because I examined dynamic social and psychosocial, and not psychological processes, a grounded theory approach with a constructivist slant was more appropriate for this study.
Chapter 5: Data Collection

I collected and analyzed audio-recorded interviews using grounded theory guidelines outlined by Charmaz (2002). They are: (a) concurrent data-collection and analysis, (b) identification and pursuit of themes through early data analysis, (c) detection of and expanded search for social and socio-psychological processes in data, (d) synthesis of processes through construction of core categories, and (e) construction of a theoretical framework that incorporates categories. I will discuss decisions and processes involved in (a) and (b) in this chapter and those for (c) – (e) in Chapter 6.

5.1. Data Collection Methods

The sole data collection method was intensive interviewing. Before implementation, I tested and adjusted the interview processes and improved my methods as the project progressed. To ensure consistency, only I conducted interviews.

5.1.1. Sampling strategy

5.1.1.1. Grounded theory sampling

Theoretical sampling and category saturation were two primary components of my data collection. As is the case with other grounded theory researchers, my initial sampling was purposive (see Tables 3 and 4 below). Once the themes and categories became clear, theoretical sampling commenced. To help me develop categories further, I sought variation within categories and tried to account for gaps between them. Sampling ended when I decided that I had achieved category saturation, which Morse (1995) and Strauss (1987) define as the point where researchers no longer find significantly new information after uncovering a variety of incidents to support the category. Researchers cannot predict when exactly they will achieve this stage (Morse, 1995), and this was my experience too. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998a), researchers often discover whether they have reached data saturation when writing memos. That was partly true for
me, but my Comparison Grids (see Tables 9-11 on pp. 66-68) were by far more helpful to identify complete sets of information or gaps.

The definition of saturation is vague and relies upon researcher judgement. In my case, the decision to declare saturation point not only required determining whether I had enough variety in my material, but also involved considering research purpose and time restrictions. Wilson and Hutchinson (1991) explain that a sample size of 20-30 is typical. However, Charmaz (1991, 2002) conducted 55 interviews with 35 people for her dissertation, and thereafter expanded her search to 115 interviews with 55 people. When dealing with human subject matter, one could keep discovering variety in categories if one searched long enough. I had to decide whether conducting more interviews would produce significantly new information. I concluded that it would not (see 5.1.1.3).

Because the purpose of data gathering was to learn as much as possible about the research topic and not to record frequency of phenomena, I followed Morse's (1995) and Charmaz's (1995) advice and used theoretical sampling to seek out possible negative cases to build a comprehensive theoretical model. Theoretical sampling helped to delimit data collection so that I could search for specific information that would fill in the gaps in my theoretical framework. The purpose was to refine ideas and not to increase the sample size (Charmaz, 2000). Comparative analysis of material enabled me to continue seeking data that comprehensively defined category properties, their contexts, the conditions under which they occur, and their consequences (Charmaz, 2000, 2002).

5.1.1.2. Research setting

I conducted this investigation at a medium-sized (around 8,000 students) community college over two academic years. The college offers both technical/professional and academic courses and class sizes range from 24-38 students. Depending on class loads, students usually attend class every day. Many students have jobs to support themselves and so early morning or evening classes are popular. Student ages range from 16 to over 70 years. The general educational philosophy is that students learn best when they engage in discussion or debate and apply principles rather than memorize facts. Because classes are small, many instructors promote active student participation during lectures. They encourage students to ask questions, answer teacher questions, and volunteer opinions and information. Some want students to engage in debates and disagree with others,
including the teacher. Many teachers also rely heavily on group work. It is generally understood that everybody will contribute ideas and opinions equally, share the workload equitably, and produce quality work when working in groups.

5.1.1.3. Participants and sample size

The target population was NNES and U.S. students engaged in group activities in academic settings. Group work interactions included graded assignments such as papers and presentations, non-graded class activities such as group discussions and impromptu presentations, and student government meetings and group tasks outside class. I chose these settings because circumstances forced students from both groups to work together, and students reported experiencing problems in them. It appeared that the group work environment might be a microcosm of cross-cultural interaction. It also seemed that less superficial and more genuine interaction took place during group work, and that contact had immediate and significant consequences for individuals. NNES students included refugees and immigrants as well as international students with student visas, and they came from East Asia, Africa, and Central Europe. NNES and U.S. student group experiences ranged from less than one quarter (3 months) to more than six (18 months). U.S. and NNES groups have the following in common: they are students and exposed to the same campus culture and educational philosophies, they aim to reach academic goals for future careers through attending classes in person, and they have experience working in multi-cultural groups.

Striving for category saturation, I conducted 24 interviews to incorporate numerous participant perspectives. To elicit data that provided maximum variety, I included individuals from both genders, a variety of ages, and different cultural and racial backgrounds. Sampling size for both groups is 12. Equal sample sizes happened more by coincidence than design. During the last stages of theoretical sampling, I approached several people who could provide information to fill in gaps in my data. Contrary to expectations, all the U.S. participants agreed to interviews and turned up, but one NNES student withdrew at the last moment and hence there is an equal number. After analyzing the last interviews, I concluded that I had reached saturation point and did not continue sampling (see 5.1.1.1 above). Table 3 on the next page summarizes relevant demographic information for my sample, and Appendix A provides short profiles of my participants.
Table 3: Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Name</th>
<th>Country of Origin and Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Complete Academic Quarters</th>
<th>Code Name</th>
<th>Racial Background, Country of Origin, and Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Complete Academic Quarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*R#1</td>
<td>Taiwan, M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>*A#1</td>
<td>White American, M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*R#2</td>
<td>Japan, M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*J#1</td>
<td>White American, M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*V#1</td>
<td>Hong Kong, F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*R#3</td>
<td>White American, M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*P#1</td>
<td>Ukraine, M</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>*J#2</td>
<td>White American, M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Japan, F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>*H#1</td>
<td>White American, F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Y#1</td>
<td>Japan, F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>**J#3</td>
<td>White American, F</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**P#2</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>**M#2</td>
<td>White American, M</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>***R#4</td>
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<td>**L#1</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>**J#4</td>
<td>White American, M</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>***M#3</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: * = Purposive sampling, ** = Theoretical sampling phase 1, *** = Theoretical sampling phase 2

5.1.1.4. Participant selection criteria and process

Sampling involved three phases: initial purposive sampling and two stages of theoretical sampling. Table 4 depicts sample phases, duration, size, and selection criteria.

Table 4: Sampling Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Sample Selection Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Purposive Sampling</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
<td>10 interviews</td>
<td>• College students&lt;br&gt;• Classroom group work experience with people from different cultures.&lt;br&gt;• Able and willing to express ideas&lt;br&gt;• Diverse range of gender, age, racial background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Theoretical Sampling Phase 1 (variation)</td>
<td>18 weeks</td>
<td>8 interviews</td>
<td>• Same as Stage 1 above&lt;br&gt;• Non-classroom group experience on campus&lt;br&gt;• Different opinions from those expressed in previous sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: Theoretical Sampling Phase 2 (greater variation)</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
<td>6 interviews</td>
<td>• Same as Stage 1 above&lt;br&gt;• Students new to group work experience&lt;br&gt;• Different opinions from those expressed in previous samples&lt;br&gt;• Wider range of racial background and life perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instead of giving my participants different names to protect their anonymity, I used the first initial of their names and added a number to indicate whether they were the first person that I interviewed with that initial or the second or third. To me, names are important and indicate a certain kind of personality. By giving participants different names, it felt like I was changing their identities. I wanted to avoid that. Some may say that a name like R#1 sounds as if I am referring to a machine or some impersonal entity, but to me it preserves their personal qualities and humanity.
The process of selecting participants evolved as the needs of my project changed, and I selectively chose participants based upon their ability to contribute to my emerging theoretical framework. My idea of good research participants coincides with Morse’s (1991) definition. They are people who have the relevant experience and knowledge, are capable of reflecting, are articulate, and have the time and inclination to participate.

Initial sampling was purposive and took place over a 12-week period. Through consulting old Intensive English as Second Language (IESL) class lists, I identified, screened, and selected NNES students who had taken classes with group work and who were willing and able to express their opinions. Instructors in English, Social Sciences, and Humanities, where most group work is done, identified possible U.S. students and in a few cases NNES students. Through informal interviews, I identified appropriate participants and dropped students with no or limited multicultural group work experience. These interviews lasted about 10 minutes and were not recorded. I asked questions like “Have you worked with NNES students (for U.S. students) or U.S. students (for NNES students) on group assignments?” “For how long?” “How often?” “What was the purpose?” “What did you think about these experiences?” Some students had never worked with a NNES or U.S. student. Others’ experiences were limited to once-off introduction/ice-breaker activities or had participated only in very brief or superficial group discussions and had nothing to say about their experiences. I did not invite them to participate in the study. I asked students who worked on course-related group assignments (even if they had only one experience) and had opinions about their experiences (good, bad, or indifferent) whether they would be willing to participate. During this phase, no students turned down requests for interviews. Sample size for this group was 10 students. This sampling period was the hardest because it took much time and effort to develop meaningful themes. As I finished analyzing an interview, I started seeking the next participant. Data analyses provided important questions and leads, and they helped me to sharpen my interviewing process and select the next participant.

Phase 1 of theoretical sampling started once themes emerged through data analysis. By this stage, I had concluded that the problem in the research setting involved competing student expectations, positioning (though I only encountered the term in the literature later), and self-description, and that I needed to find individuals who had
different views and experiences from those interviewed previously. With a few exceptions, most of the U.S. students I had interviewed either expressed politically correct ideas (not offending any special interest group) or tolerance for and understanding of the NNES student plight. This puzzled me because their information did not confirm what NNES students had said about their experiences. For example, up to this point, U.S. participants had only reported that other U.S. students excluded NNES students during group work, but none admitted doing so themselves. I needed to find U.S. students who had excluded NNES students so that I could find out what they were thinking and what prompted their actions. In contrast, all NNES participants had reported experiencing exclusion. I wanted to see if there were U.S. students who had different perspectives from the ones I had already interviewed. On the other hand, I needed to interview NNES students who had different expectations about group work and U.S. students from those I had already interviewed. Over an 18-week period, I consulted instructors and students to help locate participants, and through informal interviews, I eliminated students who expressed views similar to those already recorded. A sample of eight included NNES and U.S. students who were involved in leadership positions on campus and had wider experience in groups than just classroom group activities. This exposure gave them different perspectives on working with people from different cultural backgrounds and the subsequent interviews yielded new and useful U.S. student data and provided deeper insights into NNES student reactions to U.S. students.

Through completing various Comparison Grids (see samples on pp. 66-68), I determined that there were still important gaps in the data and embarked on Phase 2 of theoretical sampling over a five-week period to develop more variation in my sample. Continuous data analysis indicated that it took time for NNES students to adapt to their academic environments, but I needed to know what the initial impact of group work was on them. I also wanted to find U.S. students from different racial backgrounds. To select the final six candidates for interviews, I once again consulted old IESL records, attended academic classes and spoke to instructors, and screened potential participants for suitability. After analysing this new data set and comparing it with the previous two, I concluded that there were still minor gaps in the data but that more sampling would not likely turn up radically different or completely new information.
5.1.2. Interviews and transcriptions

5.1.2.1. Grounded theory interviews

I used transcribed audio-recorded, digitally stored, intensive interviews to gather data. There is conflicting advice from Glaser (1978) who advises against recording and transcribing interviews, Strauss (1987) who recommends transcribing “only as much as is needed” (p. 266), and others like Swanson (1986) who recommend transcribing all interviews personally. Some researchers save time and avoid transcribing by taking notes when interviewing. However, the benefits of transcriptions outweigh any potential timesaving advantages. I felt that if I did not record or transcribe interviews, I might lose valuable information at the time or forfeit the opportunity to go back later to scrutinize the data for further leads or information. In addition, the planned analysis methods required staying close to the data, and I wanted to use participant quotes to strengthen my conclusions. Finally as an interviewer, I felt it would be hard to attend to my interviewees as people, steer the interview carefully, and take detailed notes simultaneously.

Based upon these arguments and the idea that my focus was to elicit individuals’ accounts of their experiences, I decided to centre my attention on the interviewees as people. I wanted to connect with them on a personal level through making eye contact and sending verbal and non-verbal cues that I was interested in them and understood what they were telling me. This necessitated recording and transcribing interviews. When I contacted individuals, in person or through email, I communicated this intention. I also explained that I was interested in hearing their true experiences and thoughts about both good and bad events. With this information, they were able to make independent decisions about whether to participate or not. I also reassured the NNES students that I cared about the content of their accounts and not their pronunciation or grammar.

5.1.2.2. Transcriptions

I followed Swanson’s (1986) advice, transcribed the first 17 interviews (8.5 hours of the total 12.9 recorded time), and found that I became closely connected with my data. However, this was very time-consuming. I wanted to log all false starts, “uhs” and “ahems”, and silences because they produced important information about participants’ levels of comfort. Because of pronunciation problems and awkward sentence structures, transcribing NNES student interviews was difficult, and it took me roughly one hour to
transcribe each 5-minute recorded unit. After completing this stage, I felt sufficiently in command of my material and asked a court-reporting student (using college grant money) to transcribe the remaining seven interviews. When coding these interviews, I listened to each audio recording several times to focus on the subtle nuances in participants’ tones.

5.1.2.3. Interview process

In keeping with the nature of my research approach and area of investigation, my interview process changed in important ways during my investigation. As the inquiry progressed and the research questions became more defined, I had to adjust my interview strategy to elicit the most relevant data. The need for this kind of flexibility required constant reflection. I recorded insights, ideas, and progress in my journal.

Initially I tried out my interview approach separately with a NNES and a U.S. college student. After completing the interviews, I analyzed my performance and concluded that I needed to ask fewer questions and allow participants to talk more freely. After more interviews, I reflected upon my initial research purpose and concluded that I had to narrow down my research area. It was too wide and complicated as the original plan called for focusing on group work from a personal, interpersonal, societal, and institutional perspective. This realization helped me refine my research questions (as described in Chapter 3) and refocus my data gathering attempts.

Recorded interview lengths ranged from 21 to 52 minutes. During the purposive sampling phase, my interviews were unstructured with no formal preset list of questions and continued like conversations with a specific focus; however, I followed a general interview strategy (Kvale, 1996). Before starting the audiotape, I established rapport and obtained relevant demographic information (e.g. length of time at institution, major, future plans, and campus activities). Thereafter I clarified the purpose of my research, discussed the interview process, and explained participant rights and obligations. Participants read the Information Sheet for Volunteers and signed the Consent Form (see Appendix B). To start the interview, I asked a broad question “Tell me about your group work experiences with ____ (NNES/U.S.) students at ____.” I allowed the participant to talk, jotted down follow-up and probing questions (Kvale, 1996) for areas that needed further exploration during the interview, and asked them at appropriate times. Sometimes I needed to ask follow-up questions immediately, but more often, I assessed the situation
and decided when to ask questions, especially sensitive ones involving emotions or potentially painful experiences. This generally took place toward the middle or end of the interview.

A mental list of topics guided the interview (Swanson, 1986). For example, ‘What processes are operative during group work?’ ‘How do NNES and U.S. students influence each other?’ ‘How do individuals make sense of experiences?’ ‘What actions have meaning and why?’ Some of the topics lent themselves to direct questioning; others did not. For instance, to obtain information about how students influenced each other, I had to listen carefully for those specific incidents and then probe further. Direct questions about how students influenced each other seldom elicited useful information. In fact, Glaser (1992) warns against asking questions that explicitly state the intention of the study because doing so may force the data in a certain direction and restrict the process of opening up the field. When the interview digressed too far, group work questions helped me to redirect the interview. I tried to end on a positive note (Charmaz, 2002) by asking what the individuals had learnt about their group experiences and about themselves.

This open and elastic approach in the initial stages helped me cast a wide net to obtain enough data so that the research questions and most important categories could emerge. This worked so well that I was soon flooded with data. To avoid becoming overwhelmed, I analyzed and sorted data after each interview, made comparison grids to order ideas, and labelled data units carefully. I will discuss these processes in Chapter 6.

Table 5 on the next page illustrates my interview approach. It demonstrates follow-up and probing questions and techniques to encourage participants to continue. The segment also shows how I followed a line of questioning to elicit information directly and indirectly. I wanted to know how U.S. students affected NNES students (indirect questioning) and what specific behaviours were operative (direct questioning). The interchange took place early in the interview. When a sensitive topic came up, I probed more and did not wait until later when the emotions might have been lost. This particular NNES interviewee felt comfortable enough to reveal sensitive information. Other students often only revealed sensitive information later in interviews when they felt more at ease.
Table 5: Interviewer Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Interviewer thoughts during interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> Just, I just feel like they just ignore me but they didn’t…they don’t do it on purpose. They just having natural conversation before they start their work.</td>
<td>- S#1 just told me a very important piece of information. She feels U.S. students ignore her. She is talking about how they have an impact on her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V:</strong> Uhm. So what makes you think that they are ignoring you? What do they do? What behaviour?</td>
<td>- I need to know what S#1 observes and how she interprets U.S. student behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> Behaviour like they don’t look at me so the uhm their face is not facing to me, so I could tell from their...their body language or facial expression like every time I ask like uhm “What TV program is that?” or “Who is this?” They...like some students are willing to tell me more details but some students just don’t...uh...</td>
<td>- S#1 is giving very clear information about actual behaviour that has meaning to her in this situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V:</strong> So, they just continue...</td>
<td>- Restatement to show understanding but also to encourage her to continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> Just continue talking.</td>
<td>- How does she feel about this?—A sensitive question, but if I don’t ask it now, it would be difficult to come back to the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V:</strong> Okay and how does that make you feel when they do that?</td>
<td>- Encouragement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> Feel like I’m isolated</td>
<td>- S#1 expands, she explains “isolated”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V:</strong> <strong>Yeah</strong></td>
<td>- How is she a stress factor? I am trying to dig deeper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> They don’t see me as ah their team mate. They just, they might see me as a like stress factor like they have to take care of me ‘cause I use extra time. So I feel like uhm I’m taking...I’m making them more trouble and then taking time explaining work.</td>
<td>- Encouragement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V:</strong> So, how...so you think they think they might have to explain more but how else do you think you are trouble for them?</td>
<td>- S#1 is reporting more important observed behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> How? Um because my English sometimes didn’t work. Like they have to listen. “What?” they...they are going like “What?” [laugh]</td>
<td>- Encouragement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V:</strong> <strong>Uhuh</strong></td>
<td>- She explains more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> Or they don’t say anything but they just look each other by eyes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V:</strong> <strong>Um</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S#1:</strong> Like they don’t...they don’t e...exact say like “Can you explain it one more time?” but they just look at each other by moving their eyes and then they are showing that they don’t understand. And then if they don’t ask question to me, I feel like...I feel like they think that they...I don’t understand anything like even “Can you explain it one more time?” So that they don’t say anything.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The advantage of using a grounded theory approach is that researchers can refine and adjust the research process. With each interview, it became clearer what I needed to search for and as a result, I was better able to adjust my questioning and choose the next participant. During the two theoretical sampling phases, I followed the same interviewing procedure as during the purposive sampling phase, but had a list of questions that I asked
at the end if participants had not addressed them specifically during the interview. For example, ‘What is the purpose of group work?’ ‘What are your expectations of your group members?’ ‘How have you changed (or not) because of working with _______ (NNES or U.S. students)?’ ‘What have you learned about yourself?’ ‘What was the best thing that happened during group work?’ ‘What was the worst thing?’

5.2. Interview Data Status

Charmaz and Mitchell (2001), explain that investigating the research setting using interviews can be problematic. Interviewees may tell us things they think we should know or what they want us to know. They may take certain things for granted, may not know what the real problems are, or omit telling us what is most important. We might interpret their perceptions differently based upon our own life experiences or points of view. Digging for implicit meanings is difficult, takes time and great effort, and requires a patient, alert, and perceptive interviewer.

5.2.1. Interviewees

I selected participants who were willing and able to express their ideas easily. Students were often busy and could only spare me an hour between classes for interviews. I did not have the luxury of time to coax information out of tongue-tied students or try to make sense out of student comments in very broken English. I can only speculate about whether the less communicative students or those with poor English language skills might have experienced even more frustration than their articulate peers might or whether they would have given different responses. Time constraints limited whom I was able to interview, but should I decide to expand my study later, it might be fruitful to include a wider range of students in my sample.

My general sense was that participants felt puzzled initially about my interest in what happened during group work, but as each interview progressed, they realized there was more to multicultural group interaction than they thought, and they started appreciating the special attention and call for their expertise and opinions. This helped them relax, and I felt they were more forthright once we had reached this stage. In the end, some had enjoyed talking so much, especially some of the U.S. students, that they were reluctant to stop. Some also used the opportunity after the interview to raise issues they did not think
about during the interview or did not want to raise while the tape recorder was running. Before we parted, I asked permission to include their comments in my data, and I noted them down immediately after the interviews. Nobody refused permission.

During the interviews and when analyzing the data, I noticed several issues that caused me to reflect more deeply on the nature of my data. I observed that:

1. It was easy for participants to talk about the details of incidents (what somebody said or did), but some were either incapable or reluctant to explore their emotional responses to incidents.

2. Not all interviewees revealed everything that had happened to them or all that they had done to others during group work. I know this because in several instances and completely by coincidence, I interviewed people who recalled the same incidents and had referred to each other during interviews. For example, participants did not always disclose when they had behaved in hurtful ways toward others or when others had harmed them. Perhaps they did not know they were hurt or had behaved in hurtful ways, and it was not always possible for me to tell. They might also have wanted me to think highly of them and therefore did not want to portray themselves in a bad light. This was true of both groups, but more so with East Asian students. It was also clear that different individuals had different perspectives and interpretations of the same situations.

3. U.S. students have learnt to be politically correct (not offending any special interest group) in school; as a result, I often received mixed messages from them. Some bravely expressed their thoughts and emotional responses and others revealed them inadvertently. Most agreed that diversity was a good thing; however, when I analyzed their reported behaviour, their words and recounted actions did not always match their stated positions. This kind of comparison posed interpretation problems but also yielded useful insights.

4. NNES students sometimes did not speak their minds freely either. Some students with certain cultural backgrounds, especially from Asia, tended to avoid talking about personal emotional responses like anger and frustration. Since I have been working with them for more than 12 years, I can often sense when they are just
being polite toward the host country's people and when they are sincere. This is where my theoretical sensitivity aided understanding and interpretation.

5. My relationship with the students and the degree to which they were willing to open up to a foreigner/teacher/stranger raised many questions. Was it easier or more difficult to talk to me, a foreigner? Were there other barriers because I was older than they were or came from a different culture? Since I was an outsider to U.S. students, could they tell me things they would not have otherwise? Or were they more closed because I was not part of their group? I believe that my foreignness helped with the NNES students. At the beginning of each interview, I explained my background to them, and tried to convey a sense that I understood their situations because I had experienced similar ones. Was the fact that I was a teacher a barrier? Did they want to present themselves in a more positive light? I suspect this was more of a factor with NNES students than with U.S. students. Did the U.S. students care that I was a teacher? For the most part, I think they did not. When interviewing L#1, B#1, and J#4 who were in leadership positions, I felt they were talking to me like just another human being. M#3 thought that U.S. students behave as if they are the equals of teachers. J#1 also spoke his mind. On the other hand, A#1 wanted to impress as did R#3 and J#2.

Given these insights, I wondered how a researcher could view the information obtained from interviewees. Because I prepared the students carefully and clarified the nature of the investigation, I believe they knew that I wanted them to speak frankly. As a result, I believe that they treated the investigation seriously and responded with a sense of shared responsibility toward addressing problems that affect them directly. Even though it is possible that the incidents did not happen exactly as participants reported (but who can really make such a determination?), I believe they did their best to recount their constructions of their experiences under the circumstances.

5.2.2. A social constructionist view of interview data

I derived my data from transcribed intensive interviews with U.S. and NNES students and elicited their accounts of the socially constructed nature of group work. I encouraged them to recount their experiences with each other, thoughts about encounters, perceptions of themselves and others, and emotional reactions about incidents. During interactions
with me, they revealed complex and contradictory ideas and emotional reactions, but they also distorted or hid responses and emotions unintentionally or deliberately.

Data obtained from discourse pose thorny issues researchers should grapple with and try to resolve before and during data analysis. Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Wetherell and Potter (1988) explain that discourse is a social act where language is constantly functional, and individuals use language for specific purposes, for example, to construct particular versions of their social experiences. However, they do not always express their purposes explicitly. The authors use the term 'function' to refer simultaneously to the purpose for which people use discourse and the unintended consequences thereof. Some functions are clear-cut and easy to identify and interpret; however, individuals sometimes have good reasons to be indirect and inexplicit when speaking, and those functions are difficult if not impossible to interpret. Because functions are not generally directly available, analysis is not straightforward. According to Burr (1995), interpretation is restricted to ‘meanings’ because we cannot infer beliefs and opinions based upon what people say. We can use discourse as a frame of reference through which we interpret utterances, but at the same time, we can only make inferences about the meanings of utterances by keeping in mind particular discursive contexts from which we derive them.

Harre (1989) further expands on Potter and Wetherell’s ideas by saying that individuals try to represent themselves in a positive way within the rules and boundaries of their local moral system. For example, during the research interviews, it seemed that participants were trying to explain who they were, why they were who they were, why it was okay or not okay to be who they were, and why others were being mean, indifferent, or kind to them in relation to who they were.

I concluded that my data presented important insights, but that there were limitations. Because my research questions seek answers to what students’ realities are during multicultural group work, I set out to gather data relying on self-reports and not self-reports confirmed by independent observation. This allowed me to explain how things might be constructed given certain factors in particular group work situations, but I cannot present them as ultimate truths. Nobody can. On the other hand, searching for so-called ‘objective truths’ about human behaviour so far has not greatly furthered understanding
of how group work affects individuals and has not helped to improve teaching practices. Uncovering individuals’ constructions of their realities may provide a new avenue.

5.3. Conclusion

Because my enthusiasm was great and my expectations high, my initial reaction to the interview data was disappointment. Interviewees seemed to state the obvious and did not appear to want to do much introspection, even though I had sent them the interview topic in advance hoping that they would reflect upon their experiences. This was particularly true about the U.S. student interviews. I even suspected that I needed different techniques to elicit deeper levels of information from them during interviews. However, as line-by-line coding progressed and opened up the text, I realized that I had rich information that could keep me busy for years. As I searched for processes in the data, physical and cognitive, I became aware of the multiple layers of information that appeared right before my eyes. What I needed to do was think hard, sift and sort data, and compare and experiment with patterns. Most importantly, I learnt that I could not force the creative process. By working at times and relaxing when needed, I finally saw that the brain works in mysterious ways and produces ideas and structures when it is ready.
PART II
RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Chapter 6: Data Analysis

The previous chapter dealt with the grounded theory processes (Charmaz, 2002) used for (a) concurrent data-collection and analysis, and (b) identification and pursuit of themes through early data analysis. In this section, I will elaborate on the methods used for the (c) detection of and expanded search for social and socio-psychological processes in data, (d) synthesis of processes through construction of core categories, and (e) construction of a theoretical framework that incorporates categories. I will also explain how I refined and expanded my grounded theory analysis through employing a form of discourse analysis. Before dealing with these methods, I will discuss my general approach to data analysis and clarify the unit of analysis.

6.1. Unit of Analysis and Approach to Data Analysis

Charmaz (1995) explains that constructivist grounded theory bridges the gap between interpretive and traditional positivist analytic approaches because it aims to uncover research participants’ meanings through an empirical endeavour, which also provides a set of procedural guidelines. My aim was to obtain knowledge from the inside to understand, describe, and explain my participants’ worlds through their accounts of their experiences. Even though I had been in similar situations, I was not on the inside of their particular settings, and I was not part of their immediate circumstances. Hence, I relied on their descriptions of their situations, actions, thoughts, and emotions and allowed my theoretical sensitivity to guide me during data analysis. In this sense, my data is a social construction. However, Van Maanen (1988) considers grounded theory studies to be realist works because the author is largely absent from the developed theory. The author also has unquestioned authority to interpret the research situation, define social processes, and portray participants. My descriptions and explanations remain those of an outsider with insider knowledge. In this sense, my work is also empirical and realist.
According to Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates (2001), the study of discourse is “the study of language in use” but she expands this definition by saying it can also be “the study of human meaning-making” (p. 3). Burr (1995) explains that a central concern of researchers who analyze discourse is the processes through which individuals negotiate “(morally) tenable positions for themselves” (p. 178). In other words, how they justify their actions, excuse their behaviour, or blame others. In addition, Wetherell et al. (2001) state that the process of meaning-making can involve more than language use because it can include “meaning-making frames” which could include specific contextual elements such as performing non-verbal actions, following set procedures/guidelines dictated by the situation, or coordinating activities. Potter and Wetherell (1990) stress that discourse is oriented towards action and constructed by its participants, and as a result, a great variation in discourses is possible. In my study, I focused on what Burr (1995) terms the “performative qualities of discourse” (p. 47) and looked at what my participants did with their language and tried to achieve. I also looked at the “meaning-making frames” (Wetherell, et al., 2001) that participants reported. However, to understand what participants did with their discourse, I also had to look closely at the language they used.

I scrutinized a range of aspects in my data using various analysis techniques. I initially used grounded theory coding methods to open up the text. *In vivo* codes (Strauss, 1987) allowed me to lift out behaviours or processes participants reported using to deal with group work problems. Terms and concepts that I formulated, which Strauss (1987) calls sociological constructs, helped me move my interpretations from local meanings to broader social scientific ones. After concluding that participants were using specific language for definite purposes, I analysed their discourse to uncover the functions (see 6.2.4 below).

Interview responses are sense making accounts (Baker, 2001) “through which participants engage in explaining, attributing, justifying, describing” (p. 781) and creating order of experiences. My participants did more than just recall; they provided a certain version of their membership in their social environments. This according to Silverman (2001) can give researchers access to “a cultural universe and its content of moral assumptions” (p. 113). In my study, I aimed to uncover multiple layers of meanings. These included (a) verbal accounts/interpretations of actions, (b) participants’ implied/
unexpressed assumptions about actions, (c) alleged effects of participant actions on others, and (d) perceived effects of others’ actions on participants. Thus, I searched for and examined both direct statements and inferences drawn from the context of the text.

However, I did not analyze what participants were doing with their discourse during the interviews with me but focused on what they reported about the functions of the social processes and discourses they used during multicultural group work. Nevertheless, I remained aware that participants were using utterances for specific purposes while I was interviewing them. By being non-judgemental during interviews and asking many questions from different and unexpected angles, I was largely able to set participants at ease and get information that went beyond their attempts to impress me as an interviewer and teacher. Yet, while I made every attempt to obtain solid data rigorously, I have to accept that human nature is changeable, complex, and fallible, and that my participants’ information is incomplete and imperfect.

6.2. Data Analysis Methods

A variety of principles and grounded theory techniques guided the data analysis process. Guiding principles (Charmaz, 2004) include:

- Gaining a deeper understanding through being open
- Uncovering local and broader social meanings through studying participant actions
- Seeking and exploring taken-for-granted participant meanings
- Staying faithful to studied phenomena through accuracy, thoroughness, and completeness

Grounded theory techniques are:

- Using open coding which includes line-by-line and selective/focused coding (Charmaz, 1995, 2000; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Corbin, 1986; Glaser, 1978),
- Coding for process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a),
- Diagramming (Corbin, 1986; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a),
• Applying theoretical sorting (Glaser, 1978) which includes categorizing data and constructing one or more core categories (Charmaz, 1994),
• Using extant theory as data (Chenitz, 1986; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a), and
• Employing theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 1994, 2000, 2002; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a) (discussed in Chapter 5).

6.2.1. Coding

Constructionist thinking acknowledges multiple realities, and coding of transcripts can be done from many perspectives. Depending on researchers’ orientations and theoretical sensitivity, it is possible for them to derive different but not necessarily contradictory interpretations. In fact, the same researcher could use different lenses to investigate the same set of data (e.g. Kendall, 1999). When using grounded theory, researchers try to stay close to the data while coding to avoid taking flights of fantasy; nevertheless, they analyse from their unique perspectives related to specific research contexts. Themes and ideas emerge from the data and researchers make sense of situations through sorting and ordering themes and ideas into coherent frameworks.

Charmaz (1994) explains that coding helps researchers summarize, synthesize, and sort data. Codes can range from specific/topical to general and abstract, but codes and categories should reflect emerging concepts and not remain descriptive. Coding is the first step in the progression of abstracting data. Placing codes into categories is next. As the analysis proceeds and themes emerge, researchers can and should go back to view already coded data from the new conceptual perspective/s and recode where appropriate. Charmaz (1995), Corbin (1986), and Glaser and Strauss (1967) all stress this process.

My coding involved a two-phase process. The initial searching phase consisted of opening up the data through line-by-line coding to find leads and ideas. As patterns and themes emerged, I defined the problem in the situation several times and identified a set of core codes. Later during the focused coding phase and because I was working with large amounts of data, I coded more selectively. I used the problem and code set as guides to search for categories. As the category framework emerged, I adapted the problem statement and research questions. This happened several times.

I coded data soon after transcribing interviews and coded for processes (origins/ reasons, context, conditions, and consequences) and assumptions that underlie actions
rather than for topics. I kept in mind that participants often do not reveal crucial concerns directly, and I stayed alert for possible clues and indications of central issues. When assigning codes, I considered different labels from different perspectives. I compared (a) different people, actions, accounts, and experiences from different interviews; (b) data from the same people at different stages of the interview, and (c) codes with codes. As trends and themes emerged, I recoded interviews, sometimes several times.

During the initial coding stage, I first read transcripts completely and underlined key words of significant incidents. Questions like “What is going on?” “What processes are operative?” “When, why, and how do processes change?” “What are the consequences?” “What do statements take for granted?” (Charmaz, 1995, pp. 38-39) constantly guided the coding process. Then I conducted line-by-line coding and assigned initial codes quickly and spontaneously. To avoid imposing conceptual limits on the data, I did line-by-line coding contextually (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). Thereafter I thought about each code and assigned abstract codes, left appropriate in vivo codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a), and wrote short memos. Charmaz (2000, 2002) recommends staying close to the data by focusing on action. Thus, I used codes like feeling, observing, having, and experiencing.

Table 6 on the next page illustrates the full coding process, which includes initial line-by-line coding, selective recoding, categorizing codes (in this case positioning), comparing, and spontaneous memoing. After a provisional category, ‘Rights and obligations that come through story lines and positioning’ (terms defined in Chapter 7) emerged, it was possible to rethink and recode this segment. During the interview, U.S. student M#3 related how she viewed NNES students and gave me insights into how the process of positioning worked in her case. She explained some of her frustrations with group work with NNES students and divulged her expectations of the group members.
Table 6: Initial Coding, Recoding, and Memoing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Recode</th>
<th>Memo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And so, um, if we were put into groups, though, and they were usually with us, it's almost like, it's not that I discount them, but you don't really consider them because they, number one, usually won't say anything, like I said, I don't know if that's because of the language barrier that they might still have or just being shy of what somebody's going to think. And like I kind of notice with a lot of international students, regardless, not regardless where they're from, but especially like from the Koreans and all of that, the Asians and even like the -- I want to say, I don't know where they're from -- people from Africa, they're very quiet, they're very shy and they're not very outspoken. They're never rude. So I think that difference, um, almost kind of makes them invisible in a way, to American kids 'cause a lot of us are very loud and boisterous and outspoken and, um, I don't want to say don't have so much respect for a teacher, but almost a lot of us consider ourselves equal to, which is ridiculous kind of, but it's true. It's not true, but they think that, so, well, we act like it. that's how I think people would perceive it. So, yeah, that's about, they're usually pretty much in the background, pretty quiet.</td>
<td>3. Being grouped with NNES</td>
<td>4. Positioning self &amp; NNES students</td>
<td>Category = Positioning - Moral rights and obligations: M#3 feels she has the right to expect certain behaviours from the NNES students. She also feels the NNES students have the obligation to behave like the U.S. students (talk in class), and when they do not, she feels she has the right to disregard them. #4. She positions herself as somebody who has the right to ignore those who do not behave like her and her fellow classmates. By positioning herself this way, she also positions the NNES students as unimportant and unequal to her. #5. She finds justifications for her position. It is their problem and not hers. She uses the words &quot;language barrier that they might still have&quot; (her or her fellow students' role in the barrier is not acknowledged) and their shyness (a weakness?). #10. She displays a lack of knowledge about where these students come from. This is part of positioning herself and them. It is not important to know where they come from exactly. They are from Asia somewhere. They are from Africa somewhere. They are not important. #11. Through the process of focusing on differences, M#3 defines her position and theirs. She uses words that illustrate opposites. NNES students are &quot;never rude&quot;, &quot;very quiet&quot;, and &quot;won't say anything&quot;, but U.S. students don't respect teachers and are loud and boisterous. To become invisible, the NNES students are initially very visible and it is through the process of comparison that they are weighed and deemed insignificant. Notice use of pronouns—distancing or aligning herself?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selective initial coding, illustrated in Table 7, took place once the direction of my study became apparent, and this phase roughly coincided with the start of theoretical sampling. Glaser (1978) explains the need to delimit the focus. When coding line-by-line, researchers can quickly become overwhelmed by data. After analyzing data for a while (often several months), the most important social processes become clear. By specifying one or two processes, researchers can work more profitably and quickly. This sample illustrates selective coding (in this case for *positioning* and *discourse*) that commenced only after months of line-by-line coding. During this interview, NNES student P#2 explained how he initially positioned himself in groups, and later, after observing and learning, how he took a different position when working on group projects.

**Table 7: Focused/Selective Coding and Memoing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Memo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P#2: At the beginning I when I didn’t understand, I was ... at the beginning when I did not understand them I...I was afraid to ask them because I thought that if I ask a question they might think that “This guy is stupid” or “This guy is...this guy is not smart” you know? So, that’s the feeling that I had at the beginning. But right now I...I’ve been here two years and right now I understand them most of the time and if I feel like I...I haven’t understand what they have to say, I ask them the question and when they explain, I understand more. V: So, what happened in your mind --from feeling they may think you are stupid until now? P#2: What happened is basically as I stay...as I work with them, I’ve done a lot of things with American students and I’ve noticed that ... I’ve noticed that ... I’ve noticed that it’s not a big deal to ask questions because even ... I’ve noticed that even American students between them ... between themselves they also sometimes don’t understand each other ... they have to “Say that again.” You know, they do that so I was ... at the beginning I was like “Hey!” so when I started notice that ... noticing that they do the same thing, so I kind of feel comfortable now. So if you say ... when they say something to me now that I don’t understand, I say “Say that again.” It’s ... Yea. So I learned ... I learned, yea ...</td>
<td>44. Positioning self in groups to avoid negative image 45. Avoiding being positioned through negative discourse 46. Positioning self differently after learning 47. Observing and learning 48. Comparing own and other behaviour 49. Positioning with more confidence</td>
<td>Positioning and discourse: This is a good example of how a NNES group member can change an initial position (and avoid being negatively positioned by his group members) after gaining insights about U.S. students and learning what behaviour is acceptable in groups. It also demonstrates preservation of self-esteem, manipulation of discourse, and illustrates how adaptation can take place in certain situations. P#2 initially positions himself as “quiet” by not asking questions and faking understanding (see previous section in transcript for context). He takes this position because he fears being called “stupid” or “not smart”. It is better to be called “quiet” than to give the impression that you are dumb. The preservation of image is important. Thus, he inadvertently manipulates circumstances so that the discourse U.S. students use to refer to NNES students will not now also contain further negative words like “stupid” or “not smart.” Again, it is better for U.S. students to use words like “quiet” or “shy” than say NNES students are not intelligent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sample in Table 8 on the next page shows coding for process. Strauss and Corbin (1998a) state that this kind of coding takes place when coding for properties, dimensions, and relationships. While coding, researchers remain vigilant for how actions and interactions proceed and evolve. They carefully note context and conditions as well as underlying assumptions. In this sample, two kinds of processes are taking place simultaneously. One occurred outside the NNES participant’s sphere of control and unfolded through recounted observed and experienced actions (codes and memos for this process are printed in **regular bold letters**). The other is a thought process that partially unfolded and the participant partially recounted during the conversation (codes and memos for this process appear in *italic bold print*).

In this segment, NNES student P#1 recounts one of many painful moments that occurred outside group interactions with classmates but had important implications for group work later. Even though the incident did not occur during group work, I included it in my analysis because of the impact it had on the student’s ability to function later in groups. It forms an important part of his story line (discussed in Chapter 10). The advantage initially of coding for two processes was to help me understand what had happened and how the participant made sense of his situation. It also helped me see that group member inclusion and exclusion can start long before a group assembles. Most importantly, by understanding his way of sense making, I was better able later to appreciate how and why he positioned himself in different ways during group work. It also provided insights into the development and use of discourse and the kinds of emotion work individuals have to engage in (discussed in Chapter 11).
I met some students who didn’t want just to work. For example, during my class I met one student who didn’t like me and he didn’t want to talk with me, maybe took worse. I think she didn’t want to talk with me because I studied more than he did here and I knew maybe more than he did. When we study with him three quarter, I saw he changed in his mind to talk with me because during three quarter I tried to be friendly with him to show him example how to work with friends. International people who are American they work very good for me and one man told me that guys he like push you he told a lot of not good words in your address but I didn’t understand because he use slang. I don’t understand slang. When American person told me, I told him I knew it can happened but it’s okay for me. Just I had this experience in my country the same and knew it can happen because he doesn’t understand us. After three quarters he could talk with me … and he could explain me. I remember last, we’ll met with him last time, and I was like [blows out air] … I didn’t understand why she was talking with me. why she was, she told me what classes she is going, he is going to take, he told me “Why I have to take, like English classes or why I have to take?” I just thought it was his problem because he was angry [blows air] I don’t know why … another I have good experience with inter… with American person who understand.

I don’t know why, maybe it depends from person, maybe it depends from our parents, I think parents they influence.

If I am teach my … children we have to be friendly with each other doesn’t matter this is all a good person or not good they all just maybe not 100% maybe 50% but they will not do like something not good. This one same, I think, with American person, maybe, I’m not sure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Coding for Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcript</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I met some students who doesn’t want just to work. For example, during my class I met one student who didn’t like me and he didn’t want to talk with me, maybe took worse. I think she didn’t want to talk with me because I studied more than he did here and I knew maybe more than he did. When we study with him three quarter, I saw he changed in his mind to talk with me because during three quarter I tried to be friendly with him to show him example how to work with friends. International people who are American they work very good for me and one man told me that guys he like push you he told a lot of not good words in your address but I didn’t understand because he use slang. I don’t understand slang. When American person told me, I told him I knew it can happened but it’s okay for me. Just I had this experience in my country the same and knew it can happen because he doesn’t understand us. After three quarters he could talk with me … and he could explain me. I remember last, we’ll met with him last time, and I was like [blows out air] … I didn’t understand why she was talking with me. why she was, she told me what classes she is going, he is going to take, he told me “Why I have to take, like English classes or why I have to take?” I just thought it was his problem because he was angry [blows air] I don’t know why … another I have good experience with inter… with American person who understand. I don’t know why, maybe it depends from person, maybe it depends from their parents, I think parents they influence. If I am teach my … children we have to be friendly with each other doesn’t matter this is all a good person or not good they all just maybe not 100% maybe 50% but they will not do like something not good. This one same, I think, with American person, maybe, I’m not sure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.2. Memoing

Memos were an important part of the analysis process. They allowed me to reflect upon data, bring ideas together, and experiment with concepts. At the same time, they made thoughts visible, allowed later scrutiny of conceptualizations, and created a record of idea development. Like Glaser (1978), I believe that writing memos created conceptual discipline because I could start the process of defining codes and categories early. By trying to define and explain process contexts, conditions, and consequences, I could see errors in logic and gaps in data as well as solid reasoning and richness in concepts. These memos formed the foundations for my theory, and by further exploring and elaborating the themes and information contained in them, I was able to write my theory.

Tables 6 - 8 above illustrate short memos written spontaneously and imperfectly while coding. They reflect immediate ideas, reactions, and questions. The next memo is longer and demonstrates how I moved from the initial memo in Table 6 to a more complete one after deeper reflection. It illustrates my exploratory mode, is more analytical, and shows attempts at abstraction. It also demonstrates how I revisited memos and added further insights at different stages of the analysis process.

**Category note: December 23-24, 2005, March 27-28, 2006**

*Development of U.S.-NNES student discourse: ‘Invisibility’ (related to positioning).*

(Initially written after coding US student M#3’s interview—the 12th and final one)

How do NNES students become invisible? At first, NNES students are very visible. M#3, L#1, J#1, J#2, J#3, J#4, and T#1 (all U.S. students) talk about how they observe certain NNES student behaviours that are very different from how U.S. students usually behave. Through a process of observation, comparison and contrast, and evaluation, they reach conclusions about how to treat NNES students. U.S. student conclusions are different.

1. M#3, J#2, J#3, and T#1 conclude that NNES students are not worthy of further attention.
2. J#1, R#3, M#2, and B#1 think it is worth trying to communicate with NNES students in class.
3. L#1 and J#4 think it is only worth trying in social situations but not in class.
M#3, L#1, J#1, J#2, J#3, J#4, and T#1 all notice that NNES students are shy, quiet, not outspoken, not animated and active, are respectful toward teachers, and do not see themselves as equals of teachers. These are directly the opposite of the U.S. student behaviours they admire. They approve of loudness, boisterous and sassy class behaviour, outspokenness, and conspicuous public confidence. But these differences have different meanings for them. Here is a summary:

1. They want to feel intelligent and alive when they communicate with others. They feel dumb or silly when the NNES students do not talk back to them. They have a strong aversion to people who make them feel stupid.

2. They need to be on an equal footing with everybody (even teachers). They seek equality. When they are not equal, they feel uncomfortable.

3. They want debate in the class in order to hear different points of view, think deeper, and be able to challenge others.

4. They want to be independent and do not want to be responsible for helping, mothering, teaching, or coaching other students. They insist on everybody being independent. (They do not want to do the emotion work that might subtly be required of them.)

So when U.S. students observe, compare, and contrast the NNES student behaviours, they reach conclusions about further contact with them based upon whether any of the needs listed above are threatened or not. If they are, U.S. students might decide to ignore them.

Conclusion: On a superficial level, NNES students do not behave in the same way as the U.S. students, but on a deeper level, they are not subscribing to the same underlying social conventions and values.

What does it mean to be invisible? You are not noticed, you do not count, you are not worth spending time on, and you are not of interest. You are not important; you are inferior, defective, and to be avoided because you might make U.S. students feel awkward or stupid. The lack of curiosity about NNES behaviour and the lack of even considering their behaviour as something to learn from might indicate that U.S. students are not willing to confront areas of discomfort or disturb the notion that all is well. It might also indicate ideas about superiority and arrogance. I need to explore this.
What is the role of positioning? To understand what is going on during interactions, it is important to focus on the moral positions of the participants. What rights and obligations do they have during the interactions? U.S. students seem to feel that they have the right to expect the NNES students to behave like U.S. students in class. NNES students have the duty to behave according to the “generally accepted” classroom norms. When they do not, some U.S. students think it is their right to ignore them. To state the obvious, when NNES students choose to be quiet, they are not visible in a culture where people like to get attention and be noticed. The worst thing that could happen to M#3 is to be ignored and to become invisible (and that is how she feels when NNES students do not talk back to her—so before they do it to her, she does it to them).

Conclusion: Invisibility is socially constructed. When an outsider does not behave according to the “generally accepted norms” of the insider, the insider may notice, contrast, and evaluate the deviant behaviour. A previously formed sense of moral rights and obligations guides the insider through the process. These rights and obligations determine what each party should or should not do, and what each is entitled to expect. If this moral code is violated, the insider then positions her/himself relative to the outsider: I am visible and you are invisible and I will exclude you.

Coding and memoing are processes designed to open up the data to explore themes. The large amounts of material they generate place great demands on a researcher’s ability to be organized. This phase also requires patience, great tolerance for ambiguity, and a belief that the processes work. The sections that follow will illustrate how I moved from large amounts of codes and early memos to organized categories and eventually to the theoretical framework.

6.2.3. Diagramming

After deconstructing through coding and memoing, I used diagrams to reconstruct and visualize connections between different elements emerging from the data. Diagrams helped me think through the processes and discover faulty logic as well as unjustified assumptions. Figure 1 on the next page represents a diagram I used to start making sense of the different elements in the U.S.-NNES student group interactions.
This diagram illustrates how the group encounter process functions when U.S. and NNES students have to work together. Several external factors such as preformed ideas and expectations, situational demands, and cultural norms affect the situation. Social contact inside the group confronts members with challenges and opportunities that make demands on them and force them to decide whether or how to leave their comfort zones, take social risks, reposition, revise story lines, perform emotion work, or change ideas and expectations. Based upon their decisions and subsequent actions, there are consequences that lead to group member inclusion or exclusion, becoming visible or invisible, and undergoing personal change or not.
6.2.4. From codes to categories to theoretical framework

Authors have different methods for raising codes to categories. Swanson (1986) recommends making a “laundry list” of all the codes. The list is then collapsed into several manageable groups according to similarities and differences. This method did not work for me because there were too many codes, and the framework seemed clumsy and contrived. Instead, I followed Charmaz’s advice given during a grounded theory workshop at The First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on 5-7 May 2005. Instead of using all codes to form categories, I considered only those that appeared frequently in the data and seemed most significant to addressing the research problem.

Constructing categories from codes was time-consuming, complicated, and involved various experiments with the data, painstaking analysis, and long hours of allowing interviews to live in my head. I initially coded and analyzed the two participant groups separately to see if different patterns might emerge but soon realized the value of constantly comparing data from both groups. Working on them simultaneously forced me to look at the bigger picture thus allowing me to abstract while staying close to the data.

I developed several workable category patterns from the data over the months but abandoned them in favour of new and improved ones. The progression in category formation involved continuously subjecting existing patterns to scrutiny and considering what I could realistically do with my data given my methodology. I worked towards a more integrated category structure by constantly questioning whether my categories fit my interview data, research questions, and methodological approach. The process finally guided me to the key conclusion that the groups had developed a distinct discourse of their own (discussed in Chapters 7 and 8) which achieved specific intended and unintended outcomes. Diagrams helped clarify data as manageable thought units and visually represented relationships. In addition, comparison grids (see partial samples in Tables 9 - 11 below) showed gaps, allowed me to compare and contrast ideas, and provided a bird’s-eye-view of the data. Each new category structure involved recoding selected transcripts and further explicating the research questions.

After concluding that my participants had developed a discourse consisting of constructed meanings that attained certain outcomes, I realized that I had to analyze the
discourse in more detail to understand fully the consequences of their social interactions. While grounded theory coding for process helped me analyze the social use of discourse and the consequences, it did not assist me in analyzing the language in the discourse. To refine and expand my analysis, I collected specific utterances by (a) identifying the language (words, phrases, and expressions) individuals used to describe themselves and others and (b) analyzing the context in which utterances occurred. I uncovered language elements in the discourse by pulling out statements or phrases from the transcripts, but to analyze the purpose of the utterances, I had to code or recode sections for behaviour or processes. I put these elements together again to form my theoretical framework discussed in Chapters 7-12.

The first comparison grid on the next page (Table 9) provides a summary of U.S. student qualities and skills as reported by them and NNES students. The next one (Table 10) has the same format but provides information about NNES students. The top half of each table contains students’ words, while the bottom half includes my analysis and synthesis after consulting the use of each word or phrase in context.

I will discuss these qualities and skills in future chapters, but I noticed that the U.S. student list contained many traditionally labelled male characteristics (by western standards), and the NNES student sample more traditionally labelled feminine traits. I wondered whether this was due to the presence of seven female NNES participants and only four female U.S. students in my sample. After examining the details, I concluded that there was ample individual variation within my sample and that the stereotypical male appearance of the U.S. student list and the stereotypical female appearance of the NNES student list were likely more due to culturally determined behaviour differences and not the male-female imbalance in the sample. The female U.S. interviewees represented characteristics ranging from aggressive and assertive to mild mannered and amiable. So did the male U.S. sample. In fact, two of the U.S. female participants seemed to act more “male” than the male participants. The NNES students, both female and male, also represented a wide range of individual characteristics, though they differed significantly from those the U.S. students displayed. My analyses further revealed that the situation, in addition to individual or cultural differences, often influenced or dictated how people behaved in groups. I will explore these aspects further in Chapters 8-12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Student Self-Descriptions (participant words)</th>
<th>Descriptions by NNES Students of U.S. Students (participant words)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Take initiative and lead</td>
<td>- Outspoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Think critically</td>
<td>- Brave to speak out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vocal</td>
<td>- Opinions about anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assertive</td>
<td>- Honest and direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take the lead</td>
<td>- Show emotions directly on faces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Empathetic/non-empathetic</td>
<td>- Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self-absorbed</td>
<td>- Impatient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Even-handed</td>
<td>- Unfriendly and cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Articulate/communicative</td>
<td>- Indifferent toward NNES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give ideas and opinions</td>
<td>- Persuasive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Task oriented</td>
<td>- Talk a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confident</td>
<td>- Active in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Politically correct</td>
<td>- Talk first/volunteer/initiate action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Arrogant</td>
<td>- Not willing to work with NNES students in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Willing to debate &amp; disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disagree to find alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Persuasive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Impatient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**U.S. Student Profile (researcher analysis and inference)**

1. Talkative/communicative
2. Opinionated
3. Assertive/aggressive
4. Active
5. Persuasive
6. Willing to debate issues
7. Arrogant
8. Critical thinkers
9. Very direct
10. Willing to show emotions
11. Less willing to focus on relationships/humanity/individuals & task focused
12. Expect self reliance/ability to take care of self
13. Expect equal partnership where each one participates (no freeloaders)
### Table 10: Comparison Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NNES Student Self-Descriptions</th>
<th>Descriptions by U.S. Students of NNES Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Shy</td>
<td>- Shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quiet</td>
<td>- Quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reluctant to express opinions</td>
<td>- Not easy to work with (quiet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not confident</td>
<td>- Timid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Silent and reserved</td>
<td>- Hesitant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not brave to speak out</td>
<td>- Have low confidence level (language and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t have sufficient command of</td>
<td>general behaviour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (listening comprehension,</td>
<td>- Able to (but usually don’t) provide a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking, vocabulary)</td>
<td>different perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack language skills to talk about certain topics</td>
<td>- Have more information than US students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack speech making skills</td>
<td>- Not articulate/not communicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Act helpless and powerless</td>
<td>- Lack critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can be playful and childlike</td>
<td>- Need time to formulate ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t speak up</td>
<td>- Don’t deliver quality ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Struggling to think critically</td>
<td>- Don’t share ideas and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t confront unfairness/non-inclusion</td>
<td>- Don’t answer questions willingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t ask for clarification</td>
<td>- Prefer to avoid conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t ask for help</td>
<td>- Amiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Defer to group members</td>
<td>- Agree with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take studies seriously</td>
<td>- Don’t disagreeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seek equality</td>
<td>- Easily intimidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seek fairness</td>
<td>- Willing to let US students dominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t take initiative in groups</td>
<td>- Lack leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack initiative and drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Brave and strong to study in a strange country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hardworking and desire more learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NNES Student Profile Summary (researcher analysis and inference)

1. Shy
2. Quiet
3. Passive
4. Lack of confidence
5. Reticence to speak
6. Capable but unwilling or unable to share ideas or different perspectives
7. Willing to be lead/not leaders
8. Lacking initiative
9. Lacking assertiveness
10. Amiable/impressionable
11. Timid
12. Hardworking and serious about studies
13. Silently seeking fairness and equality
14. Not critical thinkers

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Tables 9 and 10 show a synthesis of the many qualities mentioned in the interviews. By looking at different comparison grids, I could compare both NNES and U.S. perspectives for the same topic, and I could compare various topics with each other. The grids allowed me to sift, sort, and compare many different aspects simultaneously. For example, by placing the first halves of Tables 9 and 10 next to each other (Table 11), I was able to conclude that students were using a discourse of difference when referring to each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11: Analyzing Data Using Comparison Grids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Student Self-Descriptions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take initiative and lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Think critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take the lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Empathetic/non-empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self-absorbed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Even-handed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Articulate/communicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give ideas and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Task oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Politically correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Willing to debate &amp; disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disagree to find alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Persuasive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Impatient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NNES Student Self-Descriptions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Descriptions by U.S. Students of NNES Students</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Shy</td>
<td>- Shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quiet</td>
<td>- Quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reluctant to express opinions</td>
<td>- Not easy to work with (quiet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not confident</td>
<td>- Timid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Silent and reserved</td>
<td>- Hesitant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not brave to speak out</td>
<td>- Have low confidence level (language and general behaviour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t have sufficient command of English (listening comprehension, speaking, vocabulary)</td>
<td>- Able to (but usually don’t) provide a different perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack language skills to talk about certain topics</td>
<td>- Have more information than US students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack speech making skills</td>
<td>- Not articulate/not communicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Act helpless and powerless</td>
<td>- Lack critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can be playful and childlike</td>
<td>- Need time to formulate ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t speak up</td>
<td>- Don’t deliver quality ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Struggling to think critically</td>
<td>- Don’t share ideas and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t confront unfairness/non-inclusion</td>
<td>- Don’t answer questions willingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t ask for clarification</td>
<td>- Prefer to avoid conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t ask for help</td>
<td>- Amiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Defer to group members</td>
<td>- Agree with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take studies seriously</td>
<td>- Don’t disagreeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seek equality</td>
<td>- Easily intimidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seek fairness</td>
<td>- Willing to let US students dominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t take initiative in groups</td>
<td>- Lack leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack initiative and drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Brave and strong to study in a strange country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hardworking and desire more learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 9-11 show how I reworked and summarized material in comparison grids and then contrasted the grids to help me reach a key conclusion that the two student groups were using a discourse of difference to refer to each other. This discovery led to the development of the major category. A seemingly orderly process of sorting and comparing helped me reach this conclusion; however, the neatness of the tables belies the actual process of developing categories. While organizing data was tedious but straightforward, the decision to sort these particular data was not and neither was the process of interpreting the newly grouped data. As I coded and analyzed, I noticed recurring themes in the transcripts. I explored several of them, but they often led nowhere. Finally, I formed a group of themes that I initially named “Actions that have meaning” (see column one of Table 12 below) and placed relevant data in comparison grids. By experimenting and eventually placing grids next to each other, the underlying theme became clear. After consulting extant literature for definitions and confirming that work in this area had not been done before, I renamed the category “U.S.-NNES student discourse” and started developing its properties, investigated how and when it changed, and described the consequences of using this discourse. All these steps were necessary to ensure that the concept worked. The process took several months, but as Glaser (1978) says, each idea should earn its way into the category structure.

Then I had to figure out how the new category fitted with the rest of my work. It was not immediately clear what the significance of the discovery was. This is where creativity takes over and processes like grouping and comparing using computers sometimes become impediments. Writing memos facilitated creativity and allowed me to explore hunches and leads, but most often ideas and insights came at 4 a.m. when my brain was most clear and active. Diagrams helped me summarize ideas and explore connections.

Corbin (1986) and Strauss (1987) explain that the analytic process moves the researcher from inductive to deductive and back again. I derived hypotheses from the data and then checked them against the rest of the emerging framework and extant research. At times, I went back into the field to resume theoretical sampling (discussed in Chapter 5) to seek confirmation of hypotheses, clarification, greater variation, or more details. I modified or discarded hypotheses that I could not verify. Table 12 shows the
major categories that emerged initially from the coding and sorting processes and the final categories I developed after incorporating ideas and definitions from the literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions that have meaning</td>
<td>U.S.-NNES student discourse developed by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Descriptions of others’ behaviours that conform or do not conform to U.S. academic study norms</td>
<td>• NNES students about U.S. students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Descriptions of unfulfilled needs and emotions as a result of others’ behaviours</td>
<td>• NNES students about NNES students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>Rights and obligations that come through story lines and positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preformed expectations of each other</td>
<td>• Origin and formation of sense of entitlement or duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Newly formed expectations</td>
<td>• Positioning in order to claim rights and obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disappointment and/or fulfilment of expectations</td>
<td>• Processing conformance or non-compliance of rights and obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Struggling to come to terms with expectations and consequences of unfulfilled expectations</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inclusion or exclusion of individuals</td>
<td>• Inclusion or exclusion of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effect on self descriptions as result of interaction</td>
<td>• Effect on self descriptions as result of interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coping strategies</td>
<td>• Emotion work (which emotions, emotion management, and strategies for not getting involved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coping strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category structure in column 2 above needed further refinement and after many months of analyzing data, consulting relevant literature, and thinking about the relationships between the different categories, I concluded that the discourse of difference was the core category. As a result, I collapsed all the other components listed in column 2 into the one category because they all were elements of the discourse development and utilization processes, emanated from these processes, or influenced them. Figure 2 in Chapter 7 illustrates the different components of the discourse of difference.

The discourse of difference became the foundation for my theoretical framework. I developed each of the components of the category as I wrote my theory, all the while drawing extensively from my data analyses and consulting extant literature when needed. During the write-up phase, I developed definitions, explained properties and dimensions of different elements, explored variation within the target population, and discussed consequences of actions and processes. I tried to find a balance between being precise...
and analytical yet giving a rich and varied account of intensely human social situations. I did this by letting my participants speak through pertinent quotes from the transcripts and by writing with compassion but trying not to judge participants or take sides.

Harré and van Langenhove (1999) explain that conversations and conversation-like activities generate social phenomena that researchers can study. During discursive practices, participants jointly create these phenomena. Coding for social processes helped me focus on joint actions such as positioning within discursive practices. Looking at the codes within the context, I was able to see how speech acts were interpreted. By clustering codes that connected various instances where specific individuals were positioned, I was able to see how story lines were formed. Story lines are individual histories that contain themes and threads about experiences that influence how people behave. Harré and Slocum (2003) maintain that individuals can be “fairly tightly constrained” by “what story line is possible, proper, or even desirable” (p. 128) within a given context. Story lines provided clues to why individuals felt helpless or empowered in certain situations. A key social phenomenon deeply embedded in positioning and story lines is the discourse of difference. Through analyzing specific utterances in the transcripts and linking them back to the social process codes, I was able to see how my participants used the discourse and how the discourse in turn affected and produced them.

6.2.5. Using literature as data

I conducted literature searches at different stages during my research. I initially conducted a search related to my research problem area to discover gaps in the literature and ascertain the need for my study. I postponed consulting outside literature directly related to my emerging theory until I had a reasonably clear idea of the main questions and issues in the research situation. Until then, I had read widely around the topic but avoided work that could potentially contaminate my thinking and prevent me from looking at my data from a fresh perspective. After creating a preliminary category structure, I used key concepts to search for relevant material. Drawing on extant research served several important purposes. First, in some cases, it provided existing definitions and explanations that clarified, expanded, or provided a context for my data, and at other times, it spurred me on to develop my own definitions or contexts. It further helped me to corroborate my findings or to avoid duplication of research effort, but more importantly,
through comparing my data with others’ findings and ideas, I could think more deeply about my own material and develop a rounded theory that explained more dimensions and greater variation.

6.3. Conclusion

Data analysis involved continuous processes of coding, memoing, diagramming, creating comparison tables, and using extant literature as data. It also involved supplementing coding for action and social processes with analyzing words and phrases in participant discourses. Through sorting and making comparisons, I was able to identify common elements as well as individual variation within the U.S.-NNES student interaction process that allowed me to open up the research situation and provide a fuller description of its functioning. In the next chapter, I will discuss the core category and theoretical framework that I constructed during analysis and provide an overview of my work. Subsequent chapters will elaborate on the different elements in my theoretical framework.
The purpose of this study was to find out what happened between NNES and U.S. students when they had to work together in groups in U.S. college classes. The methodological lens is constructionism, and the focus was on the social processes the students used and were exposed to during multicultural contact and the consequences of those interactions. The findings, which illuminate how group participants behaved, thought and felt about, and made sense of their experiences, provide important insights into the complex nature of group work and hint at ways to develop productive methods to facilitate harmonious cross-cultural relations in college classrooms. The study specifically investigated interaction dynamics during group work, but the participants often talked about related experiences that occurred outside group work and discussed the wider social and cultural environment. These data were all relevant and illustrated how group incidents do not happen in a vacuum. Thus, I will discuss group work in particular but bring in certain relevant non-group information when necessary. The findings further seem to indicate that there is a reciprocal relationship between in-class group work and general student perceptions about diversity on campus. Events transpiring during multicultural group work contribute to the general state of relationships between different ethnic/racial groups at this college. On the other hand, general perceptions on campus about different language groups are brought into the classroom and affect multicultural group work interactions.

Part III contains explanations and discussions of the research findings. This chapter will provide an overview and establish definitions for some of the major components. In subsequent chapters, I will provide more definitions and develop major themes to illustrate the full process and the consequences of NNES and U.S. student group interactions.
7.1. Introduction

To understand the complex and temporal nature of social situations and the problems that occur within them, it is helpful to study not only the different socially constructed currents that are operative in a given situation, their variations, and dimensions, but also how they connect and combine. By currents, I mean the confluence of socially constructed moments emanating from group members using language for a particular purpose. Currents could be local discourses, personal or group story lines, or various forms of positioning. Like sea currents meeting, blending with, or departing from each other, these social currents flow within a larger body of language and social interactions. I analyzed social currents within their contexts so that they could be understood in terms of how U.S. and NNES students constructed and were moulded by the constant flux of social life. In the sections below and the chapters that follow, I will examine some of the different currents in U.S.-NNES student interaction and demonstrate how they converged to create unique situations with challenges and opportunities for individuals. For purposes of this research project, the focus is restricted mainly to the immediate and local social level of interaction, though it cannot be separated from the larger institutional or national and international levels.

7.2. A Discourse of Difference

Analyses revealed that through contact with each other in their U.S. college classes, U.S. and NNES students have constructed a distinct discourse (Davies & Harré, 1990; Foucault, 1972, 1977—defined below), which they use to refer to themselves and each other. This is a discourse of group difference, which exists solely because of U.S.-NNES student interaction and provides a way for both parties to understand their situations relative to each other. In relation and sometimes in reaction to the discourse, individuals have developed personal and group story lines (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003—defined below). These in turn have provided the backdrop for individuals to position (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Moghaddam, 2003; Harré & Slocum, 2003—defined below) themselves or a group, to be positioned by others, and to have the option to reposition at any moment in any situation. These three currents range from more stable to highly volatile and flexible, but it cannot be assumed that the more stable current does not
change or that all the participants see even the more stable current in exactly the same way. They also do not represent a hierarchy of currents. As explained above, they should be seen more like currents that converge, intermingle, or depart at different times. According to Harré & Slocum (2003), by analyzing these three elements, the researcher can open up interactions (such as U.S.-NNES student group contact), find different links and connect the dots, and explain the social processes in a way that the participants, their teachers, and administrators had not encountered before.

The term discourse is used here to mean the “institutionalised use of language and language-like systems” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 45) where institutionalisation occurs at the small group level and around a topic; not at the broader cultural or national level. Discourse is a “multi-faceted public process through which meanings are progressively and dynamically achieved” (p. 46). It is also used in the manner Foucault (1972) intends it; namely, discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). Thus, discourses provide ways to create meanings, and they act as frames of references through which specific objects can take shape (Burr, 1995). Furthermore, discourse has a relationship to power. According to Foucault (1977) discourse develops through a set of discursive practices where the field of objects is delimited, a legitimate perspective is defined for the agent of knowledge, and norms for elaboration of concepts and theories are fixed. Kennedy (2000) explains that a discourse sets parameters and rules not only for participant behaviour within a certain sphere, but also for the theoretical models they create. According to Davies and Harré (1990), “discourses can compete with each other or they can create distinct and incompatible versions of reality” (p. 45).

7.3. Positions and Story Lines

Within the local U.S.-NNES student discourse, individuals positioned themselves (first order positioning—Harré & van Langenhove, 1991), were positioned by others, or resisted an assigned position by repositioning (second order positioning). A position can allow or deny admission to a specific domain because it gives an individual access to a set of rights, duties, and obligations that guides actions (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003; Harré & Slocum, 2003). Positions are situation specific, and always contestable and ephemeral (Harré & Slocum, 2003). They are also always relative to one another. If an
individual positions herself as a teacher, the other individual is positioned as a student. By taking the teacher position, she gives herself access to certain rights, duties, and obligations and assigns other rights, duties, and obligations to the person positioned as a student. However, positions are not always intentional (Davies & Harré, 1990). It is also possible for individuals to occupy more than one position at a time or to take on different positions under different circumstances. Thus according to Burr (1995), “we behave, think and feel differently depending on whom we are with, what we are doing and why […] we should expect a person to be different in different situations” (p. 25).

Against this backdrop of discourse and positioning, individuals live and constantly develop their own story lines, which Harré and Moghaddam (2003) define as “a loose cluster of narrative conventions” (p. 6) that are structured according to a specific pattern and are not accidental. Individuals choose story lines that complement and further their positions. As will be illustrated in more detail later, positions, story lines, local discourses, and even discourses at an institutional or wider cultural/racial level are often simultaneously entwined.

7.4. Theoretical Framework: The Interaction Process

Figure 1 below, shown previously in Chapter 6 to demonstrate diagramming during the analysis stages, sums up an important set of circumstances that U.S. and NNES students had to deal with during group work. It appears here again for reader convenience. During each encounter, students were faced with a variety of direct and indirect demands from others and themselves, and had to make decisions whether and how to respond. Some, but not all of the demands were perceived as threats to personal goal attainment or as challenges to existing systems and ways of working. Their actions, and in some cases decisions not to act, had certain consequences for them and others. A combination of external factors had an impact on the nature of the encounter and the decision-making process. For example, if a NNES student should position a U.S. student as a helper during group work (to interpret assignments and to provide ideas and format for the assignment), the situational demands (time available to help and whether the assignment was graded or not) may affect the U.S. student’s willingness to take on the role. The NNES student’s demand for help may also threaten or frustrate the U.S.
student's ability to achieve personal goals. Furthermore, the U.S. student's preformed ideas and expectations about roles, rights, and obligations within this context could influence her decision-making. If the U.S. student decides to reposition herself as a fellow group member who expects all students to behave in independent and self-sufficient ways, she may treat the NNES student differently from how he expects to be treated. Her actions may make him feel excluded from the group process. The diagram illustrates several of the variables that affected the dynamics during the interaction process. I will discuss various aspects and processes operative within this framework in future chapters.

Figure 1: Multicultural Group Work Dynamics
Figures 1 (above) and 2 (below) are closely connected. Figure 1 illustrates processes external to group interaction that affect the nature of the encounter and the factors internal to group interaction that influence decision-making processes having an impact on the outcome of interactions. Figure 2 demonstrates the connections between different social components and processes that are operative within different encounters.

7.5. Components of a Discourse of Difference

The diagram in Figure 2, which contains various fundamental elements for my theory, summarizes conclusions I reached from my data analyses and draws on work in sociology, social psychology, and education. It provides a very simplistic illustration of how all the components related to the discourse of difference are connected. Harré and Slocum (2003) talk about the positioning triad, which consists of positions, speech acts, and story lines. I have altered their depiction to suit my research situation and added other applicable elements that emerged from my data analyses.

![Figure 2: Components of a Discourse of Difference](image-url)
The diagram starts with the discourse of difference, the core category, but I should stress that all the components of this structure are inextricably entwined and connected. Participants in conversations jointly construct meanings in a discourse by producing speech acts that position them or others in specific episodes. Positions, speech acts, and story lines form what van Langenhove and Harré (1999) term a “mutually determining triad” (p. 18). Speech acts may be made intentionally or unintentionally when positioning. As Davies and Harré (1990) explain, a speech act is not the “social intention of the person who uttered it” (p. 45); rather it is through joint action that all participants attempt or succeed in making “their own and others’ actions socially determinate” (p. 45). Furthermore, it is through discourse that the local moral order of rights, duties, and obligations, which underlie decisions to position, are constructed and maintained. In addition, it is because certain speech and positioning acts combine to form a conversational history and sequence of utterances that story lines develop. Identity factors like race, gender, and age affect the development and use of story lines in the discourse and play a major role in how individuals position themselves or others. How individuals use the discourse to position themselves and others has implications for distribution of power among participants. Positioning acts also have implications for whether individuals choose to engage in emotion work or how they use emotions or emotion work to position given the local moral order. Positioning has ramifications for whether or how individuals adjust self-descriptions. Sometimes identities are bestowed upon individuals through discourse and positioning and might affect how they think about themselves. Yet, it is possible for them to accept, reject, or fight those identities. Thus, figure 2 not only shows how people use discourse to achieve certain purposes but also how discourse has the potential to shape individuals.

The diagram further shows that there is the potential for small-scale social change and individual growth. Through unravelling and understanding the potential force of the different components of multi-cultural group situations in particular contexts, individuals can take certain steps to empower themselves, create positive personal change, learn to adapt, or integrate.

The different components in Figures 1 and 2 depict multicultural intergroup relations between NNES and U.S. students in college classes as a process and not a product.
Depending on the players and the circumstances, different conditions and outcomes will emerge. Social situations constantly shift and change. Nothing is fixed. The account of events from this research situation is a snapshot from a particular vantage point, at a given time, and under specific conditions. It gives an indication of what reality was like for the NNES and U.S. student participants, and how it might be for other NNES and U.S. students.

7.6. Conclusion

In most everyday situations, individuals do not intentionally plan or deliberately set out to inconvenience or harm others; yet their actions often have exactly those effects. Hence, Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2003) remind us that as researchers we need to analyze methodically the ways in which normative ideas about the social world persist. It is through routine activities that malicious positioning takes place and bigotry and injustice flourish. The U.S. and NNES students did not one day conceive of the idea and embark on a plan to develop a discourse of difference. Neither did the U.S. students plot to use the discourse to their advantage to gain power over and marginalize or exclude NNES students. Nonetheless, U.S. students have used the discourse to do these very things. On the other hand, the NNES made conscious decisions to come to the U.S. to study, but they did not know that their lack of cultural knowledge or skills would inconvenience the U.S. students during group work assignments. Because human actions can result in unintended consequences for themselves and others, it is important to unravel social situations so that benign intentions can be understood in terms of their potential carcinogenic consequences. I will discuss these processes and consequences in future chapters and explore what we might learn from this research situation.
In this chapter, I will explore the discourse of difference by elaborating on its features and functions, and begin to answer questions like: Why or how has the discourse developed? What sustains it? How and why have inaccurate descriptions of groups persisted despite evidence that not all U.S. or NNES students are similar or behave the same way? What impact does the discourse have on its participants? In Chapters 9-12, I will deal with two more questions: How do individuals use this discourse and for what purposes? What are the implications and consequences?

8.1. Factors Influencing U.S.-NNES Student Interactions

Before discussing the discourse of difference, it is important to set the scene. When individuals from different social or cultural backgrounds have to work together to achieve a common academic goal, a number of complicating factors are present. Possibly, not all participants will speak the same language equally well. Some might not express ideas as freely or fluently as others. Messages might be distorted and communication may break down. Participants may not all understand the same rules and conventions for a particular context, and as a result, their goals and expectations might be different or in conflict. Personal characteristics and different behaviour styles might irritate or embarrass others, and situational factors such as insufficient time or lack of leadership might impede functional interactions. Add to this the fear that working together will require more effort to communicate, involve losing face or being hurt, lead to rejection or being ignored, place a greater workload on some individuals, and potentially lower assignment grades. There might be other factors, but these were the most pertinent ones participants in my study talked about during their interviews. They recounted how these aspects complicated communication and interaction and at times shut them down. It was within this context that the two student groups constructed and sustained the discourse of difference.
8.1.1. NNES student cultural backgrounds and expectations

The NNES students in this study came from different educational backgrounds. The students from Taiwan, Japan, and Korea attended educational institutions where they were required to listen to lectures and take notes. Students were not encouraged to participate in class discussions and were seldom exposed to group work. If they wanted to ask a question, they had to weigh up the consequences of such an action. Students like M#1 and R#2 said that in some cases asking a question might give the teacher the impression that the questioner had not listened carefully. M#1 said:

We feel like asking questions is also, kind of not good thing ... in Japan ... we just do lecture thing and then if I have a question, teacher feel like “Hey, you didn’t hear that?” or “You didn’t listen to the lecture?”

Furthermore, a question might carry an implied criticism that the teacher had not explained the content clearly enough. On the other hand, making dissenting comments or disagreeing with the teacher is anathema. In the students’ cultures, doubting the teacher’s opinions or level of knowledge is extremely rude and above all, may signal to other students that the questioner was trying to show off. In addition, questioning authority is not part of the larger culture and is not encouraged, but that does not mean that some individuals do not question or rebel. Students reported that sanctions such as reprimands, ridicule, or ostracism were common when students transgressed classroom norms.

Hong Kong students were more often exposed to educational settings influenced by western educational norms. For example, V#1 and R#5 were exposed to group work but were still intimidated by the requirement to participate fully in U.S. classes. Each time U.S. teachers announced that they were going to participate in groups, V#1 felt anxious.

Oh, I’m ... so scared. ... I don’t know what ... we gonna talk about. I don’t know what they are gonna talk about their opinion. I [am] scared if I cannot catch what they talk, what they say and some vocabulary ... I couldn’t understand, so ... I just listen and agree.

Unlike their Hong Kong classes where all the students used English as their second or third language, U.S. classes had first and second language speakers. The fear of native

7 Quotes from my participants appear in American English. Punctuation like ... indicates short pauses and [...] indicates that I edited out irrelevant words or sections. I sometimes added words for clarity, e.g. [am].
English speakers judging NNES speakers produced anxiety. The students from the Ukraine (P#1) and Mali (P#2) were accustomed to group work and debated or disagreed with people in their own languages, but P#1 could not behave similarly in his U.S. classes. P#2 initially had problems but forced himself to improve; however, he still found that U.S. students dominated during idea generation and decision-making situations. Even though the students had different backgrounds and skills, they all experienced difficulties participating in groups in U.S. classes.

Like V#1 above, many NNES students referred to their lack of English skills and the anxiety speaking English provoked during group work. They often struggled to understand conversations and felt incapable of expressing ideas or sharing opinions. MacIntyre (1995) explains that when anxious students have to use a foreign language, they often divide their attention between the content of the utterance and the social implications thereof. Performance suffers because self-related cognition increases while task-related cognition is diminished. Thus, anxiety can interfere with individuals’ abilities to demonstrate knowledge and competence. Other NNES students in my study worried about the accuracy of their grammar and pronunciation. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) found that some NNES students did not want to say something in English unless it could be done perfectly. They said other students developed communication apprehension and shyness related to speaking in English. Because they had already experienced situations where they had difficulties making themselves understood, they became prematurely convinced that they were incapable of having coherent conversations. The authors also described different kinds of anxiety NNES students experience related to fearing others’ evaluations and criticisms of their language usage.

Most significantly, Horwitz et al (1986) pointed out that NNES students often felt that they were unable to have authentic discussions because of their immature command of English relative to their first language. Limited self-expression not only frustrated my participants, but also made them acutely aware of how inadequate their English personas were. For example, A#2 expressed dissatisfaction with her English and disappointment over her inability to communicate as she normally would with Japanese students.

I can't speak English very well, and sometime ... my English is very complicated, and sometimes they [U.S. students] don't understand and their face “What the hell?” Or
something like that. So I'm like, oh, my English is too bad, so I don't want to speak the English with American students. So I feel more nervous and more like I don't know what I should say to American students.

R#2, on the other hand, was adamant that U.S. and Japanese students had the same intellectual abilities and was very sensitive about the possibility of projecting a dumb persona during group conversations with U.S. students.

We will be silent pretty much and I don't know, especially in the class that I'm taking right now, I feel the American students think that I ... can't think [...] When it comes to critical thinking, like English class critical thinking ... it's hard for us to do. Choose the word to say what we really think. [...] When we study, of course, we have equally, we have the idea, but we can't express what exactly what we think in English, so we think, but our thinking is slower than American, so we kind of like behind and once that topic goes away we can't talk about it any more.

NNES students were right to be concerned about the personas they projected because U.S. student L#1 admitted that she sometimes treated NNES students as if they were two-year olds or inhuman and not peers.

Sometimes I will talk down to them [...] and will treat them like they are not people.

Oberg (1960) says that when individuals have to function in another culture, they have to engage in role-playing and develop two patterns of behaviour: one pattern that is compatible with the first language and another that allows them to function in the new culture. Some students in my study resisted having to develop new behaviours, and many felt discouraged by how limited their abilities to function with such a new set were and how long they took to develop. However, taking on new personas or developing different sets of behaviour patterns is not an easy matter and perhaps not even desirable for some. Master (1998) quotes Annamalai who explained how difficult it is for people to learn and use another language because

English is *not* the language of their cultural heritage, *not* the language of intense personal feelings and the community, *not* the language most appropriate for learning or to solve problems in cognitively decontextualized situations (italics in original, p. 285)

Functioning in another language can have a profound impact. A NNES student said that when she used English, she could say and behave in ways that she could not in her native
language and in some situations it was liberating, but sometimes it was strange and
disorientating. For her switching languages was like changing her identity or personality.
This corresponds to Young’s (1991) observation about the existential anxiety language
learners experience. Using a different language can affect the image one has of oneself.

The NNES students were aware that they behaved less competently in English during
group situations than they would have in their native languages. Hilleson (1996), citing
Schumann, says that individuals who are usually capable of functioning perfectly
normally within one linguistic and cultural setting might appear incompetent in another.
This clearly was the experience for many of my interviewees. In particular, P#1 who was
older than most of his peers, was under pressure to counteract his under-developed
English language skills through behaving more sensibly, independently, and maturely.

Language anxiety was a major contributing factor to NNES student adjustment
problems, but there were other complications. Oberg (1960) explains that culture shock is
the anxiety and feelings of frustration or disorientation people experience when familiar
everyday social interaction markers that orient them are removed. Moreover, according to
Yeh and Inose (2002), many NNES students experience a sense of loss because they no
longer have access to familiar things in their communities or social systems. When
working in groups, NNES students in my study experienced these two aspects repeatedly
and felt confused. For example, some East Asian students noticed that U.S. students
seemed to draw attention to themselves. As Markus and Kitayama (2003) indicate, to
Japanese students this kind of behaviour is not immediately sensible. From their
perspective, students who stand out are vulnerable to ridicule, jealousy, or resentment
from others. It is more comfortable to fit in and be assured of the group’s protection and
sympathy. Yet, students in my study discovered that in order to fit in during group work
in the U.S., they had to behave in ‘risky’ ways that made them visible and prominent.

The NNES students also noticed U.S. students expressing emotions and thoughts
directly during group work. Some were shocked by this kind of blatant display,
confirming Uba’s (1994) comment that East Asian cultures de-emphasise expression of
emotion. Related to this aspect, Yeh and Inose (2002) explained that students from China,
Japan, and Korea might not be willing to confront others or create interpersonal conflict
because they might have been raised in environments that emphasized interdependence.
As such, they might be more willing to sacrifice personal conviction and endure adversity for the sake of peaceful and harmonious group relationships.

As mentioned above, asking questions posed problems. Markus and Kitayama (2003) say that Japanese students often ask themselves whether they are the right ones to ask questions or whether it is the place of the more senior or knowledgeable person. If that person does not ask, then the question might not be appropriate to ask. My participants noticed that all U.S. students asked questions, but many NNES students could not feel comfortable doing this. Clearly, this involved a fundamental mindset change for some.

Furthermore, Constantine, Anderson, Caldwell, Berkel, and Utsey (2005) found that because students from Africa were reared in homogeneous environments where being black was the norm, they had never experienced negative comments or discrimination prior to entering the U.S.A. They said that cultural values and behavioural expectations often caused cognitive contradictions for students from Africa studying in the U.S. For example, P#2 who had not personally experienced discrimination, mentioned cases where his friends had, and they were deeply troubled by it. He also noticed that interactions during groups were often “professional” and not as relaxed and casual as in his country. Relationships seemed formal and people were more solemn during group interactions. In general, he felt they took everything in life seriously in the U.S.A.

NNES student P#1 noticed differences in commitment to relationships between individuals in the U.S. and the Ukraine.

American culture is different. With Ukraine person, I can help him, and he can help me, doesn’t matter. He can come during the night and I can do the same. If something happens with American person, he will not call me.

In the Ukraine, friends would help each other. It would be acceptable to knock on your friend's door past midnight and request help on a college group assignment, but in the U.S., friends would not easily do that. Thus, P#1 not only found himself without the kind of assistance and friendship he was used to and needed at the college, but also without the knowledge and skills to develop supportive relationships in the U.S.

8.1.2. U.S. student cultural backgrounds and expectations

It is often only when individuals leave their country to travel or live in another that they become explicitly aware of the nature and value of their own culture. Many of the
U.S. students were at a disadvantage in this regard, and the NNES students were far more sophisticated. A few U.S. students like H#1, M#2, and B#1 had either travelled overseas or participated in short-term student exchange programs. R#3 had a Japanese girlfriend and M#2 had many NNES friends, and according to them, they had learnt a lot about themselves and their culture through these relationships. On the other hand, T#1 had worked with people from Mexico, the Ukraine, and Russia in the U.S. before, but instead of providing understanding, contact seemed to have made him more antagonistic toward foreigners. The other research participants had mainly made peripheral contact with other cultures through NNES students in school or college. Some like M#3 and L#1 were particularly unaware of how the U.S. culture differed from others. Most often, the U.S. students took for granted that some of the group work qualities they prized highly in the U.S. were universal, and that NNES students were somehow deficient because they did not behave like them. U.S. student J#4 said, "You just get so accustomed to doing things every day in the classroom, and you expect the person next to you to do the exact same thing” and U.S. student M#3 explained how she saw the situation:

I expect everybody to give equal, I'm really big on people giving their opinions and talking because I can't stand it when people are quiet, it really bugs me, which might come from where some of my ideas about them came from, the international students, almost annoyance of being, you don't almost want to be put in a group with them.

In addition, L#1 explained how she and others felt about NNES students and how they avoided working with them because their English skills were not acceptable.

Because either their [NNES students'] English is not as good as we all speak it and they [U.S. students] are not willing to be patient with them and give them the break to work. They don’t want to.

U.S. students come from a culture that is different in important ways from NNES students’ in this study and when not understood by U.S. participants, these differences can become pronounced and problematic during multicultural group work. Yet many U.S. students live under the illusion that the U.S. is the big melting pot where cultures merge automatically and effortlessly. Participants in this study had grown up during a time where there was emphasis on being tolerant and politically correct. Some institutions they attended explicitly taught courses on gender and racial issues, and
students like H#1 explained how she was encouraged since primary school to work with students with different abilities and orientations. However, the students were also exposed to the backlash and general conservative mood-swing in the U.S. Furthermore, U.S. students like A#1, J#1, and R#3 were aware that because Americans are often reminded that they are the most powerful country in the world, they attain a level of arrogance that prevents them from learning about the outside world. They are often remarkably uninformed about other countries and cultures.

In addition, students like T#1 had very specific ideas about what it meant to be an American. His father came to the U.S. from Croatia and his mother was born in the Philippines. He used these family members to illustrate that each had made an effort right from the start to learn the language, fit in, and contribute to the country. He expressed resentment that so many NNES students did not do the same. He felt frustrated because they seemed to come to the U.S. to take without giving something back. This sentiment also came through when he spoke about what happened during group work. According to him, NNES students sat passively, listened to others, and did not share their knowledge or opinions. He was particularly irked by how NNES students sometimes discussed negative aspects related to his government or country without ever referring to their own.

Furthermore, the case of the candid M#3 illustrated some of the troubling elements in the multicultural U.S. environment. During the interview, she explained that she identified strongly with her white European mother and not her Black father and expressed admiration for the blonde Danish students on campus and disdain for the Asian Hip-Hop “wannabees” (who expressed identification with Blacks and Black culture through their appearance). The wider national unease between different races and ethnicities in the U.S. seemed to be reflected in this individual who then turned her own biases and intolerance toward others. In contrast, A#1 came from a small, conservative logging town and according to him, through contact with other cultures on campus was able to confront his prejudices and become tolerant and accepting of others.

Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1994, 2003) and Heine (2001) wrote insightful articles comparing far eastern and western cultures. They say that U.S. students tend to believe that self-expression is important. It is a sign of intelligence if you are willing to express attitudes and opinions publicly. Individuals can sharpen their minds through debate and
discussion with others. Moreover, in the wider national culture, it is important to feel
good and make others feel that way, and there are very visible ways in which Americans
try to achieve this. For example, they praise and compliment each other, and their bumper
stickers often declare that the driver's child is an honour student. They also prefer to seek
out situations that promote positive emotions. However, the need to feel good is often
accompanied by the desire to be the best, and this sometimes results in competitiveness
that works against being interconnected with others. To be the best, one has to
differentiate oneself from others and become separate. Getting ahead or gaining a
competitive advantage also means pushing forward and controlling the required
environment. To many Americans control can also mean using inner qualities to change
outer aspects such as public behaviour or social situations. Like Markus and Kitayama, I
acknowledge that the U.S. is a widely diverse country and that there are huge disparities.
In spite of the pervasive atmosphere, not all Americans behave similarly and not
everybody displays the qualities discussed above.

8.1.3. Potential for misinterpretation and conflict

I am aware of the dangers of essentializing different groups through discussing their
qualities in comparison to each other. Nevertheless, the differences cannot be ignored. It
is important to acknowledge individuals' cultural and educational backgrounds because
they may provide useful insights about people's behaviours and orientations in a given
situation. Still, it is imperative to point out that not everybody from Taiwan is the same,
not all people from the U.S.A. think alike, and individuals from Mali behave differently.

From this brief discussion on cultural aspects, the potential for misunderstanding and
conflict among individuals from different cultural groups is already clear. Take for
example the need to participate in groups. The U.S. student need to demonstrate
intellectual competence and the desire to be the best might be expressed in ways that
come across as showing off to some of the Asian students. NNES student C#1 explained
that he would speak if called upon, but that he and other Asian students would not
automatically indicate during discussions that they have opinions.

If the American student ask me "What's your opinion? What do you think about this?" then I
express my opinion. But I think most international students are not talking by themselves,
"Oh, I have an opinion!" like that. They don't. If someone ask me, ask them, the international
students, then we express opinion.
On the other hand, the need not to stand out or boast in groups might be perceived as intellectually weak or timid behaviour from the U.S. perspective. M#3 pointed out the importance of being noticed in the U.S.

Being timid isn't rewarded in America, it's not rewarded. You really have to be very, very bold and even then you might get squashed for that, but you could also be, you're still noticed. And the important thing is for sometimes to make people look and to let you in, you have to push and you have to elbow because that's just how it is.

Furthermore, U.S. student behaviour in groups may seem excessively active and assertive to some of the NNES students. Some Asian students might prefer to discuss topics only after more contemplation and then slowly and deliberately.

People like P#1, R#5, and P#2, from Ukraine, Hong Kong, and Mali respectively, felt relationships between U.S. students were superficially friendly and lacked commitment and depth. P#1 wanted friends who could help him when they worked in groups.

Now I have Communication 234. I don’t have there friend. I didn’t find yet, and ... it’s very hard for me in that class. On Friday I met one person from there outside, and we talked with him, and I found he is very good. And he told me, we just talk like friend, I told him “Do you know in this class I don’t have friend who can like talk with me ... Just, I didn’t find him before this part, I have just one week, to the end of this quarter and I think, “Why I didn’t met him? Why I didn’t talk him before Thursday of the quarter?” He could help me a lot.

R#5 expressed similar sentiments about the lack of a friend’s help during group work.

Nobody will help me. Nobody will think, “Oh, you are international student, I will try to help you or I will try to understand more about you.”

On the other hand, U.S. group members like M#3 and L#1 might find P#1’s and R#5’s need for friendship too demanding and see them as clingy, dependent, and a nuisance.

Many NNES students used silence during group discussions as a coping mechanism. By not expressing ideas because they formulated their English sentences too late and lost the moment or because they were afraid of giving a wrong or bad opinion, NNES students like R#2 and R#5 gave U.S. students wrong impressions. By trying to save face in a NNES student way, they were in fact losing face from the U.S. perspective. When NNES students were silent, they irritated talkative U.S. students because they felt the
NNES students were taking ideas but not contributing. For example, it was disconcerting for U.S. student J#1 when his NNES group mate refused to share opinions.

I’m uncomfortable with her [NNES student] not participating or taking sides, or not, it’s not really her not taking sides but not having an opinion because I wanna get more people involved with the group and have more opinions, so we can make, hopefully make better choices and ... I don’t know I’m not overly comfortable with making, with two people making decisions for the entire group, which is what has been happening ... but, having someone who does not want to come forward with her ideas doesn’t help that.

Some U.S. students also felt cheated out of the opportunity to learn from others who might have different perspectives. On the other hand, by talking so much, many U.S. students shocked NNES students.

Friendship was an area that caused confusion. The need many NNES students experienced for help and friendship in the U.S. group work context probably came from two sources: a practical need to be helped with language (to understand assignments and conversations) and an emotional need to be connected and supported born from cultures that nourish friendships and interdependence in a way that is different from U.S. interpretations. Many NNES students like P#1, R#1, S#1, and A#1 longed for and regretted not having U.S. friends, while U.S. students seldom used the word “friend” related to NNES students. Many U.S. students like M#3, L#1, T#1, and J#1 resisted taking on the responsibility to become helpers, as this role did not fit in with their idea of independence in society. It demanded a greater sense of responsibility than they felt comfortable accepting. From the NNES student perspective (S#1, R#2, V#1, and Y#1), U.S. student reluctance to provide help seemed selfish and hard-hearted and even rude.

Markus and Kitayama (2003) remind us that we live our culture, and because it is lived, we are mostly not cognitively aware of its details. These details are often embedded in the mundane everyday practices we take for granted. However, it seemed that through contact with each other and because they could compare different cultural aspects, some U.S. and NNES individuals became aware of these seemingly insignificant everyday practices but lacked the inclination or methods to put all the pieces together and make sense of them in a helpful format. The discourse of difference reflected an awareness of dissimilarity but in many ways prevented individuals from moving beyond
the immediate utterances in the discourse to deeper understanding and acceptance of each other and the demands of the multicultural group work process.

8.2. Discourse of Difference Defined

Burr (1995) explains that discourse acts as a frame of reference through which people understand utterances. There is a two-way relationship between discourse and the verbal expressions and written statements people make. Discourses develop through them and in turn, their meanings become understandable within the context of the discourse.

Within the context of group work interactions, both U.S. and NNES students used specific language to refer to themselves and others. Individuals within this setting constructed their own versions, but because there were important overlaps, collectively their references formed a local discourse. This discourse was born out of and focused on group differences. Burr (1995) says that discourses, certain ways of talking about people or events, can be powerful because they are generally accepted as 'common truth' and are often in the interest of a dominant or influential group. However, she raises important questions about how we can recognize a prevailing discourse and by whose criteria. In this study, the prevailing discourse can be recognized through the language (words and metaphors) both groups used when they referred to themselves and members of the other group in their academic group settings. I will demonstrate that U.S. students intentionally and unintentionally dictated criteria for the discourse. Phrases and expressions both groups used to refer to themselves and others formed loosely connected themes and involved talk about the presence or lack of (a) assertiveness or perceived aggression, (b) initiative and leadership, (c) participation, and (d) interaction.

While the research participants all operated with their own varieties of the U.S.-NNES student discourse, there were common threads within each group and across groups. For example, Tables 9-11 in Chapter 6 and Tables 13-14 below show that NNES students most often used language describing themselves as quiet, shy, reluctant to express opinions, timid, not confident, possessing inadequate English skills, and not taking initiative. U.S. students used similar descriptions to portray NNES students. NNES students often described U.S. students as outspoken, opinionated, confident, persuasive, initiators, eager to express ideas, and unwilling to work with NNES students in groups.
Most U.S. students described themselves in this manner too. Comparing the descriptions of the two groups, one is struck by how one group’s members generally seemed to define themselves as the opposite of the other group. U.S. students were described and described themselves as opinionated and outspoken, and NNES students as quiet and reluctant to express ideas. NNES students were described and described themselves as shy, timid, and not confident, and U.S. students as initiators and confident.

On the other hand, both groups gave instances where they or others broke the mould and behaved in ways that did not conform to the general discourse. This raises important questions about the construction of the discourse (addressed in 8.3. below) and its functions. I will discuss the functions again at various stages in Chapters 9-12, but want to point out some of the harmful, though largely unintended, functions here. The discourse can be seen as a convenient carrier for stereotypes. For instance, students from both groups said that NNES students were quiet, but some gave instances of group members that were not like that. When individuals operate with such convenient, neat, and simplistic language about others, it can obstruct future observation of variety and nuance within behaviour patterns and may result in unjustified and one-dimensional thinking. If individuals use unsophisticated language to talk about themselves, the discourse can be restrictive because it can suggest that individuals can only behave in a certain way and are not capable of behaving differently. The discourse can also become oppressive because it can indicate that a certain kind of behaviour is not acceptable or right given a particular set of rules (in this case the dominant party’s). Finally, because this discourse focuses on the differences between the groups, it also serves to perpetuate a sense of ‘us’ (in-group) and ‘them’ (out-group) among the participants.

The content of Tables 9-11 is rearranged in Tables 13-14, and they contain references both groups made when referring to themselves and the other party. By comparing the two columns in table 13, the reader can see similarities between U.S. student self-descriptions and NNES student descriptions of U.S. students. The same is true for table 14 with NNES students. On the other hand, by comparing U.S. self-descriptions in table 13 with NNES self-descriptions in table 14, the reader can see striking differences.

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8 The term coined by Walter Lippmann in 1922 to refer to a “picture in the head” (Middlebrook, 1974) is defined by Feldman (2001) as “a set of beliefs and expectations about members of a group that are held simply because of their membership in the group” (p. 81)
Table 13: References to U.S. Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Student Self-Descriptions</th>
<th>Descriptions by NNES Students of U.S. Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertiveness or perceived aggression</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assertiveness or perceived aggression</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Impatient</td>
<td>- Impatient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confident</td>
<td>- Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Arrogant</td>
<td>- Honest and direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self-absorbed</td>
<td>- Show emotions directly on faces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assertive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiative and leadership</strong></td>
<td><strong>Initiative and leadership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take the lead</td>
<td>- Take the lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take initiative</td>
<td>- Take first/volunteer/initiate action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Persuasive</td>
<td>- Persuasive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vocal</td>
<td>- Talk a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give ideas and opinions</td>
<td>- Opinions about anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Willing to debate &amp; disagree</td>
<td>- Brave to speak out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disagree to find alternatives</td>
<td>- Outspoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Task oriented</td>
<td>- Active in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Articulate / communicative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Think critically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Empathetic / non-empathetic</td>
<td>- Unfriendly and cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Even-handed / strong-willed</td>
<td>- Indifferent toward NNES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unwilling &amp; willing to work with NNES students in groups</td>
<td>- Not willing to work with NNES students in groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: References to NNES Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NNES Student Self-Descriptions</th>
<th>Descriptions by U.S. Students of NNES Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertiveness or perceived aggression</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assertiveness or perceived aggression</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Less confident than U.S. students</td>
<td>- Hesitant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Need help</td>
<td>- Need help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t confront unfairness/non-inclusion</td>
<td>- Prefer to avoid conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afraid to ask for clarification</td>
<td>- Powerless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afraid to ask for help</td>
<td>- Easily intimidated Timid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nervous in groups</td>
<td>- Don’t disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Defer to group members</td>
<td>- Agree with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Politically correct</td>
<td>- Amiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiative and leadership</strong></td>
<td><strong>Initiative and leadership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Never or seldom takes the lead</td>
<td>- Lack leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t take initiative in groups</td>
<td>- Lack initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wait to be included</td>
<td>- Willing to let US students dominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quiet</td>
<td>- Lack critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Struggling to think critically</td>
<td>- Hardworking and desire more learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take studies seriously</td>
<td>- Don’t share ideas and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reluctant to express opinions</td>
<td>- Have low confidence level (language and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not brave to speak out</td>
<td>general behaviour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t have sufficient command of English</td>
<td>- Need time to formulate ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(listening comprehension, speaking,</td>
<td>- Don’t deliver quality ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary)</td>
<td>- Don’t answer questions willingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fear giving incorrect answers</td>
<td>- Not articulate / not communicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Don’t speak up</td>
<td>- Able to (but usually don’t) provide a different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Silent and reserved</td>
<td>perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack language skills to talk about certain topics</td>
<td>- Have more information than US students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack speech making skills</td>
<td>- Brave and strong to study in a strange country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unobtrusively seek equality &amp; fairness</td>
<td>- Not easy to work with (quiet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shy</td>
<td>- Shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can be playful and childlike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8.3. Development of U.S.-NNES Student Discourses

Analyses showed that through a process of noticing variances in behaviour during interactions on campus, in class, or during group work, the participants reached conclusions about themselves and others and constructed their interpretations accordingly. During the interviews, participants used certain expressions and words to refer to themselves, their own group, other individuals, and other groups. The language they employed showed that they were each using their own variant of a discourse distinct to different situations. There are striking similarities between the language NNES students used to describe themselves and how the U.S. students talked about them (see Tables 13-14 above). The same is true for the U.S. students; however, how each party adopted the discourse, how they used it, or how it positioned them differs significantly. I will first consider how and why the discourse developed.

8.3.1. From the NNES student perspective

Many NNES students came to the U.S. with expectations of obtaining a better or different education than they might have received in their own countries. Some were aware that they might have to face cultural challenges (though they did not initially know what they were or how difficult it might be to deal with them), alter their diets and living conditions, and communicate more often in English. Others were too young, uninformed, inexperienced, or starry-eyed to think that far ahead. However, no one was prepared emotionally for the interpersonal challenges working directly with U.S. students in groups would present. Some students thought U.S. students would welcome them, and they were shocked by the distant treatment they received. R#1 explained, “we cannot know that Americans gonna be ... cold.” P#2 was surprised by the consequences of his inadequate language skills during group work:

And when you feel like you’re left out ... it’s kinda ah shock you a little bit when it comes to projects and you are the only one not understanding what everybody else is talking about ...

A#2 expressed amazement and dismay when she discovered that U.S. students during group work sometimes were either reluctant to speak to NNES students or ignored them:

They are not so helpful [towards] the international student, they are not so kind [towards] the international students [...] and we still have English problems ... so if I ask to the American student, they don't want to talk to us, or they just ignore us.
The NNES students also noticed that their behaviour during group work was different from how U.S. students behaved. For example, when talking about working with U.S. students in groups, P#2 said U.S. students most often “came up with all the ideas” and their ideas were “most of the time pretty good ideas” and were usually the only ones adopted by the group. U.S. students were also organized and professional, unlike him. V#1 explained that U.S. students were different because “they do [group] presentation very well ‘cause they have a lot of opinion and they have brave to say”. R#2 stressed that “the Americans always talk” and R#5 confirmed this by saying, “they just talk and blah, blah, blah and they, they feel very happy”. M#1 explained that “they have their opinion” and “they talk really quickly”, but S#1 noticed a more disturbing difference from her Japanese perspective and put it like this:

American students ... they are very honest. Very, very honest and I could see how they think by facial expressions, body language ... what they say [...] [In my culture] they are more understated than ... they make more understated ... like speech, they [U.S. students] direct, not indirect at all, they don’t hesitate to say “I don’t think it’s right” like they said “I think it’s wrong because ...” but we [Japanese] don’t make a negative comment about others usually. Asian students don’t do it.

Through contact, NNES students gradually came to understand in practical terms what was required from them in groups and how they differed. Most often, they concluded that these differences were shortcomings on their part. Some had heard from their friends or Intensive English as Second Language teachers what would be required, but the implications were not real until they encountered actual group situations. They saw U.S. students express their opinions about any topic, think critically and creatively, debate and disagree with each other, express their emotional reactions directly, initiate actions, take the lead, and state their answers or comments with confidence and conviction. When referring to U.S. students, NNES students used words and expressions like “confident”, “persuasive”, “impatient”, “outspoken”, “talkative”, “opinionated”, “active”, “unfriendly and cold”, and “not willing to work with NNES students in groups”.

On the other hand, some NNES students realized that not all U.S. students were outspoken or talkative. M#1 talked about a 30-year old American woman who “was really shy, so she didn’t talk” and R#4 recalled an incident where the tables were turned for her:
The group mate, American girl, is kind of quiet and don't even talk [...] So sometimes kind of hard. I don't know what to say. It's usually you would think all Americans [are] kind of active or active to talk.

Some were also able to see that not all U.S. students were similar. C#1 explained that some U.S. students did not ignore NNES students:

I think they just want to talk with only American students just ignore international students, but not all of them, just some of them.

Other NNES students like R#1, S#1, A#1, and M#1 recalled positive experiences with U.S. students and realized that not everyone was cold or uncaring. Yet it seems that the unconstructive impact of certain experiences was more powerful, and that the negative images often prevailed when these NNES students referred to U.S. students as a group. Thus, NNES students often utilized stereotyped language when referring to U.S. students, as R#4 and C#1’s comments just above indicate.

Related to their experiences and insights during interaction, several NNES students remarked that they underwent changes and behaved in less active and confident ways than they did in their home countries. The comments that they became “less active” might seem strange because they came mostly from educational backgrounds where they did not engage in class discussions or group work, but it seems that their statements referred to their general behaviour in class and to situations when they were around other students. In other words, their self-descriptions had changed and this had implications for how they felt and behaved during group work. For example, R#1 said, “I became not as talkative as I am in Japan” and R#5 stated, “I am be more quiet. Yeah, I don't talk a lot.” P#1, M#1, and Y#1, who explained that they were outgoing and gregarious with students from their own cultures, became silent and shy in U.S. class groups. I should also point out that the students were at different stages of their tenure at the college. Some had been there for many months and others were new. Since their comments were recorded at a particular time, it is still possible that they will undergo positive changes in the future. Nevertheless, these experiences positioned them at that point in time in ways that were unexpected, uncomfortable, and out of their range of experiences and introduced new words and phrases that they used to refer to themselves.
However, not all NNES students became less active and quiet. P#2 and R#4, student leaders, deliberately set out to learn from U.S. students during group interactions through observation because they felt they had opportunities to excel at the college and did not want to lose them. They also did not want to disappoint their parents who were making sacrifices so that they could study in the U.S. They were shy and quiet in the beginning but through sheer effort and persistence became more confident with experience. Others like C#1, remained centred and reasoned that his lack of English was more than compensated for by his excellent mathematics skills. Nevertheless, all the NNES students agreed that they were less active, opinionated, and talkative than their U.S. counterparts in groups, and that this was a disadvantage, which they thought they ought to remedy.

Moreover, all the NNES participants expressed frustration and anguish over the problems they faced in classrooms and in groups, and frequently referred to the differences in teaching and learning styles between the U.S. and their home countries. By observing U.S. students and listening to teachers in classes, they concluded that active class participation such as asking and answering questions, volunteering opinions, and sharing ideas in groups were highly valued. All realized that these expectations and norms about classroom and group work behaviour were very different from those they were accustomed to in their countries and many knew that they did not have the skills to hold their own in groups. However, they noticed when they behaved according to U.S. standards, U.S. students were more willing to include them during group work; when they did not, they were ignored. S#1 explains the situation as follows:

They [U.S. students] ... ignore them [NNES students] until they start to talk. So I learned that from experience “’Cause she doesn’t talk, so that’s why she [is] not so active in the small group.” So okay, if I start to talk, I could participate in the discussion.

Other NNES students like A#2 not only accepted that they needed to be more active, but accepted that being ignored was their fault; there was something wrong with their behaviour, not the U.S. students’:

Sometimes they ignore me because I don't speak ... but it is my fault, so I have to speak, so they are not rude or like they're doing something bad for me, yeah, so I think I have to speak so they don't ignore me. If I speak, they will speak to me.
Like A#2, many compared their own behaviour with those of their U.S. counterparts and concluded that because they were not accustomed to active participation in groups, they were lacking in appropriate group work skills. However, others silenced themselves because their English skills were not adequate and they were afraid people would think they were stupid. P#1 is a prime example:

Next class I just told him, “You know, Glen, I don’t understand what is this, I just don’t understand why. What? Okay. And I saw students like “Ha” like inside many students, I just see “Like you are not smart.” I understand I am not smart. “Tell me, me, [in] my language, you will see if you are smart.” This is my just heart can tell them. I just inside, I feel uncomfortable but I am not person who look on, at their face.

This incident happened early in his studies and affected him severely. In subsequent situations where he had to participate, he was unable to because as he says, “When I could talk, I could not tell them that I can’t understand.” Later he commented more generally about the class situation, “I am uncomfortable in the class because I cannot say for teacher, ‘Do you know, I don’t understand you’” and again about groups, “I cannot open because I feel ... I don’t know. I cannot because we don’t talk with each other.”

In addition to reaching their own conclusions through observation and experience, NNES students talked amongst themselves. New students talked to seniors, and students from different majors talked to each other. Y#1 explained how an American male told a NNES student during group work that she was lazy because she did not speak and then he ordered her to take notes:

Another [one of] my friends told me one more group also has ... [an] American guy [who] tell[s a] Japanese girl ... Japanese [she] doesn’t do anything, so [he told her] write down me...memo like this, so just [he] tell...tell[s the] Japanese [girl] “Work, work, work, work.”

Another way NNES students became aware of what they should be doing was through U.S. students telling them directly, as in the previous example. M#1 also recalled an incident where “the American guy told me, ‘Hey, you guys have to talk.’” She got a direct message in class from one of her group members, but when she met him later the same day, she experienced coolness from him, which she ascribed to her lack of participation during a graded group project. This incident shows that NNES students also seemed to get indirect messages and that these were even more powerful and hurtful.
Silence and coldness, or rejection as M#1 interpreted it, sent powerful messages about the behaviour she ought to have displayed and did not. Then there were U.S. students who used friendly teasing to convey messages. U.S. student J#1 explained:

Well, one of the things that has happened is she gets teased in a friendly fashion ... or at least she does not seem to have a problem with it ... she comes across as ... sort of shy and sort of ... like, she laughs at ... everything and it's like, I don’t know, but she does get teased more than I would expect a similar Ameri... student, American student to, based on how, she doesn’t, she doesn’t always come ... it’s like she is more passive and therefore gets teased.

NNES student M#1, the person J#1 referred to in the quote, later confirmed the effect the teasing had on her:

They just joked to me, and then ... we really worked well in the group and then I was really amazed to by them and ... I developed my mind to speak to everybody, even Americans.

Thus, through sharing incidents with others, experiencing, being told directly or receiving messages indirectly, and making comparisons between what they saw others do and they did not, they developed references and ways of talking about themselves in relation to U.S. students. Furthermore, group pressure from the majority on individuals or small groups, rejection or personal rewards of acceptance, and the need to fit in rather than stand out as fostered by the cultures of their home countries (there is an irony here that was explained in 8.1.1.), all produced anxiety, disappointment, and frustration when they did not behave according to U.S. classroom norms. This seemed to perpetuate certain references in the discourse. In some cases, one painful encounter was enough to send a message that they were different from U.S. students, and that the difference was not valued. However, most often, the NNES participants recounted many instances that repeated this message for them.

It is interesting to note that NNES participants did not talk about the benefits or disadvantages of learning in a more active environment where group work formed a large part of the learning process. They also did not debate whether this style of learning was better or worse; they seem to have accepted the U.S. system as the norm even though some felt the repercussions for them were unfair. Moreover, as mentioned before, they seemed to have accepted that they were less active, opinionated, and talkative than their U.S. counterparts in groups, and that these qualities had negative connotations. They
understood that not possessing these skills somehow made them deficient and less desirable as people in U.S. student eyes. Several NNES students did not want to accept this notion but elected to suffer in silence (a cultural trait for some and discussed in 8.1.1 above). Some had a clear sense of justice and a limit for what shortcomings others could accuse them of, and they protested against the unfair treatment they received from U.S. students in groups. For example, R#2 provided instances where he was on an equal footing with U.S. students in the Spanish 101 class and on the football (soccer) field where they either had the same level of language knowledge or physical skills. He also pointed out that they had equal abilities when it came to course content, but that his English language abilities hampered him:

When we study, of course, we have equally, we have the idea, but we can't express what exactly what we think in English, so we think, but our thinking is slower than American, so we kind of like behind and once that topic goes away we can't talk about it any more.

P#2 insisted that NNES and U.S. students are all human. In the statement below, he is appealing to one of the key values of America: equality for all.

American students are people. They're students just like me ... they're people. They think just like you, and they have a down side...down sides, they have some good sides. But my case, I...I've learned a lot of stuff. I've learned a lot of things from them. Like in this country, one personal thing that I've learned is that ... everybody is equal.

However, he stops short of accusing his U.S. classmates of double standards. In fact, throughout his interview, he steadfastly remained optimistic and positive that he would overcome unfairness and adversity through persistence and hard work. NNES students like P#1 and P#2 also gave instances where they deliberately remained silent during group situations because they did not want to be described as 'stupid':

At the beginning when I did not understand them I...I was afraid to ask them because I thought that if I ask a question they might think that “This guy is stupid” or “This guy is...this guy is not smart”.

Carrying the label ‘quiet’ was less shameful than being called ‘dumb’. It seems then that some NNES students operating within the framework of their own moral codes inadvertently controlled which descriptions entered the discourse and which did not.
They did not want to give the impression that just because they were thinking and speaking slowly in English, that they were intellectually deficient. To some extent, U.S. students did not want to make NNES students look dumb either. B#1 and J#3 explained that they had the suspicion that the NNES students had good ideas and that they were not stupid. They just wished the NNES students would share their ideas. J#4 was careful to point out that most of them were very intelligent, and J#2 and R#3 went as far as saying that NNES students often had greater knowledge about a topic than the more vocal U.S. students had. All of these U.S. students were at pains to prevent words like “stupid” or “unintelligent” from entering the discourse.

8.3.2. From the U.S. student perspective

The discourse developed differently for U.S. students. U.S. college classrooms are small and therefore many teachers encourage lively student participation. Several also use group work extensively. U.S. students are accustomed to this kind of learning environment and have certain expectations about what they or others should do in a group; as M#1 explained, “I expect everybody to give equal, I'm really big on people giving their opinions and talking”. J#1 added, “I wanna get more people involved with the group and have more opinions, so we can hopefully make better choices”. L#1 was very specific about her expectations:

I would that generally one person takes the lead and with the assignment or whatever needs to be done, and that every person will be able to contribute what is asked of them. They will contribute equally and will do the share that is given to them and [...] that you need to give your opinion and give your fair share and not hold back but be willing to step out and to give back to the group as well.

However, many of the U.S. students did not choose to study in a multicultural environment and expressed surprise at the number of NNES students at their college, and resentment over having to share their classrooms with them. They also expressed frustration about the lack of participation from NNES students. Thus, from the outset in some cases there did not seem to be room for negotiation or a willingness to consider or tolerate different learning styles during group work. Even before having any real contact with NNES students, L#1 had formed opinions about the desirability of working with them. Her version of events best summarizes the attitudes of many U.S. students:
I guess annoyed that I had to work with them [NNES] because I expected it to be really hard all year ... just expecting to be frustrated and not be able to communicate at all ... just not be able to work with them and even the first couple of days was still like I just didn't want to be around them and didn't want to react to them and it was just so frustrating for me and didn't ... you could say I didn't like them and it was really just a kind of prejudiced against them ... there is a perception that they are taking up American space and American money that because they are here in our school and they ... don't understand everything, they might, but there is a perception that they don't, because either their English is not as good...as we all speak it and...and they don't...they [U.S. students] are not willing to be patient with them and give them the break to work. They don't want to.

Several U.S. students seemed to operate with the perception that NNES students had chosen to come to the U.S. and felt that the onus was on NNES students, not them, to change and conform. Characteristics that U.S. students often reported they admired in the classroom, and particularly when working in groups, were assertiveness, confidence, persuasiveness, taking initiative, willingness to express opinions quickly and frequently, and independence. Because the vocal majority of U.S. students behaved like this and because the behaviour seemed accepted in class, U.S. students classified NNES students as non-standard; they are inarticulate, followers rather than leaders, amiable, lacking in willingness to disagree or debate, not openly abrasive, insecure, lacking in confidence, dependent, and easily dominated. Possessing these qualities was a source of irritation for some U.S. students and a sign of weakness. As M#3 explained about working in groups:

I'm really big on people giving their opinions and talking because I can't stand it when people are quiet, it really bugs me, which might come from where some of my ideas about them [NNES students] came from, the international students, almost annoyance of being, you don't almost want to be put in a group with them. A lot of people don't want to because you don't want to do all the work, and you don't want to just sit there and talk to the wall.

She also explained what happens generally outside groups on campus:

I'm serious, they [U.S. students] don't care. And if someone [NNES student] tries to come up to them and talk to them, they'll respond out of -- most likely, girls will respond, just respond, but you'll see it's not very welcoming, it's not very nice, it's in fact rude, and as soon as they can get away from it, they'll get away from it, whatever it is.

M#3 is not alone. J#4 recounted an incident where the teacher wanted students to work in groups and none of the U.S. students in class (including him) wanted to work with the NNES students:
I noticed international students sitting there. Of course my first thought was maybe I should go over and ask them, and then the teacher went and talked to them and was like, “Do you want to choose your group?” or this, and I think because they sat there and they were quiet and they weren't outspoken, no one's really going to go and want that person in a group. You know what I mean? Like when you choose groups, you kind of like, it's all the quiet people in a group normally, all the loud, outspoken people are in a group, and then you have the international student. Well, people kind of overlook them, and I'm guilty of that, too.

Not all U.S. students expressed their emotional reactions as strongly as M#3. Some were ambivalent about interactions with NNES students. People like B#1 and J#4 liked socializing with NNES students on campus, but preferred not to work with them in groups. J#4 said it best when he explained that he would work with a NNES group member if he had to, but that he would rather not:

I mean, I'm kind of talking on both sides of my mouth when I'm saying that, though, because I know many of them are really intelligent and they're really smart and you don't have to stereotype them as “international students are so smart” but just the fact like when I'm working with a group, I like to make sure the information is clearly conveyed and understandable, you. And so I think that I would work with one of them, but I think that being kind of like, I'd have to put up, you know.

J#4 knew that if he worked with a NNES student in a group, he would have to do more work, put up with more communication problems, and run the risk of having to redo the assignment, or worse, get a bad grade. Both he and B#1 were concerned about this.

J#1 also expressed ambivalence. He preferred not to work with NNES students but was willing to consider including an active and talkative one. Yet he all but ruled out that possibility because he wanted somebody who had already adapted to the culture and could speak English well.

I don't have a problem with having international students in the group. I would, when it comes to...to doing group. I would rather...I think I would rather have a reasonably high achieving American student, though, be, there's, especially if there's going to involve presentation and we have an instructor who wants everyone to say something. I would rather have and Amer...American students or someone who has been in America long enough to have gotten quite used to the culture [...] if I was going to choose all the members of my own group, unless I had already seen one of the international students that was speaking up in class and contributing, I would probably pick American students over international students for the grad... for at least purposes of grading [...] I'd still, I would rather have ... I'm not sure I'd go for over international students or not, but I'd want the more articulate, willing to actually say something.
Others felt that group assignment conditions restricted humane interactions, and that task completion took precedence over human relations. J#2 explained what happens:

What happens? ... somebody else comes over 'em [NNES students]. Just talks over them ... we just kind of move on. There would ... it would be kind of silence for a second. They would kind of hesitate or something, and we are looking at the clock. We only have 15 minutes to do the assignment, and just have to move on, so that the momentum of the group ... just carries itself forward, and we don't really, don't have time to really deal with why they are not saying anything ... I feel a little rushed, and I feel bad at the same time, because, maybe they know more, than they can get out, you know. They just need to ... actually I wish we had more time, so, 'cause I'm the type that likes to kinda make somebody comfortable, get them to ask them more questions and kinda let them, let them share.

Yet U.S. students R#3 and M#2 did not mind working with NNES students in groups and proudly sought their company. They also described NNES students as shy, timid, and quiet, but because they saw themselves as experts and helpers, they seemed to view these qualities as temporary impediments and not barriers that prevented interaction.

However, some U.S. students like J#3 recounted how interaction with a few NNES students demonstrated that not all NNES students are alike. For example, J#3 explained

There was a girl...a woman in my [name deleted] class last quarter named [name deleted] and she was [nationality deleted] and she was still learning language and she was like one of the best students in the class though and she always had lots of like deep things to say about whatever we were talking about and...so she was like one of everyone else's favorite students in the class even though she...like it seemed like her problem she had with the language ... the things she would say would transcend that and she...people would still understand what she saying and [...] she was a big part of that class.

Looking at the descriptions from J#3 and other U.S. students, this kind of NNES student seemed to be in the minority. It appeared that the U.S. students, when referring to NNES students, had also generalized from the majority's qualities, just like the NNES students, when referring to them as a group. Both groups used stereotyped language, a kind of discourse shorthand when referring to members of a specific group, when talking about each other or themselves, but only H#1 gave any indication that the labels she used might have come through interpretations from her particular cultural orientation. She said:

But that could also be me interpreting their signals differently 'cause I know when I attended a Japanese high school you don't ask questions during class. You just can listen to the teacher, so I might be interpreting not asking questions as being shy.
Unlike her U.S. counterparts, she demonstrated greater insight into NNES peer behaviour because of her experience as an exchange student in Japan, and her rare perceptiveness provides hope that with more information and broader life experiences, NNES and U.S. students can learn to understand and accommodate each other.

8.3.3. Differences vs. commonalities

Various factors from NNES and U.S. student perspectives influenced the formation and development of the discourse of difference. These factors included personal experiences, desires, and perceptions, and involved individuals’ educational, linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds. During the interviews, participants focused mainly on the differences between the two groups, yet some quotes above show that several U.S. students were quiet and passive in class, just like many NNES students. In most instances, participants did not mention the gender or age of the quiet U.S. students, but two NNES students talked about quiet females; and two U.S. students talked about young (16-18 years) quiet students. J#2, a male U.S. student, admitted that he was quiet in class. There is not enough data in my study to make a case that young or female (or maybe male) U.S. and NNES students had similar experiences, though that might be something to explore in the future (see 13.4.1). U.S. students J#1, B#1 and L#1 said that they would avoid working with quiet students, no matter who they are, but M#3 articulated the sentiment most U.S. students expressed about NNES students like this:

We know that the quiet American person can talk. They can communicate with us, so we can understand them. That's a comfort for us. But somebody [NNES student] who we don't know, yeah, I mean they might know English perfectly well, but they're quiet, we don't want to take that chance, feeling almost stupid trying to talk to someone when they're like, silence, they can't really respond. I think a lot of people don't want to try to communicate with people who you don't know if they're going to be able to communicate back.

The fear that the NNES student might not be able to communicate sometimes inhibited U.S. students from interacting with them. Even though NNES students like P#1, P#2, R#2, and C#1 and U.S. students like H#1, M#1 and R#3 insisted that all students were human and equal, all the NNES participants reported that they were treated differently from how they saw U.S. students behave toward other U.S. students. In some cases, reluctance to talk seemed to be a worse transgression for NNES students because U.S. students could at least communicate in English if they chose to.
Did the U.S. participants treat NNES students as the “other” based upon racial stereotypes? Did they treat different racial groups of NNES students differently? There is far more evidence that U.S. students lumped all NNES students into one big group that most referred to as “international students”, whether they were foreign or immigrant/refugee students or not, than evidence that U.S. students had certain stereotypes about Asian students specifically and treated them differently from other NNES students. However, NNES student Y#1 reported that her friend told her that a U.S. student said all Japanese students are lazy, and U.S. student M#3 mentioned different racial groups that seemed silent (though she was uncertain where people came from) and her disdain for Asian “hip-hop wannabees” (black culture) and admiration for the blonde Danes (white culture). This comment reflected more her own struggle with her mixed race identity than a preoccupation with how to treat Asians or Danes. However, as the quotes in 8.3.2 demonstrate, NNES students’ willingness to speak or not most often determined how U.S. students treated NNES students during group work interactions. In addition, NNES students P#2 and P#1 were not Asian, yet they received the same treatment as the Asian students when they were not active in groups. Factors such as proficiency in English, ability to interact socially as Americans, and willingness to integrate and conform to U.S. group work norms most often influenced the perceptions of U.S. students and the formation of their version of the discourse of difference.

8.4. Discourse and Power

U.S. students displayed a wide array of reactions to NNES students and used very specific language when referring to U.S. and contrasting NNES student qualities. Similar to the ways NNES students had constructed references to themselves and U.S. students, observation, comparison, experience, and word of mouth had perpetuated the discourse U.S. students used, but an even stronger element was the reinforcement that teachers and the system exerted. Most noticeably, U.S. and NNES students talked about themselves in the discourse in terms of what they saw the norm to be. Usually, those qualities were ones displayed by U.S. students. Thus, using Foucault’s terms, in this discourse the field of objects is delimited by the dominant party (U.S. group), the agent of knowledge (U.S. student) has taken the leading role in defining the discourse, and norms for elaboration
are fixed (by the system, teachers, U.S. students, and NNES students who feel pressure to conform). This, according to Foucault (1972, 1977), has an enormous effect on discourse and is linked to power. There might be nothing sinister about the development and establishment of the discourse, but it is helpful to analyze the different aspects to create an understanding of the potential damage that can be done with the discourse.

The U.S. students, who took the leading role, delimited the field of objects intentionally or unintentionally, but it should be noted that it happened with NNES students’ tacit agreement. Some U.S. students, like M#3, thought that they had the right to demand NNES student compliance to U.S. group behaviour customs. Others like T#1, J#3, L#1, and J#1 just behaved as they always did and naively thought that U.S. group work norms were universal. Not one U.S. student said group work should be conducted differently or that they could learn from NNES student approaches to group work.

The field of objects was delimited in other ways. First, the NNES students were usually in the minority in groups. Participants explained that groups often had four to six students. Sometimes groups consisted only of NNES students (as J#4 pointed out earlier), but most often there was only one NNES student in the group. This made it difficult to exert pressure on the rest of the group to change. Second, as explained above, many of the NNES students came from educational settings and cultural backgrounds where they were not encouraged to question authority. They were also taught to create harmony through blending in and not standing out. Add to this, fears that their language skills and pronunciation would not be strong enough to make them understood and that they thought more slowly in English. Most also did not feel comfortable expressing ideas that were different from the group. Some like P#2 did, but only about the course content and then only after months of adjusting to the new culture. Third, many felt that U.S. students should take the initiative to seek opinions. For example, C#1 said, “If the American student ask me ‘What’s your opinion? What do you think about this?’ then I express my opinion.” Perhaps because no U.S. student asked, no opposing opinions were given and nothing changed. Fourth, NNES students came to the U.S. to study and to learn in and from another culture. Thus, many NNES students did not feel it was their right to dictate group work rules in the host country. Moreover, many U.S. students expected NNES students to adjust, and behaved toward them accordingly.
By reacting toward NNES students as they described above and speaking about themselves and NNES students in a certain way, the U.S. students produced knowledge about desired forms of behaviour that gave them the upper hand in many respects. Since NNES students generally did not possess prized U.S. student characteristics, they were placed in an inferior position. For example, NNES students were described and described themselves as quiet, shy, and reserved (negative connotations in the discourse); not as thoughtful, circumspect, and academically modest. By talking about U.S. students in favourable terms, both U.S. and NNES students conferred power upon U.S. students. They knew how and when to behave in ways that conformed to the terms in the discourse. However, Davies and Harré (1990) and Potter and Wetherell (1987) explain that using language to construct positive versions of the social world is common but not necessarily conscious or deliberate. While the ways in which NNES students were described in the discourse and how they were positioned might seem malicious, U.S. students might not have done so intentionally. Thus, not only did the U.S. and NNES student groups construct and use a discourse of difference, but for the most part, this discourse placed the NNES students in an inferior position. In future chapters, I will discuss how participants distributed power and how it circulated.

8.5. Discourse and Identity

According to Burr (1995) and Tajfel (1981), personal identity is constructed through interactions with other people and through group membership. Burr explains that a variety of discourses containing numerous threads such as age, gender, class, education, and ethnicity are interwoven to form part of one’s identity fabric. However, the different threads also often restrict identity and sometimes people have no choice but to adapt their identities according to the dictates of those threads. Thus, identity does not come from inside; it is socially produced. Discourse is closely related to how society is structured and operates, and this has implications for what individuals can or should say or do. Often the discourse serves the interest of relatively powerful groups, and they dictate the rules for interaction. Taking this notion to its conclusion, Johnston (1973) says that identity “is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be” (p. 68). A recent study by Hawkins (2005) showed that identity construction is specific to discourse
communities, and that children acquired different identities in different ecologies (defined as “specific sites and sets of practices” p. 63). Through ongoing interaction, the elements in a particular ecology have a unique impact on each individual. She believes that schools have the power to impose identity categories on people. For example, through teaching practices, interactions with students, curriculum design, and educational philosophies teachers and administrators can have a major impact on individuals.

My participants had been exposed to a new educational environment and through contact during group work developed new ways of talking about themselves and others as they entered the discourse. The discourse formed the concepts of a NNES student and a U.S. student in a certain but very narrow way, and defined the rules and obligations for acceptable group behaviour. These social processes had an influence on how individuals thought and talked about themselves. In particular, NNES students’ self-descriptions indicated that they were facing issues that threatened to change or had already changed their identities. In Chapter 9, I will explain how individuals, particularly NNES students, developed self-descriptions that reflected consequences of group work contact in the U.S.

8.6. Conclusion

Within discourse as Harré and van Langenhove (1999) explain, it is necessary to pay close attention to the “local moral order, the local system of rights and duties and obligations within which both public and private intentional acts are done” (p. 1). This observation helps to explain what happens during U.S.-NNES student interaction. The overarching U.S.-NNES student discourse consists mainly of references to how individuals conform to or differ from ‘accepted U.S. classroom norms’ as defined by U.S. student behaviour. Thus, while certain individuals within the local moral order are entitled to perform in certain ways or have the right to expect certain acts from others, others have the obligation to act in ways that conform to this local moral order. Individuals position themselves and position others, and this kind of positioning takes place through a loosely connected set of episodes called a story line. In addition to discussing the development and use of self-descriptions within multicultural group settings, I will explain in future chapters how the discourse positioned individuals and what the consequences were.
PART III
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter 9: Self-Descriptions and Positioning

There is a reciprocal relationship between individuals’ self-descriptions and the social processes they are exposed to. The processes operative during multicultural group work, discussed in the previous chapter, influenced individual’s self-descriptions, and in turn, the self-descriptions influenced how individuals positioned themselves and others. When and how U.S. and NNES students used speech acts and the discourse of difference during multicultural group interactions to position are the main topics of this and the next three chapters. In this chapter, I will explore the link between student self-descriptions and positioning. In the next chapter, I will discuss how threats and coping reactions influenced positioning and repositioning. I will also focus on the formation and function of story lines and their relationships to positioning. Throughout the next four chapters, I will explore the consequences for both parties of using different speech acts within the discourse, positioning, and story lines.

9.1. Defining Positioning

Hollway (1984) first introduced the concept of positioning to the study of human subjects when she explained the construction of subjectivity in heterosexual relationships. Harré and van Langenhove (1991) later adapted it for their positioning theory and defined it more specifically as:

The discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations (p. 395).

They understand a position within a conversation to be a metaphorical concept that compendiously contains an individual’s moral and personal attributes as a speaker. Using these attributes, an individual can position herself or her group inadvertently or deliberately and in the process position other individuals or groups. Individuals or groups
positioned by others may accept the assigned position or reposition. When positioning takes place, individuals view the world from that vantage point (Davies & Harre, 1990). For example, when a NNES student positions himself as an international student in need of language help during multicultural group work in the U.S., he not only positions himself as a member of a specific group, but also places himself in a subordinate position from a U.S. perspective because he is not self-sufficient. At the same time, he positions the other individuals as members of the host group (from a NNES student perspective) who have expert power and the ability to act as his helpers. The people so positioned may comply or reject the imposed position. For instance, they could feel flattered or compelled and provide help, or insist on equality and treat the other person like just another independent student in class.

According to Davies and Harré (1990), conversations take place through joint actions during which individuals attempt to make “their own and each other’s actions socially determinate” (p. 45) (see Chapter 7, 7.5). How participants understand and respond to utterances will determine their social meaning. The authors use the term discursive practice to refer to the means through which people actively construct social and psychological realities with language. They also say that there is a productive relationship between illocutionary forces and positioning. The meanings of utterances depend upon how individuals are positioned. For instance, when a U.S. student told a Japanese student during group work that she should not be passive and that she should write memos for the group, both parties understood that the U.S. student had given her an order. The group members seemingly also understood that he had positioned himself as superior (giver of orders—male boss) and her as inferior (obliged to follow orders—female secretary) within this context.

In this case, social meaning was established by both parties and both knew it, but the process is not always that clear or straightforward. When U.S. student J#1 told NNES student M#1 during group interactions that she had to be decisive and choose between two ideas or produce her own, J#1 was appealing to her to behave like a regular U.S.

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9 Austin (1978) distinguished between illocutionary acts, utterances that “have a certain (conventional) force” (p. 109) such as ordering, informing, and warning somebody and perlocutionary acts, “what we bring about or achieve by saying something” (p. 109), such as succeeding in persuading or convincing someone through an utterance.
student and tried to position her as an equal. However, M#1 unintentionally or
deliberately (impossible to tell from the data) did not accept the position and continued as
before. Maybe she did not understand what he wanted, or perhaps she understood but did
not want to give up her Japanese idea of creating harmony in the group. She might have
been reluctant to make a shift in gender perceptions (from her female Japanese vantage
point—men are superior and women are inferior). Maybe she felt uncomfortable
behaving out of character or feared being disliked. Whatever the reason, she positioned
herself differently from what J#1 had wanted. In this case, J#1’s utterance did not achieve
his intended goal, but it does not mean that social meaning was not established.

Harre and Slocum (2003) explain that when individuals act within a certain situation,
they often have a surprisingly small catalogue of actions to draw from. The range is
limited because what one might want to do is often restricted by what one may be
permitted to do given the protocols, rights, and duties associated with the context, or what
one is permitted to do might not suit one’s abilities or temperament. Furthermore, when
taking a position, an individual assumes certain rights (justification for expecting others
to do something for you) and duties/obligations (demands for action by yourself) and has
an expectation that others will honour them. The person who positions others also hopes
that they will comply with the rights and duties/obligations assigned them. Thus,
positioning acts allow individuals to achieve certain purposes within specific contexts.
Harre and Slocum say that when we describe a position, we are doing all of the
following: we (a) give an account of actions in an episode, (b) explain a set of shared
presuppositions in a particular situation, and (c) describe a system of beliefs that guide
thoughts and actions.

9.2. Self-Descriptions and Positioning Using the Discourse of Difference

Positioning and self-descriptions within the discourse are intimately linked.
Individuals position themselves during social contact based upon their thoughts about and
perceptions of themselves. How they position might also be influenced by how they think
they ought to behave in certain situations. Through contact with people, they find out
which positions are accepted and under what conditions. This feedback in turn might
influence how they choose to describe themselves. Thus, analyzing positioning and self-
descriptions in this study provided a means to analyze and expose the complex and concealed elements that operated within U.S. and NNES student interactions.

9.2.1. How NNES students described and positioned themselves

Chapter 8 explained how NNES students started noticing differences between their behaviour and U.S. students' and began making references about themselves that reflected these differences. The problem is that individuals sometimes gained negative insights about themselves in particular situations but then internalized and generalized the insights to other areas. In the context of group work at the college, NNES students used various self-descriptions that they might not have used about themselves in their home countries or in different situations in the U.S. These self-descriptions within the context of multicultural group work reflected levels of confidence related to (a) the capacity to interact meaningfully with group members, (b) the ability to think and express opinions, (c) the strength to be self-sufficient, (d) the influence to make others notice and appreciate them, and (e) the power to make peers recognize their academic ability. In some cases, individuals talked about how their group experiences had influenced them outside multicultural groups. In the following sections, I will discuss different self-descriptions and point out the variations within and between the two student groups.

9.2.1.1. Capacity to interact meaningfully with group members

Japanese student M#1 explained that she was popular with other NNES students on campus, but often felt diminished when interacting with U.S. students. She recollected how group work would sometimes go awry and relationships would sour. She explains:

... the American people were, I don’t know, they were, they were like kind of ignoring us and they're chatting, just chatting, chatting and then, you know we [M#1 and another NNES student in the group] wanted to work on the project but we couldn’t do anything at all in the class and then we are shy, so we couldn’t talk, you know, we couldn’t even speak to ... and then you know [laugh], then late[r] we have to grade ourselves and of course they...they gave us bad score and then we gave us bad scores. So for the group, we didn’t combine well.

She also felt she did not have the right (mainly self-imposed) to ask her U.S. group members questions when she did not understand what was going on:

The topic was kind of hard, so I even couldn’t understand what should I do, and I wanted a clear mind [...] I feel like oh, I can’t ask them [U.S. group members], and then maybe its annoying to ask them, so I couldn’t ask them.
Markus and Kitayama (2003) explain that in Japanese society individuals try to show consideration for group members by not being a burden to them. M#1’s behaviour in this situation seems to indicate this tendency. She assumed that asking questions would annoy or hurt U.S. group members or waste their time, and so she did not know what to do or how to talk to them. She said, “I ask the question, and then they answered, but still you [...] hurt to ask question, because I feel like I’m behind.” Because she was afraid of the potential harmful impact she would have on others and the bad impression they would then have of her, she often silenced herself, but such actions still left her with the negative consequences of not clarifying information and not being part of group discussions. She knew something was wrong, and that she needed to behave differently, but she was not able to curtail her ingrained habits and feel comfortable with new behaviour that seemed wrong. She started doubting whether she was capable of initiating and maintaining positive relationships with most U.S. group members. S#1, P#1, and A#2 had good and bad experiences, but still felt inadequate during group interactions. They also described themselves as a hindrance to U.S. students and indicated that they were less capable than their U.S. peers were to interact meaningfully. S#1’s comment below illustrates their experiences best:

Feel like I’m isolated. They don’t see me as their team mate. They just, they might see me as a stress factor like they have to take care of me ‘cause I use extra time. So I feel like I’m taking...I’m making them more trouble and then taking [their] time explaining work.

It should be noted that some of these NNES students took the blame for communication failures and started doubting themselves. For example, A#2 said:

... but sometimes they ignore me because I don't speak, so sometimes they ignore me. But it is my fault so I have to speak [...] So I think I have to speak so they don't ignore me. If I speak, they will speak to me ...

Instead of concluding that U.S. students were equally bad at interacting meaningfully with NNES students, they accepted sole responsibility. Since they did not explain this phenomenon, one could only speculate about the reasons. Two of the students mentioned above were Japanese women who might have been raised to accept subordinate roles
during interaction in order to make others look good. Perhaps they were the only women in the groups and felt the U.S. men were or should remain more powerful. They might also be sensitive individuals with a propensity for self-reflection, and coupled with constant perceived or real unconstructive feedback during group work, overwhelmed by too much information. On the other hand, P#1 was an older male student and might have felt stressed by the need to retain his status as a wiser person and the realization that in this particular situation, given his language skills, he was less able than his younger counterparts were to function adequately.

R#2, P#2, and R#4’s situations illustrated other dimensions. R#2 became cynical about group relations and felt that as long as he was of benefit to U.S. students, they would interact with him and even be friendly. Group member acceptance seemed to him a fickle thing and consequently, while not doubting his interpersonal skills, he started doubting his ability to read group situations, and he questioned his willingness to comply with standards and demands that he perceived as unfair. Heine (2001) confirms the idea that relationships tend to be important to North Americans to the extent that they provide useful service to them. In contrast to R#2, P#2 and R#4 deliberately set out to learn how to interact meaningfully in multicultural groups. They described themselves as more confident and comfortable in class than they were at the beginning.

9.2.1.2. Ability to think and express opinions

All the NNES students recounted incidents where they either did not have enough time to think in English during group conversations (R#2, M#1, R#5, and Y#1) or where they did not express opinions (R#1, V#1, P#1, P#2, S#1, M#1, R#4, and C#1). However, an event V#1 described illustrated all the elements in the self-description and positioning process best. She recalled a group incident where she did not understand an article they had to use for a presentation and felt incapable of expressing opinions about it. This was due to her inadequate academic vocabulary and lack of U.S. culture knowledge.

English ... is also difficult for me ‘cause they [U.S. students] ... like discussion ... they give a lot of vocabulary that I don’t know, so I can’t understand sometimes [...] Like in my English class, I don’t think my classmates are friendly [...] they don’t really talk to us [...] but we have to grade each other, what we did, something like that, so at that time I don’t really have ... opinion about that article, so I put some picture on the PowerPoint, so that I can get some grade [...] ‘cause like discussion, I don’t really talk, maybe they think I’m creepy [laughs, long pause]
Because she did not talk much in the group, she later described herself as "creepy" implying that the U.S. students felt disturbed and uncomfortable by her silence. She concluded that she was the source of their discomfort. Moreover, not to be entirely hopeless in the group, she took the minor and subordinate role of inserting pictures into the PowerPoint slides for the presentation. This one incident produced two negative self-descriptions: one of being capable of provoking uneasiness in fellow group members, and the other of not being capable of serious academic work. Instead of trying hard to comprehend the article, she gave up, accepted an inferior position, and gave away power.

9.2.1.3. Strength to be self-sufficient

R#3, R#4, and C#1 often had ideas or opinions but explained that they always waited for U.S. students to ask them to contribute. If the U.S. students did not encourage them, they would not share. Some of the reasons they gave for not volunteering information were related to their cultural backgrounds (not wanting to show off or stand out), not being sure that their comments were accurate (fear of making mistakes and looking stupid), and distrust in their ability to express ideas comprehensibly in English. Even though they knew that U.S. students expected them to volunteer with confidence, they could not force themselves to take this next step. They had ideas, which made them feel good about their academic abilities, but they did not feel confident or comfortable behaving in unfamiliar ways. This dynamic introduced an element of uncertainty for them because R#3, R#4, and C#1 did not feel completely accepted and were not participating of their own volition. They knew this was in contradiction to what U.S. students expected. They were still waiting for U.S. students to invite them to participate, and the U.S. students still had the power to include or exclude them; the NNES students had not yet taken the next step to claim that power. Their self-descriptions indicted their ambivalent feelings about being self-sufficient.

P#1 had experienced many bad interactions and stopped asking questions when he did not understand something, but he retained his pride. As an older student, he worked hard not to lose face in front of younger group members, yet he repeatedly expressed the desire for somebody of his own age to help him.
Usually it’s hard for me to work with American students and in the other side it’s very interesting and it’s very help for me to work with them. [...] Usually, I found, this is my opinion, if we have the same age, or older, they can empathize more than younger.

When it came to producing academic work in English, he did not feel self-sufficient as the quote below indicates. To appear independent and maintain the façade of competence, he developed a complicated process to obtain information and a network of individuals he could consult outside the group and class. He consulted various tutors and librarians just so that he would not burden the teacher or his classmates with his needs. He also did not want to appear dumb or incapable of doing his own work in front of them. Yet, he longed for somebody in his class to help him. His self-descriptions and the ways in which he positioned himself reflected his conflicting needs and thoughts about his situation.

But I just look at them [U.S. group mates] and feel uncomfortable because I don’t know. And they are doing project. I also don’t know. I just looking [...] I like that they have tutor. Tutor can help me. And tutor helped me a lot. If they don’t have tutor, I didn’t do anything. I use all tutor. […] I talk with him. Then I talk in the library with counter desk, with that lady. I just show “Do you see this is my project? I don’t know.” And they just told me some information. Gave it to me. I just looked for that information. [...] Some word I translate to understand. And just, I go to another tutor with this information. I go to another tutor. Again, I need to know what teacher wants from me. I am uncomfortable in the class because I cannot say for teacher, “Do you know, I don’t understand you.” She doesn’t have time to spend with me maybe half hour or what … but I, I just have to find myself for this information. It takes a lot of time. First project, I just rewrite,...rewrote three times [...] and I spent two weeks to do it. It’s not easy for me [...] It takes time for person and patient to explain what teacher wants from me.

Both S#1 and V#1 expressed a preference for working in groups with U.S. students because they said U.S. students had many good ideas (unlike them), were brave to express opinions (unlike them), and could help them interpret assignments (which they did not feel confident doing). The way they positioned themselves in groups and the comments they made about their own abilities in relation to U.S. student abilities indicated a lack of self-reliance from the U.S. student perspective.

9.2.1.4. Influence to make others take notice and show appreciation

Y#1 described herself as quiet and scared during group interactions, yet she gave instances where she deliberately fought being ignored by trying to talk in the group.

We couldn’t tell them “Why you didn’t ask me?” because we worry about English, so we just silence and just thinking about group work. How group work is working. [...] ‘Cause we
have ... a lot of group works and we felt they don't want to talk to us. It is hard to explain but [I] felt that so [...] other time we felt ignoring [ignored] but other time ... other time ... from other time I felt so sad and "How come?" so I tried to say something.

A#2 also explained that she was nervous and silent during group activities. When referring to these experiences, she used the word “nervous” eighteen times during a 36-minute interview. However, she sometimes tried to combat becoming invisible through forcing herself to participate. S#1 recounted similar experiences. All three students discovered ways to try to empower themselves. However, they did not feel at ease being silent. At the same time, they were not composed when talking, and they doubted whether their comments were accurate or appropriate. A#1 explains:

I don't like to participate a lot. Because I feel like my answer is wrong or right, and if I say wrong answer [...] how is the student and teacher going to react for me. Sometime I feel like, like my answer is wrong or my answer is right, and if the answer is right I'm going to participate, but I'm not sure my answer is wrong or right, so I don't want to participate, so I just want to sit and listen and take the notes.

Neither of the two positions was comfortable. S#1 and A#1 were capable of positioning themselves both ways, but did not feel secure with either and as a result, became hesitant and unsettled. The terms of exerting influence were not their own; they were imposed by the situation and the U.S. students.

9.2.1.5. Power to obtain recognition for academic ability

P#1 experienced a painful and embarrassing situation where he assumed his peers thought he was stupid because he had asked what he presumed to be a dumb question. Because he was afraid of putting himself in such a position again, from then he did not ask any of his group mates in any class a question again. He positioned himself as quiet to avoid the labels “stupid” or “dumb”. In his case, he tried to avoid the negative self-description, but did not feel empowered enough to keep asking questions and believe that his questions were legitimate. On the other hand, P#2 initially felt his confidence in his academic ability shaken, but quickly regained his footing. He also silenced himself at the beginning because he thought group members would think he was stupid, but instead of accepting the situation and remaining a victim, he empowered himself by observing and practising different behaviours. He soon felt confident to ask questions, give opinions,
and disagree with other members. He described himself as more comfortable and confident during interactions with U.S. students on campus.

9.2.2. How U.S. students described and positioned themselves

U.S. students positioned and described themselves very differently from NNES students. Some of their descriptions were also related to (a) the capacity to interact meaningfully with group members, (b) the ability to think and express opinions, and (c) the strength to be self-sufficient; however, there were other aspects in their self-descriptions such as (d) the capacity to help others and (e) the power and influence over others. It is important to note that unlike their NNES peers, none of them reported being worried about whether they had the influence to make others notice and appreciate them or whether they had the power to make them recognize their academic ability.

9.2.2.1. Capacity to interact meaningfully with group members

Unlike some NNES students, U.S. students did not feel that they were diminished during interactions with NNES students, though some feared the possibility and took precautions. Some like R#3, M#2, and A#1 felt empowered by NNES student encounters. During interactions, they could take care of NNES students, provide language help, and make them feel good. This appealed to their sense of worth and need for power. B#1 also felt empowered, but in a different way. He mentioned instances where he had learnt from NNES students and about himself through contact.

Others like T#1, M#3, and L#1 did not feel empowered or disempowered through contact, but they felt “annoyed”, “irritated”, and “frustrated” sometimes and avoided situations where they would have group contact with NNES students. They described themselves as “leaders”, “opinionated”, and “impatient” with the communicative incompetence of NNES students. L#1 and B#1 discovered that they were “impatient” during interactions and used that word to describe themselves in this context. L#1’s impatience hinted at a sense of superiority that others were not as competent as she was (“I will talk down to them […] talk down to them and will treat them like they are not people”), and B#1’s illustrated his need for quick responses (“I wanted stuff just right now. I wanted them to answer right now”). He explained that U.S. people live in a fast-paced world where they demand things instantly and do not want to wait. M#3 feared that further contact with NNES students would lead to loss of personal control. She explained
that if NNES students would not talk during groups, she felt “ridiculous” and “silly” which then annoyed her because “you don’t want to just sit there and talk to the wall”. As a result, she avoided contact not only with silent NNES individuals, but also with all of them. Some U.S. students found it disturbing that they could not communicate as easily with NNES students as they could with their U.S. peers, but this did not lead them to doubt their general abilities to interact with people. In fact, students like M#3, J#3, and L#1 felt the communication problem was not theirs at all, but a NNES student weakness. They were competent and confident during social interactions. Heine (2001) concluded that North Americans tend to be highly selective in the facts they consider when evaluating themselves and prefer to give themselves the benefit of the doubt. This statement might help to explain these U.S. students’ self-descriptions and positions.

9.2.2.2. Ability to think and express opinions

Several students like J#1, L#1, J#4, T#1, and M#3 expressed pride in their abilities to share ideas and opinions with others in groups. Only J#2 indicated that he sometimes felt shy and became silent when he did not really know enough about a topic. The other students’ self-descriptions and ways of positioning themselves and others indicated confidence and comfort with this ability and frustration with NNES students’ inability to do the same. Their self-descriptions and positions indicated a level of superiority and pride, which gave them an edge over silent people (even J#2) and the right to dismiss NNES students (L#1, M#3, and T#1).

9.2.2.3. Strength to be self-sufficient

In contrast to some of the NNES students, none of the U.S. students used self-descriptions that indicated any doubts about their abilities to take care of themselves during group work, but many expressed the fear that needy NNES students would try to latch onto them for guidance. Students like M#3, J#1, J#4, and T#1 used language to indicate that they were initiators of topics, leaders during discussions, and volunteers of ideas and opinions. Many U.S. students also claimed the right to expect others to be self-sufficient. In particular, they insisted that NNES students conform to U.S. group work practices as M#3 explained:

I don't know what, like when I could give them [NNES students] the opportunity to speak if they don't just take it [...] so here, it's more, you just take what you want and you try to get
what you want and explain what you want [...] Because usually they [NNES students] won't speak out unless they're called upon in our class. So, I don't know what's up with that [...] being timid isn't rewarded in America [...] You really have to be very, very bold [...] you have to push and you have to elbow because that's just how it is.

In this sense, they positioned themselves as members of the right group or in-group and positioned non-conformers as members of the wrong group or out-group.

9.2.2.4. Capacity to help others

U.S. students varied greatly in their self-descriptions as helpers of NNES students. Some like R#3, M#2, and A#1 gave several instances where they enjoyed coming to the rescue of a NNES student. They also took pride in displaying their knowledge about the NNES student plight. They used words like “put myself in their shoes” and “make them feel comfortable” to convey the message that they were empathetic and compassionate. On the other hand, J#2, J#3, T#1, M#3, and J#4 did not describe or position themselves as helpers. Quite the contrary, they disliked this role, tried to avoid tutoring or coaching situations with NNES students, and shunned the title.

9.2.2.5. Power and influence over others

J#1, L#1, J#4, M#3, and T#1 all positioned themselves as leaders in groups and their self-descriptions reflected their abilities to get others to accept their ideas and follow their plans. This is in contrast to NNES students P#2 and R#4, student leaders on campus. Even though they were in leadership positions, they did not take on sole leadership positions when U.S. students were in their groups. R#4 mentioned instances where she led NNES student groups and co-led with a U.S. student. P#2 talked about offering ideas and disagreeing in groups, but he inevitably had to give in and accept U.S. student suggestions, which he admitted were always good.

9.2.3. Comparing NNES and U.S. student self-descriptions and positioning

Comparing the self-descriptions and ways of positioning of the two groups, with a few minor exceptions, one can notice insecurities, discomfort, thoughts about incompetence, and a tendency to self-reflect in the NNES student group. In contrast, the U.S. student group members described themselves as self-assured, competent, and less willing to do introspection. This corresponds partly with Heine’s (2001) conclusion after surveying existing literature that East Asians tend to evaluate themselves less positively than North Americans do. However, it also seemed that the NNES students were sensing
the pressure to alter their behaviour or conform to U.S. group work conventions, whereas the U.S. students generally did not consider adapting or changing their ways of thinking or operating to accommodate the NNES students. Group work clearly provided greater challenges for NNES students than U.S. students, but U.S. students had to face some too.

U.S. students were meeting the NNES students on U.S. turf where U.S. students knew the rules and requirements. In contrast to the NNES students, they understood what to do in U.S. groups, had experienced group work many times in the past, and behaved instinctively. Some NNES students came from cultures like Japan, Korea, and Taiwan where society is ordered differently and where rules for social engagement were very clear to them. NNES students were suddenly exposed to situations where rules for interaction were not apparent or comprehensible to them, and this introduced uncertainty and doubt. Furthermore, because NNES students were often in the minority, there was group pressure on them. All these factors created a greater need for NNES students to reflect upon their behaviour.

Nevertheless, U.S. students faced obstacles too. They had to deal with NNES individuals who would not participate according to U.S. conventions. They also received direct and indirect demands for help. Some U.S. students did not mind, but many did not want others to be dependent upon them because they did not see immediate personal benefits. Demands for help also disturbed the balance of power and irritated those who expected all students to be self-sufficient, competent, and equal.

The wider national context and prevailing discourse can help illuminate the situation further. There was a general perception among NNES and U.S. students that the U.S. is a powerful country. Some U.S. students explained that this perception created a sense of complacency, security, and cockiness that prevented them from wanting to do introspection, learn from others, or change. For example, U.S. student R#3 explained:

Some don’t care. That’s, I think, the norm [...] and then there’s people that are just content in living their own way and don’t really think outside the box and aren’t open to new ideas and are more closed off.

J#1 felt that the U.S. was too wrapped up in itself, and schools needed to encourage students from a young age to expand their horizons.
... I think something that will help is if, this is a bigger cultural change for the US, is if the US was less centered around itself and foreign languages were taught in elementary schools all the way up and were required.

On the other hand, NNES students might have felt less powerful in the presence of U.S. students because of their general perceptions of the U.S. as a country. They made many references to being nervous and anxious when facing U.S. students during group interactions. While some of their anxieties were related to their real and perceived lack of English skills and normal fears of rejection, not all of their explanations accounted for these factors. For example, several NNES students referred to various social and political aspects in the U.S. when talking about group work interactions and the treatment they received from U.S. students. R#2 linked the conservative atmosphere in the U.S. to the unfriendly treatment he received on campus and in class where some people valued war and supremacy over others rather than basic humanity.

Some people are interested in Asian culture [...] but most don't really. They have information about “Last Samurai” [...] some TV show. They are not very interested in our culture, our people. They're not going to be very friendly. [...] Seattle's people are more colder. Not as friendly [...] I went to Vancouver which is really more international city and when we went there we found that many Asian young people hang out with [...] Canadian, so I could see those difference cause here we hardly see those situation like American people with Asian [...] I noticed that in the news or TV show ... every time they talk about America, America is good ... I mean like a perfect country and then Japanese people think that way 'cause they don't have other source to know about it, but we're here knowing what's going on ... like a criminal rate or ... about war ... what American people think about war ... and there very, very conservative people ... I mean a lot of conservative people in the United States, not very liberal. I think this country has not very liberal ... students.

A number of different elements in the macro and micro contexts disturbed power differentials, and I will discuss these aspects again in Chapter 12.

9.3. Conclusion

U.S. and NNES student self-descriptions were closely linked to the ways they positioned themselves. These in turn were intimately connected to their speech acts within the discourse of difference. During social interactions, issues of race, age, gender, and power emerged. I started addressing them in this chapter, and I will explore them further in subsequent chapters.
Chapter 10: Positioning and Story Lines

Figure 1 in Chapter 7 illustrates the components that influenced U.S.-NNES student interactions and decision-making processes for engagement. Individuals were faced with situations that provided challenges or opportunities which demanded actions, and the chosen actions had intended and unintended consequences for all group participants. During group work, individuals reacted to perceived and real threats through using various coping strategies while positioning and repositioning. In this chapter, I will discuss in more detail how U.S. and NNES students used positioning and story lines to obtain particular goals. I will also explore the threats which individuals perceived were aimed at them and investigate the methods they selected to help them cope.

10.1. Factors Influencing Positioning

Sometimes individuals position themselves during the natural course of interaction with others unintentionally. They position based upon their immediate understandings of themselves in relation to the demands of the situation. In other cases, positioning can be intentional. For example, positioning can be used deliberately to protect against external threats or to ensure specific goal attainment. It can also be used to regulate socially undesirable behaviour or promote attitudes that support certain desired moral values. At different times, U.S. and NNES students used unintentional and intentional positioning.

A key factor in NNES and U.S. student positioning was the pursuit of personal (and sometimes super-ordinate) goals and needs. Other aspects that influenced positioning were: (a) social context (time, location, participants), (b) reasons for interaction, (c) past relations with individuals, (d) past relations with similar individuals, (e) interpretations of the local moral order (rights and duties associated with the situation), and (f) expressions of emotions permitted within the situation. Sometimes individuals perceived threats or obstacles to the pursuit of their personal goals during multicultural contact and reacted
accordingly. They also frequently felt that the social order and known ways of operating were not observed. These perceptions often led to individuals positioning themselves in certain ways to ensure goal achievement or to protect them or the system from harm.

10.2. Threats

In the context of U.S.-NNES student group interaction, the concept *threat* can be defined as a real or perceived challenge to the existing or known order of things. Threats have the potential to prevent individuals from achieving personal goals. Threats can come through behaviour from others that may block personal goal attainment or may put pressure on individuals or systems to change. It can also come from inside the individual where there is self-induced pressure for transformation. The obstacles or requests for change can be uninvited and undesired or deemed necessary but evoke feelings of uncertainty or discomfort. Threats involve various levels of challenges. A more superficial threat can be aimed at individuals to change familiar group procedures where the change will cause mild discomfort; for example, imposing new rules about who should be the leader, who can speak, and who must take notes. On a more significant level, threats can be directed at individuals to change deeply ingrained behaviour patterns or adapt their social identities. Threats sometimes appear in the form of actual demands or roadblocks, and sometimes they are merely perceived or invented. Not everybody will perceive a threat in the same way, and not everybody will choose the same coping strategy. Furthermore, threats provoke different levels of anxiety or stress in people.

Threats for both NNES and U.S. students included real, inferred, or imagined demands to leave comfort zones, take social risks, reposition, revise story lines, do emotion work, and change ideas and expectations (see Figure 1 in Chapter 7). Yet, the actual threats took on different forms for U.S. and NNES students. Figure 3 below shows that both U.S. and NNES students experienced the same kind of general threats, but in the discussion, I will demonstrate that the specifics for each group differed.
Table 15 provides details of different threats that emerged during U.S.-NNES student interaction. In some cases, the name of the threat is the same for both groups, but how each individual interpreted the implications of the threat was different. For example, NNES students interpreted the implications for changing cultural ideas very differently from U.S. students. I will discuss the nature and implications of threats for each group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats to U.S. Students</th>
<th>Threats to NNES Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Challenges to personal goal attainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Demands to change self or system</td>
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<td>Preferred Coping Behaviours</td>
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<td>- Avoiding</td>
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<td>- Resisting</td>
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<td>- Rationalizing</td>
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<td>- Ignoring/Denying</td>
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<td>- Avoiding</td>
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<td>- Resisting</td>
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<td>Coping Behaviour Not Used</td>
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<td>- Conflict</td>
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Table 15: Threats during U.S.-NNES Student Interaction

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats to Goal Attainment</th>
<th>Demands for Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Students</td>
<td>Interpersonal group behaviour</td>
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<td>Personal goals</td>
<td>Group rules and obligations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic grades</td>
<td>Cultural ideas (responsibility to others, equality)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workload (increased)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditure of effort (unequal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditure of time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal power</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NNES Students</td>
<td>Interpersonal group behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal goals</td>
<td>Group rules and obligations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic grades</td>
<td>Cultural ideas (responsibility to others, harmony, friendship)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection of reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal power</td>
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10.2.1. Threats to U.S. students

For U.S. students threats came from NNES students through direct or implied requests for help with content or language comprehension on group assignments. They also involved appeals for personal interaction, which U.S. students sensed demanded more than they were comfortable with in college-level group settings. These requests and appeals were undesirable because they placed demands on U.S. students to spend more time and effort to communicate with NNES students, which they generally elected not to do. Many U.S. students worked part-time and did not have extra time to volunteer. Some U.S. students feared that requests would involve providing emotion work, which they preferred not to supply. Others felt irritated by the prospect of giving without getting anything of value in return. Many were concerned that relying on NNES students to do part of the assignment would lower their own grades.

On a more subtle but pervasive level U.S. students felt that NNES student behaviour threatened to block their academic and personal goal attainment. For example, U.S. student J#1 desired debate and discussion so that the group could develop better decisions, but NNES student M#1 was not willing to participate. U.S. student J#3 wanted to hear opinions from different cultural perspectives, but her NNES group mates often did not comply. U.S. student T#1 wanted NNES students to share leadership roles because he did not feel competent or willing to represent their perspectives. U.S. student M#3 wanted talkative and opinionated NNES students because they would make her feel valued and would not disturb her sense of conversation control.

Sometimes threats appeared directly during group activities. However, U.S. students did not mention experiencing them first-hand. They had either inferred threats from NNES student characteristics or observed situations where threats appeared. For instance, U.S. student J#1 had never actually worked with NNES students who were bad at making presentations, but he had observed a few groups that had to deal with this problem. As a result, he deliberately avoided working with inarticulate NNES students in groups because he was strong academically and did not want to risk lowering his grades.

Related to group work, U.S. students sometimes thought NNES students were a threat to national job security and scarce resources such as education. Some feared that they
were unfairly taking away taxpayer-sponsored seats from U.S. students. These thoughts had a damaging impact on how some U.S. students viewed NNES students in general.

10.2.2. Threats to NNES students

For NNES students threats came in the form of potential or actual U.S. student ridicule, negative evaluations, dislike, or rejection. These had profound implications for how NNES students thought and felt about themselves. Aida (1994) cites research studies showing that individuals who were highly concerned about others' impressions of them tended to behave in ways that minimized the possibility of unfavourable judgements. In my study, NNES students like S#1 reported that they deliberately choose classes where there would be older U.S. students who were kinder and more understanding so that they would not be exposed to destructive elements. Some NNES students even decided to drop classes when they felt the situation had become too unpleasant. Furthermore, direct or implied requests to participate actively like U.S. students during groups caused anxiety because NNES individuals were not comfortable acting in ways that were different from what they were accustomed to and comfortable with. Another major threat, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 12, was the fear of exclusion by U.S. students.

In some cases, the threat appeared to be the spectre of doing group work rather than the group work itself. NNES students like M#1, Y#1, S#1, A#1, and R#1 shuddered when teachers announced group work because they knew they would have to behave in ways that were not comfortable for them. S#1 expressed her anxiety like this:

I'm like “Eh! Group work?! Eh! What?!?” I feel so disappointed. I get really frightened if teacher said “Okay, let’s work as a group” I’m like “Oh, no! Group work!”

And A#1 said:

I was so nervous, and so when she said like “We're going to have group work today”, I was like, “Oh, my God!” [Laughs] I don't want to do because I have to speak with domestic student, and I have to participate, and I have to say my opinion.

They also knew from experience that they would not get the kind of help and assistance they wanted or needed. S#1 and V#1 explained that they sometimes had to rely upon U.S. student cooperation to obtain good grades. For them, goal attainment was in jeopardy if they could not rely on U.S. student help.
10.2.3. Feelings, emotions, and threats

It is important to note that unlike NNES students, U.S. students never used words like “anxious”, “frightened”, or “nervous” to refer to their reactions to threats during group interaction. They used words like “I felt frustrated” and “I was irritated”. These statements accompanied explanations about how NNES students actually blocked their goals or might have. NNES students sometimes used the word “frustrated” in this sense too (to be discussed in Chapter 11). Both groups used words like “uncomfortable” to refer to their experiences during face-to-face interactions with each other. The difference in use of vocabulary might indicate the degree of the impact of the threat on individuals. NNES students tended to indicate greater levels of intimidation while U.S. students tended to indicate greater levels of goal attainment frustration. Both groups felt they lacked control sometimes, but NNES students more often felt so and perhaps to a greater degree. The difference might also be attributed to the way individuals viewed the threat and the coping strategies they chose.

10.3. Coping Reactions and Strategies

Drawing on previous work with Folkman (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; 1987), Lazarus (1991) defines coping as efforts that involve cognitive and emotional components aimed at managing “specific external or internal demands (and conflicts between them) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 112). Coping involves controlling the sources of stress as well as managing emotions caused by the stressors. The aim is to remove, control, or minimize threats. According to Laux and Weber (1991) and Lazarus (1991), to understand coping fully, researchers need to be aware of the goals that are under threat and those that emerge during the encounter. Thus, the coping reaction or strategy used depends on how the threat is viewed, what coping options are available, and what the individual wishes to accomplish during the encounter.

Figure 3 above provides eight different coping strategies that were relevant to U.S.-NNES student group interactions. Various authors have come up with different coping strategy classifications. For example, Olah (1995) refers to the “three-A-parcel” (p. 493) that consists of assimilation, accommodation, and avoidance. Higgins and Endler (1995) talk about task-oriented, emotion-oriented, and avoidance-oriented coping strategies, and
Kariv and Heiman (2005) have expanded these categories to include problem-focused and pro-active coping. I have chosen just to list rather than classify them because it is beyond the scope of this project to determine whether certain coping reactions or strategies were specifically emotion or task oriented, both, or something else.

10.3.1. Coping reactions and strategies during multicultural group work

In the context of U.S.-NNES student group interactions as depicted in Figure 3, I have listed eight coping reactions or strategies. I define the coping strategy conflict as attempts by participants to remove, minimize, or manage a threat through direct, usually unconstructive or acrimonious, verbal confrontation. Resisting involves not conforming to demands to behave in a certain way because compliance would cause damage to the individual. Resistance can be covert or overt, direct or indirect. When individuals avoid, they evade the source of the threat, and this is different from ignore/deny where the individual cannot avoid the source, but instead disregards or rejects it in its presence.

When rationalizing, individuals create a positive version or story line about an event or series of events so that the individual can feel good about him/herself. Pretending helps individuals save face. Through faking, they hope to convey a positive impression to others. Individuals compromise when they give in partially to demands to relieve the pressure of feeling the threat but get something else they want in return. It can also involve conforming to demands at times and not conforming when conforming is stressful and non-conforming relieves pressure. Conforming means fully complying with demands or fulfilling the wishes of the source of the threat.

NNES and U.S. students recalled instances where all the coping strategies listed in Figure 3 were used except conflict. Nevertheless, I have listed it because the absence of conflict is interesting and warrants further exploration. U.S. student A#1 explained that individuals like him went to schools where ethnic/racial conflict was discouraged yet he sensed there was an unspoken divide between groups at the college, and the potential for conflict lay just below the surface. He said the U.S. is:

very much viewed as a white land and I think that when you have the influx as you do at the college level, of ESL [English as a Second Language] students, you are gonna have a lot of people from say the school that I went to [...] where it’s not socially acceptable to be overtly [laughs] hostile on the outside, but ... I think that it very much lies underneath the surface, I mean we hate to say that ... because we are all students here and usually, I think primarily,
educated people and students are usually the most liberal ... I mean, they're not very apt to vote for Bush [laughs] you could say, but I think that there still is that unspoken divide there.

According to him, U.S. students like to think of themselves as educated and liberal and hence behaviour that is not politically correct is repressed. Similarly, U.S. student J#1 was very aware of the possibility of conflict when people from different cultures made contact, and said that he tried not to cause conflict:

I’ve definitely learned that there are major differences in cultures and that I have to keep those in mind when I do things with other people, that... those differences can cause conflict or hurt people working together.

Moreover, U.S. students like H#1 and M#2 said they were taught in school to be more tolerant of other groups and to work with a diverse range of students. H#1 explained:

Ever since preschool we’d be divided into groups to work on some coloring project or something like that, I don’t know what the teaching fads were of the time, but... it was... develop social skills as well as academic skills at the same time [...] when we were very little, we were taught... basically “Play nice” “Give you blocks” and have [...] some kids you did not normally socialize with [...] Then... in my junior high and high school [...] you were put into groups to do a project together and to present something together, and probably just the same basic idea, get you split up from the same people that you’re with all the time and learn how to interact with, maybe a student who does not speak English as well, or a student who has a disability or a student that no one wants to work with, and you make sure that everyone kind of has to deal with people that maybe they’d rather not deal with or don’t know how to deal with.

The NNES students from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong came from cultures and educational backgrounds where conflict was not encouraged (Yeh & Inose, 2002). None of them or the U.S. students gave instances where they confronted each other. P#2, a NNES student from Mali, stressed that individuals must try to get along. He said:

Sometimes when their [U.S.] thinking and my thinking are sometimes different but we get along and we always have an agreement, but sometimes I have to say that the way they think... and the way I think are sometimes really different [...] I always tell them my...what I think and if I think this way and I tell...I say “Okay, hang on a sec, and this is the way I think” and we always can compare the two ideas and come up with a solution.

But he acknowledged that it is difficult for the two parties to get along:
So I think that it can be very difficult for international students to get along, I mean, to get along with American students and it can also be very difficult for American students to get along with international students.

Yet he constantly demonstrated a positive attitude and encouraged his roommate from Alaska to be more accepting and tolerant of others in the college too:

So this is ... not school, but it’s life. And the American guy, I always tell him “You gotta get used to it man” He always say “Why this guy does that?” You know like the Hong Kong guy, he always take food to his room or he does some weird stuff and I say “C#2” the American guy, I say “C#2, you gotta get used to it ... when it comes to working with international students or living with them they are always going to be doing some stuff that you are not used to and sometimes you think are doing some weird stuff and something we think that you are doing the strangest thing in the world, so when it comes to working with them, studying with them, doing projects, you know, you’ve always got to adapt to the way they think, get adapt to their pronunciation, get used to their weird behaviors and stuff like that.”

Finally, P#1 from the Ukraine explained that the general atmosphere on campus indicated that teachers discouraged discrimination and conflict:

I don’t see any difference in class and in campus. I think it’s the same atmosphere in class, outside and the same any teacher. Teacher tries, all teacher try to teach students how to have a good behavior. Don’t look at the face, or ... country, or you are black, white, Ukraine, or England, doesn’t matter for this to teacher.

Thus, while open conflicts or clashes did not appear to take place on the campus or during group work, there was much going on below the surface. It seems that all parties dealt with cultural differences and problems in other ways such as resisting, avoiding, ignoring, denying, rationalizing, complying, or compromising.

10.3.2. U.S. student coping reactions and strategies

U.S. students used a variety of methods to cope with perceived threats, but behaviour that indicated avoiding, ignoring, or resisting were most frequently mentioned. The U.S. students sometimes had no choice about whether to work with NNES students because teachers placed them in groups, but when given a choice, most (J#1, J#2, J#3, B#1, L#1, J#4, T#1, and M#3) preferred not to work with NNES students. They feared their grades would be affected negatively, they did not want to spend too much time or energy to help NNES students, and they wanted to be independent and did not want to be responsible for others. A few like A#1 and H#1 did not mind and students like R#3 and M#2 sought out
NNES students because as R#3 said, “It helps me to understand the material more, it makes me have to work harder”. U.S. students often also ignored NNES students in groups and as a result did not have to leave their comfort zones to interact in ways that were socially uncomfortable for them. They also often resisted attempts by NNES students to obtain help during group work.

10.3.3. NNES student coping reactions and strategies

NNES students used a combination of coping methods during groups. At various times, they all resisted leaving their comfort zones and did not participate actively according to U.S. group dictates; however, this brought other threats. Many had to face the threat of being ridiculed when they spoke, and as a result, they tried to avoid speaking if possible. Sometimes they tried to avoid the threat of being ignored or ostracized through compromise, complying just enough with the requirement to share opinions so that they could return to the safety of familiar silence. This was particularly true of the NNES female students. S#1 explained the impact of not participating (resisting) and the new threat of being left out and ignored. These thoughts about rejection pushed her at times to drop classes to avoid further rejection and humiliation as she explains:

For if I’m been so shy to do it [participate], I’m so lost in the class and then I feel like I have no friend to interact with. I don’t understand class. “Okay, let’s drop class.” I feel like, I feel bad consequences. I can see the bad consequences if I don’t participate in the class.

NNES students also often had to save face by feigning understanding during group conversation. P#2 said:

They use some … slangs that I don’t understand or they also use … the person talking very fast so I don’t understand. Sometime I feel lost but I kind of pretend that I’m not lost. I just, you know, stay there and pretend that I understand everything that they are talking about but I don’t understand everything they’re talking about.

Some felt threatened by the imbalance of power between them and U.S. students and tried to cope through rationalizations. NNES student P#1 demonstrated rationalizing as a way to cope. He encountered an unfriendly U.S. student who did not want to work or talk with him, and this rejection bothered him, but later this student suddenly became friendly toward P#1. P#1 reasoned that he had countered this student’s affront by modelling friendly and cooperative behaviour, not reciprocating with similar bad behaviour, and not
showing anger or hurt. He told himself that bad behaviour is normal in the world and that he expected this kind of thing to happen in the U.S. By doing this, he demonstrated to himself that he was not a bad person. Others like R#1 acknowledged that working with US students was very difficult, but he tried to convince himself that he was learning a lot from these interactions. R#2, C#1, and P#2 used similar techniques. They told themselves that at bottom U.S. and NNES students were only humans, equally smart academically, and that only NNES students' lack of language skills prevented U.S. students from seeing this. Struthers, Perry, and Menec (2000) cite studies showing that college students who were optimistic and felt in control tended to be shielded from the unconstructive effects of unpleasant experiences. It is interesting to note that in my study only males seemed to use rationalization. Female participants seemed to resist, avoid, compromise, or comply.

10.4. Threats, Coping Behaviour, and Positioning

In this section, I will use the case of U.S. student J#1 and NNES student M#1, the interaction between U.S. student J#4 with his group mates and a Vietnamese student, and NNES student A#1's Biology group work experience to illustrate the process of positioning, repositioning, and resistance to positioning. All of them are examples of threats and coping behaviour in action.

10.4.1. The case of J#1 and M#1

Through sheer coincidence, I interviewed both J#1 (a male U.S. student) and M#1 (a female NNES student) and later discovered that both of them had referred to the same set of incidents during their interviews because they used each other's names, the course title, and had mentioned the quarter (a specific 3-month academic period). The situations they referred to occurred while working on a group assignment. The teacher had placed M#1 with J#1 and three other U.S. students in a group.

Before meeting M#1, J#1 already had a very clear idea about the differences between the NNES and U.S. students and described the groups as follows:

The international students won't be as forward with their ideas as the more individualistic American students. They'll put forward their ideas and sound confident [...] in a group setting they [international students] tend to be, from what I've seen, quiet, and if a question is asked they won't speak up and in groups won't disagree with you, they'll just go with what you want, if there's a person that is more of a ... leader type personality.
He thought the NNES student tendency to be quiet and not participate actively or disagree with others in groups was a negative predisposition, but he considered their lack of abrasiveness a positive quality. He explained:

Working in groups there’s a difference in culture. The international students I’ve worked with … haven’t seen … they’re not really as openly abrasive as some Americans are, so it’s … hopeful I think to see that.

He said he came from a “white-ghetto” where he did not have contact with people from other cultures and described himself as a “strong-willed” individual who was “willing to say things in class and contribute”. He further explained his behaviour in groups as confident and believed that students followed his suggestions:

I’ve been in groups and suggest something in my manner which I guess comes across as confident and everybody goes with what I say … and it’s especially true with, I found with international students here, they don’t raise objections to what I say and … it’s true with […] typically the younger ones [U.S. students].

He had clear expectations about group behaviour and wanted group members to participate so that the discussions could result in better decisions. He said:

The conversation, the group work and I put forward an idea and if someone disagrees with me and we argue about it then that will at least, it’ll be, well another opinion, we have two beliefs of why and we can work with that and that’ll make the decision stronger, but if there is no disagreement, then it’s just, then they [international students] just go with what somebody said and that does not really help.

However, he did not like group assignments because experiences taught him that the work distribution was usually unequal. Group members like NNES or younger U.S. students often did not share ideas or pull their weight.

M#1 came from Japan and believed that “Asian people are shy”. During the interview, she gave many examples of group instances where she did not talk. Sometimes she did not participate because she could not understand the assignment or conversation. She was reluctant to ask questions because she did not want to annoy her group mates or cause them to get further behind with the assignment. At other times, she did not talk because she felt unsure about whether her answers were right. She was afraid of saying
dumb things like the time she participated under pressure and said anything that came into her head. She also did not want to disagree with others.

Like J#1, she noticed differences between the two groups. Her comments included many similar descriptions. U.S. students talked a lot during group work, disagreed with each other, volunteered information, and asked many questions when they did not understand. Asking questions in a classroom setting was a difficult concept for her to accept. She explained that in Japan students seldom asked questions because asking questions sometimes sent bad messages to the teacher or fellow group mates. She said:

> We feel like asking questions is also, kind of not good thing, but for Americans, it’s good to ask, so they’re really positive.

Awareness of these differences and her lack of English skills made her anxious:

> Oh, I feel nervous, because America is free country. They’ve ... talk freedom ... because they talk, they have their opinion, they talk really quickly and sometimes I can’t catch ... and I have to answer, and sometimes I feel, “Oh, am I wrong or am I true about...based on that question?”, but anyway, I say something. Or it’s really hard to me to get in, get start speaking from me, because they talk, talk and so I always like “uh...uh, uh...uh” like this.

The quote shows that she knew what was required of her during group work but might have felt intimidated as the following quote indicates:

> I have to say my opinion, but you know, American people, they have opinion and my friend, he is American, he, he has opinion, he has confidence himself about that opinion, everything, and he always think he’s right and he persuade me all the time.

She might also have felt that she had less confidence than her U.S. counterparts had and that she was often persuaded by their forceful manner, which robbed her of control.

With these experiences and previously formed perceptions and expectations, the Japanese student M#1 met the U.S. student J#1 to work on an assignment with three other American men. J#1 explained what happened:

> And so V#2 [a U.S. man not interviewed for this study] and I would argue about something ... or talk about ideas and each put forward our own ideas and we would at some point ... M#1 would not come forward with ideas of her own and she would, if we ask her for her ideas and opinions, she would not really want to put forth her own ideas, it would be “I agree with you” or “That sounds good”.

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In this situation, M#1 initially positioned herself as quiet by allowing the other group members to do all the talking (from the U.S. perspective she was not behaving as their equal). Through M#1’s reluctance to express her opinions directly, J#1 was confronted with the prospect of leaving his comfort zone and changing his ideas and expectations about how group work should proceed. He was uncomfortable being put in the position where he and others had to make decisions for M#1. He wanted debate and chose not to leave his comfort zone. Not accepting the position that she had put him in, to take all the initiative and be more active than she was, and operating with the expectation that all students should participate equally, J#1 assumed the right to demand that she change. He tried to reposition her by inviting her to contribute ideas as an equal partner, which she resisted by merely agreeing with group members or praising their ideas. M#1 did not want to offend anybody by agreeing with one and thereby rejecting another’s ideas. By remaining amiable, laughing, and saying all ideas were good, she resisted being repositioned and being drawn into debate, and so she thought she avoided being disliked, which was something she feared very much. According to J#1, M#1’s behaviour seemed to be based upon her (a Japanese) understanding of the rights and obligations that were appropriate for group situations. She felt obligated to retain harmony in the group by not favouring one idea above another. J#1 explained it like this:

I think partially it was ... what I suspected, was partially a language thing and then it also seemed to be she did not want to go against the other people in the group, or us, when we were freely going against each other ... I had the impression that she’s uncomfortable with doing that and coming forward and doing the same ... that is the expectation for ... V#2 and I, that’s how we get things done ... is through ... a conflict sort of thing where we put forth our ideas, argue about them, and then come up with something that well, they include both things and is better for the different ideas.

The set of rights and obligations he operated with was in conflict with hers. He thought it was his right to expect disagreement and discussion so that the group could construct the best possible idea and his duty to debate and argue. In contrast, M#1 thought it was her right to expect group harmony and her duty to work toward it. J#1 was unhappy:

Well, I’m uncomfortable with her not participating or taking sides [...] I wanna get more people involved with the group and have more opinions, so we can ... hopefully make better choices and ... I don’t know, I’m not overly comfortable with making, with two people
making decisions for the entire group, which is what has been happening and having someone who does not want to come forward with her ideas doesn't help that.

The episode did not end here. J#1 explained that there were consequences for M#1 for not participating and being quiet and passive:

Well, one of the things that has happened is ... she gets ... teased in a friendly fashion ... or at least she does not seem to have a problem with it. I think if she did, we would stop. She gets ... teased a lot from how she does not come forward and confront that and be more, it's like ... she comes across as ... sort of shy and sort of ... like, she laughs at ... everything and it's like, I don't know, but she does get teased more than I would expect a similar Amer... student, Americans student to, based on ... it's like she is more passive and therefore gets teased.

It seems that J#1 and his other U.S. group members used ‘friendly’ teasing as an indirect approach to focus on her shortcomings (shyness, amiability, and passivity) in an attempt to get M#1 to conform to their group work expectations. Teasing was another way of positioning her. A teasing act can have different meanings. It could be interpreted as belittling, insulting, or making fun of somebody, or playfully kidding a person. In a young male-female situation, it can also be construed as flirting. The first two options have negative connotations and will disturb the power balance while the last two might be positive depending on the situation and may take place between individuals on an equal footing. J#1 explained that they meant no harm, and M#1 understood it like that too. In fact, their teasing had a positive effect on her, though not exactly as they had intended. This is how M#1 perceived and experienced the teasing:

Five of us are one group and they like, really nice, very nice. I was so surprised, and one of them ... spoke to me, and like make fun of me and then I'm getting used to ... I'm getting you know ... I talk to them and then, first I was hesitating because, you know, they are American [...] the American ... my group members told me, and they “Oh, you so popular. Uh, maybe we should [laughs], we should held a popularity contest or something”. They just joked to me, and then we really worked well in the group and then I was really amazed to by them and, there I developed my mind to speak to everybody, even Americans.

Nevertheless, their teasing came from a superior position. The U.S. students wanted her to do something according to their rules to suit their purposes, and they used an indirect way to get her to conform. Furthermore, there might have been an element of playful flirting present as the following quote from M#1 indicates:
We are really nice friends now, and then I tell them how to play in Japanese, you know [laugh], how to do like [laugh] Japanese, oh, you know [laughs] I'm playing. Like, like, like this or something [shows hands in the air with palms toward interviewer] Yea, hand, hand, you know [laugh], like a, yea, childish style.

It should also be noted that M#1 brought them to her level and into her world by teaching them childish hand games, and they tried to coax her into theirs by meeting her in her world through friendly teasing. It seems that the indirect approach, extra attention, and friendly atmosphere worked to break the ice and encouraged her to talk. We know from M#1’s comments that she felt more willing to “speak to everybody, even Americans” during group activities; however, J#1 said that even though she talked more, she did not disagree or give opposing opinions. It seems she got more out of the interaction by avoiding threats than J#1 did by confronting his threats.

10.4.2. Interaction between U.S. students and a Vietnamese student

Not all interactions have positive endings for NNES students. U.S. student J#4 gave an example to show how U.S. students threatened a NNES student from Vietnam, and how the NNES student dealt with the situation. J#4 explains:

There was an international student that was in there and we could not say the name for the life of it. And, you know, a lot of them have, they make up other names […] he was getting really frustrated, and we were like, “Can we call you something else?” But he just, he left. We haven't, he hasn't come back to class since then.

According to J#4, the Vietnamese student wanted acknowledgment for who he is. Having other people pronounce his name correctly was very important to him because it would have acknowledged him as a unique person. J#4 also thought that when the U.S. students overwhelmed him with attention and suggested they call him something else, he perceived the interest as negative, felt threatened, and got mad. Because U.S. students were not able to pronounce his name accurately, they suggested that he change his name to suit them. It seems they tried to position him differently from how he had positioned himself. They wanted to communicate on their terms, not his. They indicated to him that they were not able (or willing) to make adjustments to accommodate him. J#4 thought that by changing his name, the Vietnamese student would have made it easier for the U.S. students, but in the process, he would have had to sacrifice an important part of his identity. This, according to J#4, was unacceptable to him. Yet it is possible to see why the
U.S. students suggested he adopt a nickname. Many other NNES students have taken English names seemingly without problems, and the U.S. students did not consider the implications of their request. Many NNES students have adopted new names because they wanted to fit in and to some it was a compliment to be part of the new culture, but others did it because they knew U.S. students and teachers would butcher their names. They changed to make it easier for them. This Vietnamese student did not because it seems his name was important to him. He reacted to the threat by resisting U.S. students’ attempts to position him, but in the end, it meant he felt he could not be in that class any longer and he chose to cope by avoiding future humiliation through dropping the class—a serious consequence for him. This is how seemingly minor and innocent incidents can have major implications for some.

10.4.3. A#1’s Biology group work experience

NNES student A#1 recalled a group situation that further illustrates threats and coping behaviours in action. She positioned herself as somebody needing to discuss textbook information. The U.S. students resisted the position she put them in and avoided contact by deliberately disregarding all her attempts to talk to them. She explains:

When I was in the Biology class, I feel like not comfortable because I can’t speak with American students because they just ignore me. I want to talk to them, but […] they don’t want to talk to me […] I really want to talk to them and discuss about the topic from the textbook, but they don’t want to, they don’t want to share their, they don’t want to share their opinion with me, and they don’t want to even talk to me […] I talked to like American students about like, “What did you do to study or what did you do over last week,” but they said, “Nothing, nothing,” always say like, “Nothing, nothing.” So they just don’t want to talk to me. […] And like one student, “Why did you ask me, you’re not my friend” or something like that [Laughs] “What the hell?” or something like that […] “You’re not friend, who are you?” […] I was so sad in Biology class.

From the context, it is clear that she needed help understanding and interpreting the textbook information, but the U.S. students saw her advances as a threat to their time and resources. They were not willing to provide help. As U.S. student R#3 explained:

For American students the group goal is get the work done as quickly as we can so that we can go off and have our own life and do what we want to do, … and it’s a ‘me’ not ‘we’ attitude in the group. Their only concern is that they get a good grade […] and not for every one else, and so that can be a problem I think … group dynamics at work.
Goal attainment was clearly a factor in this situation, and the goals of A#1 (to get help) were in conflict with those of the U.S. students (to get their work done with minimal effort). Socio-cultural factors were also operative. As M#3, T#1, L#1, A#1, and R#3 reported, most U.S. students do not seem to think it is their duty to take care of group members whereas Japanese students like A#1 might have operated with such an expectation. The U.S. students dealt with the request for their resources by avoiding the source of the threat, thereby rejecting A#1, which set another round of threat and coping strategies in motion for her.

10.4.4. Comparing threats and U.S. and NNES student coping behaviour

The following synopsis of the behaviours both parties used during multicultural group work provides insights into the complicated nature of group dynamics. My purpose is not to provide generalizations about all student behaviour during group interactions but to show what happened in this study and point out what could possibly occur when U.S. and certain kinds of NNES students have to work together.

Situational and interaction demands, personal goal attainment purposes, and socio-cultural patterns influenced how individuals perceived threats and which coping strategies they chose during the multicultural group activities they described. What was a threat to some was often not a threat to others. Both student groups reported using a variety of coping methods and sometimes more than one at a time, but it seems that the U.S. students favoured a narrower range involving avoiding, ignoring, or resisting real or perceived threats coming from NNES students, which might indicate that the students in this study tried to control external rather than internal factors. On the other hand, NNES students used a much wider range of coping behaviours. In addition to the ones the U.S. students used, they used pretending, rationalizing, complying, and compromising, which might indicate that they tried to control both external and internal factors, but tended to focus more on internal control. This would partly corroborate Heine’s (2001) and Tweed, White, and Lehman’s (2004) conclusions that native or naturalized North Americans strive to control the outer world to conform to their inner desires whereas people from East Asia prefer to create harmony in the group through adjusting to the social environment. However, saying that all East Asians tend to prefer to adjust to the social environment is problematic because as Heine (2001) and Markus and Kitayama (1994)
point out, there is evidence of anti-conformity among Japanese when they have to work with strangers, and U.S. group members often are strangers to the NNES students. There was also evidence in my study that the students from Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan resisted conforming at times. Nevertheless, Yeh and Inose (2002) state that people coming from Korea, Japan, and China tend to avoid conflict and are willing to sacrifice personal goals for the sake of harmony in the group, and this was generally true for the NNES students in my study. Similarly, Constantine et al. (2005) say that students with African-centred perspectives, like P#2, also tend to value harmony in the group and collective responsibility, which was true in his case. Gender was another factor. It seems that the NNES male students in this study tended to use rationalizations to cope, but the females gave no indications that they did. On the other hand, the NNES female students tended to use compromise a little more than the males.

10.5. Defining Story Lines

The situations above illustrate how complicated interactions between NNES and U.S. students are and how groups of individuals constantly co-construct and reconstruct their worlds. Power differentials, gender issues, cultural and educational backgrounds and expectations, the need to be liked and appreciated, and achievement of personal goals are some of the issues that emerge during group encounters. Individuals influence and affect each other through discursive practices such as speech acts and positioning. Individuals adjust their self-descriptions through contact and use those descriptions to position themselves. Cumulative episodes of positioning form story lines that help individuals understand who they are in relation to others, and in turn, each episode is informed by one or many previously formed story lines.

According to Sabat and Harré (1999), positions and story lines mutually determine each other. Story lines consist of strings of positions formed during a variety of related episodes within a certain discourse and context, and depending on a given situation, individuals may decide how to position based upon the story lines they choose to take up. They may adopt one story line or combine different ones. Story lines are formed within the local discourse, but the wider social or national discourses often have major influences in their production. They are also under constant construction. Tan and
Moghaddam (1999) remind us that they are not pre-existing sites that individuals inhabit; they are collaboratively made available through social interaction.

The extent to which an individual can pursue a particular story line depends on whether the other individuals have a similar understanding of the meaning of that story line, and if they are willing to cooperate. Positions and story lines are actively negotiated and attained (Tan & Moghaddam, 1999). Davies and Harré (1990) explain that during social interaction, participants sometimes adopt positions linked to a story line that incorporates a particular interpretation of a cultural stereotype. Through the act of positioning, the other party is invited to play along. However, the individual so positioned may understand the situation and refuse to cooperate, or not understand the story line as intended and pursue a different one.

Tan and Moghaddam (1999) distinguish between autobiographical and group story lines and say that individuals often use a combination of group story lines, group myths, group histories, and autobiographical story lines to form personal stories. It is possible for groups to position other groups, for an individual to position a group, or for a group to position an individual. In the sections below, I will address the different ways in which NNES and U.S. students used story lines to position themselves and others.

10.6. Story Lines within the Discourse of Difference

Story lines, positions, and discourses are entwined. In Chapter 8, I explained that the overarching U.S.-NNES student discourse consisted mainly of references to how individuals conformed to or differed from ‘accepted’ U.S. classroom norms as defined by U.S. student behaviour. Individuals operated with their own versions of this discourse; however, there were striking similarities within each group, and across groups.

10.6.1. NNES and U.S. student story lines

Table 16 presents a set of story lines contained in each of the research interviews. I will use different combinations to illustrate how individuals positioned themselves within their narratives and how others positioned them. I will point out how one individual’s story line may conflict with or complement another’s, leading to specific consequences.
Table 16: NNES and U.S. Student Story Lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NNES Student Story Lines</th>
<th>U.S. Student Story Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survivors</td>
<td>Includers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R#1 The patient observer and learner</td>
<td>A#1 The rescuer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P#2 Adaptation without sacrifice: I will survive intact</td>
<td>R#3 The expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R#4 Seeking success while experiencing three kinds of frustration</td>
<td>H#1 Humanity, civility, and equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C#1 I’ve observed bad but experienced good</td>
<td>M#2 The infiltrator and friend of aliens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strugglers</td>
<td>Includers-Excluders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V#1 I need a leg up</td>
<td>B#1 I have seen, learnt, and changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A#2 Leaving my comfort zone is hard work</td>
<td>J#1 The debater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistors</td>
<td>Excluders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R#2 My acceptability depends on my utility value</td>
<td>L#1 The impatient leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P#1 The golden rule</td>
<td>J#2 Empty empathy: I understand, but ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hurt or crushed</td>
<td>T#1 Self-made man: Son of an immigrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M#1 Let me not burden you</td>
<td>M#3 I’ll take care of me if you’ll take care of you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y#1 The angry-sad neophyte</td>
<td>S#1 I am an international student!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S#1 I am an international student!</td>
<td>R#5 The outsider looking in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interviews, NNES students gave historical accounts of their multicultural group work experiences. Some individuals’ story lines showed that they had developed from inexperienced and overwhelmed to confident and skilled individuals. A few started out self-assured but became despondent and jaded. Several were fearful and cautious initially and remained that way, while others had small or sporadic successes. Even though some of their self-descriptions had changed, the general terms or phrases they used to describe themselves did not. For example, some had become more talkative, but they would still describe themselves as less talkative than U.S. students in groups. Moreover, within their story lines some individuals had modified their descriptions of the U.S. students. For instance, statements like “all U.S. students are unfriendly” became “some U.S. students are unfriendly”.

With a few exceptions, the U.S. students indicated that their self-descriptions within their story lines had not changed. The table above illustrates that there were includers and excluders, and while it is easy to see how the excluders would have used terms and descriptions of themselves and the NNES students consistent with the discourse of
difference, it might be less obvious how the includers used them. Like the excluders, the includers described the NNES students as quiet, shy, timid, and reluctant to participate. They also described U.S. students and themselves as talkative, confident, active, and overpowering; however, they behaved differently toward the NNES students than the other U.S. students did, and they inserted a few different depictions of themselves. For example, they described themselves as patient, empathetic, and helpful. Only in that sense did they differ from the excluders who described themselves as impatient, not helpful, and polite but not friendly.

10.6.2. Misaligned expectations

To illustrate how individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and how conflict can be produced, the story lines and positions taken by NNES student S#1 and U.S. student M#3 merit closer scrutiny. Linked to the U.S.-NNES student discourse discussed above, NNES student S#1 created a story line I entitled 'I’m an international student!' Episodes in her narrative consisted of situations where she struggled to work with ‘unhelpful’ U.S. students and felt ignored. Within her story line, she positioned herself as a student with special needs requiring help from U.S. students:

This is my opinion, but I want them to treat me as a international student like I need a little bit more attention to openly and directly communicate with other students ... American students should welcome international students ... like if they [NNES students] don’t speak English, “that’s okay, but you can just try your best and then we’ll help you”.

By taking this position, she also positioned the U.S. students as care and help givers. There is also the implication that U.S. students are the hosts (they “should welcome international students”). Markus and Kitayama (1991) explain that in Japan, it is the responsibility of the host to read the mind of guests and make them feel comfortable. Apparently, operating with this typical Japanese assumption, she gave herself the right to expect special treatment such as requiring a concerted effort from U.S. students to understand her, to know when to speak slower, to include her in discussions, to lead her in groups, and to clarify assignments until she understood. On the other hand, during interactions with NNES students, U.S. student M#3 lived out her story line ‘I’ll take care of me if you’ll take care of you.’ This is how she positioned herself:
I don't think American students feel any obligation towards anyone, they don't even feel obligation towards their own friends ... people [NNES students] who don't speak up, won't be noticed, and I don't really have a lot of sympathy for it ... I mean ... I don't know what, like when I could give them the opportunity to speak if they don't just take it ... it's not that I discount them, but you don't really consider them because they ... usually won't say anything.

Her story line links closely to the discourse that defines U.S. students as self-sufficient and this in turn connects to the wider national discourse that Americans are fiercely independent. It further corroborates the idea that U.S. people tend to think that social relationships are voluntary and temporary (Triandis, Leung, Villereal, & Clack, 1985; Triandis, 1989). Markus and Kitayama (1991) say that in contrast to the Japanese idea that the host should infer from the situation what the guest needs U.S. individuals generally do not think it is their responsibility to read others' minds. Part of being an adult is saying what is on your mind and not waiting for others to guess what you need.

What becomes clear from these two story lines is the potential for disillusionment and conflict if these students should work together in groups, but more specifically, it illustrates that the matter of inclusion and exclusion is not a simple one, and neither is the search for remedies to the problems of exclusion. As Wenger (1998) puts it:

In order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members [...] Only with enough legitimacy can all their inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion (p. 101).

Thus, U.S. students need to grant NNES students a certain degree of legitimacy before they will be ready to allow them entry into their groups, but U.S. students grant different NNES students different degrees of entry to groups and even bar some at the outset. For U.S. student M#3 to grant NNES students entry, she might have to gain greater knowledge of her own and others' cultures and adapt her attitude and her story line. NNES student S#1 might also have to gain greater insight into her own and her host's culture, change her story line, or behave in ways that warrant legitimacy. Even more complicated is the change in discourse that might have to take place. However, since constructionists believe that social situations are constantly under construction, there is the hope that change is possible. By making different parts of this social situation
apparent, it might be easier to understand what is going on, and it might enhance the possibility of finding alternative ways of operating. I will discuss them in Chapter 14.

10.6.3. Aligned expectations

U.S. student B#1 and NNES student P#2 have story lines with elements that complement each other. For example, B#1’s story line ‘I have seen, learnt, and changed’ includes many references to how he opened himself to and learnt from NNES students:

I have never had really a bad experience ... because they [NNES students] have always been helpful [...] I’ve explained stuff to international students also and it helps me and ... it helps them too when they help somebody else ... When you are working with a mixture, you get a whole bunch of different ideas from like their perspective and then from domestic student perspective and you put them together and you can create something new.

Similarly, episodes and perspectives within P#2’s story line ‘Adaptation without sacrifice: I will survive intact’ illustrates his position and shows how he and B#1 can find common ground:

Sometimes when they’re [U.S. students] thinking ... and my thinking are sometimes different but we get along and we always have an agreement ... I always tell them ... what I think and ... I say, “Okay, hang on a sec, and this is the way I think” and we always, you know, can compare the two ideas and come up with ah...ah solution.

They expressed sentiments that both groups can learn and benefit from interaction. B#1 also displayed understanding and empathy that helped him interact with NNES students:

I’d probably be shy too ... but once you start talking with them [NNES students] and just see how they are doing and stuff then they kind of open up.

And P#2 explained his outlook on life and his opinion about others:

American students are people. They’re students just like me ... they’re people they...they think just like you ... one personal thing that I’ve learned ... is that everybody is equal.

Just as P#2 gained an important personal insight about himself through contact with U.S. students, B#1 benefited from contact with NNES students and explained how it has changed him in profound ways:

I noticed it probably in the beginning ... of this year ... how I looked at myself when I graduated ... and now ... I think it opened ... definitely opened my eyes. I realized there’s a
whole new world out there ... I came to the realization that there are different cultures out there other than just American cultures.

P#2 positioned himself as an easy-going person who deliberately tried to get on with everybody:

‘Cause I personally have a good sense of humour ... and I always try ... to get used to people and ... when it comes to talking to them, I always try to ... please them or try ... to get used to what they think.

Even though B#1 had reservations about working with quiet NNES students on graded assignments, he positioned himself as somebody who wanted to get on with everybody, but unlike P#2, he had to work on his emotional disposition: “I have learned patience because sometimes you just ... have to listen”.

10.7. Conclusion

Sections 10.6.2 and 10.6.3 illustrate how individuals positioned themselves within U.S.-NNES student interaction, and how their positions within their story lines made conflict or harmony and exclusion or inclusion possible. This aspect will be discussed fully in Chapter 12. Individuals operated with expectations about rights and obligations they claimed for their positions, but their expectations often remained largely undisclosed and invisible to each other. These two sections also started raising questions about how individuals from both groups can work together. I will continue to raise these questions, and in Chapter 14, I will suggest possible ways to bring about improvements. Both groups had to face situations that posed various threats requiring coping behaviour. A major issue, the challenges students faced to do emotion work during group work, still needs to be discussed. Some students performed emotion work as a matter of course, but some felt threatened by the demands others made of them. I will address emotions and emotion work in the context of positioning in the next chapter.
PART III
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter 11: Emotions, Emotion Work, and Positioning

*Not sharing or withholding* during group interactions was a theme that recurred during the interviews. NNES students often did not share opinions, information, and ideas with U.S. students during group work. They withheld inadvertently because they had learnt from their cultures not to stand out or draw attention to themselves, but they also withheld deliberately because they were afraid of the emotional consequences: losing face when making language mistakes or giving wrong or inappropriate responses or opinions in front of strangers. Moreover, they sometimes withdrew from interaction (not sharing themselves with others) because they felt intimidated and frightened. However, they also made direct or subtle demands of U.S. students to share through requests for help, support, and friendship. U.S. students often withheld themselves from NNES students by not showing compassion, providing help, or offering friendship during group work. They did not share because they too were operating with learnt socio-cultural norms and expectations. Their beliefs in equality and independence made them hope that NNES students would behave like peers and share ideas and express opinions with the same levels of confidence and assertiveness they could. When NNES students did not, U.S. students feared that they might have to take on greater responsibility for their NNES group members taxing their own patience and limited resources, and U.S. students protected themselves by withholding friendship and assistance. In short, with a few exceptions, they tried not to get involved with NNES students during group work in class. The dynamics and functions of requesting and withholding or sharing and not sharing within the U.S.-NNES student context can be most clearly understood in terms of the concepts of emotion work and positioning.

In this chapter, I will explore, from a social constructionist perspective, the role of emotions during group interactions, how individuals used positioning to provide or refuse
to do emotion work, and the consequences of their actions. To provide the appropriate background for my analysis, I will first discuss constructionism and emotions, the difficulties of studying emotions when working with different cultural groups, and emotion work and feeling rules. Thereafter, I will adapt the definition for emotion work and explain the processes and strategies NNES and U.S. students were exposed to or used when dealing with emotions during group work interactions.

11.1. Constructionism and Emotions

Great thinkers like Aristotle and Spinoza, and more recently William James, Izard, Plutchik, and Lazarus have tried to define and describe the complexity of human emotions. Explanations of these phenomena have included a variety of cognitive, genetic, bodily, linguistic, and socio-cultural elements, but researchers are still looking for more sophisticated and comprehensive theories and viable routes to study emotions.

Investigating emotions has provided a number of serious problems for researchers. Top of the list is the persistent ontological question of whether there is a thing that can be studied. As Harré (1986) points out, there is a tendency for researchers to abstract emotional entities from the concrete world of contexts and activities where there are real irritated people, uncomfortable group interactions, and global conflicts, and this gets them into trouble. According to him and others (Averill, 1980, Armon-Jones, 1986a, 1986b), many "emotions can exist only in the reciprocal exchanges of a social encounter" (Harré, 1986, p. 5) and not as concrete entities. Therefore, it is more fruitful to study the unexamined and common sense assumptions of the local socio-cultural world to understand how certain emotions are created and function within societies.

Like Harré, Averil, and Armon-Jones, Denzin (1983) claims that emotions are embedded in social acts, but he has added the concept of self-interactions. His

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10 The words emotion and feeling are sometimes used interchangeably. For example, Hochschild (1983) does that. However, several authors distinguish between the two words. Lazarus (1991) prefers to use the word feeling to refer to the "awareness of bodily sensations" and emotion to refer to situations where there is "an appraisal of harm or benefit" (p. 57). Izard (1991) says that an emotion is "experienced as a feeling that motivates, organizes and guides perception, thought, and action" (p. 14). Jenkins (1994) summarizes definitions from a variety of authors and explains that "feelings are understood to be biological, whereas emotions are understood to be cultural [...] and because they are biological, feelings are understood to be universal and immutable, whereas emotions are understood to be cross-culturally variable" (p. 316). These definitions provide slightly different angles on the same concepts. I will use the distinctions Lazarus, Izard, and Jenkins make between the meanings of the two words whenever possible in my thesis.
redefinition of emotions states that they are "temporally embodied self-feelings which arise from emotional social acts persons direct to the self or have directed toward them by others" (p. 404). Individuals conceptualize emotions as self-feelings that come from self-reflections and imagined or real appraisals of others. Emotions are processes. Thus, individuals do not manage emotions (things), rather they manage “the self-in-the-feeling that is felt” (p. 403). This is an important departure from Hochschild’s work (1979, 1983) on emotion management; however, his definition remains problematic. I will address it further in 11.4.

Harré (1986) says that by not focusing on human physiological states, it becomes possible to see that many emotions are constructed during reciprocal social exchanges. Emotions can have a strategic purpose within social contexts, and this aspect can be studied. He says that recent research has demonstrated that it is profitable to investigate emotional qualities of encounters through linguistic practices, systems of rights and obligations, and moral judgements in the local social world. By focusing on how individuals make use of discourse, positioning, and story lines, researchers can study the ways in which emotions are manifested in behaviour and are used by participants in social groups. I will use these tools to examine the strategic purposes of emotions and emotion work in U.S.-NNES student group encounters.

11.1.1. A social constructionist view of emotions

George Herbert Mead’s work during the first half of the 20th century illustrated the interdependence between society and the individual. He believed that individuals are constructed by the social structure they belong to and said:

The behavior of an individual can be understood only in terms of the behavior of the whole social group of which he is a member, since his individual acts are involved in larger, social acts which go beyond himself and which implicate the other members of that group (1934, pp. 6-7).

Armon-Jones (1986a) believes that Mead’s work was an important contributing factor to creating a model of general experience called a world-view. This world-view is constituted of conceptualizations from the language, beliefs, and social rules of the agent’s cultural community. According to her, the model provides the background for the idea that emotions are socially constituted, and she outlines four principles that explain
the social constructionist’s viewpoint. These principles provided an important context for
my analysis of emotions.

1. The content of emotions is not natural\footnote{Armon-Jones does not define this concept, but from the context of the article I infer that “not natural” means emotion content is not inborn or inherent in human beings but learnt through contact with society.}. A particular community’s systems of
cultural beliefs, principles, and moral values determine the convictions, desires,
judgements, and contents that characterize an individual’s emotions. They are not
natural but are acquired through experience within a society, which deems certain
norms, standards, principles, and goals appropriate and desirable.

2. Emotion attitudes are learnt. Through exposure to beliefs, norms, values, and
expectations of their socio-cultural environments, individuals learn which
emotion attitudes are appropriate in particular situations and for which purposes
they can be used.

3. Emotions are socially prescribed. Society expects individuals to follow agreed
emotional responses in specific contexts. By exhibiting appropriate responses to
situations that warrant certain emotional responses, individuals demonstrate
commitment to the social values and allegiance to their society and culture.

4. Emotions are constituted to serve socio-cultural functions. The meaning of an
emotion can be found within the socio-cultural system. Moreover, individuals
demonstrating culturally appropriate emotional responses help to perpetuate the
system and keep out unwelcome attitudes and behaviour. This idea also
introduces the concept of agent responsibility. Unlike the naturalist view that
individuals are passive, this social constructionist view holds that once individuals
have learnt socially appropriate emotions, they are responsible for their actions.

Armon-Jones (1986a) further explains that emotions must be distinguished from
natural phenomena such as perception and sensation because evidence suggests that these
two exist prior to the acquisition of socio-cultural frames of reference. However, she
acknowledges that some forms of perception can be obtained through learning.

11.1.2. Emotion defined within a constructionist framework

Various authors have attempted to define emotions from a constructionist perspective.
Denzin (1984) says that emotions are “self-feelings”, and explains that emotionality, “the
process of being emotional, locates the person in the world of social interaction” and hence those self-feelings are “sequences of lived emotionality” (p. 3). Even though emotional experiences take place in the social realm, they always refer back to the person who experiences them. Emotions are felt in relation to other people and are situational and relational. They can be negative or positive and involve feeling, reflection, cognition, and interpretation. Individuals come to know themselves and others through emotionality.

Averill’s (1980) definition includes the reflective (assessment) element but in addition, focuses on the temporary nature of emotions. He states that emotion is:

A transitory social role (a socially constituted syndrome) that includes an individual’s appraisal of the situation and that is interpreted as a passion rather than as an action (p.312).

Averill is not entirely happy with his own definition because the concept “transitory social role” is based upon metaphor, and he acknowledges that many psychologists will have a problem with “role” because then emotions cannot be explained in psychological or physiological terms. He does not discount the need to investigate both the psychological and physiological aspects but feels that emotional syndromes12 can only be understood fully if analyzed on the social level. The social level of analysis is not the only way to study emotions, and it is also not sufficient to study emotions only from this perspective; however, if researchers want to understand systems of interactive behaviour related to emotion, they need to analyze at the social level. This is also the position I take in my analysis.

Denzin (1984) lists authors such as Darwin, James, Sartre, Freud, Plutchik, Izard, Arnold, and Kemper who have tried to catalogue emotions. The different classifications are sometimes confusing because individuals have different ideas about what constitutes an emotion and what does not. For example, Lazarus classifies the concept frustration as an ambiguous negative state, while Kemper (1978) treats it as an emotion. Lazarus explains that frustration is an appraisal or a description of an emotion-provoking person-environment relationship. However, Harré (1983) says that the purpose of a social

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12 Averill (1980) defines syndrome as “a set of responses that covary in a systematic fashion” (p. 307). The term “set” refers to a variety of different elements and “system” implies that all the elements are related in a coherent manner. Thus, in this definition, syndromes can also be defined as “systems of behavior, as opposed to specific reactions” (p. 307).
constructionist study of emotion is to explore “the ontological, conceptual, and temporal priority of the public—collective realm” (p. 114), and he encourages researchers to look at how the words are used in the discourse to understand what they are referring to. Edwards (1997) expands this idea by explaining that there is no need to distinguish between the emotion discourse and the emotions themselves because emotions and how they are constructed, interpreted, and performed during social interaction are one and the same thing. Since I will be concentrating on how individuals perform and experience emotionality, classifications of emotions will not further illuminate the discussion.

11.1.3. Socio-cultural functions of emotions

Averill (1986) claims that humans are “by nature rule-generating and rule-following animals” (p. 101) and social situations provide prime examples of this. He believes that individuals undergo emotional development, which involves the acquisition of social norms and rules. His cross-classification system of the rules of emotion provides an interesting framework that illustrates the complexity of the functioning of emotions. He explains that not all the rules pertain to each emotion and stresses that distinctions between different categories are not absolute. He lists three different types of rules: constitutive (that which makes up the emotion), regulative (how the emotion can be used), and heuristic (determines the strategy). These intersect with rules of appraisal (how the situation is perceived and evaluated), behaviour (how the emotion is organized and expressed), prognosis (time course and progression of an emotional episode), and attribution (how the emotion is explained or justified). Averill explains that during emotional development individuals internalize the appropriate rules of emotion. When individuals do not internalize or if the internalization process is incomplete, society may think an individual is socially delinquent or inept. The implications of this last statement are of particular interest for my study and help explain how NNES and U.S. students viewed each others’ behaviour during group work.

From a constructionist perspective, emotions can perform several different functions. Drawing from previous research, Keltner and Haidt (1999) mention three primary social functions: emotions “help individuals know others’ emotions, beliefs, and intentions”, they “evoke complementary and reciprocal emotions in others”, and they “serve as incentives or deterrents for other individual’s social behaviour” (p. 511). According to
Aimon-Jones (1986b), emotions such as guilt, compassion, resentment, and anger can help to preserve the moral rules of society through regulating undesired behaviour and promoting attitudes that preserve the social practices of a particular community. Benson (2003) explains that self-conscious moral emotions like embarrassment and shame often facilitate the process of others fitting in or behaving in acceptable ways that will not harm the group. Individuals who are afraid that others will be angry with them because they have infringed their rights might behave in ways that will not limit the autonomy of the angered people again. Closely related to this social regulation function, emotions can help define boundaries between groups. Emotions like disgust coupled with contempt can help to identify and maintain the boundaries between different groups, and disgust coupled with desire can establish bounds that ought not to be crossed or can create the need in others to emulate or imitate (Miller, 1997). Finally, individuals can use emotions to get others to behave in ways that facilitate their own goal attainment. By using strategies that could induce negative emotions in others, individuals can try to coax others into behaving according to their wishes. Malicious and unfriendly teasing or ridicule can produce unpleasant feelings or emotions, which might persuade people to conform. I will explain below in 11.6-11.7 how these factors were operative in U.S.-NNES student situations.

11.2. Emotions and Culture

Studying emotions and emotion talk across cultures is not straightforward and presents numerous problems. Among some of the important conclusions Lazarus (1991) has reached is the idea that culture has a profound influence on how individuals think about emotions. However, Wierzbicka (1995) points out that while Lazarus's approach to emotions allows for cultural variations, he mistakenly interprets emotions through English and not through other languages. In making this point, she reminds us how tricky it is to study emotions cross-culturally because no language is value-free, and many emotional concepts, whether expressed in English or another language, are not universal. Harré (1986) and Warner (1986) also point out problems with using specific words to denote particular emotions across cultures. Harré says that anger, or any other emotion, "can only be what this or that folk use the word ‘anger’, or something roughly approximating it in their culture, to pick out" (p. 4). Heelas (1986) also believes that it is
extremely difficult to study cross-cultural differences in emotion talk and explains that before researchers can establish whether certain emotion elements are universal, they need to (a) establish what counts as emotion talk within a particular culture, (b) consider that non-emotion talk meanings might be generating emotions, and (c) decide what role endogenous processes play.

Inferring when individuals were talking about emotional experiences and analyzing direct references to emotions in my transcripts posed similar problems mentioned by Wierzbeca, Harré, Warner, and Heelas. For example, when R#4 used the word “frustration” when she spoke English to me, might I have accepted that she has learnt the language well enough to be able to convey the same meaning other native English speakers would? That was possible, but I could not assume so. Alternatively, was she conveying something different based upon Taiwanese culture? That was a possibility too. To find out what she meant, I had to look at how she used the word in her story context.

Trickier problems confronted me. What important references to emotional reactions or experiences did I miss because I was not intimately familiar with the NNES student cultures? Furthermore, my study was not designed explicitly to find out how people used culturally learnt behaviours to evoke certain emotions in others. It was not constructed specifically to find out how one situation might evoke certain emotions for one culture but evoke entirely different emotions in others. To address these issues, I would have to conduct other research projects. I will discuss the limitations of my study in Chapter 13.

However, my study was designed to uncover how U.S. and NNES students reported they interacted with each other. The main question for my research project is: What happens during multicultural group work in a college setting: How do the social processes students are exposed to influence their experiences and how do the students in turn influence the social processes? The sub-questions ask what strategies individuals used during group interactions, what the consequences of the strategies were, and what students thought and felt about them. These strategies included the use of emotion and emotion work. The data obtained came through interviews where individuals recounted their experiences and gave interpretations of situations. I was not privy to the actual group interactions or the discourse between students as they unfolded moment to moment. As a result, I will restrict my discussion of the data mainly to the ways in which
students reported emotion experiences featured in social strategies. I will also explain the meanings and uses of emotionality within the different contexts. I will examine different episodes to illuminate the positions individuals took and the judgements they invoked on matters of “morality” and “prudence” (Harre & Gillett, 1994, pp. 153-155).

11.3. Emotion Work and Feeling Rules

Hochschild’s work (1979, 1983, 2003) provides an important backdrop for my study, though I have had to alter her definition of emotion work for my study’s purposes. I will apply the aspects discussed in this section to U.S.-NNES student interactions discussed in 11.6.3. She focused on the emotional labour as opposed to the bodily labour that workers perform in the workplace. She defined the term emotional labour as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (2003, p. 7). Emotional labour involves behaving according to institutionally generated feeling rules that specify appropriate behaviour for particular work situations. These rules dictate which emotions employees should display or inhibit at work. Employees receive payment for emotional labour. Synonymous terms, emotion work and emotion management, involve comparable work but they are performed in private situations and are not remunerated. Emotion work is “the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling” (Hochschild, 1979, p. 561). Emotional labour has exchange value whereas emotion work has use value. Both emotional labour and emotion work emphasize the relational and not task-based aspects of work (Steinberg & Figart, 1999). They also refer to intentional efforts individuals employ to convince others of their emotions (Wharton & Erickson, 1993). This kind of emotion management is governed by learnt rules (James, 1989). Emotion management involves awareness of feeling\(^\text{13}\) and how individuals try to feel; not how they appear to feel (Hochschild, 1979).

Hochschild (1979, 1983) posits that all humans act to a certain degree. She distinguishes between surface acting, where individuals change their outward appearance to mask their true emotions, and deep acting, where individuals express emotions that have been self-induced spontaneously. How people act in society is determined by certain rules, and these include feeling rules that specify the rights and duties for individuals

\(^{13}\) Hochschild uses feeling and emotion interchangeably. I have specifically used her word choice here.
within certain situations. For example, in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean cultures, students are supposed to listen and learn. Even if students are bored, they have to pretend that they are interested. It is a student’s duty to behave this way, and it is the teacher’s and all classmates’ right to expect such behaviour.

Feeling rules establish a set of entitlements and obligations that guides emotion work and directs emotional exchanges. People become aware of feeling rules through experiencing the pinch between what they actually feel and what they think they should feel in a given situation (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). Hochschild (1983) assumes that people recognize feeling rules by inspecting how they or others assess their emotional displays and by noticing the sanctions that they or others impose. She hypothesizes that different social or cultural groups have different feeling rules, ways of recognizing them, and cues or reminders. Common sanctions are “cajoling, chiding, teasing, scolding, shunning” (p. 58). They can take the form of encouragement or ridicule aimed at redirecting individuals to convention. Emotion management works on the principle of pain avoidance and seeking advantage within the context of feeling rules. When individuals are in certain situations, they often think they can operate on commonly held assumptions regarding their and others’ rights and obligations, but Hochschild points out that feeling rules are not always shared. Moreover, there might be discrepancies between what individuals know they can expect in a situation and what they wish they could.

Social roles or positions may set base lines for what emotions are appropriate in given situations, and they may prescribe what emotions individuals owe others or what others owe them. According to Hochschild (1983), people can pay respect with emotions. It is a kind of emotional gift exchange. Emotion work involves a system of “payment and non-payment of latent dues” (p. 83) and this is always operative during interaction. When there is non-payment of dues or mis-payment, others may see it as inappropriate emotion. Inappropriate emotion might also arise when individuals do not behave according to others’ or their own expectations. Friends have deeper bonds and therefore exchange emotional gifts in areas that are more important, and they may do it more tacitly. They may also compensate for each other in areas where they are lacking. People with higher status have a greater claim to emotional gifts and greater power to enforce those claims. It is generally understood that the person with lower status will provide more.
Through emotions, individuals can develop a sense of self-relevance (Hochschild, 1983). Others' reactions and the feedback individuals receive through emotions may help them infer desires and expectations and help them see how others perceive them. Emotion work can involve lowering an individual's own status to enhance another's. It can entail enhancing the individual's in order to lower another's. It can also involve withholding empathy. There are consequences for having lower status. The lower the status of an individual, the more likely others will discredit that individual's ways of seeing and experiencing. Often people with lower status do not have status shields that can protect them against other's efforts to discredit their emotions. People sometimes develop a 'healthy' estrangement between self and role, which can act like a shield. Individuals may also develop a false sense of self and lose touch with who they are.

The concept emotion work and not emotional labour is relevant to this study. Unlike Hochschild who drew attention to how employees are exploited in the workplace, I will explain how students exploited, tried to exploit, or supported each other through emotion work. By using the word exploitation, I am not implying that either party was trying to abuse the other deliberately, but as Price (2001) points out, "at any moment one is always engaged, more or less unwittingly, in forms of emotional exploitation or enrichment" (p. 168). I will further explore how emotion rules played a role in regulating emotion work during NNES and U.S. student group interactions.

11.4. Emotion Work Defined

There is a problem with using Hochschild's definition of emotional labour (and by implication emotion work) in the constructionist context of my study. As Denzin (1983) pointed out, when Hochschild says that emotional labour is "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (2003, p. 7), she is implying that there is a thing to be managed. However, I would suggest that even Denzin's explanation of what is really managed "the self-in-the-feeling that is felt" (1983, p. 403) does not illuminate the situation either because, not only is the term clumsy, but he is assuming the existence of a "self-in-the-feeling" that has to be managed. From a constructionist perspective, the definition needs to be reworked.
For my purposes, emotion work refers to the intentional efforts individuals make during interactions to display situational appropriate emotions toward others to further particular social goals. The efforts, for example, can involve use of language, tone of voice, implied verbal/non-verbal meanings, non-verbal gestures (eye contact, touch, and body positions), positioning, and speech acts. Emotion work might involve inauthentic behaviour, but not necessarily. It can involve efforts to notice, acknowledge, and understand others. It can be demonstrated through a display of empathy, or it can entail any other behaviour that makes others feel valued as human beings. I include Steinberg and Figart’s (1999) idea that emotion work involves behaving more personally, warmly, or caringly than normal toward “others with whom they have no ongoing personal” relationship (p. 12). The purpose of emotion work is to create smooth, functioning relations between the social participants in a particular situation, which might mean that certain individuals have to redirect their own or absorb others’ emotions. Emotion work involves social exchanges of gestures in particular situations, but the exchanges might not be viewed as reciprocal or equal in regular and ongoing personal relationships. Finally, I include Hochschild’s (1979) idea that emotion work can be done by “the self upon the self, by the self upon others, and by others upon oneself” (p. 562).

11.5. Emotions, Emotion Work, and Positioning Theory

Parrot (2003) and Walton, Coyle, and Lyons (2003) make strong cases for studying emotions through positioning. Positioning takes place within a discourse, and Burr (1995) defines discourse as a “systematic coherent set of images, metaphors and so on that construct an object in a particular way” (p. 184). Because emotions are created through language and can be identified in talk, we can discern and study their social functions. Positioning takes place within a local moral order that regulates rights, duties, and obligations (Harre & Moghaddam, 2003; Harre & Slocum, 2003; Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). Emotions (Averill, 1986; Denzin, 1984) and emotion work (Hochschild, 1979, 1983, 2003) also function within a local moral order that specifies rules. Through the rules, individuals learn about appropriate emotional behaviour which in turn forms their identities, but rules also help individuals understand what they should do in certain situations, what they can expect from others, and how they can use the rules.
to regulate others' behaviour. Harré (1986) explains that emotions are strategic, implying that they can be used intentionally and purposefully just like positioning, though both are often used unintentionally. Positioning and emotionality are relational. Individuals can position themselves relative to others, and some emotions have targets or are displayed for a particular audience to achieve a particular purpose. Emotions can establish positions that can be defined relative to another individual's.

11.6. U.S.-NNES Student Discourse, Positioning, and Emotion Work

Through data analyses it became clear that while participants from both groups understood what task-based behaviour was required for full membership during group work in the U.S. (such as active participation), they all operated with different understandings and expectations of what it meant to interact with or relate to each other as human beings. Even though there were individual disparities among members of each group, there were broad clusters of agreement within each group, and generally, the two groups differed considerably from each other. NNES students were at a particular disadvantage because they were under pressure from U.S. group members to conform. On a cognitive level NNES students understood what behaviour was required, but on a deeper and emotional level they found it hard to accept the efforts they had to expend.

NNES students often used words like "anxious", "frightened", or "nervous" to explain their reactions to group interactions (see 10.2.3). These words did not feature in U.S. student talk. Both groups used the word "uncomfortable" to refer to interactions with each other. While this term indicated a general social uneasiness with each other, it had different meanings for the two groups. U.S. students felt uncomfortable because they did not know how or did not want to deal with NNES student non-participation, silences, or dependency. On the other hand, NNES students felt uncomfortable because they often did not feel welcome in groups, could not understand conversations, and felt pressure to participate when they were not ready.

In the three sections below I will examine how linguistic practices, systems of entitlements and obligations, feeling rules, and moral judgements affected U.S. and NNES student positioning and emotion work.
11.6.1. Differences in expressions of emotionality and positioning

Tables 13 and 14 in Chapter 8 provide concepts in the discourse of difference that both U.S. and NNES students used to refer to themselves or each other. Many of the terms directly or indirectly referred to emotions, emotional reactions, or behaviour that could evoke emotions in others. For example, U.S. students referred to themselves or were described as “impatient”, “brave”, “empathetic/not empathetic”, “honest and direct”, and “unfriendly and cold”. NNES students, on the other hand, described themselves or were referred to as “nervous”, “afraid”, “amiable”, “easily intimidated” and “needing help”. Words like “impatient” imply that U.S. students were not tolerant of NNES student behaviour. “Brave” as opposed to “afraid” indicates strength and power. Clearly, U.S. students generally had the required characteristics, but NNES students generally did not. “Honest and direct” signifies the difference between how NNES students hoped U.S. students would behave—that is, with tact and subtlety—and the stark reality of how they did not. “Needing help” demonstrates NNES student positions relative to U.S. students, and it hints at NNES student weakness and powerlessness.

Closer inspection of how some words were used or what they implied in different contexts can reveal the needs and expectations of the different members and provide useful insights into the strategies they used during interactions with each other. I will use U.S. student L#1 as an example since her sentiments and position were reminiscent of other U.S. students’ such as M#3, T#1, J#1, J#2, J#3, and J#4. L#1 used the word “frustration” often during her interview. Table 17 below provides a collection of extracts from her transcript and my analysis that shows how she used the word in context and how she positioned herself relative to NNES students.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It [interacting with NNES students] was very confusing to me. I did not understand what they [NNES] were trying to say and it was really frustrating working with them [...].</td>
<td>She felt confused. She could not understand them and they frustrated (hindered and retarded) the communication process (there is no indication of her trying harder to understand them or that it was her fault). It was difficult to work with them in groups. They frustrated (hindered and obstructed) group work goal achievement. Partially disappointment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that it was easy to get frustrated with them and if they did not understand something or they did not get [understand] something [...].</td>
<td>They caused her unpleasant feelings because they did not understand her. It was their fault. She was superior (she understood) and they were inferior (they did not understand).</td>
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<tr>
<td>just frustrated and talk down to them and will treat them like they are not people [...].</td>
<td>She was intolerant and dismissive of them. By talking “down to them”, she positioned herself as superior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think the frustration ... there is a perception that they are taking up American space and American money that because they are here in our school and they...they don’t understand everything, they might, but there is a perception that they don’t, because either their English is not as good...as we all speak it and...and they don’t...they [U.S. students] are not willing to be patient with them and give them the break to work...They don’t want to. [...] I guess annoyed that I had to work with them because I expected it to be really hard all year [...].</td>
<td>She explained: 1. They were a threat, and they were taking valuable resources from U.S. students. NNES students were not entitled to it. 2. They were not proficient in English. NNES students were not like U.S. students. They were foreign and different. 3. She and other U.S. students had to provide emotion work through being patient with them. She felt annoyed about having to work with them. She did not want to endure pain or provocation without complaint. She did not want to remain calm. She did not want to absorb her own negative emotions. She talks about her own reaction, then generalizes by saying that all U.S. students are not willing to be patient, but immediately returns to her own reactions of annoyance about having to work with them. Is she trying to make it seem that she is not the only one feeling this way? Does this make her feel better?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let’s see, quiet American students ... I still get frustrated and...and really kind of impatient. Actually, thinking about it, it seems it is the same reasons though because [long pause] even if they are not understanding something then I would feel that same impatience and probably still would [long pause] with international [NNES] students [...].</td>
<td>She linked frustration with impatience (edginess, intolerance) and explained that she felt the same about quiet U.S. and NNES students and for the same reasons: they were not communicating. She was not willing to give NNES students a break because they did not understand something. She felt impatience because they did not provide ideas or opinions, and they were not contributing to her academic goals, in fact, they were an obstacle to achieving her goals.</td>
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Table 17 (continued): Analysis of L#1’s use of “Frustration”

<table>
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<th>Transcript</th>
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<tr>
<td>I didn’t know what it would be like and just expecting to be frustrated and not be able to communicate at all and just not be able to work with them and even the first couple of days was still like I just didn’t want to be around them and didn’t want to react to them and it was just so frustrating for me and didn’t … you could say I didn’t like them and it was really just a kind of prejudice against them [...].</td>
<td>Even before she met them, she imagined that they would prevent her from reaching her goals (to communicate or work with them in groups to achieve group goals), and initially she found that to be the case. She admits that these ideas were based upon prejudice (no prior experience though she had observed them in groups before and had talked to others who had experienced group work with NNES students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought I didn’t have any prejudices and then I realized that I … and we all do, but I didn’t think I did … not so much in manner as it was coming out of frustration and then realizing that it was based on some generalizations of the international student group and this is making me recognize what I was doing and how I can change it and it helps me treat people better.</td>
<td>She tried to say that she did not show prejudice through her behaviour but that she felt frustration, which she did not show. However, there is an inconsistency. When she admitted talking down to them previously, she gave an instance of dismissive behaviour, which could be seen to be based upon prejudice. It seems that by focusing on the experience of frustration, she was able to gain some kind of understanding of the harmful things she was doing to the NNES students.</td>
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From L#1’s version of events, it appears that she positioned herself as superior to NNES students. Her personal needs and expectations of group work indicated that she wanted NNES students to be proficient in English, be willing to share ideas and opinions, contribute to group goals, not freeload, and be independent. Her frustration with them, which she admitted arose initially out of ignorance and prejudice, took different forms. She felt frustrated because NNES students obstructed or retarded the communication process and thereby blocked or unnecessarily complicated reaching group assignment goals. Her frustration was also linked to NNES students’ foreignness because they could not speak English like U.S. students. Furthermore, NNES student behaviour, such as not being capable of communicating fluently in English, intentionally or unintentionally sent messages to U.S. students that they needed to be patient and help NNES students. She indicated that she was not willing to perform that kind of emotion work. Therefore, even though she was aware of the need to provide emotion work, she refused to accept the position. She displayed her frustration and disdain toward NNES students by “talking down” to them and treating “them like they are not people”. Thus, she demonstrated that she was better and they were inferior.
NNES student R#4 also used the word “frustration” several times during her interview. Table 18 provides extracts and analyses of her interview.

<table>
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<th>Transcript</th>
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</table>
| ... the first class I was the only one, yeah. And I, actually, I was so like frustrated, really scared like that. And but, and the first day the teacher just let us to pick up one person to be the first day speech interviewer. And then I was kind of frustrated because like beside me there is two girls and a guy, we talk a lot. And then I thought maybe we could be a group or something like that I can pick up, but they all find out the group, and then most of people find out the group. There is a guy called Jim, and he just look at me, and we just stare each other, and we just decided to be a group [...]
| She couples “frustrated” with “scared”. This is about not achieving her goal of working with the U.S. students that she knew, and it is linked to fear because she dreaded being alone, not having somebody to work with, and being publicly rejected (though she had already been rejected by one group of people). But she also indicated that she was the only NNES student in the class, so there was more pressure on her because there was no other NNES student tacit or overt support.

I’m kind of frustrated because still not only I am one of the, um, international student, because you have sometime because the grade is you have group participation, and you have to go up to speak for the, this question, how can you solve it? So maybe it’s a little bit, because the class is full. And I don’t know, just a little bit afraid of it, and but for the group work, um, it’s not difficult for me because Math 104 for me, I think, is pretty easy. So that’s why just maybe because too crowded and my group mate is not that what I want [...] Usually when the teacher instructor gives us the work sheet or everything, I will do this, I will do it the first day he gave us, he give me, and then I will do it like that. But when we have to do and most of my group mate didn’t do it [...] But most of the time because the group have to turn one. Most of them is turning my, because I did it [...] I need to go up to the stage to talk about this math problem, because it’s the group work, too, so we have to pick one. And usually I did the question, and someone just go write it down and then speak it [...] I’m only one person do the effort for the group work like that, so I don’t really like the class. I told my friends, it’s kind of like how to say – different for the Math class participation for the group and Communication class. Although math is easy for me, and I really like the Math class for the 102 and 104, but just the group work I don’t like it. But the group work of the Communication work I really like it like that [...] |
| Here the tables were turned and she was the one doing all the work while the U.S. students were the freeloaders most often. Now she was the one who felt frustrated and exploited. However, she stuck with it during the quarter and did not abandon the group.

She linked “frustrated” with “afraid” to indicate her reaction to group work. In this case the fear is different. The class was full and she had to make presentations in front of the whole class to explain her calculations. This was scary. She also indicated that she did not like her group mates. They did not do their work and did not support her, and so she was virtually alone and felt the burden of work on her shoulders. Here “frustrated” means not getting support or equal participation and it is tinged with fear because she is made vulnerable by having the sole responsibility for correct answers because the group work is graded.
R#4's use of the word "frustration" is interesting for two reasons. First, she used the word to display her emotional reaction during an experience in the Mathematics class where she did all the work and the group members did not participate diligently; only in this case, the group members were U.S. and not NNES students. Here the tables were turned. She was the only NNES student to recount a situation where NNES and not U.S. students did most of the work. Because she was competent in mathematics, the U.S. students relied on her to do all the calculations. Sometimes she had to present the answers in front of the class, and at other times, the U.S. students copied her calculations. She was also the only NNES student to say that she did not enjoy group work in the Mathematics class because there were unequal group contributions. On the other hand, unlike the other NNES students, she liked the Communication class group work because she worked with a very good team of U.S. students and was co-leader for one group. This is also unusual, because no other NNES students reported co-leading a group.

Second, her use of "frustration" is sometimes coupled with words like "scared" and "afraid": a linkage which U.S. student L#1 did not make. It seems that she linked these concepts because not attaining her goals (being paired with a U.S. acquaintance) and being exposed to possible risk of showing off or being burdened by having all group members rely on the accuracy of her work, made her afraid of the responsibility. Group
work was graded. Both R#4 and L#1 used the word “frustration” to refer to obstructed or blocked personal needs, but unlike L#1 who took a superior position over NNES students, R#4 did not give any indication that she had positioned herself this way. According to her account, she found other ways to deal with the situations. For example, in one case the U.S. students that she had been friendly with chose not to work with her during a group assignment, so she found another U.S. group mate. R#4 also used the word “frustration” to show her level of dissatisfaction and irritation with understanding the word list. Again, she found a way to get help by talking to the teacher.

In the last extract, R#4 also used the word “frustrated” in relation to goal obstruction, but in this case, her frustration is linked to two group tasks. One is to understand the word list, and the other is to participate in the group. In this case, she indicated intensity through the expression “Okay, I’m done!” Unlike her behaviour in the Mathematics class, she did not keep trying with the group because it seemed they did not know some of the answers either. They could not help each other. Instead, she tried to resolve her problem by talking directly with the instructor.

The difference between how U.S. student L#1 and NNES student R#4 used their “frustration” in the group setting and what they gained is noteworthy. Both held leadership positions on campus. L#1 was the student body vice-president and R#4 was an international student ambassador. L#1 was intolerant of and prejudiced toward others who were not like her. She also could not endure people who slowed her down or required special help. She took out her frustration on NNES students by positioning herself as better and more competent than them through minimizing them as people and talking down to them. Thus, she created a distance between them and her so that she could retain her superior position, continue to feel good about herself, and minimize her level of frustration. Even though she said she became aware of how she was behaving and tried to treat others better, she kept contradicting herself in the interview, explaining how she avoided working with NNES students altogether, and how she still felt frustrated and impatient in their presence. By not working with NNES students in groups, she further controlled her environment. On the other hand, R#4 showed different ways of coping with her frustration. In the Mathematics class, she persisted with her group members, continued to share her work with them, and silently resented having to work in
this group. She gave no indication that she treated her group members with disdain. In the second case, she overcame obstacles by seeking the teacher’s help.

These are only two cases that I have selected from a small sample (24 interviews) to illustrate differences between members of the NNES and U.S. student groups, and I cannot make sweeping generalizations from them. However, these cases can provide a glimpse into what sometimes happens to students during some group encounters, and they allow us to see and understand the kinds of things that can occur. Nevertheless, seen from the totality of the different student situations, it is possible for me to say that L#1’s behaviour is reminiscent of how many U.S. students reported they felt and behaved toward silent NNES students, and it also confirms what many NNES students told me about their experiences with U.S. students. R#4’s behaviour, while a little unusual as I pointed out above, also conformed to a general pattern many of the East Asian students displayed. For example, she tended not to express her real emotions openly like U.S. students. This was also true for the student from Mali (who deliberately tried to get on with everybody) and the one from Ukraine (who treated others well while expecting that they would do the same for him). Their behaviour was in contrast to U.S. student L#1 who talked down to others, and M#3, who avoided or was unfriendly toward NNES students. NNES student S#1 was particularly struck by how readily U.S. students showed their thoughts and emotions publicly and directly.

11.6.2. Differences in positioning and understanding the local moral order

I have already discussed the different ways in which NNES and U.S. students positioned themselves during group work. In this section, I will build on discussions from previous chapters and home in more specifically on how emotionality, the process of being emotional within social interaction, appeared in story lines and influenced positioning. I use the word emotional to mean expressive behaviour that shows awareness of self in relation to others.

Many NNES students (R#2, P#1, Y#1, P#2, S#1, A#1, R#5, and C#1) conveyed the expectation that they would be treated with understanding and patience by U.S. students all the time, and they were all surprised when that did not happen. All NNES participants had experienced unpleasant group work situations, and some of them (R#1, M#1, P#2, S#1, R#4, and C#1) recalled good experiences. Some like R#2, S#1, and R#5 had
explicitly positioned themselves as international students and demanded to be treated differently by U.S. students. For example, R#2 thought that U.S. students should be more friendly, approach NNES students first, make an effort to get to know them and become friends with them, recognize that NNES students struggled with English, and provide help and assistance because NNES students were different. S#1 and R#5 wanted help too, but they also desired more attention and recognition from U.S. students during conversations. All three insisted on being accepted unconditionally by U.S. students. Other NNES students like P#1 and R#1 positioned themselves as patient with and understanding of younger and less sensitive U.S. students. They believed that if they were patient and treated them with respect, U.S. students would reciprocate. This seldom happened. M#1 and A#2 positioned themselves as amiable. Their obligation was to create harmony in the group and not to disturb the others or become a burden on them, and in return, they hoped to be liked and included by group members. Often this did not happen.

Thus, the different NNES student groups were operating with specific understandings of their rights to make emotional demands of others and the U.S. students’ obligations to fulfil the emotional duties specified by NNES students. Positioning themselves and U.S. students this way meant that NNES participants were inevitably disappointed and hurt by reality. They recalled situations where U.S. students clearly did not understand the local moral order the same way and hence did not provide the kind of emotion work the NNES students had expected. However, P#2 and R#4 understood their obligations to the group in the same way U.S. students like M#3, L#1, T#1, and J#2 did. Yet, they did not hold the same understanding of their rights. The NNES students still thought U.S. students should have shown more compassion and understanding of NNES students than the majority did.

U.S. students like M#3, L#1, T#1, and J#2 positioned themselves differently from how NNES students R#2, S#1, and R#5 expected. From their perspective, U.S. student behaviour appeared cold and selfish. The U.S. student understanding of the local moral order included elements that were in direct conflict with NNES student interpretations. For example, they expected all group participants to be independent, participate equally, and fend for themselves. They did not think it was their responsibility to mother, mentor, or assist NNES students. On the other hand, the behaviour of U.S. students A#1, R#3, H#1, and M#2 displayed would have pleased this group of NNES students. This group
had a similar understanding of the rights and obligations of NNES students, and a very different interpretation of U.S. students’ roles in relation to U.S. students M#3, L#1, T#1, and J#2. The way U.S. students B#1, J#1, J#3, and J#4 behaved might have confused some NNES students. Outside group work, these students were willing to engage with NNES students. While they were friendly and polite enough in class, they sent very clear messages that they were not willing to work with NNES students on graded assignments in groups. They had yet another understanding of the local moral order.

11.6.3. Differences in perceptions of emotion work

Table 16 in Chapter 10 provides a list of U.S. and NNES students grouped by story lines. The U.S. students categorized as *Includers* were willing to do emotion work whereas the *Excluders* were not. The *Includers-Excluders* were willing to do emotion work on campus but mainly outside class and definitely not during group activities. In contrast, all the NNES participants recounted instances where they delivered emotion work. In this section, I will compare individuals’ behaviours within each of the groups, not so much to illustrate the differences between the groups but to show the variances of what it means to do emotion work during U.S.-NNES student group interactions.

U.S. students A#1, R#3, and M#2 gave instances of delivering emotion work. A#1 and R#3 were older male students and M#2 was young and slightly physically handicapped. All of these students indicated that they understood the plight of NNES students, partially because of their own personal problems or family backgrounds. A#1 in particular described situations where he was the sympathetic helper, provider of encouragement, self-esteem builder, mentor, and creator of NNES student safe zones. He gave instances where he rescued NNES students from nasty situations with younger U.S. students, and he explained how he built camaraderie and provided language help and guidance on assignments. U.S. student R#3 noticed NNES student P#1 at the end of a particularly trying time for P#1. R#3 provided encouragement and tried to build P#1 up by giving him a compliment. In his groups, R#3 spoke more slowly, took time to explain words and difficult concepts, and tried to prevent NNES students from embarrassing themselves by correcting their pronunciation in private. From their descriptions, it was not always clear whether these U.S. students delivered emotion work because they were trying to create smoother group functioning. However, it was clear that they were
engaging in emotional gift exchange in the sense Hochschild described it. By being empathetic and helpful, they received gratitude from students they helped. R#3 and M#2 also made it clear that they either received help in return from NNES students or gained personal knowledge about other cultures. For them, the gift exchange was balanced.

NNES students S#1, V#1, R#1, and R#2 explained that in their experiences, older U.S. students were kinder, more understanding, and often willing to help them. It also seems that people of the opposite sex sometimes were more considerate towards NNES students. For example, female NNES students S#1, M#1, and A#2 said that male U.S. students were very kind to them and that female students were often very nasty. A#2 recalled an incident where two female students called her a “yellow monkey” and said “just go back to your country”. In addition, NNES student R#2 talked about several women who took an interest in him as a person and helped him.

U.S. students L#1, J#2, T#1, and M#3 all indicated that they were not willing to provide emotion work in group settings or outside class. L#1 and M#3 did not even want to do that for other quiet U.S. group members. J#2 and T#1 were older male students, so not all older U.S. men were more considerate or helpful toward NNES students. L#1, T#1, and M#3 actively tried to avoid working with NNES students in groups. Yet when they were grouped with NNES students, L#1, J#2, T#1, and M#3 were aware of the “pinch” between what they actually felt and the pressure they experienced from NNES students to feel differently; however, they were not willing to give in to the pressures. J#2 said he sometimes felt guilty, unlike L#1, T#1, and M#3 who only felt irritated.

U.S. student J#3 presents an interesting case. She was initially willing to provide emotion work within group settings with NNES students, but changed her mind. At the beginning, she helped NNES students in class but found that they ignored her outside class, and she felt slighted and hurt by these actions. She invested time and effort to be a conversation partner outside class, but also found that the NNES students whom she had befriended pretended not to see her on campus. She perceived their behaviour as haughty and aloof. She took the first steps to initiate friendly contact in groups but often met with NNES student silence and awkwardness. Above all, she had high expectations of working with NNES students in groups and was repeatedly disappointed. She wished they would share perspectives that would be different from conventional ones in the U.S. This did not
happen. It seems that J#3 had presented emotional gifts to NNES students that were not reciprocated. She took the non-payment personally and decided not to exert further efforts. She also saw the non-payment as socially inappropriate. From a cultural perspective, this is interesting. NNES student V#1 explained that she was often too shy to acknowledge U.S. classmates outside class. Other NNES students like M#1, R#4, A#1, and S#1 explained that they ventured outside their comfort zones to take brave steps on campus by saying “Hi” to U.S. classmates. It is possible that J#3 had drawn wrong conclusions from NNES student behaviour.

U.S. student J#4 was mainly willing to provide emotion work to NNES students outside group work assignments. He even felt guilty when he realized he was not willing to include NNES students in his groups, but he knew working with them would involve a greater investment of emotionality than he was inclined to give under graded group conditions. For example, he said he would have to speak more slowly and clearly, he would have to look for facial or other signs to notice when they did not understand, and then he could have to stop and provide clarification. He would have to coax and encourage NNES students to participate. He would have to check their work to make sure they had understood the assignment, and then he would have to conceal his irritation and disappointment when they blundered. He would have to make them feel accepted and valued. During group work, this was asking too much. He had his own learning and performance to think about, and as a result, he avoided working with them in groups.

J#4’s perspective about the amount of emotion work involved when working with NNES students is similar to that of many U.S. participants. Even students like R#3, who was more than willing to provide emotion work, acknowledged that NNES students slowed groups down and sometimes had a negative impact on group grades. He acknowledged that most U.S. students were not willing to sacrifice for the good of the group.

NNES students all reported that they delivered emotion work in groups, some more than others. Some like R#1, P#2, C#1, and R#4 said that they were patient with U.S. students and themselves and figured out how to respond appropriately. R#1 learnt to avoid younger U.S. students as an emotional shield, but he was willing to listen to and provide emotional support to other U.S. group mates especially when they were dealing with difficult emotional problems. P#2 used his sense of humour and his positive outlook
on life to create smoother group functioning and to try to learn and fit in. R#4 took care of both NNES and U.S. students in her groups and often persisted working with them, perhaps far beyond what most U.S. students would have endured in similar situations.

P#1, an older NNES student, believed in the golden rule and reported that he consciously tried to treat others as he would like to be treated. He also trusted that if he set an example, others would follow. He said he remained friendly toward a student who had slighted and rejected him. He tried to be patient with others because as he said “I have to like them. If I want that they have patience for me, I have to have patience for them.” He also gave emotional gifts in the hope that they would be returned, but unlike U.S. student J#3 or NNES student R#2 who gave up after trying for a while, he persisted.

Other NNES students like M#1, S#1, A#1, and R#5 worried about being burdens on U.S. students or slowing down the group. They reported providing emotion work by not dumping their helplessness onto the group and trying to solve communication problems in other ways. They remained amiable and friendly toward group members and tended to blame themselves for not being liked or for being ignored by U.S. students. They were among the students who most often talked about group work anxiety, fear of working with U.S. students, and sadness about being ignored or slighted. While all NNES students expressed apprehension about group work with U.S. students, some male NNES students like P#2, R#1, R#2, and C#1 found other ways to channel their anxieties and fears. P#2 tried to learn and do better the next time, R#1 distanced himself physically from younger U.S. students, R#2 distanced himself emotionally through rationalizations (see Chapter 10), and C#1 stayed rooted in his belief that he was a good and intelligent person.

NNES students often used the word “friend” but this word, with two exceptions (R#3 and M#2), was noticeably absent from U.S. participant accounts. To some NNES students, friendship had a particular meaning. They thought that by making a friend, they were taking out a kind of insurance policy for protection, at least partially, against the emotional onslaughts they were exposed to and the turmoil they experienced in groups. A friend would perform emotion work freely or on demand. As discussed in 11.3, friends have deeper bonds and are able to provide emotional gifts in important areas or compensate for weaknesses in their friends. A U.S. friend would be able to provide language help, notice when a NNES student was upset, extend an invitation to participate
during group discussion, demonstrate patience and understanding, and protect against feeling lonely. Most U.S. students did not express such needs and had no friendship expectations of NNES students because they already felt connected, knew what to do and how to behave, or had their own friends. They also did not feel obligated to provide this kind of emotion work. However, U.S. students R#3 and M#2 who used the word “friend” supplied the kind of help and emotional support NNES students craved sporadically, but they were the exceptions.

Finally, emotion work can involve lowering or enhancing one’s own or another’s status (see 11.3). U.S. students lowered NNES students’ status while elevating their own when they withheld empathy from them or refused to engage in emotion work. Hochschild (1983) explains that people with lower status often do not have status shields that can protect them from being disregarded. NNES students were often reminded of this reality in groups when U.S. students refused to be patient with them, talked down to them, or did not care enough to try to engage them.

11.7. Social Functions of Emotions in U.S.-NNES Student Groups

Harré (1986) believes emotions are strategic because they can be used to obtain specific social purposes. In section 11.1.3, I set out some of the social functions of emotions. The primary ones outlined by Keltner and Haidt (1999), to learn about others’ beliefs and intentions, to bring about complementary and reciprocal emotions in others, and to deter unwanted social behaviour, all applied to U.S.-NNES student group situations as discussed above. Generally NNES students were not very successful in bringing out reciprocal emotions in others, but P#1 and R#1 gave instances where they believed their patience or understanding resulted in U.S. students reciprocating. Emotions and emotion work were more often geared toward deterring unwanted actions or encouraging desirable behaviour. The regulation of social behaviour for group work purposes did not take place in a contrived, orderly, or planned way, but participants noticed what was happening. Through experiencing scary and painful reactions from U.S. students, NNES students understood that they needed to behave in ways that conformed to the rights and obligations U.S. students dictated for the groups. NNES students found out that if they did not conform, there were sometimes severe consequences for them. For
example, some were totally ignored and became invisible during group interactions. Rejection was painful, and embarrassment and shame were to be avoided. Some students like J#1 used teasing to get NNES students to conform. Furthermore, emotion work involved lowering or elevating another’s status. Some U.S. students chose to enhance the group work environment for NNES students and others did not. Some did this intentionally and others did not. The contempt some U.S. students showed toward NNES students more clearly defined the boundaries between the two groups, and the compassion others displayed razed those barriers.

11.8. Conclusion

Figure 1 in Chapter 7 illustrated different demands U.S. and NNES students were confronted with during interaction. They had to decide whether to leave their comfort zones, take social risks, reposition, revise story lines, perform emotion work, and change ideas or expectations. These decisions, especially the ones involving emotion work, had consequences for them and others. Both U.S. and NNES student groups withheld during group interactions. NNES students often withheld sharing ideas because they tried to protect themselves from emotional hurt or ridicule. U.S. students withheld help and support because they did not want to be involved emotionally. In the next chapter, I will discuss one of the consequences: inclusion or exclusion of NNES students. I will examine how different groups raised or lowered group boundaries and how issues of power and control, stereotyping, and malignant positioning contributed toward creating a minority group where individuals were sometimes rendered invisible.
Chapter 12: Dynamics of Group Inclusion and Exclusion

A major threat for NNES students during group work, mentioned in Chapter 10, was the fear of exclusion by U.S. students. Often this threat became a reality and challenged the ways NNES students viewed themselves. The topic of inclusion-exclusion appeared frequently during U.S. and NNES student interviews. Misinterpretations of behaviours and intentions due to differing cultural backgrounds partially fulfilled or frustrated needs and expectations because of lack of communication and understanding, and disturbances in power distribution among participants through positioning were crucial factors influencing inclusion or exclusion. The consequence of being integrated into the group or barred from participation developed out of a complex set of circumstances and processes involving the discourse of difference, power, stereotypes, group identities, positioning, and story lines. I have introduced or discussed these topics in previous chapters, but in this one, I will bring them together to illustrate an important outcome of exclusion: the social construction of invisibility.

12.1. Production and Circulation of Power

Foucault (1980) provided a new understanding of power through explaining that it is not distributed in hierarchical top-down or chain-reaction fashions, but that it circulates and involves all people in some way. Power is also not inherently negative or positive; rather, it has the potential to be productive. Power can accomplish sets of knowledge, practices, meanings, and values. However, it can also be oppressive or destructive when used to control or gain dominance over others, and it can provide fulfilment when power is used to achieve personal goals. Foucault linked discourse and power (1972, 1980). Discourse constructs topics through a series of related statements, texts, and actions. It creates definitions of participants and concepts and lays out rules and conventions about behaviour that society or individuals can use to regulate others’ conduct. Definitions and
moral orders are constructed in particular contexts that reflect a certain social orientation at a specific time. Thus, one society may construct a group as deviant or inferior at one time in history, and another may reconstruct it later as mainstream or powerful.

In Chapter 8 (8.4), I discussed the connection between the discourse of difference and power. I explained that the discourse NNES and U.S. students used contained references about differences in behaviour and personal qualities between the two groups. The differences were formed from the majority and dominant party’s vantage point—the U.S. students’—and hence the discourse contains mainly positive references about U.S. student abilities and mostly negative remarks about NNES student abilities. NNES student qualities that might have been seen as academic modesty and thoughtfulness from their cultural perspectives were recast in various ways from a U.S. student standpoint to mean unassertiveness, timidity, silence, passivity, unwillingness to share ideas/opinions, and lack of leadership. NNES students were also described in terms of what they did not have or produce. For example, they were described as not communicative, not sharing ideas and opinions, not leaders, and not assertive. Thus, they were not only different but also deficient in certain important interpersonal skills. The meanings different actions had within U.S.-NNES student group settings were reflected in the discourse but in a circular fashion also dictated by the discourse. The rules and obligations for participant behaviour were defined within the discourse and used by individuals or groups to regulate group inclusion or exclusion. For example, if individuals wanted to be part of a U.S. student group, then they had to share opinions freely. It was each participant’s duty to contribute, and it was each participant’s right to demand participation from others.

Finally, it is important to note that participants in social situations negotiate and mutually sustain a particular definition of a situation (Jones, 1997). While U.S. students as a group, with support from the educational system and the teachers, dictated the terms of the discourse and thereby the definition of the U.S. group work interactions, it happened with tacit agreement from the NNES students.

12.2. Social Categorization, Stereotypes, and Power

Feldman (2001) explains that human beings have a natural tendency to categorize the things around them. To classify people, they use conspicuous visual attributes such as
sex, age, and race and these categorizations provide a set of predictions and expectations about what certain individuals are and how they behave. Often these general predictions and expectations are untested and inaccurate. They form the basis for prejudice (the negative or positive evaluations of individuals based upon their group affiliation and not on individual traits) and stereotypes (defined in Chapter 8 on p. 93 as “beliefs and expectations about members of a group that are held solely on the basis of their membership in the group”). Stereotypes can be descriptive because they provide information about the behaviour, preferences, and skills of others, and prescriptive because they make suggestions about how individuals ought to think and behave.

Often stereotyping is the result of intellectual laziness, inattention to detail, and lack of information; however, Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, and Yzerbyt (2000) claim that power-holders seem to engage in another kind of stereotyping process. Their data suggest that people who are in control sometimes form stereotypes by design to maintain that control because accurate impressions of others could “threaten power-relevant social identities” (p. 230). By stereotyping others negatively, they justify their own positions of power and set the ground rules for interaction. U.S. students M#3, L#1, and T#1 stereotyped NNES students initially based upon limited exposure and inadequate information about them, yet after more contact, they continued to ignore counter examples that could soften or neutralize their stereotypes. All three students used stereotyped ideas to justify their desire to remain in control by excluding NNES students from group interactions.

12.3. A Minority Group Identity

The desire to be connected to others or to belong to a group has long been identified as a universal need, and various authors (see Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003) have demonstrated that humans seek inclusion and try to avoid exclusion. The NNES student group in my study was not homogeneous, and individuals came from Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Mali, Taiwan, and Ukraine (for details see Table 3 in Chapter 5). Yet students from these countries tended to think of themselves either as part of the international student group or the immigrant group, and all thought of themselves as belonging to the non-American group. Moreover, the U.S. participants often referred to all NNES students, whether they were international students or immigrants, as international
students or ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Tajfel (1978) has suggested that a minority group identity can be imposed from the outside where one had not existed previously. He explained that this happens when there are definite boundaries between the majority and minority groups and where individuals from the minority group are generally subjected to the same social consequences of social interaction such as prejudice and discrimination. Closely related, Turner, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987) claim that a collective identity arises from the inside when individuals feel that a shared identity helps them to make sense of common elements in the treatment they receive from others. Usually the treatment that they collectively receive is not the same as that which the majority group receives. Schmitt, Spears, and Branscombe (2003) found that the students in their study developed a new minority identity based upon common treatment from majority members, and that the new identity was not “based upon who they are, but on who they are not” (p. 9). These theories seem to explain what happened to the NNES student group in my study.

12.4. Malignant Positioning

People’s moral and personal attributes can be made intelligible through the ways they position themselves; however, it is also through positioning that others can strengthen or weaken those attributes. Sabat (2003) uses the term malignant positioning to focus on the harmful or even dangerous consequences for individuals when others position them in negative ways. The damaging effects appear in not only how individuals are seen but also how others behave toward them. Malignant positioning can compromise the personhood of the positioned person and might even arouse or encourage negative reactions in that individual. Often malignant positioning gives indications of the needs of the person who positions others and provides a means to control them.

When U.S. students positioned NNES students as deficient or deviant because they were not behaving like them, they started treating NNES students like unwelcome members of their groups. For example, when NNES students just listened to group members without participating, both U.S. and NNES students reported that there were consequences ranging from ignoring NNES students to telling them outright that the U.S. students would do the work for them. NNES students got the message that they were not
capable of doing quality work, and to add insult to injury, they were a burden and freeloaders because the group had to do the NNES student’s share of the work too.

12.5. Factors Influencing Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion and exclusion of NNES students in college class workgroups involved a variety of factors. Tan and Moghaddam (1999) say that positioning strategies involve a constant battle among participants to achieve legitimacy for positions that will make them most effective and powerful as speakers. Achieving this state can be difficult because people have different abilities, dissimilar access to social resources, and varying levels of understanding the rules and obligations of a particular situation. In addition, even though individuals have control over how they intend to position themselves, they have no control over how others view that position or see them.

Heller (1987, 1988) believes that ethnicity and language have an impact on the degree to which an individual can participate in groups. NNES students participated in groups through using English, but when their linguistic abilities were not up to the required standard for academic discussions, U.S. students sometimes denied or reduced their access to group participation. Not belonging to a particular group (i.e. American) also automatically limited access because U.S. students often used “international student” (non-American) stereotypes as group selection criteria.

During U.S.-NNES student group work, a number of factors raised or lowered barriers to communication and therefore determined group inclusion and exclusion. Tables 19 and 20 list a variety of behaviours U.S. and NNES students used. There are also clear links to the discourse of difference. For example, silence, shyness, frequency of expressing opinions, but there are other elements such as language usage, forming and seeking out cliques, malicious teasing and joking, stereotyping, and expectations.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 19: Behaviours that Removed Barriers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Created by U.S. students</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusive behaviours (inviting, talking, reaching out)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing help</td>
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<td>Learning from NNES students</td>
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<td>Showing patience and interest</td>
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Participants in this study described various levels of NNES student inclusion and exclusion during group work. They ranged from full inclusion to complete exclusion. The boundaries of group membership were defined in part by the discourse of difference, but how different individuals interpreted the meaning of the rules and obligations or how they positioned themselves within the discourse, determined access.

12.5.1. Inclusion: NNES students conform

Inclusion sometimes involved NNES student willingness to comply with U.S. group participation norms (see Table 19). When NNES students could participate through following discussions and sharing useful ideas, debating opinions, and carrying their fair share of the workload, they were welcomed in groups. In other words, they were perceived to be self-sufficient, independent, and equal partners from a U.S. student perspective. U.S. student J#3 explained that even though a Russian classmate spoke in broken English, she contributed thoughtful and valuable ideas during group discussions. Because of her willingness to share opinions from a different perspective and her bravery to overcome language barriers, she was a much sought after group member. NNES students S#1, R#4, and P#2 recounted incidents where they were included during group discussions because they actively participated. In these cases, NNES students took the initiative and made it happen. They did not wait for U.S. students to create opportunities.
12.5.2. Inclusion: U.S. students show compassion

A few NNES students recalled instances where they were included because U.S. students made the effort (see Table 19). R#1 and V#1 gave examples where they participated in groups but were given inferior roles. In both cases, they helped with the PowerPoint slides in ways that would not harm the content of the presentations. U.S. students M#2, R#3, and B#1 included NNES students in peer editing exercises, and M#2 arranged Japanese tutoring in exchange for English help. B#1 explained that by helping a NNES student to edit her papers, he was really sharpening his own English and teaching skills. R#3 provided help because he said he always learnt something new about different cultures and this satisfied his curiosity. It is interesting to note that all three U.S. students openly discussed their motivations for including NNES students. They ensured the exchange effort was balanced fairly by the rewards obtained. Thus, when the exchange was arranged justly, according to U.S. standards, the door to participation opened. Also noteworthy in most cases is the unequal and inferior roles NNES students played. Only U.S. student M#2 became a student to his Japanese language tutor.

12.5.3. Inclusion: NNES students are experts

There was some consensus among U.S. students that students from East Asia were good at mathematics. U.S. student B#1 expressed surprise when his Japanese group mate did very complicated computations in his head and did not need a calculator. U.S. student H#1 said U.S. students often sought out NNES students in her Mathematics classes. NNES students R#2, R#4, R#5, V#1, and C#1 gave instances where U.S. students wanted their help in groups or often did not share their work until their NNES group mates had given the answers or helped them understand. In R#4’s groups, U.S. students always asked her to write her calculations on the board when the teacher called on their group. Here NNES students were on firm ground and confident because they often had solid basic skills and did not require competence in English to explain calculations. However, when it came to interpreting complicated word problems, they were at a distinct disadvantage and U.S. students had to assist them.

Often NNES students were included in groups by U.S. students where they had similar language skills, for example, Spanish 101 where all the students had the same basic skills. In other cases, NNES students were included because they had equal
competence in the content and subject-area jargon, for example in Business classes. Here NNES students were not the experts, but equals.

12.5.4. Exclusion: NNES students do not conform

Most often NNES and U.S. students recounted instances where U.S. students ignored or excluded NNES students because NNES students were not conforming to U.S. group participation norms or expectations (see Table 20). NNES student R#1, for example, struggled to participate in groups because limited vocabulary and poor pronunciation diminished his ability to express ideas clearly. He recounted an incident where U.S. students left his Physics group (leaving him alone with another NNES student) because, as he later overheard them say in the rows behind him, they were afraid that R#1’s lack of English would affect their group assignment grade. NNES students M#1, Y#1, A#2, and R#5 all gave instances where they were ignored in groups because they were not able or willing to participate in the discussions.

12.5.5. Exclusion: NNES students are not experts

In classes like English, where U.S. students had a distinct language advantage, NNES students most often experienced exclusion during group work (see Table 20). U.S. student J#3 and NNES students R#2, V#1, M#1, Y#1, S#1, and A#2 all gave instances where U.S. students reluctantly provided help or actively pushed NNES students aside. J#3 and A#2 said that NNES students simply did not have good enough English grammar and spelling skills to provide meaningful comments on U.S. student papers. R#2 and V#1 said the worst exclusion took place in the English classes. However, U.S. students B#1, M#2, and R#3 did provide help in their English classes, but as explained previously, they made it clear that they got something of value out of the exchanges. Other classes where NNES students were excluded were Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Sociology, Journalism, Speech, and surprisingly Cross-Cultural Communication and Small Group Leadership.

12.5.6. Exclusion: NNES and U.S. student cliques

NNES students R#1 and Y#1 explained that NNES students already knew that U.S. students would prefer not to work with NNES students, so they often just formed their own groups. Y#1 also said that NNES students often did not have problems expressing ideas and making themselves understood in English in these groups because they were used to each other and did not fear being ridiculed or judged. U.S. students J#1, J#2, J#3,
B#1, L#1, J#4, T#1, and M#3 all confirmed that they preferred to work with articulate or talkative American students especially when they had to do graded group assignments. They might have considered working with NNES students in non-graded assignments, but most did not prefer or actively seek out NNES students for their groups. J#4 recounted an incident where all the U.S. students in class formed their own homogeneous groups and left the NNES students to work in one group. He felt embarrassed about this incident, but explained that it sometimes simply took too much effort to work with them in groups. NNES students A#1 and R#2 also listed several instances where U.S. students just formed their own groups and deliberately excluded NNES students.

12.6. Incidence Rates and Implications of Inclusion and Exclusion

NNES students had to face the possibility of group inclusion and exclusion in many classes; however, it seems that there was a higher incidence of exclusion in English classes and a lower possibility of exclusion in the Mathematics classes. This phenomenon was connected with U.S. student assessments about whether the NNES students required help or were able to provide information, or as NNES student R#2 understood it, whether NNES students had utility value or not.

Many NNES students explained that they cringed when teachers announced group work assignments. Group inclusion and exclusion had profound implications for NNES students because the consequences sent powerful messages about their acceptability as human beings. Furthermore, it is possible to be physically included in a group and ignored, or acknowledged but excluded through teasing and ridicule. Only two NNES students mentioned being teased. M#1 gave an instance where teasing had a positive personal effect on her, and R#1 told about painful situations where U.S. students made fun of a NNES student’s pronunciation. Whereas teasing and open ridicule seemed to be limited to a few cases, all NNES students experienced being invisible in one form or another in U.S. groups.

12.7. Invisibility Defined

One of the consequences of interaction, and one of the major categories, is the invisibility of NNES students during group activities. I use the term invisibility
metaphorically to indicate that even though U.S. students could physically see NNES students, they chose for a variety of reasons (some explained in Chapter 10) not to acknowledge their existence. Under certain circumstances, NNES students became imperceptible to their minds. Invisibility was achieved through two means during U.S.-NNES group interactions: other-induced or self-induced. I will discuss both below. The state of being invisible is related to being ignored. When U.S. students ignored NNES students, they were still aware of their presence in the group, but deliberately overlooked their contributions or chose not to engage them. Sometimes NNES students were acknowledged through being slighted; however, with invisibility, individuals were not acknowledged at all. Because these concepts are so closely related and had negative impacts on NNES students, I will include both in the discussion. The phenomenon of becoming invisible pertained mainly to NNES students; yet, U.S. student J#3 mentioned instances where she felt rendered invisible by NNES students. She was the exception.

12.8. The Social Construction of Invisibility

Key factors in the processes of becoming invisible are participant expectations and positioning. They are intimately linked. Harré and Slocum (2003) explain that when individuals enter certain situations, they draw on a cluster of duties and rights that enable them to behave in certain ways and allow them to expect certain actions from others. For example, when U.S. students worked in groups, they implicitly understood that they were expected to participate through volunteering information, sharing opinions, and answering and asking questions. Based upon this duty, they also felt it was their right to expect that all group members contributed equally. Once assigned positions, individuals had the option to reposition themselves, position the other person, accept the position, or ignore it. With the exception of the last one, all of the options imply a certain degree of mutual understanding of the rules and obligations associated with the position.

NNES participants all explained that they understood the requirements of group work in a U.S. classroom, but to varying degrees found being in groups stressful because the new requirements called for action that was mostly outside their experience or comfort zones. For example, most NNES students did not come from environments where they were required to stand out or deliberately differentiate themselves from others, had to
take initiative during conversations to lead the group, competed for airtime during discussions, or contributed ideas on the spot without doing research or thinking deeply about the topic. Add to this the perceptions that their English vocabulary was limited, their pronunciation bad, and their grammar faulty.

On the other hand, eight out of twelve U.S. interviewees told me that they had not been outside the borders of their state, let alone their country. During the interviews, many implied or stated directly that they grew up thinking that the U.S. was the most important and powerful country in the world. J#1 felt there would be more true diversity if the “US was less centered around itself.” A#1, R#3, and B#1 also felt that the U.S. was too self-absorbed and that its young citizens’ behaviour towards people from different cultures reflected this. According to A#1:

... youthful [U.S.] students, that are primarily involved with themselves [...] [have] discriminatory, or kind of closed minded views [...] the college student that’s 18 years old, a lot of those values, or a lot of those worldly concerns have not manifested yet, [...] but I have to say in a lot of times, it’s pretty much, it’s [for college students] a fairly self-centered life ...

Some had not been taught the true value of being exposed to different points of view or different learning styles. J#1 said he grew up in a “white ghetto” where “we didn’t have many international students”, and A#1 explained that when he attended school in the early to mid nineties there was no diversity whatsoever.

I was not around different ethnicities ... I came from a small logging town, so ... I had to grow up ... and ... become more aware politically of the world, become more aware of what’s going on in the world ...

L#1 and B#1 also experienced working with international students for the first time after high school at the college. B#1 explained:

... working in a class situation with international students, so I wasn’t used to it because in high school we never really had international students like we have here, so basically it was...it was a big change for me. It was kind of a culture shock ‘cause I didn’t really understand how they work ... I had a stereotype kind of picture of what they were like but I didn’t have any first hand experience.

Students like M#3, L#1, and J#2 were young and were still finding out who they were, and at times, they expressed little interest in finding out about others. Most assumed that
U.S. group participation conventions were universally accepted and practiced. Students like L#1, T#1, M#3, J#4, and J#2 had also concluded that because NNES students chose to come to the U.S., they had the obligation to make an effort to fit in and that U.S. students did not have the duty to act as hosts and ease the transition process.

Many research participants talked about the fact that NNES students were often ignored when they did not participate, or worse, as M#3 explained, they became invisible. It is important to note that many NNES participants were shocked when they became aware of their new status. In their own countries, the behaviour they were now demonstrating in the U.S. made them equal, visible, and valued members of their groups, but here in the U.S. expectations were different, and they felt they had lower status, had become invisible, and were not valued. A few U.S. students such as J#2 and J#4 were embarrassed about how NNES students were made to feel, but the majority talked matter-of-factly about the invisibility of NNES students.

In this study, data analyses indicated that becoming invisible happened via two different routes: (a) U.S. students positioned themselves and NNES students and (b) NNES students positioned themselves and U.S. students.

12.8.1. How U.S. students positioned themselves and NNES students

Before becoming invisible, NNES students are initially very visible. Through a process of observation and comparison, U.S. students become aware of differences in behaviour. M#3 expressed most vividly, what many other U.S. students told me about NNES group members:

They're very quiet, they're very shy and they're not very outspoken. They're never rude. So I think that difference, um, almost kind of makes them invisible, in a way, to American kids 'cause a lot of us are very loud and boisterous and outspoken.

Further expanding her story line that I entitled *I'll take care of me if you'll take care of you*, she uses a discourse of difference to position herself as part of the group that is loud, boisterous, and outspoken, and positions NNES students as quiet, shy, and reserved. NNES students are different. They do not belong. They are outsiders. She is an insider. However, in her case, the process is not complete. Her later comments indicate that in this instance, the process goes beyond observation and comparison. It includes justifications and rationalizations:
People who don't speak up, won't be noticed, and I don't really have a lot of sympathy for it. I don't know what, like when I could give them the opportunity to speak if they don't just take it. American students don't feel obligated at all, they don't. To them, that has nothing to do with them. They will go along with their little lives, play baseball and go shopping and be selfish. I'm serious, they don't care.

The process also includes value judgements based upon expectations and expressions of emotions. She continues:

I expect everybody to give equal, I'm really big on people giving their opinions and talking because I can't stand it when people are quiet, it really bugs me, which might come from where some of my ideas about them came from, the international students, almost annoyance of being, you don't almost want to be put in a group with them, a lot of people don't want to because you don't want to do all the work, and you don't want to just sit there and talk to the wall. And a lot of time they're more quiet, whether it's lack of communication or you're just, you're naturally quiet, it's just annoying, and it will annoy even more because they're not American.

But even more important, she reveals that underlying it all, there is also a fear of being put in an awkward position and then not being in control:

We know that the quiet American person can talk. They can communicate with us, so we can understand them. That's a comfort for us. But somebody [NNES students] who we don't know, yeah, I mean they might know English perfectly well, but they're quiet, we don't want to take that chance, feeling almost stupid trying to talk to someone when they're like, silence, they can't really respond.

Obviously the process of rendering NNES students invisible is not the same for each person, and it probably is different in different situations, but M#3's comments combines most completely the different elements U.S. participants revealed they used.

12.8.2. How NNES students positioned themselves and U.S. students

NNES students also made themselves invisible through positioning U.S. students and themselves in certain ways. NNES student S#1 gave one of the most vivid examples. In the following excerpt, she stakes her position:

I want them to treat me as a[n] international student like I need a little bit more attention to openly and directly communicate with other students ... American students should welcome international students ... like if they [NNES students] don't speak English, “that’s okay, but you can just try your best and then we’ll help you”.
S#1 positioned herself as a student with special needs requiring help from U.S. students. By taking this position, she also positioned the U.S. students as care and help givers. Thus, she gave herself the right to expect special treatment such as requiring a concerted effort from U.S. students to understand her, to speak more slowly, to include her in discussions, to lead her in groups, and to clarify assignments until she understood. When she operated with this assumption during group work, quietly and expectantly waiting for others to pull her into discussions, she became invisible. She recalled:

They just started to talk about jokes, making jokes by using phrases that I don’t get it and then they just leave me behind. They just ignored me that time ‘cause I don’t know what question I need to ask so […] they just don’t look at me and then facing totally over that way [points away from her face] and that makes me really like sad and then [getting tears in her eyes] they are like, “Oh, you don’t have to participate in the discussion, but we’ll do it.” They truly think that I am not beneficial to participate in discussion.

In this case, there is clearly a disconnect between what the U.S. students she had to work with understood their obligations to be and the right S#1 felt she had to expect different behaviour from them. Through this misalignment of expectations, she became invisible, which really hurt her.

S#1 is not alone. R#2 positioned himself similarly by claiming special status. But unlike S#1 who kept trying to establish contact with U.S. students even though this often resulted in the experience of being invisible, R#2 indicated that he had given up and tried to stay away from U.S. students. Thus, he contributed to his own invisibility through distancing himself from domestic students:

I mean ‘cause … we cannot know that Americans gonna be … cold, so we … we have that feeling already, so we wants to keep away from them a little bit particularly English class … and once we did that American feel that too … first Americans should be more friendly to international as well … because … they should know we’re international, … it’s okay not to have same skill like them, I mean not to speak very much.

In another case, P#1 explained how he had initially positioned himself as an active, questioning class participant. Then one bad day he discovered that he had become uncomfortably visible, and he withdrew from sight. He explains:

Next class I just told him, “You know, Glen, I don’t understand what is this, I just don’t understand why. What?” Okay. And I saw students like “Ha” like inside many students, I just
see “Like you are not smart.” I understand I am not smart. “Tell me, me, [in] my language, you will see if you are smart.” This is my just heart can tell them. I just inside, I feel uncomfortable but I am not person who look on, at their face.

This incident illustrates a pivotal moment in P#3’s academic life. Whether his question was really silly, whether the domestic students actually showed shock at a dumb question, or whether they even thought he was stupid is beside the point, what mattered was that he had felt stupid at that moment and that he chose to withdraw and become invisible in all his classes thereafter. He stopped talking in class, and when he did not understand something, he did not ask the teacher or fellow students but used an elaborate and time-consuming system of asking different people in the library and in the writing centre. By just asking one question at a time, he reasoned he would not be seen as too dependent or unintelligent.

After this incident, P#3 positioned himself as a quiet, passive student in class, which not only made him invisible to many domestic students, but may also have confirmed their general perceptions of NNES students and may thereby have contributed to the prevailing U.S.-NNES student discourse that constructs NNES students in a negative light. Clearly, P#3 reasoned, it was better for him to become invisible than to be visible.

12.8.3. A matter of perception

Understanding how NNES students become visible further helps to explain the process of becoming invisible. Both groups reported that U.S. students took notice of NNES students when they were able to contribute to the group’s learning, expressed opinions, asked questions, and were active. They became visible when they behaved like U.S. students. Nevertheless, there were some notable exceptions. Some of the silent NNES students, who may have been invisible to U.S. students like M#3, L#1, J#1, and J#3, were very visible to people like R#3 and M#2. Explanations for NNES student visibility can be found in how the U.S. students positioned themselves. R#3 and M#2 positioned themselves as friends of NNES students, experts on interpreting their plights, and rescuers. By positioning themselves this way, they positioned NNES students as people needing understanding and help. This made NNES students visible to them. R#3, for example, noticed P#3 during his invisible stage. It would seem then that depending on what individuals’ expectations were and how they positioned themselves, they could
make themselves or others visible or invisible. Therefore, in the same situation, NNES student P#3 could be invisible to some U.S. students, but very visible to others. It also seems that he thought he could decide whom he wanted to be visible to, but how much control he had over this aspect is a matter of speculation.

Finally, NNES students had different reactions to being visible and invisible. Some took it in stride at times (P#2, C#1, and R#4). Others fought it when they felt provoked enough (R#2, Y#1, and S#1), and a few gave up when the burden got too heavy (P#1, M#1, S#1, A#2, and R#5). Yet, most felt hurt by the treatment they had received and confused about their status as human beings. NNES student R#2 said it best:

When I play soccer ... they are really my friend ... actually I’m kind of good player ... they think I’m good, they really welcome me as a player as well as ... my person ... but if we don’t play well ... they’re not gonna be ... as much friendly as they are now.

In other words, he felt he had utility value for what he could do for others, but he did not receive unconditional acceptance from others or have inherent value as a person.

12.9. Conclusion

If one were to stroll through a class where NNES and U.S. students were placed in groups, one would not immediately see what was taking place among the participants. During the past 6 years, as part of my job to create better programs for international students to transition into academia, I have attended a wide range of college classes to observe international students in action. Through follow-up discussions with academic instructors, it has become clear to me that many are completely oblivious to the personal student dramas that occur right in front of their eyes. Many reason that because there is no visible conflict or disruption, all is well.

Students from both groups have often gathered and synthesized experiences and information that have formed their perceptions of others and guided their behaviour towards them long before an actual group convenes. During group work, individuals talked to, connected with, disengaged from, collaborated with, or frustrated and irritated each other, but much of what transpired happened almost imperceptibly beneath the surface. Individuals interpreted others’ language, speech acts, and positions and then based upon those inferences and coupled with their own abilities, understandings,
intentions, and goals, acted and reacted. Sometimes individuals treated each other well, but often they did not. Malignant positioning involved U.S. students behaving toward NNES students as if they were inferior or had no value by disregarding or ignoring them. Often this did not happen because U.S. students deliberately plotted against them, rather it involved U.S. students behaving out of ignorance or protecting their own limited resources so that they could achieve their goals. Nevertheless, the consequences for many NNES students were severe. Some lost confidence in their interaction skills, others temporarily doubted their academic abilities, many felt anxious and fearful when engaged in groups, and many had to behave in ways that felt wrong and were in conflict with what they had learnt in their cultures. Most importantly, they sometimes felt unwanted, disliked, and very, very small. NNES participants’ experiences confirm conclusions Schmitt, Spears, and Branscombe (2003) reached after consulting various authors. It is important for individuals to feel they belong because this gives meaning to their existence. Being excluded or rejected by others can cause psychological harm such as increased anxiety, depression, lowered self-esteem, and alienation.
Chapter 13: Comparisons, Contributions, Limitations, and Future Research

In this chapter, I will briefly restate and discuss my main findings, link them to existing research, and consider the value and unique contribution of my work in relation to existing knowledge. Thereafter, I will examine the limitations of my study and propose avenues for future research.

13.1. Summary and Discussion of Research Findings

Instead of approaching my research situation exclusively from either a NNES or a U.S. student perspective, the focus was on how experiences were co-constructed. I have been able to show how perceptions and actions are relative to the conditions and requirements of each situation. For example, NNES students are not necessarily always or inherently quiet and shy, but in relation to U.S. students, they might appear that way and certain conditions might induce such behaviour.

Participants in this study not only painted a picture showing that U.S. students most often emerged as the dominant party during interactions with NNES students but also illuminated how it happened and what the consequences were for both parties. Analyses revealed that through observation and comparison during group interaction, U.S. and NNES participants drew conclusions about themselves and others. Individuals, informed by their social, educational, and cultural backgrounds, operated with specific expectations guided by rules and obligations that regulated each group situation. These rules and obligations governed the suitability of verbal and non-verbal actions, appropriate displays of emotion, and willingness to do emotion work; however, they were often in conflict with other group participants’ interpretations. How NNES individuals conformed to, deviated from, or ignored U.S. group work conventions created impressions on U.S. participants that became generalized to all NNES students. NNES participants also drew conclusions. They experienced pressure from the majority of U.S. students to conform to
U.S. student group behaviour standards/conventions, and NNES participants noticed how they were treated when they did not comply. They reached conclusions about their own and U.S. students' actions. Both groups' conclusions were expressed through the language they used to refer to members of the different groups, and this was reflected in the general discourse they used. There were remarkable similarities in the words and phrases used. The discourse is one of group difference, where the behaviour displayed by the U.S. student group is the norm, and NNES students are defined as non-standard. NNES student descriptions generally had negative meanings in relation to U.S. student descriptions. The discourse reflected a tacit understanding between U.S. and NNES students that U.S. students were the dominant party. This understanding had a definite impact on individuals from both groups, though the impact differed from individual to individual and from situation to situation. The consequences for NNES students were more severe than for U.S. students.

This research project showed how individuals from both parties used the discourse to position themselves and others to realize personal objectives and avoid threats related to immediate group goal achievement, academic success, and personal acceptance. Sequences of positioning acts created story lines that helped to explain how individuals made sense of their multicultural group experiences. Participants reported that with a few exceptions, U.S. students were mainly concerned with achieving immediate group work goals and obtaining the best possible grades with the least interference from NNES students. Most of them were more concerned with task performance than with creating smooth interpersonal relations with NNES students, though their reactions ranged from completely excluding NNES students to actively seeking them out and providing help. For some, personal acceptance by NNES students was important, but not for the majority of U.S. students interviewed. A few liked to socialize with them outside group work situations, but many avoided them.

On the other hand, NNES participants were constantly confronted with group goal achievement, academic success, and personal acceptance simultaneously. Most often, they had to confront the spectre of being excluded or rendered invisible which meant achievement of all three goals was thwarted at the same time. Often their performance in groups or their grades depended upon the help and cooperation of U.S. students. All
NNES participants knew on a cognitive level how to behave to be included in groups, yet adopting these new behaviours and mindsets posed immediate challenges to culturally learnt attitudes and emotions. Some NNES participants set out to learn and adapt and met with success, others experienced sporadic victories interspersed with painful episodes, and several became downtrodden or cynical and generally withdrew.

Participants reported that both groups relied on a variety of coping behaviours. U.S. students tended to resist responding to NNES students' requests for help, with a few exceptions avoided working with them in groups, and most often tried to ignore them. In contrast, NNES students tried to cope through conforming, compromising, faking competence, rationalizing, resisting, and avoiding contact or painful situations. U.S. participants often talked about their frustrations and irritation about having to work with NNES students while NNES participants talked a lot about their anxieties and fears about working with U.S. students. Individuals' self-descriptions reflected similar patterns. NNES participants often described themselves as insecure, unsettled, and incompetent in relation to U.S. students. In contrast, U.S. participants described themselves as self-assured and capable, especially in relation to NNES students.

Many factors disturbed the power balance, which tipped in favour of U.S. students. NNES participants reported that they experienced constant pressure to conform to U.S. student interpretations of acceptable group work behaviour. NNES students were often ignored in or excluded from groups. Several NNES participants experienced anxiety during group interactions because they received messages that they did not fit in. They felt uncomfortable and insecure in class and had to deal with anger and cynicism over the treatment they had received from U.S. students. Moreover, because U.S. students were regarded as authorities, NNES participants tended to ignore the value of their own wisdom and interaction skills and looked to U.S. students for guidance. This imbalance in power thwarted individual attempts to rectify levels of inequality and undermined efforts on both sides to learn about themselves and others and grow. Participants reported that many U.S. students felt frustrated by the invisible hands grabbing at them and were irritated by the need to fight them off. Many sensed that the status quo was threatened because they were not receiving input and dialogue from NNES students, which in their view was a necessary component of learning. Coming from a society that encourages
competition and individual success, U.S. students were less willing to share without getting something useful in return, whether that was the opportunity to compete against somebody or to trade useful information. These U.S. students felt pressure to reassert their power to secure their sense of control and to retain their worldview. After all, they reasoned, this was their country and their educational resources.

A few puzzling issues remain. First, why did the U.S. participants so seldom refer to racial differences or mention stereotypes of specific racial groups? Why did they more often refer to inadequate English language usage or differing levels of academic group work participation? I touched upon this issue in various chapters, but I want to offer a final comment. A few U.S. students explained that they were taught explicitly in school to be tolerant of others and to respect everybody, yet I suspect that most U.S. participants had been socialized to believe that it is politically incorrect to make overt racial comments that imply dominance of one group over another. For example, it is unacceptable to talk about physical features or behaviours that specifically denote racial superiority. On the other hand, it might have seemed acceptable to talk about language deficiencies and group work behaviour differences because these topics might have appeared legitimate within a learning context. The participants might not even have understood the irony of their actions. Some U.S. participants reported that they had no minorities or foreign students in their schools, and as a result, had only vague ideas about them. Many also had limited knowledge of other countries and hence they often just referred to the students who could not speak English well as "international" students. This ignorance of other cultures was also often accompanied by an underlying sense that the U.S. is superior, and this notion might have made them less inclined to learn about the rest of the world. People from other cultures were coming to the U.S. to learn, not vice versa. Thus, a combination of socially learnt political correctness, a lack of experience with and knowledge of other cultures, and a sense of superiority might explain the lack of specific stereotypes U.S. participants used to refer to NNES students.

Second, I explained that personal experiences, desires, and perceptions influenced how students talked about and behaved toward each other, and that various other factors such as individuals' educational, linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds influenced the discourse of difference. Yet, might the focus on group differences have obscured a
variety of similarities in the data? For example, was the treatment the NNES students received from the U.S. students so unusual? Did quiet female (or male) NNES and U.S. students experience the same treatment from group members? Might U.S. students have treated quiet male NNES students differently from quiet female NNES students? Is it possible that loud or articulate U.S. or NNES students treated timid and shy U.S. or NNES students similarly? Were U.S. citizens who spoke English well but had East Asian or African features treated any differently by U.S. students?

I did not find evidence in my data that U.S. students treated quiet or shy NNES students, whether they were male or female, from East Asia, Africa, or Eastern Europe, any differently. However, my data indicate that it is possible that some of the shy U.S. students were ignored in groups or that their group mates put direct or subtle pressure on them to participate, but it is important to understand that the impact of such behaviour on them was very likely not the same as for NNES students given the context. Shy or quiet U.S. students who spoke English well were still regarded as insiders and could be forgiven for their social non-compliance. As M#3 said in Chapter 8 (8.3.3), it is a comfort for U.S. students to know that even the shy U.S. student can speak English and hence there can be communication. Even though their behaviour was unacceptable, quiet U.S. students were more acceptable than quiet outsiders who some U.S. students, according to L#1, felt had no right to be in the class in the first place. In addition, expectations played an important role. Some of the NNES students felt that they should have been treated as guests or individuals with special language problems and behaved accordingly, and were shocked and hurt when U.S. students did not oblige. U.S. students wanted NNES students to contribute new and unusual ideas, and when they did not, U.S. students demonstrated their frustration by talking down to them, ignoring them, or avoiding contact altogether. J#4 talks about how quiet U.S. students would sometimes not be included in groups and had to form their own, but they would at least be able to complete the assignments competently. On the other hand, NNES students, sometimes on their own in the class, needed the help and often could not function without U.S. student guidance. Moreover, NNES students were often perceived as impediments because they slowed communication down and ruined the learning environment. The NNES students all
reported that at some stage or another they got the message that most U.S. students preferred not to work with them in groups.

Third, with all the pressure on NNES students to conform, why did most of them not succeed in adapting to U.S. group work norms? There are several possible and even conflicting explanations. Kirchmeyer (1993) says that when individuals are relegated to minority status, like NNES students often were, they lose the desire to make positive contributions to the group. Moreover, when there is the expectation that individuals are incompetent, they often live up to that expectation. On the other hand, Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1994) talked about independent (e.g. U.S.) and interdependent (e.g. Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan) cultural frames. In groups that operate from an interdependent cultural frame, individuals often withhold personal thoughts and opinions to promote group harmony. This might have been another reason why East Asian students did not share as readily as U.S. students did, and their behaviour might have given the appearance that they were not willing to conform. It is possible that this and other culturally learnt behaviours were strongly ingrained and made compliance difficult. It sometimes also takes a long time for people to make sense of experiences and adjust to new situations. It further requires a lot of strength and emotional energy.

Fourth, why did U.S. students, who come from a culture that prizes individuality and independence, require NNES students to conform? Markus and Kitayama (1994) explain that from an independent cultural frame, conformity is regarded as a necessary integrative mechanism, but it is also seen as yielding to the collective and that works against being an individual. In other words, individuals need to be distinctive within a certain range of acceptable norms, which means they are not as unique or autonomous as they would like to think. When U.S. students pressured NNES students to conform to U.S. group work behaviour standards by speaking up and sharing ideas, they were requiring them simultaneously to stand out and become individuals but also to become part of the "collective of individuals".

Finally, did the U.S. participants gain meaningful insights about themselves and others or learn much about the world through contact with NNES students? There is disturbingly and disappointingly little evidence that they did. They all talked about the possibility, yet only a few gained insights about their biases, lack of interpersonal skills,
and limited world knowledge. For the most part, U.S. participants confirmed that they were competent speakers, debaters, and opinion sharers and that made them feel good and superior. They mostly blamed NNES students for not opening up or volunteering ideas and thereby spoiling the learning environment for them all. It is also distressing to see that NNES participants learnt so many negative things about themselves and the host culture, and in particular, gained so little in language competence. Although a few participants from both groups were able to learn from their experiences and became stronger as a result, the process was messy and often painful for NNES students.

13.2. Links to Existing Knowledge

Throughout my thesis I have used past studies and existing theory as data to provide definitions and background, and in relevant places, I have pointed out similarities or differences between my work and others’. The purpose of this section is to link major themes in my work to extant literature and tie up some of the loose ends.

13.2.1. Links to Australian studies

Robertson, Line, Jones, and Thomas (2000) reported that overseas students indicated lack of confidence when speaking in front of their Australian university peers. The international students, especially Japanese, said they were reluctant to express personal opinions or engage in discussions during tutorials or class interactions. Female students reported unwillingness to argue with an older person or somebody in authority. NNES students in my study also generally reported feeling nervous or anxious when they had to participate during group discussions with U.S. students, and there was evidence that the female Japanese students were unwilling to disagree with male students in their groups. Robertson et al also highlighted a strong desire by international students to be accepted, to fit in, and to overcome problems in lifestyle changes. The students indicated that they were willing to try out new ways of working once they understood the issues and were prepared to engage in self-help strategies. NNES students in my study expressed the desire to be accepted in various ways, and they were all shocked and many were hurt by the rejection they experienced in groups. Several students developed strategies to become self-sufficient, but many remained hopeful that U.S. students would rescue them.
A recent quantitative study conducted in Australia by Wright and Lander (2003) found that when South-East Asian students worked with Australian students in collaborative groups, both parties were more inhibited verbally, but Asian students were more severely affected than Australian students were. They also found that when Asian students were in mono-ethnic groups, their frequencies of verbal English interactions were much higher than when they were in groups with Australian students. The researchers concluded that language ability was not the only factor in the drop in Asian verbal interactions with Australians. Since their quantitative data could not provide answers, they speculated that cultural orientation such as coming from an individualist or collectivist society had an impact. For example, if South-East Asian students coming from a collectivist environment had regarded Australian students as dominant, they may have been more respectful of those in power and waited for guidance and direction. The researchers further speculated that the Asian concept of losing face contributed to Asian students' reluctance to speak.

NNES students in my study reported that they generally talked less than U.S. students during group work (particularly in English classes), and some NNES students confirmed that they spoke much more English when they were in groups without U.S. students. Though the dominant party was different (U.S. and not Australian), my findings generally corroborate this aspect of Wright and Lander's study. My findings further confirm that Wright and Lander are right to conclude that language ability is not the only inhibiting factor during multi-ethnic interactions. My analyses showed that there were a variety of inhibiting factors that included the fear of losing face and some NNES students looking up to U.S. students for guidance, but my explanations are much more complex and comprehensive than those put forward by Wright and Lander.

First, not all NNES students in my study were more verbally inhibited than U.S. students and not all situations created inhibition. For example, some NNES students were more active in Mathematics classes than their U.S. counterparts were. Second, culturally formed ideas about individuals' rights and duties during group work frequently created unfulfilled expectations for both parties, which often had severe consequences for NNES students. For example, by not participating according to U.S. standards, they were frequently ignored which further disturbed power balances and shook NNES student
confidence, which in turn influenced NNES students’ willingness to communicate with U.S. students in the future. Furthermore, many U.S. students sent subtle and not so subtle messages that they did not want to be responsible for taking care of NNES student problems by, for example, speaking more slowly, trying harder to understand them, or providing guidance on assignments. Some NNES students, realizing this, did not want to become a burden on U.S. students and remained silent during groups. NNES students had to confront culturally formed ideas about the value of participating a lot during group work, and they had to make decisions about taking personal risks in unknown situations where the outcomes might be hazardous to them. Moreover, the fear of being judged, not only on language ability, but also on the quality of opinions, created silence. Many NNES students came from environments where they had never learnt to participate actively or been encouraged to express ideas on any topic, especially ones that they had never thought about before. They noticed that U.S. students were self-assured, opinionated, and brave. Such behaviour appeared authoritative and intimidated many NNES students. Finally, NNES students had to deal with changed rules for group work. In their cultures, group members looked out for each other, but in the U.S., it was each person for her/himself. NNES students did not always know when to speak or how to insert their opinions into conversations. Some explained that U.S. students barely stopped to breathe between sentences. Thus, many factors contributed to reduced frequency of verbal involvement during groups.

Based upon their quantitative findings, Wright and Lander (2003) further suggested that the Australian students became the dominant party by default because they had a language advantage and were more comfortable with the socio-academic environment. They generalized and speculated that because the Asian students came from collectivist cultures, they were non-assertive and unable to challenge the existing situation or provide alternative approaches. Both proposals provide seriously incomplete pictures.

In my study, the U.S. students became the dominant group partly by default but most definitely by design too. U.S. students M#3, L#1, T#1, and J#2 were very clear about the rules of engagement for group work: be independent, take full responsibility for yourself, and elbow your way in. They were not willing to compromise on this stance. Some also believed that because the NNES students had come to the U.S., it was the NNES
students' responsibility to adjust and fit in. These U.S. students deliberately positioned themselves as more competent than and superior to NNES students in an attempt to distance themselves and remain in control. Other U.S. students like J#4, B#1, and J#3 were clear about the extent to which they wanted to be involved with NNES students and while being friendly with NNES students, avoided working in groups when grades were involved. Through their behaviour, they sent a deliberate and powerful message to NNES students: NNES students were not worthy of working with U.S. students. My study further showed how U.S. students gained power whether by default or by design through the discourse of difference and positioning. Chapter 8 gives a full account of how the discourse of difference developed, and Chapters 9-12 explain how participants used positioning and the discourse to wrestle for control and recognition.

NNES students were not able to challenge the status quo or suggest alternative ways to work in groups not only because some of them came from collectivist societies and were non-assertive. There were other reasons. First, not all U.S. students who come from an individualistic society are assertive, and not all students who come from collectivist societies are non-assertive. Moreover, NNES students were not able to amend the current system because they were the minority and often alone in groups with U.S. students. They understood that it would take a phenomenal effort to persuade the majority of the need for change. Add to this the idea that many NNES students thought they were visitors in the U.S., and as polite guests it was not their place to dictate change openly. Many U.S. students had the same notion. Moreover, there were several other culturally induced beliefs that influenced the situation. U.S. students tended to exert control over their environment while NNES students tended to control themselves, but again, that was not true for everybody. Some NNES students believed they should suffer in silence, while many U.S. students openly defected from groups with NNES students. In addition, some students who came from so-called collectivist societies were assertive in their own ways, but given some of the factors mentioned above, were practical enough to understand the implications of trying to dictate the rules. Finally, some NNES students were young, inexperienced, and so busy dealing with their immediate linguistic and emotional problems that the idea to challenge the U.S. system probably did not occur to them.
During a keynote address in Australia, Volet (1997) shared information from recent research showing that students from different cultures mixed more by chance than by choice. International students, just like their Australian peers, seemed to prefer to work with people who thought like them and used corresponding communication styles. I found a similar trend with U.S. and NNES students at the college where I conducted my research. Volet reported that Australian-born students exhibited less favourable attitudes toward mixed groups. They valued opportunities to socialize in groups but not with students from other cultures. My findings revealed the same tendency in a U.S. setting, though not all U.S. born students felt this way. A few actively sought out NNES students. Finally, reviewing recent research, Volet concluded that student perceptions changed slightly after mixed group interactions and that individuals were willing to concede that they had stereotyped ideas before contact, but there was no evidence that success in one mixed group made students seek further multicultural group experiences. A few U.S. students (L#1 and B#1) in my study admitted they were prejudiced against NNES students before contact with them. NNES students admitted thinking (and hoping) that U.S. students would be more welcoming and kind toward them because they thought that all U.S. people were friendly. I also did not find evidence that the students in my project were more willing to seek out mixed group experiences after successful group encounters, though there was recognition from some NNES students like V#1, R#1, R#4, C#1, and M#1 that group work in theory did provide opportunities to learn from different people. NNES students V#1 and S#1 also admitted that their grades improved when they worked with U.S. students, but they were aware of the difficulties involved and the price they had to pay. J#2 and J#3, U.S. students, thought it would be ideal if different cultures could share opinions from different perspectives, only they had not seen this happen in reality. In contrast, B#1 and R#3 felt they had learnt from NNES students in this regard.

13.2.2. Links to British studies

De Vita (2002) investigated the assertion that assessed multicultural group work would have a detrimental effect upon student grades. This claim was not supported by his data. He found that the multicultural group grade reflected the ability of the most able person in the group, and that the average grade for individuals was higher when students worked together in groups than when they worked alone. Both NNES and U.S. students
in my study reported U.S. student fears that NNES students would cause group grades to decline. However, they also expressed other fears like having to do most of the work or having NNES students gain an unfair advantage by working with U.S. students. Like my study, De Vita’s revealed a strong preference by domestic students to work with people who were like them.

Archer and Francis (2005) investigated how British Chinese students were positioned and represented within the discourse used by London schoolteachers. They found that the discourse had both good and bad elements, but they concluded that it was problematic for all British Chinese students whether the portrayal applied or not. Because the discourse positioned as normal and ideal a certain white, middle-class, male identity or framework of behaviour, the discourse evoked issues of power, visibility, and abnormality. The authors posited that these components could have a potent impact on social justice in schools because individuals can be judged as inherently different, abnormal, or deficient. The discourse of difference NNES and U.S. students used in my study was also constructed upon the dominant culture’s ideas, in this case the U.S. students’, of what good group work behaviour was. The discourse had the effect of positioning NNES students as a group as deviant and inept. The result was that certain U.S. students ignored or rejected NNES students, sometimes teased or made fun of them, occasionally talked down to them, or often saw them as people needing special assistance. The discourse also had the effect, at least for many U.S. students, of locking NNES students into a certain mould from which they could not emerge easily.

However, my data do not allow me to conclude, for example, that Japanese or Koreans who speak English as a first language would have been harmed by the discourse of difference in the same way as the NNES students. The college where I conducted my study is located in the suburbs, not the city, and it is very unusual to find American Asians who speak English as a first language. Hence, I was unable to find out whether American Asians were subjected to some of the same behaviour as the NNES Asian students. I interviewed one second generation Croatian/Philipino student (T#1). Even though he had Asian looking features, he gave no indication that he had ever been treated as the outsider. In fact, he and M#3 (also of mixed race) gave several accounts where they were the ones treating NNES students as outsiders.
13.2.3. Links to Canadian studies

Morita (2004) investigated how six female Japanese students negotiated participation and identity in multicultural settings during their first year in a master’s program. She found that in some instances, the Japanese students struggled to participate, and as a result, they developed identities of less competent members, which made them even less able to participate actively. However, she reported that the same students negotiated different identities in different situations leading her to conclude that the dynamic process of co-constructing identities is situated. She said “the local classroom context—the social, cultural, historical, curricular, pedagogical, interactional, and interpersonal context—is inseparable from learners’ participation” (p. 596). My study at a U.S. institution found similar patterns of behaviour and consequences of actions. It further demonstrated the influence of social, cultural, historical, pedagogical, and interpersonal factors on student participation patterns. However, it also showed more directly the impact NNES and U.S. students had on each other, and this adds another dimension to understanding participation processes in a multicultural setting. Moreover, Morita concluded that silence was socially constructed. Like Wright and Lander (2003), she believes that language is not the only factor and that interrelated factors like culture, identity, curriculum, pedagogy, and power all contributed. I reached similar conclusions about the NNES students at the U.S. college where I conducted my study.

Several NNES students in my study were worried that U.S. students would not understand them or would make fun of their pronunciation. R#1 mentioned instances where he observed U.S. students make fun of a NNES student in a group. C#1 observed a situation where a teacher cut a NNES student’s presentation short because the class became restless since they could not understand her pronunciation. Several students refrained from participating during group discussions because they did not want U.S. students to think they were dumb (also see Chapter 8, 8.3.1.). Silence turned out to be a double-edged sword: it protected NNES students from being wrongly criticised or unfairly ridiculed, but the lack of participation confirmed U.S. students’ perception that NNES students lacked initiative and were in some way deficient in social interaction skills. Duff (2002) found similar reactions in NNES and U.S. students in Canadian
mainstream high school classes and concluded like Morita (2004) that silence and difference were co-constructed phenomena.

13.2.4. Links to U.S.A. studies

Leki (2001) followed six NNES students (4 women and 2 men, 5 undergraduates and 1 graduate, and 2 were immigrants and 4 were internationals) for five years at a large U.S. university. Like me, she concluded that group work evoked “issues of power—the power to define others and to force them to behave in ways consonant with that construction” (p. 61). The presumptions of equality that NNES students in her study operated with continuously bumped up against U.S. students’ constructions of NNES students as “variously handicapped” (p. 61). However, my study went beyond this conclusion and provided specific evidence of how the discourse that can affect the power balance between NNES and U.S. students was developed and used by both participant groups during interaction. Moreover, unlike me, Leki concluded that her NNES students were more often than not reminded of their powerlessness in groups. My study found a greater variation in reactions among NNES students. Like Morita (2004), I believe that situational factors dictated students’ reactions and beliefs about their abilities. Furthermore, there was evidence in my study of positive and sustained efforts on the part of NNES students like P#2, R#4, and C#1 who showed resilience and actively tried to improve their situations during group work. There was also evidence that not all U.S. students tried to dominate NNES students. U.S. students like R#3, H#1, M#2, and A#1 made special efforts to include or empower them.

An extensive quantitative study conducted by Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, and Nora (2001) found that various environmental, academic, and non-academic factors influenced individuals’ openness to diversity and that female and older students were more open than male and younger students. They also expressed serious doubts about the willingness and abilities of many students under current U.S. conditions to engage in meaningful peer interactions because tolerance has become a scarce commodity. They pointed out how sources of friction are omnipresent. For example, students are exposed to smaller and smaller groups of social, cultural, or ethnic uniformity, there is more pressure to be politically correct rather than open about differences, and many individuals are locked into ignorance and insensitivity toward others. Participants in my study...
claimed that some older students were more willing to work with NNES students, but there was no definite distinction between genders. Many U.S. students made politically correct statements about NNES students during interviews, but they often contradicted themselves. Several U.S. students talked about frictions that lie just below the surface, and both NNES and U.S. students reported incidents of overt and covert acts of rejection and racism. It seemed that intolerance was not always hidden well.

Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, and Utsey (2005) specifically investigated cultural adjustment experiences of students from Africa. They suggested that race might be a key factor in African students’ adjustment in U.S. colleges. The students came from predominantly Black cultures and had no prior experiences with racism. They reported experiencing prejudice and discrimination through racial slurs or being viewed as less intelligent than U.S. students. In my study, NNES student P#2 said that he had not directly experienced any overt discrimination but that many of his friends had reported incidents that disturbed and hurt them deeply. NNES student A#2 reported U.S. students directing racial slurs at her, and P#1 explained that a U.S. student insulted him in slang which he only understood later when a friend explained what had been said. However, NNES students in my study were exposed to several less obvious everyday incidents. For example, U.S. students told Japanese students that they never did any work in groups, U.S. students deliberately excluded NNES students from groups, and group members sometimes gave NNES students inferior tasks to complete so that the group grade would not drop. It is noteworthy that not a single U.S. student reported being the target of racist comments or had been exposed to prejudiced behaviour from NNES students.

13.3. Unique Contributions to Current Knowledge of Subject

Unlike previous studies involving U.S. and NNES students, the constructionist approach in this study makes it possible to focus on how both student groups co-construct their realities during college-level group assignments. This is a unique contribution and makes apparent several less obvious social processes that help explain the complex nature of the situation. Earlier studies either investigated U.S.-NNES student group interaction exclusively from the NNES students’ perspective, neglecting the vital component of how both parties mutually influence each other, or focused on the differences between NNES
and U.S. students and their educational systems, thereby creating misleading and essentialized pictures of both groups. Neither of these approaches is satisfactory. By leaving out key players—U.S. students—researchers only understood part of the situation; and by focusing only on differences between the groups, they often misrepresented social situations as simplistic and orderly. This study exposes the varied, untidy, and temporal nature of social interactions.

A new theoretical framework constructed from original data and extant research illustrates how interaction between U.S. and NNES students creates a set of circumstances with special characteristics and consequences for participants. The framework also brings together a fresh combination of ideas from theories such as positioning, social construction of emotion, emotion work, and the connection between discourse and power that illustrates fundamental elements in the situation I researched.

This study illuminates, for the first time, the interplay among the wider social discourse within U.S.-NNES student interactions, individual story lines that develop out of interaction and in response to the discourse, and direct and indirect positioning. By understanding the multi-faceted nature of the situation, teachers may be less inclined to seek superficial or quick fix approaches to multicultural group work and may be more inclined to seek ways to create awareness and empower students. Furthermore, as Skeggs (2004) points out, through identifying the discourse, we can expose it for what it is: something to help individuals in a group gain advantages over others and keep them “fixed in place” (p. 61). By understanding how and for whom the discourse is created and by exposing its context and function, we can take constructive counter measures.

To give more details about specific contributions, I will refer to the three gaps in the literature highlighted in Chapter 2. My project took its cue from the small number of successful studies focusing on student reality in the classroom but developed the idea further by investigating both U.S. and NNES sides of the interaction. By not focusing exclusively on how culture affects U.S.-NNES student group work, I was able to uncover how different individuals experienced and reacted to cross-cultural encounters. The aim was not necessarily to explain what representatives from a particular culture were likely to do under certain circumstances, but to point out the variety of individual variances given particular situations. That does not mean that cultural or individual traits and
backgrounds were ignored or minimized, but this point of departure allowed me to focus more specifically on the whole person and not a one-dimensional virtual being. I believe this perspective was more helpful to understand the complexities of the situation. As pointed out before, studies focusing on differences in culture have had the adverse effect of essentializing and polarizing individuals and groups.

This study added new information about the similarities and differences among students as thinking, feeling, and acting multicultural group members. My theoretical framework provides three unique contributions. First, it describes how U.S. and NNES individuals dealt with and interpreted the group interaction process. It explains the specific actions that had meaning for different people and the expectations that influenced their thoughts and feelings as they reached conclusions. My explanations also address how miscommunication and disappointment emerged when meaning was not shared. Second, the structure provides a collection of coping strategies students used that are specific to this situation. Third, and most importantly, the framework illustrates the different ways in which multicultural group interactions can affect an individual’s sense of identity and how individuals assist or resist changes to their self-descriptions.

The second gap in the literature relates to group work. This study confirms that by merely telling students about the learning advantages of group work or by explaining the roles they should take during activities does not prepare them for the major adjustments they have to make to function productively in groups. This study provides a new perspective that will help teachers and students gain an appreciation of group work complexities. By explaining the different elements in the discourse of difference and demonstrating how both U.S. and NNES students use it to position themselves and each other or to reposition, teachers can create an awareness of the potential negative consequences for individuals. They can also point out missed opportunities such as not learning from each other and not preparing themselves for the future. If students have a better appreciation of the fundamental impact group experiences can have on them, they may be more forgiving toward others and themselves when plans do not work out. They may also approach social encounters with less anxiety and more focus knowing that there is a wide range of acceptable group encounter responses. By understanding how deeply social interaction affects individuals’ processes of self-development, teachers can arrange
group activities with more compassion, purpose, and foresight. For example, they can model integrative behaviour by setting the tone from day one through equally drawing on NNES student opinions and perspectives in class. They can consider assignment outcomes and group students by taking into account personalities, skills, and work styles. Building on these two ideas, they can design group work assignments that encourage full student participation and solicitation of diverse views in sensitive and productive ways.

The final gap in the literature involves the lack of studies examining the impact U.S. and NNES students have on each other during college-level group work. This study provided new information about how U.S. students affect NNES students and addressed two previously unanswered questions: (a) how does the U.S. student experience the situation and (b) what impact does the NNES student have on the U.S. student? With this new information, I add my voice to a growing group that objects to the view that NNES students are the only ones who have to make adjustments. When U.S. institutions invite foreign students into their midst, they ought to do much more than require NNES students to pay tuition, stay out of trouble, and fit in. Educational institutions are not just charged with providing subject content. They are responsible for educating the whole person. All parties need to be prepared with information and guidance to face the challenges of working with each other.

13.4. Limitations of Study and Implications for Future Research

Even though my study makes a valuable contribution to present knowledge of the subject, the methodology and methods I used imposed certain limitations; and while my data analyses provided a rich multifaceted picture of the problems in the research setting, gaps in knowledge remain.

13.4.1. Limitations of methodology and methods

The use of a particular methodology and corresponding methods places practical restrictions on what a researcher can achieve during a study. For example, I needed to find out how individuals made sense of their group work experiences. To reach those sense-making processes, I somehow had to find out what my participants were thinking. The most practical way given the circumstances was to ask them directly during interviews. However, participant journals might have provided more immediate and
reflective information that could have supplemented interview transcripts. Nevertheless, adding another component that needed to be analyzed and integrated could have introduced further complications, though the journals might have provided more facets and a deeper understanding of students’ interpretations of experiences.

Furthermore, when I started analyzing the data, I soon realized that the participants did not always present their opinions consistently. Sometimes they said something that they later contradicted through the descriptions of other events, and as a result, it was often difficult to figure out what the contradictions meant. It was also clear that my participants tried to make themselves look good during the interviews and that they were selective with the details they shared with me. Most constructionist ethnographers have to face this problem, and I discussed my approach to it in Chapters 5 and 6. Nevertheless, I believe this issue would have remained problematic whether I had used interviews, journals, or both.

A restriction the decision to use only interviews imposed on me was that I had to rely upon my participant’s ability to recall and interpret events. I was not able to record actual group conversations in order to study how individuals talked or positioned themselves or others in real life. Granted, I wanted to find out how individuals created meaning, which my methods allowed me to do, but I could not also study positioning in action. This might be something to study in the future. Nevertheless, investigating my research situation with my chosen approaches was a good start because I was able to conclude that U.S. and NNES students were using a discourse of difference to refer to themselves and others. I believe I would not have been able to uncover this aspect had I only focused on analyzing actual group conversations.

My sampling plan inevitably imposed limitations on my findings. The decision to use grounded theory strategies meant that my sampling approach involved searching for the basic problem in the research situation. Hence, during the theoretical sampling phases, I narrowed my focus and chose students who had experienced uncomfortable group encounters. I did not explicitly look for students who had good experiences after the initial ten interviews although many of the NNES students I subsequently interviewed had mixed experiences. A study concentrating exclusively on positive group experiences may be useful, as focusing on them can help me find constructive alternative behaviours.
that students could adopt. Information from students who had positive multicultural group experiences added more dimensions to my interpretations and conclusions. However, I probably selected more students from East Asia for my sample because teachers who helped me identify students possibly noticed that they were quiet or less active during groups. For example, they did not suggest, and I did not include, Indian, Indonesian, Pakistani, Middle Eastern, or Russian students because according to anecdotal reports, they generally do not have problems participating. Furthermore, East Asian students are by far the majority on campus (about 90-95%). Again, if I had used a different approach to data gathering, I might have found more variations within the student population; however, because I focused slightly more on problems, I believe I have gained a much deeper understanding of the difficulties certain students encounter every day. I was able to compare bad incidents with good ones, which not only provided greater insight into student experiences, but also highlighted specific problems within the educational environment that need to be addressed by teachers and administrators.

In chapter 5 (5.2.1.), I gave reasons why I did not include less talkative or tongue-tied students. Had I interviewed such NNES students, for example, I might have uncovered greater variation in experiences and depth in feelings because they might have experienced more frustration due to their inability to express ideas and participate in groups. I also did not explicitly set out to investigate the impact of gender or age during group interaction, but my study did reveal some of their influences. Factors other than linguistic or cultural differences might shape experiences, and they might have pointed to similarities and not only differences between the groups. Nevertheless, I believe my sampling strategy allowed me to start scratching the surface and my research data provided important indicators of specific problem areas that can be explored through further research.

13.4.2. Remaining gaps in knowledge

The previous section already alludes to some of the remaining gaps in knowledge. As an expansion to the current study, it will be useful to record and analyse discussions as they unfold during group interactions to expose how positioning works when individuals use everyday language. It will further help to know what constructive strategies both U.S. and NNES students use during group encounters.
Regarding cultural and gender issues, this study only skimmed the surface. First, studies focusing explicitly on variation in gender or cultural responses during group interaction will provide greater understanding of group dynamics. Second, my study was not designed explicitly to find out how people used culturally learnt behaviours to evoke certain emotions in others. It was also not constructed specifically to find out how one situation might evoke certain emotions for one culture but evoke entirely different emotions in others. These questions could be explored in the future. Third, there might have been references to emotional reactions or experiences that I missed because I was not familiar enough with the cultures represented in my study. This might be a difficult project to design, but the results will take a researcher deeper into cultural understanding.

Positioning theory with its focus on discourse, speech acts, and story lines provided productive means to study group interactions. Studies based on the same theory investigating the influence of the wider campus and national discourses on the local discourse, or a study designed to investigate whether explicit knowledge and use of positioning can empower individuals, will be useful.

13.5. Conclusion

This study examined both positive and negative experiences, but concentrated slightly more on the problems NNES and U.S. students encountered when they worked together in groups. My interpretations and conclusions show what could be avoided and hint at possible productive applications, which I will discuss in the next and final chapter.
Chapter 14: Practical Applications

In this last chapter, I will revisit issues discussed in the introduction and make final comments. Then I will look forward, examine some of the practical implications of my findings, and explore a comprehensive set of proposals to improve U.S.-NNES student group interactions at the college where I conducted my study.

14.1. Empty Promises and Missed Opportunities

A familiar reason that educational institutions, including the one where I conducted my study, give for having international/NNES students on their campuses is that their presence enriches the learning environment for all students by expanding their cultural perspectives and preparing them for the challenges of globalization. Others state the benefits more specifically for American students. In the abstract of his article entitled *International students: Steady hands on the social looking glass*, Mitchell (1995) claims:

> international students can promote cultural reflexivity, whereby American students come to know themselves in original ways, clarify their place in human intersubjectivity, and obscure the boundary between their personal and social identities.

Statements like these are common in institutions across the U.S., yet many do little more than to feed international students into their systems hoping for spontaneous cross-cultural contact and learning. Mitchell further explains that while reformers advocate teaching cultural diversity as “a necessary main course in the university curriculum”, it is more often treated as “an educational condiment” to add interest, but “this seasoning approach” has limited effect and leaves the status quo intact (p. 396).

The failure of some educational institutions to unlock the potential of cultural diversity is troubling. Administrators’ positive sounding statements aimed at U.S. student audiences often lack corresponding actions. As a result, one cannot blame faculty and
students for suspecting that administrators intend to increase revenues to ensure the financial success of their institutions at the expense of students and faculty. Neither can one blame them for concluding that administrators’ declarations indicate ignorance about reality in classrooms, the development process of social life on campus, or the achievement of educational goals. While there is nothing wrong with ensuring financial security, serious problems develop when administrators are not candid about their objectives, make promises to students without delivering, or do not involve faculty in major decisions that affect learning outcomes. If they truly want to promote diversity, their statements need to be backed up by concerted efforts to prepare teachers and domestic students to meet NNES students halfway.

Furthermore, one can not blame students for thinking that some of their teachers do not care about using effective educational practices. Participants in my study reported that teachers seldom or never prepared students for multicultural group work. Their statements coupled with the rest of my findings confirm that the commonly used educational practice of trying to achieve greater cultural understanding and self-knowledge through diversity by simply placing students from different cultures together is not viable. The data have not substantiated the notion that students from different cultures regularly mix spontaneously or that they are naturally curious and eager to learn from each other. This study has shown that multicultural interaction is very difficult and involves complicated and conflicting issues related to emotion, control and power, desires for personal and group goal achievement, and deeply engrained and culturally learnt ways of thinking and behaving. Students have not voluntarily integrated because the integration process is painful and requires commitment and hard work. Integration demands high levels of insight and reflectiveness, willingness to confront personal values and expectations, openness to accept others, receptiveness to personal change, courage, a sense of humour, and tolerance for ambiguity for which many students are not ready.

Wright and Lander (2003) warn that a cultural mix of students will not automatically lead to intercultural learning because “it is one thing to have a culturally diverse student population and yet another to have those students engaged in positive interaction” (p. 237). They go on to say that the challenge is to “create and facilitate opportunities that
foster intercultural interaction" (p. 238) where students willingly participate and teachers are able to aid group interactions.

However, creating and facilitating interaction opportunities demand a deep understanding of what is required from students. When U.S. students and teachers call for behaviours from NNES students that are consistent with U.S. interpretations of what is normal or acceptable during academic group work, they are in fact asking much more from NNES students than their merely saying something in English or expressing an opinion about a course-related matter. What they are demanding amounts to an instant social identity change and a fundamental cultural transition. It involves asking NNES individuals to take on a new persona and to be what they are not, because it requires them not to act like somebody from Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Mali, Taiwan, or Ukraine. Similarly, by asking U.S. students to be more open-minded, take more responsibility for others in their group, and share, NNES students and teachers are asking U.S. students to make personal adjustments that some of them might not be prepared for. A major issue to resolve is how to help individuals explore alternative ways of behaving so that they can interact meaningfully while remaining true to themselves. Another issue may be how to make students aware of different options and their consequences and to allow them to choose who they want to be or how they want to act, but this might not be straightforward or easy.

Rich and Cargile (2004) argue that classroom efforts to engender multicultural appreciation are often pedestrian and ineffectual. Even when teachers facilitate honest discourse, they frequently fail to anticipate or deal with the pain, frustration, and anger that accompany such discussions. The authors believe that a multicultural community is most likely achieved through transformations that are facilitated by conflict. Young (1991) further suggests that “when beliefs and reality clash, anxiety results” (p. 428). It is clear from these statements why so many teachers who are aware of the risks involved avoid dealing with or facilitating multicultural issues in their classrooms. They may simply not feel up to the challenge because they lack the necessary skills or time. Others might just not see it as part of their educational mandates.

Yet, the ideal that individuals from different cultures can benefit through contact with each other is important and needs to be pursued. Kirchmeyer (1994) cites laboratory
studies that show heterogeneous groups make better decisions than homogeneous groups do because they can consider a wider range of alternatives. However, they all point out that diversity also introduces new interpersonal problems and communication difficulties, as my study confirms. To unlock the creative potential of diversity in natural (not laboratory) situations, these complicated issues need to be addressed.

14.2. Implications and Applications

In Chapter 4, I explained that my work provides an abstract explanatory schema related to a particular situation, but that such a schema could shed light on similar situations in different settings and indicate areas for future research. Based upon the literature I reviewed (e.g., Archer & Francis 2005; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2002, 2004; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Rich & Cargile 2004; Wright & Lander, 2003) and the conversations I have had with teachers from other institutions during conferences over the past 6 years, I know that other colleges and universities in the U.S. and other English speaking countries are facing similar situations. My findings can point to problem areas and encourage those institutions to conduct similar investigations. By studying experiences of both student groups and focusing on their co-constructions, researchers can gain fuller understandings of multicultural group interactions. It might be valuable to carry out similar research with different student populations.

In the sections that follow, I will use my findings as clues to point at prevailing conditions and potential problems at the institution where I conducted my research and suggest a multi-pronged approach for self-evaluation and improvement. The discussion includes suggestions for administrators and faculty to review and alter educational philosophy and policy, and proposals for teachers and students to create a constructive and productive multicultural environment for students.

14.2.1. Educational philosophy, policy, and curriculum

By luring NNES students to study in the U.S., the institution where I conducted my research has not only set NNES and U.S. students a major task, but also faculty and administrators. I believe that it would be futile, as past experience has already shown, to continue to expect only NNES students to change and adapt, or to have little pockets of
teachers or willing U.S. students try to make a difference. There should be a concerted and coordinated effort, and self-examination and planning should start at the top.

The institution could start by forming a representative group of faculty, students, instructional deans, and the vice president for instruction to explore and clarify the purpose of diversity and address issues like access, equality, fairness, and why the institution needs to enhance students' understanding of other cultures. This group might lay out achievable diversity goals that uniformly involve all players on campus and provide equitable rewards. If the goal is to prepare students for the future, the group could consider not only how to achieve it but be willing to introspect and consider how different discourses or current attitudes toward the rest of the world prevent smooth working relations on campus. In line with the new goals and in collaboration with all key players, the institution might want to review its curricula and create an implementation plan, which could include alternative course offerings and certificates, ways to prepare students and teachers for multicultural challenges, and new support systems. The institution has very recently committed itself to efforts to improve the situation on campus and has set up a committee charged with this responsibility, but none of the work has commenced yet. As mentioned in the introduction, as a member of this committee I will be able to share my findings and recommendations with them.

14.2.2. Suggestions for teachers

U.S. and NNES students in my study commented on prevailing teacher attitudes and lack of knowledge and skills related to dealing with NNES students in academic classes. Their observations could spur some teachers to assess their own classroom practices, recognize underlying problems, and seek alternative modes of teaching.

In an extensive review of recent research, Ward (2006) cites a study showing U.S. university teachers believed it was incumbent upon international students to assimilate and adapt to the U.S. educational system. They insisted that all students be held to the same standards, and they assumed that international students had the same level of understanding as domestic students about what they were required to do. Participants in my research suggested that many teachers held similar views. Such views often disregard reality. NNES students do not automatically know what to do, nor can we expect them to unless their teachers and educational institution inform them.
Furthermore, research has shown (e.g. Kirchmeyer, 1993) that when students from different cultures have to work together, various complicating factors arise. For example, minority members are often automatically relegated to low status positions as was often the case in my study too, and because they do not feel connected to the group, they contribute less. NNES students in various studies (see Kirchmeyer, 1993) also reported that they had poorer perceptiveness and less depth of self-disclosure during interactions with U.S. group members, and other studies revealed that levels of assertiveness in U.S. students were often significantly higher than for students in other cultures. The students in my study reported similar trends. These factors disturbed interpersonal contact.

What can teachers do? First, Biggs (1999) suggests that the difficulties in multicultural groups often lie "in the teaching, not in the students" (p. 138). Students in my study reported that teachers usually placed students in groups with little or no instruction and left them to battle alone. If teachers plan to use multicultural group work, they need to consider ways to prepare students mentally and emotionally for interaction, provide input and opportunities to practice social skills, and actively guide interaction. Teachers can prepare students initially by clarifying expectations. For example, when I teach the Academic Bridge course, I conduct separate sessions with NNES and U.S. student groups. They share expectations they have of each other with me, which I then relay to the other group. After exploring how they feel about the expectations and what the consequences of non-compliance are, we talk about strategies for working together.

Morita (2004) recommends that teachers recognize the socially constructed nature of group experiences. This is particularly important when students from different groups have to work together. Teachers need to understand that different circumstances create different behaviours in individuals. A silent, non-responsive student in one setting might become a valuable resource in another. For instance, my research showed that NNES and U.S. students used a discourse of difference to refer to each other, and in the process, they created and recreated themselves and each other. Teachers need to understand that when students use a discourse like this to position themselves and others, there might be potentially harmful consequences. They also need to comprehend the potential positive power of positioning, which can reduce negative trends and unlock tremendous potential in students during multicultural group work. Positioning can be harnessed to destroy
harmful stereotypes (discussed in 4.2.5). Teachers can assign students different group roles that bring out their talents thereby altering perceptions. Kirchmeyer (1994) further promotes the idea that teachers should encourage constructive conflict in groups where they actively seek a variety of ideas and opinions and openly confront differences.

Moreover, Wright and Lander (2003) say teachers should recognize that skills for working in homogeneous groups are different from those needed when working in multicultural groups. The latter are socially and emotionally much more demanding. Teachers should create safe and trusting environments where students will be willing to take risks. Teachers should use their “emancipatory authority” (Morita, 2004, p. 599) to legitimize NNES students in their classrooms. For example, NNES students in this study have reported that when teachers set the tone in class by treating NNES students as valuable intellectual and cultural resources, U.S. students soon follow suit.

Finally, teachers at this institution might also want to consider linking learning outcomes for students to relationship building components in non-threatening and non-punitive ways. They might achieve this by creating super-ordinate goals. Teachers can provide authentic circumstances where U.S. and NNES students can be encouraged to work with and not against each other. The goal could be to cooperate so that the real product is successful group interactions and not only academic task completion. On a practical level, these objectives can be reached through providing teachers with information and skills. Workshops organized through the Learning Outcomes Committee and the Instructional Diversity Council on teacher in-service days can create awareness for teachers that will help them set up and facilitate group work more effectively.

14.2.3. Applications for U.S. students

It is generally harder to involve U.S. students on campus in matters of diversity. There are in-service days and the facility to organize additional in-service training for teachers, and NNES students can usually be reached through the English as Second or Other Language (ESOL) department (for immigrants and refugees), Intensive English as a Second Language (IESL) department (for international students), or International Programs’ (IP) special training sessions, but no such avenues exist for U.S. students. The best way to reach U.S. students is through the curriculum and in-class activities, but for
that to succeed teachers need to be willing and committed. The campus newspaper has also been used in the past to convey important messages but with limited success.

Yet, productive U.S. student participation is crucial to improve inter-cultural relations on campus and interpersonal relationships during group work. From the interviews, it became clear that U.S. students operated with stereotypes borne out of ignorance about other cultures and lack of experience with NNES students. Moreover, U.S. student biases reflected strained relationships with the rest of the world and unconstructive elements in the national discourse about illegal immigrants. If left unchecked, such ideas can create greater friction with other nations in the future. Providing more cultural information is necessary, but U.S. students are tired of talking about diversity, as U.S. student M#3 said, “I know it's talked about so much and, like I said, it can get old. The word “diversity” annoys me.” Nevertheless, M#3 and several of her U.S. peers suggested making integration with NNES students an integral part of the curriculum where it would be a natural part of their class work and not something that became a “big deal”. This might not be easy, but I can understand how people in their late teens feel when their teachers try to force them to learn something they might not see an immediate need for or want.

The idea of using the curriculum to open discussions on how to work more productively in groups has potential, but it will require commitment from teachers. For example, in the Sociology, English, Business, Inter-cultural Communication, Small Group Communication, or Speech classes (these are popular and in some cases essential transfer courses for university admission), teachers could focus on actual situations where positioning takes place. They could point out the effects and discuss alternative ways of positioning. During group work, students can discuss the process and be encouraged to try out different positions. The same could be done with the discourse of difference. Teachers could use simulations to sensitize U.S. students. By experiencing what NNES students undergo every day, U.S. students might be encouraged to think more about how they behave toward NNES students.

14.2.4. Applications for NNES students

NNES students can do many things on their own, and teachers can help them to develop better group work interactions with U.S. students. One of the most important things is to improve their academic English before attending classes and to continue
improving. NNES students are often impatient to start their academic studies and deluded about how proficient in English they really are. Improved fluency in English will facilitate greater comprehension of group conversations, provide higher levels of confidence in expressing ideas, and create a sense of self-reliance. Most importantly, if they can be released from the burden of focusing on the language, NNES students will be able to focus on the content of the discussion.

Furthermore, the ESOL and IESL departments can address specific components in their curricula for NNES students. For example, they might create sessions where NNES students can work with U.S. students in groups. After such contact, teacher and NNES students can discuss how individuals positioned themselves and what the consequences were. They can also discuss the local moral order and uncover their understandings of the rights and obligations they believe the different parties have. Such sessions could help NNES students gain an insight into their assumptions and behaviour, and they can be encouraged to investigate and practice alternative ways of thinking or positioning. Moreover, by making students aware of the coping strategies they use, teachers might be able to help students distinguish between productive and non-productive ones.

In addition, before NNES students attend academic classes, talks by teachers from subject areas they might be interested in and frank discussions with U.S. students about U.S. group work customs can provide NNES students with some cultural information. Thereafter NNES students can practice how to participate actively in the safe environment of the ESOL or IESL class. IP has the capacity to arrange sessions like these for international students who do not attend classes in the ESOL or IESL programs.

Finally, teachers could make NNES students aware of the obstacles and choices they face. The students will probably only understand the full impact of obstacles once they are involved in group work with U.S. students, but knowledge about their choices and the consequences of their choices might help them later when reality hits.

14.2.5. Applications for NNES and U.S. students

Should the harmful effects of discourse or positioning prevail on campus, how could teachers break the cycle? Burr (1995) made the point that we behave differently in different situations. This gives me hope that change is possible if people are willing to examine and alter the circumstances in social situations. For example, I do not believe the
NNES and U.S. students in my study were aware that they used a discourse of difference or that they understood the harmful consequences of positioning themselves and others in these kinds of ways. A first step should be to create greater personal awareness in students so that they can understand how they shape their subjective realities. It might help to talk openly with teachers and students. Perhaps by discussing cases from my study, teachers could create an awareness that will help students see what others did, which might encourage them to look at how they speak and behave towards others. Burr believes that by recognizing the discourse and understanding the positions taken within it, the problem is relocated from the intra-psychic to the societal domain. This can have an empowering effect on individuals in groups.

For example, NNES students can be shown that when they describe themselves using concepts like “stress factor” or “creepy”, they position themselves in ways that have harmful consequences for them. They need to understand that by thinking about themselves like this, they create mind-sets that make them live up to those expectations. They can also be made aware that they are not normally a “stress factor” but only feel that way when they are in groups with U.S. students. Instead of thinking there is something wrong with them, they can be helped to see that the context creates certain kinds of behaviour. If they could be reminded that they are untapped resources and people who could provide unique and valuable perspectives from their cultures, they might be encouraged to seize the opportunity to learn through participation. After all, they came to the U.S. because they wanted a different kind of education. This in turn will make U.S. students listen and take notice, which will provide encouragement and make it easier for everybody in the future. In fact, many U.S. students in this study wished NNES students would share ideas freely and stop worrying about their English skills or whether their answers were correct.

In addition, U.S. students could be helped to see that people behave differently in different situations and that circumstances can create quiet or active NNES students or U.S. students. NNES students might be very talkative and willing to share ideas under different conditions. Teachers can also explain how behaviour in one context can be interpreted differently in another. For instance, the same active group behaviour in the U.S. could be seen as inappropriate, abrasive, overconfident, and egocentric in another
country. Furthermore, instead of taking a superior position and feeling annoyed by NNES student behaviour or being the victim of their silence, they can be encouraged to take another position where they use initiative and leadership to unlock some of the NNES students’ potential thereby empowering not only them but also NNES students.

When individuals are positioned by others in a certain way, they often react by repositioning themselves, and when the discourse portrays them in a specific light, they resist through trying to change the discourse. These are all useful tools, but the idea is not to only promote resistance or repositioning, but also to encourage both parties to claim beneficial positions at the outset that will help both sides achieve their goals.

14.3. Signs of Hope

Using the findings from this study, I put together a proposal for a New Academic Bridge course for NNES students in the IESL program, which my superiors encouraged me to develop and pilot. In this program, IESL students in the highest level take a 5-credit academic class where they do extensive group work. They also receive English language and study skills training to support their academic class. The program is set up so that I am present in class with them, which allows me to observe their behaviour while they work with domestic students in groups. During the study skills class, I provide NNES students with feedback. We discuss the consequences of certain actions and possible alternative remedies, and then students draw up their own action plans. They review their progress with me regularly and reflect upon it in their daily journals. In addition, to help NNES students venture out from their comfort zones in a safe environment, a peer mentor (domestic student volunteer) role-plays alternative behaviours with them.

During the first pilot period, I had several group and individual discussions with the domestic students, which led me to believe that the next step in this pilot program should be to work with them to provide similar guidance, support, and practice. Nevertheless, there were notable improvements in NNES-U.S. student relationships. U.S. students often willingly worked with NNES students, helped them but also insisted on getting help, and proclaimed their appreciation for learning about their cultures and different habits. They also welcomed NNES questions in class because they often had not even thought about
issues raised by these questions. In addition, because of my presence, the academic instructor, by his own admission, was more aware of the potential problems of group work and took a number of important steps to facilitate student relationships. He arranged more opportunities for students to get to know each other, carefully selected student groups, deliberately drew in NNES students, and often allowed me to talk to domestic students. Discussions are currently under way to expand the project with an eye to wider application and permanent installation.

Even though the results are encouraging, and all participants feel that this program is a step in the right direction, I noticed deep-seated resistance to change in NNES students. Angyal (1965) explains that we have to see individual actions as part of a personal behavioural system. We cannot expect to isolate and immediately change one aspect without at least considering how that will affect other parts of the system. For example, by trying to get a NNES student to be more active in class, we might be requiring a behaviour change that could affect many other components of her/his behaviour system, and by demanding change in one area, we might be causing chaos in the rest of the system. Hence, teachers need to use patience and gentle persistence to coax students in the right direction and remain mindful of the enormity of the challenge we set them.

14.4. Final Comments

Some of the proposals above can be implemented successfully as individual pieces, but to make a real difference on the campus where I conducted my study, the administration, teachers, and students all have to become willing partners. I pointed out at various stages in this dissertation that the harmful consequences of multicultural group work often originated from unintentional everyday activities. By creating a greater consciousness of how things can go wrong and a willingness to seek better ways of operating, the different parties can play their respective parts to make a difference one encounter at a time. None of the suggestions will be easy to implement; if they were, this research project would not have been necessary. However, because of my findings there is hope that this previously unavailable information can be used to encourage teachers and students to unlock the promise of multiculturalism and ensure safe but dynamic learning environments for all students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>NNES Student Profiles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R#1</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Taiwan (interviewed October 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R#1 started in the Intensive English as a Second Language (IESL) program fall 2002. He placed in level 2 and finished level 5 in summer 2003. He has completed four academic quarters and is busy with the fifth. He is more mature not only in age but also in thought and demeanour than most of his fellow international students. He finished 2 years in the Taiwanese Army and worked for 4 years before coming to the USA. He wants to obtain a business degree, and he will transfer to a university once he finishes at this college. His pronunciation is very poor and his lack of vocabulary makes it very difficult for him to express his opinions completely. He radiates quiet determination, a sense of humour, and a willingness to be even-handed and fair.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R#2</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Japan (interviewed November 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R#2 started in the IESL program spring 2003 and placed in level 4 (Advanced). He is in his fourth academic quarter. He says he became less active here because his English skills are not strong enough for him to express his ideas fully. In addition to improving his English, he is learning to speak Spanish. His major is business. He is an accomplished soccer (football) player and is part of the campus team. He describes himself as a fun-loving person who puts academic study second. He wants to be an import-export entrepreneur.</td>
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<tr>
<td>V#1</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Hong Kong (interviewed November 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>V#1 started the IESL program in winter 2003 and placed in level 3 (High Intermediate). She is in her fourth academic quarter. She attended a high school administered by the British in Hong Kong, but admitted that there were only Chinese students in her school. She occasionally had a native English-speaking teacher for her English classes. V#1's very feminine appearance and self-deprecating manner when speaking are misleading because she is a very determined student with specific goals, which she is pursuing in earnest. Her major is business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P#1</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>41 years</td>
<td>Ukraine (interviewed December 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P#1 is a more mature student, and he has been studying at this institution since winter 2002. He will finish at the end of winter or spring 2005. He is trying to qualify as a carpenter. He is an active member of TRIO (student ambassador program). He came to the U.S. with his wife and children as an immigrant. He has been trying very hard to improve his English but feels that his age is against him. He is religious and says he believes in the golden rule. Throughout the interview, he tried to look at the NNES student situation from both the NNES and U.S. student sides. He was very concerned about not appearing unintelligent because of his lack of English skills, and said that he often feels insecure and unsure of himself during conversations in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M#1</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>Japan (interviewed December 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M#1 describes herself as an outgoing, happy, popular, and sociable student and claims to have many international friends on campus. She says she is socially flexible and adept which means that she can be friendly, playful, and child-like with her peers, but professional, respectful, and serious with her teachers or seniors. She entered academic classes without going through the IESL program because her English proficiency skills were high enough. She started classes in winter 2004. She wants to major in early childhood education. She is dating a U.S. student.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>A#2</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>R#5</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C#1</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>U.S. Student Profiles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A#1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>A#1 identifies himself as a “white American” and is in his third quarter at this college. He grew up in an all-white, conservative logging town in this state where there were no other minorities or international students in his school. He dropped out of school before matriculating; however, after the birth of his first child he realized this was a mistake and decided to go back to school. He matriculated in spring 2004. He now is a stay-at-home dad and studies part-time. He attends night classes and has completed several in-class and on-line courses. He will start taking regular day classes next year. He tutors 9 hours a week in the English Department Writing Centre and has a reputation for being empathetic and patient with international students. He hopes to finish his AA degree and then wants to go on to university for his BA degree in English. His wants to be a teacher. He feels he is older and more mature than other students are. During the interview, he mentioned that his view toward other (non-white) people has broadened since he left his hometown. He has never gone abroad.</td>
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<td>Pseudonym Gender Age</td>
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<td><strong>J#1</strong> Male 18 years (interviewed December 2004)</td>
<td>J#1 identifies himself as a “white American” and has been at the college since fall 2002. He is completing his studies at the college this quarter and according to him, will transfer to the “most liberal college in the state” next quarter. He started as a Running Start student and matriculated at the end of fall 2002. Running Start is a special program that allows gifted students or students that struggle to fit into a regular high school to matriculate through a college. He mentioned attending alternative schools with special programs for gifted students before coming to this college. J#1 feels he needs to be challenged in class and thrives on debate and lively group discussions. He is not yet sure of his major or future plans. He grew up in the suburbs or as he says, “a white ghetto”, where there were only white students in his school. He admits that only one Japanese family lived in his immediate neighbourhood. He has never gone abroad.</td>
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<td><strong>R#3</strong> Male 26 years (interviewed December 2004)</td>
<td>R#3, a “white American” from “German extraction” studied at this college during fall and winter 1995. After he matriculated at the end of winter 1995, he worked in various companies. He later started his own business and as a result, decided to resume his studies part-time in spring 2004. He hopes to major in business and will then expand his company. He is outgoing and friendly. He has started a club on campus to create greater interaction outside class between U.S. and international students. He is interested in talking with people from different countries and takes pride in his ability to understand the plight of international students. He is currently dating a Japanese student. He has never travelled or lived abroad, but hopes to do so soon.</td>
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<td><strong>J#2</strong> Male 20 years (interviewed December 2004)</td>
<td>J#2, a self-identified “white American” has been at this college since fall 2000. He enrolled as a Running Start student and matriculated at the end of fall 2000. Even though he completed his Associate in Arts Degree at the end of summer 2002, he continues to take additional classes. He is working part-time and is not sure of his plans for the future. He says he is reserved in class, and he admits that he does not like to participate much even though he knows he should. His said that his reluctance to participate in class is often due to lack of knowledge and a fear of making a fool of himself in front of others. He has not been abroad.</td>
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<td><strong>H#1</strong> Female 18 years (interviewed December 2004)</td>
<td>This is H#1’s first quarter at this college. She identifies herself as a “white American with German ancestors”. She was a high school exchange student for a few weeks in Japan and has since then been in contact with a lot of Japanese exchange students that she met at this college and through her church. Her mother is a teacher at one of the local schools. She describes herself as gentle, thoughtful, and serious, and her comments during the interview demonstrated a level of maturity beyond her 18 years. H#1 has attended schools where there were a wide range of students from different countries and ethnic backgrounds. She mentioned that she was taught from a very young age to work with people from all lifestyles. She wants to become a teacher.</td>
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<td>J#3 Female 20 years (interviewed January 2005)</td>
<td>J#3, self-identified as “white American”, has been at this college since fall 2003. She matriculated at the end of fall 2003. She is unsure of her future plans but thinks that she would like to major in Environmental Science or Political Science. She says she has strong views about topics and appreciates lively and stimulating class discussions. She has not ever gone abroad but hopes to do so in the future. She is studying French as a second language and has participated in the Conversation Partner program (the purpose is to help international students meet American students and improve their English skills) in order to meet students from other cultures; however, she stopped because she became frustrated with the lack of commitment from her Japanese and Chinese conversation partners. She has not traveled beyond the U.S. borders.</td>
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<td>M#2 Male 18 years (interviewed March 2005)</td>
<td>M#2, a “white American” started attending classes at this college in fall 2004 and he matriculated at the end of the same quarter. He participated in one of the many high school exchange programs in the state and spent several weeks in Japan. He wants to become an English as a Second Language teacher. He is currently learning Japanese and has several Japanese friends on campus. He is interested in other cultures and makes it his business to “infiltrate” NNES student groups. He claims to be one of the few students on campus that actively seeks out international students. His friendships with NNES students are mutually beneficial: He provides English language help in exchange for Japanese language practice. He displays a lot of knowledge about them. He feels he is also able to understand their situation and empathize with the difficulties they experience. Because he is learning to speak Japanese, he understands their need to be silent. He is proud of the fact that he deliberately includes NNES students in class. He believes he is a mild-mannered, retiring, and serious person. He has a slight physical deformity (much shorter than average and walks with a limp).</td>
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<td>B#1 Male 19 years (interviewed March 2005)</td>
<td>B#1, an engineering major, is a bright, enthusiastic, and articulate “white American”. He started studying at this college in summer 2001 and matriculated at the end of that quarter. In November 2004 he was awarded the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) West Region Outstanding Student Award for Two-year Schools (“in recognition of his hard work, dedication, academic achievement and desire to make a difference on and off campus”—CommuniGator, April 29, 2005). He also serves on the NACA Board of Directors as Student Representative. His teachers claim that his polite, polished, and confident manner makes him a true American gentleman, and his calm, balanced, and optimistic outlook on life a natural leader. He is the Artist &amp; Speakers Series Coordinator on campus. Two months after I interviewed him, the students elected him the new student body president (I was not aware that he was running for president when I interviewed him). He attended all-white schools and only met students from different cultures at this college. He has travelled abroad to Australia with his parents on vacation. It is his dream to travel and work abroad.</td>
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<td>L#1 Female 20 years (interviewed April 2005)</td>
<td>L#1 describes herself as an assertive and no-nonsense “white American” student. She is bright and articulate, talks fast, and has very definite ideas about issues. She radiates self-assurance and is very active in various social activities on campus. She is vice president of the student body and her major is nursing. She admits to being impatient and easily frustrated when things do not go as planned, and explains that she does not suffer fools lightly. She has not traveled abroad.</td>
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<td><strong>J#4</strong></td>
<td>Male 18 years (interviewed May 2005)</td>
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<td>J#4, a “white American with Irish roots”, became vice-president of the student body several weeks after I interviewed him (I did not know he was in contention at the time of the interview). He is a very talkative, outgoing, and social person. He says that while he enjoys socializing with NNES students and has to supervise them through CLEO (student ambassador program), he does not want to work with them in groups in class. He wants to be a teacher. Though he appreciates the opportunity to learn from NNES students and gain different perspectives, he is clear about how far he is willing to go: NNES students are fun to be with socially, but not to work with as partners in groups. Nevertheless, he is aware of the negative impact he and his fellow US students have on the NNES students. In November 2005 (6 months after I interviewed him), he received the National Association for Student Activities West Region Outstanding Student Award. He is also a Resident Assistant at Campus Corner Apartments (on-site campus residence). He has not travelled or lived abroad.</td>
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<td><strong>T#1</strong></td>
<td>Male 27 years (interviewed October 2005)</td>
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<td>T#1 identifies himself as an “American with Croatian and Philippino parents”. He says he is very patriotic and proud that all his family members made an effort right from the start to learn English, assimilate, and contribute to this country. He expressed intense resentment that so many international students do not do the same. He has studied at universities and colleges in California and Washington State and worked with students from different nationalities. While working on a fishing trawler in Alaska, he had “bad” experiences with Russians and Ukrainians. He also “did not have good experiences” with Hispanic students in Washington State. He is a tall and strongly built football player with many tattoos on his arms. Yet he is soft-spoken and his appearance belies his gentle and courteous manner. He wants to finish his AA degree but has to retake many classes because the credits from California do not transfer to Washington. He plans to be a football coach and work with groups, which he finds ironic because he hates working in groups himself. He has strong opinions, which he expresses cautiously and diplomatically. He is aware that he is older and more experienced than most of his classmates and admits that he is a reluctant leader with a stubborn streak. He does not like to engage in controversial or political debates.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>M#3</strong></td>
<td>Female 19 years (November 2005)</td>
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<td>M#3 claims to be a force to be reckoned with. She has a white mother and a black father and admits that she identifies more with her white mother and the white world than her black father and the black community. She expressed great admiration for the blond “Abercrombie and Fitch-looking” Danish students (on a short-term program) and disdain for the Asian hip-hop “wannabes” on campus. She says that race matters to her, as does rank and status. She articulated strong views about most things and expressed them frankly and confidently. She constantly made comparisons and used clearly defined criteria by which she judged different groups. She is outgoing in a bold way, assertive with an angry edge, and her outspokenness displayed a devil-may-care attitude. She says she believes strongly in individuality and independence and feels herself equal to all her teachers. She has not travelled beyond the U.S. borders.</td>
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Appendix B
Information Sheet for Student Volunteers

Project description
A growing number of international students are coming to Green River Community College to study, and as a result the changing environment requires adjustments from the institution, international students, teachers, and American students. These adjustments are often difficult and complex and need to be reviewed periodically. Recent anecdotal and statistical data gathered on campus revealed that teachers, international and American students have very different expectations of the educational situation creating the potential for misunderstanding and discontent.

This research project will be conducted at Green River Community College over the next two years to:

• Investigate how students involved in multicultural group work perceive, interpret, and interact with each other in their immediate classroom environment.
• Examine which social processes and structures have meaning for different members, how the processes and structures influence them, and how the players use and manipulate them.
• Determine which institutional factors influence and shape multicultural group interaction processes in the classroom.

Use and benefits of the study
The information gathered in this study will be used by the researcher:

• To write her research dissertation as a requirement for a MPhil/PhD at the University of Surrey, UK.
• To inform key college administrators, instructors, and students about the current state of multicultural relationships at Green River Community College. All participants will receive a copy of the findings. Interested parties will be invited to attend an In-Service Day session on campus to discuss how current strengths can be exploited, and explore possible short and long term solutions to shortcomings.

Obligations and commitments of volunteers during the study
Participants selected for this study will be required to:

• Frankly answer questions during one fifty-minute audio taped interview. Participants will be interviewed individually about their personal observations and experiences during multicultural group work in Green River Community College classes.
• Attend a focus group meeting (75 minutes) at the end of the study to verify the accuracy of the combined data. Participants will be able to express their opinions freely and suggest possible amendments to the material.
• Be observed by the researcher in a classroom setting (no more than twice) during multicultural group work. The observation will not be videotaped, but the researcher will take field notes.

Volunteer rights
All participants have the right to:

• Decline the invitation to participate in the study.
• Withdraw from the study at any stage without having to give a reason.
• Insist on the confidentiality of all identifiable information and data in the final product.
Consent Form

I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on *Reality during Cross-Cultural Group Encounters* conducted by Vivette Beuster under supervision of Dr. Jocelyn Robson and Dr. Sue Saxby-Smith at the University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XH, United Kingdom.

I hereby acknowledge that:
- I have read and understood the Information Sheet for Volunteers
- I have been given a full explanation by the investigator of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result
- I have been given adequate time to consider my participation

I understand that:
- All personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (U.K. 1998), Green River Community College Procedures and Policies, and the WAC (Washington Administrative Code, U.S.A.) and accordingly I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved
- I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice

I confirm that I have read and understood the above and:
- I freely consent to participating in this study
- I agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study

Participant signature: __________________________ Date: ________________

(Print name in BLOCK CAPITALS) ______________________________________

Researcher signature: __________________________ Date: ________________

(Print name in BLOCK CAPITALITIES) ______________________________________

Witness signature: __________________________ Date: ________________

(Print name in BLOCK CAPITALS) ______________________________________

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References


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