

**Chinese Indonesians pursuing Higher Education in Singapore:
A Grounded Theory Approach**

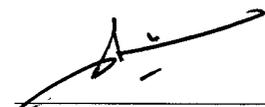
**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Education
at the University of Leicester**

**by
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January 2011

DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work and no part of it has been submitted for a degree at this, or any other, university.



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CHINESE INDONESIANS PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

ABSTRACT

This study generates a substantive theory of how Chinese Indonesian undergraduates adapt themselves in a Singapore private university. This thesis adopts an interpretivistic perspective and engages grounded theory research methodology. The principal source of information is a series of in-depth individual and focus group interviews with a group of 20 participants, supplemented by their diary accounts of their study activities over a week-long period.

The first major outcome of this study is the generation of the theory of Selective Accommodation that describes how these international students apply various social-psychological strategies based on their perceptions of their sojourn in a foreign country and on their future intentions. Their accommodation distinctiveness, on the one hand, is a response to the perceived political persecution they face as minorities in their home country and to their acquired Indonesian culture. On the other hand, their accommodation strategies are also facilitated by Singapore's vision of becoming a global educational hub. The result was the derivation of five accommodation categories of push factors, pull factors, pliability, study mechanisms and future direction.

The second major outcome that arises from the grounded theory approach is the development of a typology of Chinese Indonesians based on how they react to the five categories during their three-year tertiary courses. This typology consists of four Ideal Types of accommodation, namely ambassadors, adherents, achievers and apathetics.

In short, this study provides a fresh perspective on how foreign students adapt to life on foreign soil in their own unique ways. At the same time, it has implications for the development of theory, practice and educational research in cross border student migration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FROM frustration to fear; from anxiety to anger – this thesis has been an arduous exercise in patience and persistence since it was first conceived six years ago – not so much from the writer but the many Chinese Indonesian students who have been approached to assist in its formulation. As readers will uncover the reasons for themselves, it is to these brave young ‘jiwa bebas’ (free spirits) that much gratitude is owed. Thanks for accompanying me on this uncharted journey.

THE recurring temptation to stop, pause and change course (usually in an attempt to move away from painting some students in a less than favourable light) was thwarted by my sympathetic but strict supervisor, Professor Clive Dimmock, who continually challenged me to rise above my personal reservations to reach a purposeful academic pursuit. My heartfelt thanks too to Dr Andrew Townsend who, acting as both examiner and editor, demanded professionalism and perfection in my final script.

FINALLY, to my family and especially my selfless wife, Chrisashley Shiyi, who delivered our third child in Singapore on September 21, 2010; the same day that I was half way across the globe at the University of Leicester to present my viva. Instead of a husband instructing his wife to push harder, it was the wife who delivered the order to push on!

THIS dissertation would not have been possible without such unstinting support. To them, and to those whose contribution I lapsed to mention, may I extend the Indonesian way of expressing one’s sincerest gratitude – ‘terima kasih’.

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CHAPTER ONE

Statement of the Problem

1.0 Introduction

This thesis examines two key questions that have not been dealt with academically or systematically in education research: (1) Why do Indonesian Chinese decide to pursue Higher Education study abroad, especially in Singapore? (2) What are the study habits of these students once in Singapore?

To understand this phenomenon, 20 Indonesian Chinese who studied on a British off-shore degree at a Singapore private university were selected to participate in this study. Following requests by the said university and some participants, its identity was kept confidential and referred to throughout this study as the 'case institution'. A profile of these students during the study, which included both recent graduates and undergraduates across the three-year course, is presented in Chapter 3.

This introductory chapter encapsulates the intent of the thesis: it justifies the need for such a study (§1.1); details its aims and purposes (§1.2); sets out the research questions to be examined (§1.3); and summarises the research outcomes (§1.4) and their limitations (§1.5).

1.1 The Research Problem

Although the research problem to be investigated in this thesis is unequivocally educational, it has as its roots the backdrop of Indonesian politics – one that reached a crisis point in the late 1990s, and remained an important contextual factor today. As a political milestone in South-east Asia, the summer of 1998 spelt the fall of President Suharto, the second and last of Indonesia's dictatorial leaders (in the authoritarian footsteps of First President Sukarno, 1945 – 67). Suharto's equally corruption-tainted regime lasted three decades from 1967-98 and his forced resignation that year had followed a coup de grâce of violence, demonstration and almost-ethnic cleansing of the local Chinese by the ethnic Indonesians of mainly Javanese origin. This anti-Chinese aggression continued a pattern familiar in the context of the migration of mainlanders

from China to South-east Asia, especially after the collapse of the Chinese imperial system in 1912 (Schell, 1990). The uneasy co-existence of Chinese emigrants with the natives of Malay stock in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore was particularly jarring. The Chinese viewed their right to claim these countries as their new-found homes whereas the locals saw them as ‘outsiders’ or even ‘intruders’ (Scott, 1998).

To a large extent, this claim was similarly made by Singapore Chinese, whose ancestors migrated to the island-state in large numbers in the early 20th Century, at the same time as other mainland Chinese flocked to other parts of South-east Asia. But Singapore’s geopolitics favoured the Chinese immigrants. Their sheer number overwhelmed the native Malays to reach the current stable level of 75% as opposed to the Malay’s 15%. The island-state has been ruled since independence in 1959 by a pre-dominantly Chinese leadership.

1.1.1 Why do Indonesian Chinese present a research problem?

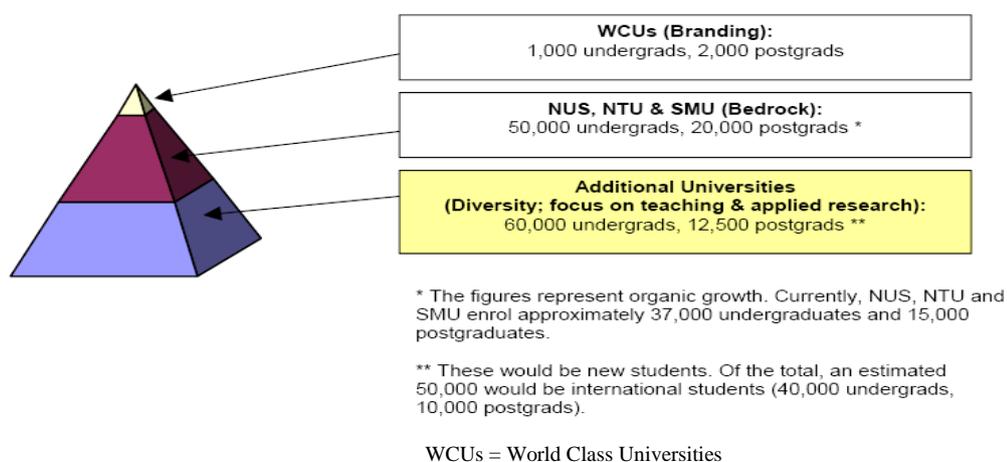
The era of Reformasi – borrowed from the English word “reform” that marked the period from the sudden resignation of President Suharto in 1998 to the current New Order Regime – had signalled sustained trouble for the Chinese. Thousands of ethnic Chinese students had originally nurtured a hope that they could complete their tertiary education in their homeland, given the wide choice of 81 public universities and 2,514 private campuses. Instead, they saw their hopes lying in tatters – or elsewhere. It was the first and clearest push-factor signal for Chinese Indonesian parents to do what all guardians do for their charges – despatch them overseas (Juliastuti, 2006).

Their favoured first-stop was Singapore, an island-state that is fundamentally attractive in many ways – geographical proximity being one – but also educationally. For the Chinese students, their aspiration (some might argue, desperation) about their own educational self-existence paralleled that of their parents – the push factors meant their educational ambitions could not be realised in Indonesia, where ethnic Chinese form a precarious 1.5%, or 3 million, of total population.

The problem with political persecution, however, should not be over-stated. Many international students studied abroad even if their home universities made them feel wanted. Some Chinese families who were well-received in their mixed communities in

Indonesia did not feel the pressure of political persecution and chose to come to Singapore for two other reasons: the status and opportunities of studying abroad; and the presence of an English-speaking Chinese majority in Singapore. In these instances, ‘pull factors’ of host countries become important and many seem to opt for Singapore even as there are other prestigious universities elsewhere. Singapore is setting itself as a Higher Education hub for South-east Asia and its government is keen to attract tertiary students from the region given its four quality universities and its strength in the use of the English Language. Given the fact that there are more Indonesians in Singapore than in Australia or the United States, one could argue that state institutionalism – in the form of the Singapore government’s vision to make the city-state a regional educational hub – plays a dominant role. Based on the Department of Statistics data in Singapore (2005), the education services sector contributed S\$3.9 billion or 2.0 per cent of Singapore’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). See Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1 – Breakdown of International Tertiary Students in Singapore



Source: Economic Review Committee (Government of Singapore) Report 2003

Singapore’s portion of the global share of international tertiary students is only 1 per cent of 1.8 million, most of whom go to the United States (33%). With a concerted long-term approach in developing overseas education in Singapore, the domestic industry has the potential to contribute 3 to 5 per cent of GDP, which would be comparable to established education hubs such as the UK and Australia (Economic Review Committee, 2003). It would appear that the Singapore “brand”, propelled by an aggressive government policy, is a dominant pull factor.

In addition, Indonesians enjoy the extra so-called three Cs of a cheap, close and comfy tertiary option. The island-republic provides a safe and secure study environment for their children, as well as relatively cheap accommodation and affordable cost of living. Singapore also provides the advantage of proximity. While no official records are available to indicate the return rate of graduating students to Indonesia, a liaison officer at the case institution noted that a majority of Indonesian graduates regularly apply for job placements via the university to work in Singapore instead of returning home. Others who do not apply usually head for further studies, mainly in the United States or Great Britain. For them, Singapore is a stopover destination.

1.1.2 How does the presence of Indonesian Chinese students in Singapore help shed light on the research problem?

No previous research has investigated overseas educational opportunities in Singapore that are directly linked to or the result of the political context, ethnicity and educational infrastructure in Indonesia. The most established research in the last 20 years has been the projects of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore and its equivalent research think tank, the Habibie Centre in Indonesia. The researcher with a consistent interest in Indonesia-Singapore affairs is Professor Leo Suryadinata, an Indonesian academic operating out of Singapore. He has published extensively on Indonesian politics and the Chinese in South-east Asia. His more recent books include *Interpreting Indonesian Politics* (1998); *Chinese and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia* (1999); *Nationalism and Globalization: East and West* (2000); and *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (2001). His political research has pointed to Singapore as a *cukong* writ large. (*Cukong* are Indonesian businessmen, often ethnic Chinese, who are beholden to the regime and end up as its financiers.) The Indonesians regard these Chinese as traitors and blood-suckers. Equally, Singapore is negatively looked upon as a ‘political *cukong*’ trying to control the financial nerve centres in Jakarta (Suryadinata, 1999).

The key research problem is to study the Indonesian perspective by understanding the reasons for their movement away from Indonesia, including whether Singapore is a convenient stop or a choice destination for them. Singapore could either be their destination for the pursuit of academic excellence or a tailor-made excuse to run away from persecution and domestic problems. If it is the former, this study will examine

whether their ‘fight’ motivation to excel despite all the odds will psyche them to be highly focused and strongly motivated. If it is the latter, this study will examine how they manage their studies in Singapore given their low ‘flight’ motivations. The fight-or-flight dichotomy, with many students possibly straddling somewhere along a continuum, is thus a worthwhile research problem. In this respect, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988), which is an extension of the social psychologist’s earlier Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), is relevant to the current study. The theory explores the link between attitudes and behaviour and is one of the most predictive persuasion theories in social psychology that could be used to study educational motivation. It has been applied to studies of the relations among beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions and behaviours and is therefore suitable for the current research purpose.

From the Singapore perspective, an understanding of the Indonesian influx would help to determine whether Singapore could indeed serve as an educational hub, or at least a springboard to US/European destinations. In the former case, this study would serve to identify the gaps in the Singapore tertiary system and to enhance its attractiveness. In the latter case, this study would strengthen its role as a ‘stopover’ destination and assist the students to fulfil their academic dreams. In both instances, the ability of Singapore to retain some of these foreign talents for its own economic development would also be explored.

At a broader level, this study hopes to examine whether there are cross-border implications for student migration in the sense that the Indonesia- to- Singapore flow is perhaps indicative of a much broader developing country-to-developed country flow. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that student migration to host countries is inversely proportional to the availability of quality tertiary education in the source countries. Despite this acknowledgement, many developing countries have not been prepared to accommodate the increased domestic demands for higher education.

Finally, in the more specific area of study habits, the research problem is addressed by examining closely the learning styles, group study methods and self-study strategies of the Chinese Indonesians to see how they are affected, positively or otherwise, by their political, social and cultural backgrounds. At a more general level, this study would examine if study habits are universal across students of a similar ethnicity (being Chinese

and/or being Indonesian) or a similar disposition (being historically and/or culturally persecuted). At a more personal level, it would examine whether these study habits are in consonance with students pursuing a tertiary education. For example, some students may find it difficult to make a transition from their spoon-fed secondary years to a more self-reliant university experience. In both cases, their coping mechanisms would be studied for their faults and strengths.

1.2 Research aims and purposes

The Indonesian political backdrop provides the context for this study, the importance of which centres on why some Chinese Indonesians choose to study overseas in Singapore (there are research problems of dislocation and of choice) and how they manage their studies after their arrival (for example, the problem of settling into a new and different environment). Mazzarol (1998) proposes that the decision process through which an international student moves when selecting a final study destination involves three distinct stages:

a. In the first stage, a student decides whether to study internationally or locally. Here, it could be surmised, that the push factors of perceived political persecution and poor quality or limited range of universities in Indonesia are dominant reasons. Strong psychological and financial support from families, friends and the communities are also indicative reasons.

b. The next stage is the selection of a host country where pull factors become attractive, making one host country relatively more attractive than another. In this regard, it could be hypothesised that Singapore as a country is a destination of choice because of its proximity, affordability, security and safety. As a provider of tertiary education, its courses are known for their quality, integrity and variety.

c. In the final stage, the student selects an institution over other competing choices. The case institution is partially an inevitability and partially a choice in the following respect. Many Indonesian students would prefer to enrol in the more prestigious top three Singapore universities, but few make the cut academically. Programmes provided by the case institution are deemed the next best in the range for those with lower-grade qualifications. By the same token, however, some students still do not make the cut and have to settle for third-rate institutions offered by other private schools; a few of which were forced to close down by the government in 2008 either for poor financial management or weak corporate governance in terms of education quality.

But what Mazzarol did not cover but which formed a significant part of this study is how these Indonesian Chinese manage their studies in and off campus. That the case institution is a magnet for Indonesians is relevant here. As the highest overseas contingent, the locals could at times be drowned out by the Indonesians especially during lunch and dinner breaks, as Indonesians tend to move in hordes and chatter a great deal, thus making their presence obtrusive. In 2008, they formalised themselves as a social group known as ‘*INxxx*’¹. This social group is to provide themselves with a more conducive studying environment and support structure. Their activities include social networking, study groups, and personal and financial counselling.

Off-campus, their ‘close-knittedness’ has been severely tested as they live apart from each other. While a hostel provided by the case institution was fully operational in 2008, many students shun away from it as they deem it relatively more expensive compared to a group of four of them sharing a rental flat. The latter is also deemed more flexible – friends or families can stay over – and they offer better amenities as they are located close to the working class heartlands. As a result, not only do study patterns differ from individual to individual, they also differ from place (on-campus) to place (off-campus). These issues will be explored in the current study.

1.3 Research questions

The first Research Aim is to explore the phenomenon of Indonesian Chinese Higher Education students going to Singapore to study. The second, more important, Research Aim is to explore how these students manage their experience of studying in Singapore. The study will thus examine two key Research Questions (RQ):

a. Research Question 1 (RQ1): Why do Indonesian Chinese decide to pursue Higher Education study abroad, especially in Singapore?

Specific Research Questions (SRQ1):

- (1) Why don’t they study in Indonesia?
- (2) Why do they choose Singapore as opposed to other possible destinations?

¹ *INxxx* refers to *Indonesians in ‘xxx’, or Indonesians in the case institution.*

b. Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the study habits of these students once in Singapore?

Specific Research Questions (SRQ2):

- (1) Where do they study (on and off campus)?
- (2) How do they study?
- (3) What do they find supportive in Singapore?
- (4) What are the difficulties they face?
- (5) How do they manage or cope with the difficulties?

As students' habits may change as their stay in Singapore lengthens, the study adopts maximum variation sampling (see §1.6 below) to capture any possible differences among students, by selecting participants from a wide range based on the following considerations: those who settle quickly and thrive in Singapore; those who do not settle and continue to struggle in Singapore; those who change their attitude/behaviour once in Singapore – either positively or negatively.

RQ1 is more structural in nature as it involves deep-seated historical distrust, political sensitivities and cultural misperceptions. Thus, issues of ethnicity and bilateral relations are raised for discussion by way of a literature review. RQ2 is more agency or process in orientation as it explores the means by which an individual copes with new experiences and makes sense of his/her newly-acquired symbols and surroundings. The interpretivist case study approach will be used here to develop a deeper understanding of the adjustment processes.

1.4 Significance and outcomes of the research

Since no previous study has been made, or theory generated, of why Indonesian Chinese prefer Singapore as their first-stop and/or how they coped with their study experiences here, this thesis hopes to deliver a number of recommendations based on evidence collected and on the following outcomes:

a. Signposts as to positive educational intervention by way of university policies by the governments of Singapore and Indonesia. For example, the study might indicate how state involvement may be an asset and not an obstacle as state policies should not end up placing the two countries in positions of suspicion and rivalry.

b. Singapore universities adopting a more customised approach in dealing with Indonesian students. The study might, for example, recommend the provision of hostel services, student counselling, home attachment and peer group support to suit the peculiar needs of Indonesians.

c. Indonesian students understanding their own educational needs better. This study might help directionless students make a more honest assessment of themselves and what they truly want, especially if they have been behaving as drifters, loafers, day-dreamers or merry-makers during their sojourn in Singapore. At the same time, it might suggest that the Singapore educational authorities design/offer more appropriate courses of study to suit Indonesians (eg agriculture, urban migration and juvenile delinquency) and to make the challenges of studying in Singapore less onerous.

d. Academics who might be able to argue the pros and cons of an overseas education from the broader perspective of push-pull and fight-flight factors. They might want to scrutinise the case study and grounded theory approach adopted for this study, including research methodology and related issues of trustworthiness and ethics.

1.5 Researcher's positioning in respect of the research

A tragedy that took place in the midst of writing this thesis intensifies the researcher's determination to understand the psyche of Indonesian Chinese in Singapore, especially isolated individuals; as well as the structural and social support systems available – or not – to them. On March 2, 2009, an Indonesian student, David Hartanto Widjaja, stabbed his Electrical Engineering professor, who is also his Final Year project supervisor, at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and later slit his own wrists before jumping to his death from a fourth-storey building in the Jurong campus. Hartanto, an ASEAN Scholarship holder had his annually-reviewed award terminated a month earlier. Despite having had frequent conversations with his mother two weeks before his suicide, David had kept his parents in the dark about his situation. A participant told this researcher: “We didn't expect him to kill himself – not for a scholar, and not in Singapore!”

As a part-time lecturer at the case institution teaching Sociology, Organisation and Social Psychology in the past decade, this researcher has taught many overseas students, the majority of them being Indonesian Chinese. He has become all too well aware of their chatty exterior and wholesome naiveté – characteristics that hide an overwhelming sense

of anxiety and isolation as they struggle in the role of being international students in a fiercely competitive academic ‘rat-race’. The researcher sincerely hopes that this study contribute to the well-being of these impressionable students compelled to live away from their family and familiar surroundings. Despite holding these empathies, this researcher will endeavour to maintain his academic objectivity by curbing his own emotions – bearing in mind that some students actually thrive in a ‘rat-race’ environment. The use of diary entries to complement open-ended interviews should reduce researcher bias here.

1.6 Limitations of the study

This study adopts a purposive sampling method with the intention of capturing a range of different sets of behaviours, reactions and views. Maximum variation sampling is also used to include a range of student experiences in regard to those affected primarily by ‘push’ factors such as political persecution, and others with ‘pull’ factors in mind, such as the prestige of an overseas education. This sampling approach is complemented by saturation sampling, where saturation was reached at 20 students. Nonetheless, the study is based on a non-random sample so care is taken to ensure that, nearer to saturation, students with similar profiles are discarded. Saturation is deemed to be reached only when maximum variation of the various features is achieved as described in Chapter 3.

It has to be stressed that study outcomes could only be applied to the group of participants in question and those who shared similar profiles. Its generalisability to the population would be severely tested due to the use of purposive sampling, whose aim is to derive a range of results that spread the standard deviation (i.e. prevent the findings from regressing to a mean). This is the opposite of random sampling and quantitative methods as the researcher is not looking for generalisation but rather, for differences between the participants.

Another major limitation of the study is the issue of participant bias where students conceal their real intentions or feelings in their interviews or diaries. One way to reduce this Hawthorne-type error is to verify student views with other related situations that they face; ask the same question sets over a different time frame; and cross-compare their views with similar situations faced by other students.

A final limitation is the issue of ambiguity of the language (Fontana & Frey, 1994), especially in diary entries. A striking example is the use of a common phrase ‘*rihat*’ (literally means ‘rest’ in Indonesian) as in “Need to *rihat*; can’t take it anymore.” It is difficult to gauge the intensity of the need for *rihat*. For a little *rihat*, a nap is sufficient. However, in a major *rihat* that is needed to avert a nervous breakdown, a trip back home to Indonesia or having family members visit Singapore, is absolutely essential. In between these extremes are other forms of *rihat* such as going to the cinema or chilling out at a watering hole.

Limitations emanating from the researcher’s end include the need to sieve through hundreds of interview transcripts and diary entries, thus posing the risk of selection bias in that a researcher might unintentionally pick data that fit his/her intended outcome. Even a minor discretion of choosing a colourful quote over a pedestrian remark might incur unintended consequences. Axial coding to a large extent reduces this researcher bias in that it provides a systematic and rigorous way of analysing data sets and sieving out relevant quotes. Ultimately, the main bias is probably the researcher’s own views and attitudes towards the research topic, having taught Indonesian students for years and moved within their social circles. By declaring these upfront, the researcher hopes to be able to consciously try to curb any personal bias when interpreting the data.

1.7 Outline of chapters

There are seven chapters in this thesis. Apart from a general overview of the project in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 contains the relevant literature review covering the major aspects of the study. Chapter 3 defines and validates the chosen research methodology underpinning the study. Chapters 4 to 6 highlight and discuss the key findings of the study, while Chapter 7 summarises the study and provides an adequate conclusion for the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The research aims of this thesis are firstly, to explore the phenomenon of Indonesian Chinese Higher Education students deciding to study in Singapore and secondly, how they manage their experience of studying in the island-state. The study will thus examine two key Research Questions: (1) Why do Indonesian Chinese decide to pursue Higher Education study abroad, especially in Singapore? (2) What are the study habits of these students once in Singapore?

This literature review will start by affirming the growth in the number of international students, with Chinese students being a particularly sizeable group. It will then focus on establishing the educational context for Chinese Indonesians studying abroad generally as well as their preferred destination of Singapore in particular – an area on which no prior study has been done. For these purposes, a literature review is essential “to justify the value of the research and to show why it is distinct from what is documented in the literature” (Creswell, 2003). It will do so by filling in the literature gap as identified in the research aims. Hart (1998) specifies that the literature review is both an argument for one’s research and part of the process in which the students learn about their topic and the field. In short, this review will “stimulate theoretical sensitivity by providing concepts and relationships that are checked out against actual data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It will do so by attempting to address the two main research questions identified earlier.

2.1 Growth in international students globally

The growth in the flow of international students is commonly measured by the average International Student Flow (ISF), which showed an exceptionally high increase of about 9% for the decade between 1960 and 1970. ISF flow then stabilised at a more sustainable 6% in the subsequent decade (Kemp, 1995). There was then a 1% dip in the ISF during the decades of 1980s and 1990s mainly because of world recession and two bouts of oil crises. The current decade (2000 – 2010),

notwithstanding the credit crunch of 2008-09, has seen a return to a more realistic 6 – 7%, or an estimated 1.5 million students studying internationally at the higher education level. A more upbeat study (Bohm et al., 2002) reported that there would be 1.8 million international students in 2002 and projected demand to grow fourfold in the next 20 years, till 2022.

According to the Global Education Digest (2008), Chinese students, mainly from China, formed the bulk of ‘outbound mobile students’ in 2006. China contributed 417,351 while Indonesia generated 33,904 travelling students. The bulk of Indonesian students headed either for Australia (11,302) or the United States (7,844). In South-east Asia, non-Chinese Indonesians headed mainly for Malaysia while Chinese Indonesians opted mainly for Singapore. Germany and Japan were other popular destinations for Indonesians. Of note is that more Indonesians are leaving the country for their educational pursuits than are incoming foreign students – Indonesia on balance has 30,895 more outbound than inbound students; the third highest in the Asia/Pacific region, behind China and South Korea.

2.2 Why students prefer to study abroad

Naturally, push-pull factors provide a balanced starting point and useful conceptualisation to examine why an overseas education is an end-choice for many undergraduates, as they embrace the broadest variation for both the most positive and negative reasons to be factored for consideration. For this purpose, Mazzarol and Soutar’s Push Factors will be contrasted with Chen and Zimitat’s Pull Factors.

Drawing on the findings from questionnaire-based quantitative research studies undertaken in Indonesia, Taiwan, China and India, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) examine the push factors that compel thousands of students to seek their institutions of higher learning outside of their home countries. The authors conclude that perceptions of the lack of quality of the tertiary education system available in the home country are a key push factor. This is linked to the relative wealth of the population and the GNP growth rate in the home country. In essence, affordability determines choice.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) also indicate that historical or colonial links between host and home countries play an important role in determining the ISF direction and destination. They point to a lack of access to higher education among many countries in Asia and Africa as a key driver for much of the ISF that has taken place over the second half of the 20th century. Their destination is often the countries of their previous colonial masters. In this respect, the apparent lack of links between Indonesia and their Dutch colonial masters is telling. One key reason that has been cited is that Holland saw Indonesia more as a trading outpost than a true colony and by the same token Indonesians themselves did not have an assimilation affinity or culture to 'go Dutch' (Kwartanada, 2000).

Chen and Zimitat (2006), on the other hand, surveyed Taiwanese students intending to study overseas either in Australia or the United States. They used an instrument based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1988). TPB's strength is its predictive powers in providing a causal link between attitudes and behaviour to explain whether actual behaviour is easy and consistent with one's attitude. TPB identifies the importance of assessing the amount of control an individual has over his/her behaviour, known as perceived behavioural control. The TPB approach takes into account that behaviours are located at some point along a continuum that extends from total control to a complete lack of control. Control factors include both internal factors (such as skills, abilities, information, and emotions) and external factors (such as situation or environmental factors). In terms of one's behavioural intentions, the components of the model include attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1988). Based on this theoretical assumption, data from 518 international students were analysed to ascertain pull factors related to these behavioural intentions to study overseas.

The authors found that the positive attitude or perceptions of Taiwanese students towards higher education in Australia was of greatest importance in shaping their intentions for overseas study there instead of in the United States. The key forces were individual beliefs about overseas study and their optimistic perceptions of the outcomes of an overseas education. These perceptions included the host's economic power and the excellence of its universities. Other positive perceptions were based on the fact that Australia provided improved English proficiency and skills, an enhanced

understanding of western culture, improved job prospects and other first-hand tacit knowledge.

As for Taiwanese students intending to study in the United States, the authors found that the influence of kinship and network was most significant. Many Taiwanese had family and friends who had experienced living and studying in the US rather than in Australia, so there was no lack of information about higher learning in the US. In addition, returning students might have assumed positions of influence and power which would further reinforce perceptions of benefits of US studies among family and friends. This pull factor is consistent with Gatfield's (1997) findings that family and friends have greater influence in selection behaviour of Asian students compared with Australian students. Conner and Heywood-Everett (1998) have similarly shown the great influence of family ties among medical students.

2.3 Why Chinese Indonesian students choose to study abroad

Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) study has correctly concluded that the social and economic forces within a home country, including the below-average quality of local universities, do indeed 'push' students to study abroad. In particular, the relative wealth of the home country population and the GNP growth rate in the home country all have an impact acting as 'deterministic' push factors. However, a critical gap in relation to the current study is that Mazzarol and Soutar failed to differentiate between ethnic Chinese and native-Muslim Indonesians in the population sampling. Thus, the study could only at best provide a general framework on broader macro-economic factors (for example, affordability issues) and non-racial social factors (such as self-esteem issues) that are generally applicable to all ethnic groups in Indonesia.

One key difference is that Chinese Indonesians possess an additional disincentive to just 'pack up and go', namely, the uneasy sense of political persecution. An Indonesian academic, Nuraini Juliastuti, noted that political changes since the 1998 unrest have placed the student movement in Indonesia in a state of meaninglessness, such that it was painfully forced to search for new meanings to keep it contextually relevant in the new era. She noted that the focus of today's Indonesian youth had shifted dramatically from big political issues of the past to more localised issues of ethnic communities and self-existence (Juliastuti, 2006). For Chinese Indonesians in

particular, their understanding of their own educational self-existence coincides with that of their anxious parents – namely, that it is inevitable that higher learning takes place outside their home country Indonesia.

To many Chinese Indonesians, the fear is that there is no long-term future for them, and an overseas education is not just a passport for higher learning but also an escape route that brings with it either job opportunities or a permanent new residence, or both. This fear factor perhaps dwarfs other push factors confronting the Chinese Indonesians as they seek new channels and even new identities to escape political and social persecution (Turner and Allen, 2007). If this is a justifiable observation, an interpretivistic approach based on grounded theory might reveal non-empirical findings that have been omitted from Mazzarol and Soutar's quantitative study. This is one gap that the current study hopes to plug.

As for Chen and Zimitat's study, their positivistic TPB methodology may have provided a quantitative argument for the pull factors of an Australian or American destination. But their study failed to consider non-Western destinations such as Japan or Singapore, which may offer different pull factors from those exerted by Western countries. For example, if Taiwanese students in Chen and Zimitat's survey were to consider these two Asian countries (Indonesia and Singapore) as host destinations, they may indicate an entirely different set of pull factors not present in the original study, such as marriage potential with local citizens and, in the case of Singapore, the relative ease of getting citizenship for Indonesian Chinese.

Thus, in considering the importance of family or friends' recommendations to international student study destination choice, it should be noted that alumni can be a valuable source of referral for education institutions. The 'Confucian links' that emerge when a Taiwanese student has to mix with other students would be made much easier if they share racial, language or communal characteristics. A Taiwanese or Indonesian Chinese student, for example, would certainly find conversing with Chinese-speaking Singaporeans easier than engaging with native Americans. Again, an interpretivistic qualitative approach, such as that adopted by the present study, might reveal other, more localised pull factors, including the potential of marriage and

business partners with similar cultural, racial and even income backgrounds. This study intends to fill this research gap.

2.4 Why Chinese Indonesian students choose to study in Singapore

Geographic proximity from the source to the host country is an all-important pull factor as it helps to explain the strong flows of Canadian students to the USA, Korean students to Japan and Indonesian students to Australia and Singapore. Proximity is often associated with reduced cost. A number of studies indicate that many overseas students enjoy the relatively cheaper tuition and living costs in Australia (Baker et al, 1996) and this has prompted speculation that increases in costs in Australian universities might discourage interest. The US is seen as a destination with higher costs of living, which may be seen as a key deterrent for those with affordability problems. Thus a Taiwanese might end up in China (indeed such a trend is emerging) just as an Indonesian might settle for Singapore simply because proximity spells lower overall costs.

Cross-border student migration viewed from the direction of developing countries (such as Indonesia) to developed countries (such as Singapore) is perhaps an area of literature that might benefit from this study. Naidoo (2007) notes that many countries, especially the developing ones, have not been prepared to domestically accommodate an escalating demand for higher education. In the majority of developing countries, higher education institutions can only accommodate less than 5% of those who demand post-secondary education. For example, a staggering five million high school students in China passed the university entrance exams in 2001 and yet local Chinese universities could accommodate less than half of that number (Kaufman and Goodman, 2002). An estimation by Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin (2002) indicates that this shortage of higher education institutions in developing countries is poised to increase in the future as the internationally driven goal of providing basic education for all citizens is being achieved progressively. Due to a shortfall of resources, Naidoo (2007) is concerned that higher education institutions in most developing countries will be unable to keep pace with the associated demand that occurs as more and more students gain access to primary and secondary education.

The outflow of student emigration from developing countries will thus have a significant impact on the inflow of student immigration to developed countries. Confronted with an extremely stretched supply of higher education opportunities from their own domestic institutions, Altbach et al. (1985) observe that many students have decided over the years to enroll in overseas institutions not only as a viable alternative but a temptingly attractive one as well. In particular, students might decide that the costs of overseas study are affordable – or at least absorbable through study loans, bursaries and scholarships.

The gap in cross-border student migration literature is whether state intervention by the developed host destination, acting as a pull factor, would help to resolve the problem of affordability. Given the fact that there are more Indonesians in an aggressively positioned Singapore than in less aggressive Australia or the United States in attracting foreign students, one could perhaps argue that state institutionalism – in the form of the Singapore government's long-term vision to make the city-state a top regional educational hub – plays a dominant pull factor role for cross-border student migration. Based on the Department of Statistics data in Singapore, the education services sector contributed S\$3 billion or 1.9% of Singapore's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2000, rising to S\$3.9 billion and 2.0% respectively by 2005. It would appear that the Singapore 'brand', propelled by an aggressive government policy, is instrumental. The state authorities are also seeking to make tertiary education in Singapore more diverse, by inviting in foreign universities, such as Insead, the European business school, and the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. The National University of Singapore (NUS), the premier University in the island-state, has overhauled its admission procedures to encourage more foreign student participation. Whereas these entry criteria once relied exclusively on examination results and entry tests, they now take into account students' project work and their study interests that might contribute to the overall well-being of Singapore and the region (McNulty, 2000). Another example is the Singapore Management University (SMU), the newest University when it opened in August 2000. SMU is a government-funded institution that has been granted private status to allow greater flexibility in faculty recruitment, remuneration and administration 'along the lines of Ivy-League US universities' (McNulty, 2000). It is all part of the Republic's global education plan to eventually establish itself as a hub

for world-class education and draw in top talent as it develops a knowledge-based economy. Singapore's ambitious roadmap in targeting top institutions had in fact started earlier in 1995 to attract first-class faculty to research and teach, high-calibre students to study, and professionals to upgrade their abilities. It is well on its way in bringing in at least 10 of the world's top universities to set up centres of excellence in education and research.

Such cross-border student migration efforts are beginning to bear fruit. In the past, a bachelor's degree in Singapore has at best put a student at the same level as a good sophomore in the United States. While that level of education was good enough to act as feeders into mid-level hierarchies at multinational companies, it was not sufficient to create value or to qualify for research and development work. Singapore then decided to upgrade the whole education system by bringing in a foreign element that is competitive enough to stir up the local environment. At SMU, this foreign element has been built into its design, for example, in operating under a five-year collaboration accord based on curriculum development and research with Wharton. The intention is to ensure that contact with top researchers will raise local levels of academic achievement (Financial Times, April 23, 2009, p. 12).

NUS and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), the top ranking universities in Singapore, have continued to set the standards for overall educational excellence in Singapore. NUS has worked with the Georgia Institute of Technology to establish a logistics institute; with Johns Hopkins to introduce specialty training for doctors and doctorate programmes in clinical research; and with Carnegie Mellon University to offer a new master of science programme. NTU has forged international alliances to strengthen its programmes and is collaborating with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to conduct five graduate research and educational programmes in Singapore (McNulty, 2000). Private institutions like the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) have benefited from the government's relentless pursuit of foreign students, with the in-flow of Chinese Indonesians particularly notable. As only a small number of these students qualify for the three premier universities, the majority opted for the case institution and its global programmes from the University of London. But how do these students cope once their university destinations have

been decided? This research issue is best dealt with in the next section by tackling the second Research Question on the study habits of the students once in Singapore.

2.5 Literature on student problems/adaptation to studying overseas

To examine adaptation problems faced by students in a foreign environment, the concept of 'place' is a useful analytical tool as it helps to illustrate the complex interactions inherent in being attached to a particular location, especially for a duration of more than a year and not just a short stay of weeks or months. Relph (1976, p. 68) defines place attachment as "a fusion of human and natural order ... defined less by unique location, landscape and communities than by focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings. Places in this sense are not abstractions or concepts but real everyday experiences filled with meaning, with real objects, and with ongoing activities. Recent writers have also adopted the same framework in stressing the importance of human experience in defining space. Migrants, whether temporary or permanent, interact and create a bond with their new environment (Altork, 1994; Hummon, 1990). It is this nexus between people and the environment that creates "place".

Overseas students may experience a number of place attachments at the same time. For example, a student may have a place attachment to his/her home country and a separate place attachment to the host country due to recent familiarity with it. Feitelson (1991) cautions that these different levels of attachment may be incongruent, thus leading to stress and tension. Fullilove (1996) describes three psychological processes that link an individual to his/her new environment: attachment (bond between a person and a special place); familiarity (process of developing cognitive knowledge of environment over time); and self-identity (sense of self-extraction). Migration affects each of these processes.

2.5.1 Personality and the issue of 'pliability'

The individual problems identified by both Feitelson and Fullilove have much to do with the disposition of an individual; the argument being that students with strong personalities, however that is defined, may adjust to their studies better than students with weaker ones. This assumption would of course rein in a whole new field in social psychology or psychoanalysis. For the purpose of this study, a narrower, more

focussed approach is adopted to distil those aspects that have a direct bearing on their study methods and outcomes. The personality of students in relation to their study attitude is heavily dependent upon their perception of whether they have control over their study outcomes as well as whether these outcomes affect their self-image. Rotter (1966) observes that individuals differ regarding the amount of control they feel they have over these life events. An internal locus of control indicates a belief in a high degree of personal control over one's destiny. In contrast, an external locus of control portrays a more pessimistic belief, suggesting little personal control over these social events. Perceived control, or the belief that one's environment can be influenced to determine whether one's experience is positive or negative, is important in predicting pliability — regardless of the degree of control a person actually possesses. Perceived control is generally associated with affecting pliability in that positive controls are more likely to result in participants being more pliable. For example, if perceived internal control is overemphasised for a negative event, a participant may blame himself/herself and reduce his/her ability to adjust well (i.e. being less pliable). A pliable participant, on the other hand, is someone with a better grip of perceived control. The participant is therefore more malleable and does not see himself/herself as the root of adjustment problems in Singapore.

Other literature on study-related personalities focus on the impact of study outcomes on a person's self-image, which is then directly linked to pliability, i.e. how much more willing students are prepared to work harder for the sake of this image. Snyder (1974) notes that individuals differ in the extent to which they are prepared to live by the impressions which other people form of them. The two extremes are:

a. High self-monitors who pay a lot of attention to the impression they are creating. They are more concerned that their presentation of themselves is appropriate in terms of what others are doing. They are willing and able to control their self-expressions and consequently vary their self-presentations from one situation to another. High self-monitors are more likely to conform in social interactions than low self-monitors.

b. Low self-monitors are not as interested in other people's opinion. They are less concerned with others' views about what is appropriate behaviour, are more attentive to their own private motivations, thoughts and desires, and so are less likely to control and vary their self-presentations from one situation to another.

2.6 How overseas students manage their study experiences in host countries

This thesis examines how Chinese Indonesian students, as migrants, attempt to find a balance with each of these processes in their study experience in Singapore, noticeably in the areas of: (1) the living environment (2) the language environment and (3) the learning environment.

2.6.1 Living environment

The literature on adaptation to a foreign living environment is historically concerned with cultural adaptation. This is perhaps because adaptation is deemed a relatively linear but essential process in which arriving students needed to transfer their home culture to their host culture. For those who can manage the transition fairly smoothly, their ethnic identity remained largely unchanged even after extended contacts with another group over a long period of time (Laroche et al., 1997). The basis for this shared identity or similarity of a group of people is commonly based on one or more characteristics. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000) identified these characteristics as a long shared history, a cultural tradition (such as family and social customs), a common geographic origin, language and religion. In this regard, Chinese Indonesians share much in common with Chinese Singaporeans because of their common ethnic stock, historical origin and geographic proximity. Moreover, extensive global migration over the last 50 years has increased cultural diversity in many countries to such an extent that it provides potential networks and ties for new arrivals (Pires et. al., 2006), thereby reducing adaptation shock. Indonesians in Singapore are benefitting from this emerging trend.

As for those who do not manage the transition well, they experience what is commonly known as culture shock. Foreign students are expected to face varying degrees of adjustment difficulties such as the adaptation to a new country, a new social organisation and a different way of doing things, encapsulated in a new national culture. As a result, they often experience varying degrees of culture shock that are precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing familiar signs, symbols and sights at home that are then reflected in culture-based adjustment difficulties in the host country. Without doubt, culture shock is a common source of many stress-induced reactions experienced by outsiders in dealing with the norms and culture of a host

country (Sims and Schraeder, 2004). These often impact negatively on a student's academic performance – all aspects of which this present study aims to pick up.

While culture shock has been variously described in the literature (Black and Gregersen, 1991, p. 462; Solomon, 1994, p. 58), there is agreement that shock arises because foreign students are living day to day, at school and outside their school environment. Inability to perform effectively in the new environment is bound eventually to induce loss of perceived self-worth that manifests most clearly in poor performers or drop-outs. For example, in China's hotel industry, as many as half of the expatriates function at a low level of effectiveness compared with their expected performances back home (Kaye and Taylor, 1997). It is fair to infer that achieving academic success for a foreign student equally depends on successful transition to a new living environment and this requires, in the first instance, a successful resolution of culture shock (Mumford, 1998). In short, the primary task of the student is to make adjustments on arrival, in order to be successful in the host culture.

The present researcher hypothesises that adaptation may be a very individual matter, each student adapting in a complex way, depending upon the degree of readiness to 'make it' in the new culture. Lapsley and Edgerton (2002) found that adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to adaptation difficulties. For many young adults, attending university is one of the first major life transitions. Notably, the young adult must often physically separate from his/her parents, confront a new identity and manage the important daily responsibilities that accompany a more independent collegiate lifestyle. Thus, one way in which such adjustments have been studied is the amount of emotional, physical or financial attachment which young adults have, as some may cling on to their family for support – real or imagined. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), there are four attachment styles in which an individual responds to their 'lost' home comforts:

a. An individual with a secure attachment style has a positive view of the self with an expectation that others are trustworthy, reliable, and available. An individual with a secure attachment style is comfortable with both the newly-acquired autonomy as a result of the separation from his/her family and the new-found intimacy from the connectedness to the host country. A secure individual does not

depend on others for their sense of self-regard, instead deriving it from their own inner strengths.

b. An individual with a dismissing attachment style also has a positive view of the self but he has low dependency needs, making him disdainful of close, intimate relationships. This avoidance of intimacy is thought to be a self-protective stance against rejection and disappointment.

c. An individual with a preoccupied attachment style has a negative view of the self as unworthy or unlovable, although others are regarded positively by him. Indeed, close relationships are highly desired in order to gain acceptance. This results in strong dependency needs and a tendency to become enmeshed in relationships.

d. An individual with a fearful attachment style also has a negative view of the self as unworthy or unlovable, and with strong dependency needs. But he/she avoids intimate relationships because of his/her view of others as rejecting, untrustworthy, and unavailable.

In the current study, it will be interesting to see whether the Chinese Indonesians who exhibit a secure attachment style also display a greater degree of psychological independence from their parents in Indonesia, thereby aiding their adjustment in Singapore. Similarly, will others with a dismissing attachment style also show a pattern of psychological independence from parents? This hypothesis follows from the claim (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) that both secure and dismissing styles are characterised by low dependency needs (although they differ on issues of intimacy and connectedness). On the other hand, individuals with fearful and preoccupied attachment styles may show greater psychological dependency on parents. These are the ones with the greatest adjustment problems transiting to life in Singapore.

There is, however, a limitation to the general attachment theories in that there is also evidence to show that poor adjustment may not be caused solely by one's dysfunctional separation from home comforts (Lopez, Campbell & Watkins, 1988). One possible reason for this discrepancy is that there may be more serious symptom patterns that might accompany the transition to a new lifestyle (Rice, Cole & Lapsley, 1990). Christenson & Wilson (1985), in particular, detected discrepancies in people with borderline personality disorder, which means that individuals who showed

greater dysfunctional separation also display a poorer profile of college adjustment (a tendency toward insecure attachment styles).

A second limitation of the parental attachment literature is that most studies that address the implications of attachment theory have been severely confined to parental attachment and adjustment. Little is known about the relationship between adult attachment styles (Chinese Indonesians as full adults) rather than parental attachment styles (Chinese Indonesians as young adults) and college adjustment, where difficulties in dating relationships, with social support, and with the quality of interpersonal relationships are common. These college adjustment problems usually present themselves in the form of therapeutic intervention in student counselling. Thus, adult attachment styles might prove a better target for intervention in such settings than would parental attachment styles (Lapsley and Edgerton, 2002).

In this study, then, the more salient relationship between adult attachment styles and college adjustment is examined. For example, Chinese Indonesian adults with a secure adult attachment style may show a better profile of adjustment than would students with insecure adult attachment styles – notwithstanding their style of parental adjustment.

2.6.2 Language environment

Sumer et al (2008) have identified proficiency in English language as a key contributor to and predictor of depression and anxiety among international students. English proficiency uniquely contributed to the variance in both depression and anxiety for all foreign students although, in their study, Latino students had significantly higher levels of depression than did Asian students. Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) reported that Asian students attending a Canadian university had serious problems with understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions and writing essays. The students considered insufficient facility in English as their major learning problem.

Ladd and Ruby Jr (1999) suggested that the beginning of a new term is the best time for a teacher to meet after class with the international students specifically to discuss methods of teaching, expectations and class rules. The teacher should also enquire

about students' concerns with the host teaching system. This form of communication provides an opportunity for the teacher, especially if he is non-Chinese, to practise pronouncing the names of students and to overcome language barriers. Because many international students are dependent on their host teachers, the brief interaction at the beginning of the semester will go a long way to promote their understanding of class expectations and the system as a whole.

In Singapore, a study by Zhang (2001) of China students shows that their key difficulty was speaking and writing in the English language. The method of teaching English using Chinese for these mainlanders back home parallels Indonesians learning English using Indonesian Malay. Consistent with Zhang's study about local English-language teachers in China, the local English-language teachers in Indonesia shunned the communicative approach of 'teaching a foreign language in the foreign language' as they sincerely believed the pace of teaching would be slowed down and the rate of learning would be slower. Thus they tended to resort to 'teaching a foreign language in the local language'. Admittedly, the non-standard language command of these English-language teachers in China or Indonesia is in itself a hindrance.

The problem for participants in the current study is multiplied when spoken English in Singapore, known as *Singlish*, is usually delivered by local lecturers (including this writer) at a rapid-fire pace with intonations in all the wrong places; making a noun sound like a verb, and vice versa. In an unpublished thesis on mainland Chinese students in Singapore, Ong (2006) noted that the way English language was spoken in Singapore posed problems even for those students proficient in English. According to Ong (2006), "The strange accent and slang of *Singlish* baffled the Mainland Chinese... this phenomenon has such a profound impact on some prospective Mainland Chinese students that they refuse to study in Singapore. (p. 113). He concluded that the answer lies with the reform of the English language environment within the institutions and at a national level in order to prevent the best mainland Chinese talents from giving Singapore a miss because of *Singlish*. Ong cautioned that the unresolved language issue would be detrimental to Singapore as an education hub - if it was not adequately addressed.

This researcher is aware from his teaching experience in Singapore that there seem to be two polar groups of Indonesian students in their language-coping strategies: one group copes by the use of sheer willpower to overcome their language handicap and improve their English, while the other group simply carries on where they left off at home, namely, conversing in *Bahasa Indonesian*, their national language, and hoping that whatever amount of English is in their existing vocabulary would be sufficient to carry them through their tertiary education. This study will explore whether this impression of two groups is borne out in reality.

2.6.3 Learning environment problems

A key topic of debate in learning-styles research is whether students should match their learning styles to the teacher's teaching methods or, vice versa, whether the teacher should use a variety of pedagogical styles to enable students to stretch their repertoires of learning styles. Cultural expectations and mismatches lie at the heart of the learning miscommunication experienced by instructors on the one hand and learners on the other.

Grasha (1990, p. 9) defined learning styles as "the preferences students have for thinking, relating to others, and particular types of classroom environments and experiences". Cornett (1983, p. 9) defined learning style as "a consistent pattern of behaviour but with a certain range of individual variability". Cornett asserted that students adjust their learning styles according to the teaching style and the task at hand. One popular definition of learning styles is provided by Keefe (1979, p. 4) as follows: "Learning styles are characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment". The debate in learning-styles research is whether students should match their learning styles to the instructor's teaching style or whether the latter should adopt a range of teaching styles to aid students in stretching their repertoires of learning styles.

Studies of Asian students in Australia and the US show these cultural differences at play. A study by Rosenthal et. al. (2007) in Melbourne, Australia showed that students from Asian countries reveal different learning patterns compared to other students. These learning patterns are different based on their relationships and

interactions with each other. The authors suggested that an awareness of these differences among international students from varying cultural backgrounds can help target assistance in achieving a sense of well-being for everyone. Similarly, a US study by Leena (2008) of Asian students in a Kansas university revealed three major themes namely, the struggle for self-identity, the subjective definitions of academic success; and the responsibility of the university in nurturing these concepts of self-identity and academic success. The author recommended that universities modify the curriculum to include an understanding of Asian students as part of the regular curriculum.

Specifically from the teacher's perspective, Horwood (1991), for example, reported that Asian students did not perform well when the primary mode of instruction was auditory. Grasha (1990; p. 26) noted that the specific teaching strategies employed by instructors were often related to their comfort with certain teaching procedures, the course content, and "a willingness to create the tension necessary to get students to learn in alternative ways".

As for the perspective of the students, they bring an added dimension to the learning relationship that cannot be taken lightly, as they are constantly challenging the teacher's methodology to suit their understanding. Parry et al (2006) noted that international students in the United States bring with them many intellectual and creative assets; along with the financial support they bring their institutions. However, they also arrive with cultural predispositions that are often quite different from those of their U.S. schoolmates and instructors. The differences lie in their coping mechanisms in terms of their locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, and work motivation. Ketchum (1985) found that international students entering the Maharishi International University in Iowa, USA, preferred learning activities involving personal interaction as opposed to impersonal activities such as reading and lecture.

In contrast, Hussein (1986) reported that among international graduate students in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the College of Engineering, the preference for developing and maintaining warm, friendly, interpersonal relations with other students ranged from very low to moderate. Those students also exhibited moderate to-high preferences for personal knowledge of, mutual liking for, and

understanding of their instructors. They had a moderate preference for people-oriented professions and a very strong preference for learning through listening. Their preference for working with numbers was moderate to very strong. Those international students believed very strongly that they would be successful in their schoolwork.

It is to be determined whether Indonesian Chinese students in Singapore show any differences from features of overseas students found in the literature. In particular, do they find the student-centered style of university education at the case institution an adjustment shock compared to the more teacher-centric style they are used to back home? Research by Holmes (2004) on ethnic Chinese students studying in a New Zealand learning environment exposed differences in communication and learning between their first culture and the host culture. These students were not prepared for the dialogic nature of classroom communication, which created difficulties in listening, understanding, and interacting. For example, written assignments embodied different expectations of writing styles, understandings of critical analysis and plagiarism.

Most research on teaching pedagogy highlights the importance for instructors advising international students that it is perfectly acceptable – and generally healthy – to disagree with them. Teachers should also prove it by responding positively when students challenge their ideas. Much learning can be achieved when there is discord as much as when there isn't. Holmes (2004) exposed differences in learning between their home culture and the host culture. Thirteen ethnic Chinese students in the New Zealand university business school participated in an 18-month ethnographic study. The findings indicate that these students were ill-prepared for the two-way interactive nature of classroom learning, which created difficulties in listening, understanding and interacting. For example, written assignments entailed contrasting expectations of writing styles, critical analysis and plagiarism. Holmes recommended that teachers manage the problem by responding to 'difference' rather than 'deficit' approaches to teaching and learning for ethnic Chinese students to perform better in their new learning environment. The study also suggested that host institutions and local students find ways of developing diversity awareness and appreciation.

An aim of the current study is to help close this pedagogy gap between foreign students and their teachers. For example, the present study examines whether an Indonesian Chinese student expects the Singapore teacher to be his/her final authority and/or that the class be formal, with little interaction between teacher and student. A host culture that is a relaxed, often light-hearted atmosphere in which the teacher does not profess to be all knowing may confuse and discourage him/her as they may be accustomed to acquiring received truths from the teacher rather than to think independently and to draw their own conclusions. It may turn out to be a strange experience for the Indonesian student to learn that it is acceptable to disagree with their Singapore teacher or that learning (and thus cognitive and affective growth) can take place even when there is discord.

In this regard, Ladd and Ruby Jr (1999) suggested that teachers could help international students be successful by determining, then explaining to them, their preferred learning styles. Such knowledge can assist college professors in adjusting their teaching styles to the students' learning styles. In their study, the authors examined the learning styles of international students enrolled in an MBA program in the United States. For example, these learners liked to get directly involved in the learning experience by handling objects; they preferred clinical studies through which they could make direct observations. Thus, although 80% of the students had learned by the lecture method in their home countries, the results indicated that they preferred to learn by direct experience.

According to Ladd and Ruby Jr (1999), one of their preferred direct-experience conditions for learning was to set their own goals, which indicated their desire to identify and pursue goals related to their immediate and specific individual interests. Another preferred direct-experience condition was to interact in person with a warm and friendly teacher. Undoubtedly, their preferred area of interest was people, an indication that the students preferred the helping occupations, such as teaching and counselling. Interestingly, that preference did not, however, indicate a willingness to cooperate or work with people in a friendly or mutually supportive way.

The findings by Ladd and Ruby Jr were consistent with those of Cheng (1987), who reported that most international students in the United States shifted from the lecture

method to a freer learning environment. They must adapt to solving problems instead of memorising facts and must learn to locate information themselves instead of depending on their professors.

Even though learning style is not the only factor that can facilitate learners' cognitive and affective growth, this literature review has shown that it can be a useful starting point for the current study. Knowledge of learning style can give Singapore educational institutions some insight into the characteristics of the learner. The teacher's insight, in turn, can enhance the students' growth potential. An example of this would be to distinguish between assimilation and acculturation, which is vital in helping international students adjust to their new surroundings. Assimilation is the process by which minorities lose their distinct characteristics and become indistinguishable from the dominant groups. Acculturation, on the other hand, is the process of adapting to the dominant culture but at the same time maintaining a separate cultural identity (Castro-Abad, 1995). Singapore teachers may thus see their goal being to assist international students in adapting to the host education culture rather than to bring about, or encourage, their assimilation into Singapore culture. One way of helping international students is to encourage them to join social organizations, clubs, and in-campus student organizations.

Because many foreign education systems rely on the lecture method with little or no interaction, Ladd and Ruby Jr (1999) advised that it is important to introduce the idea of class participation slowly. Questioning techniques may be helpful here in that the teacher can begin with recall of facts before proceeding to short answers, and then building up to open-ended questions that require opinions, problem solving and decision-making. When an over-enthusiastic teacher commences the semester with questions that require opinions, the foreign student may shy away – uncomfortable or even terrified at the thought of being singled out. The authors suggested that by starting slowly, the teacher will build the self-confidence of the student in speaking out. Should a student answer a question incorrectly, the teacher ought to respond encouragingly. However, if at any time the student experiences a sense of foolishness or belittlement, the willingness to participate (and thus attempts to please his/her teacher) will be dampened.

Torkelson (1992) uses "thinking on your feet" exercises to help international teaching assistants adjust to the classroom in the United States. These interactive exercises begin with simple self-description questions, to questions that ask the students to describe something, to hypothetical questions. Ladd and Ruby Jr (1999) suggested that questions about society and customs attract the greatest and best responses. For example, the authors noted that questions about the ever-popular Chinese New Year holiday event elicited responses not only from the student being asked but also from most other Chinese-speaking students present.

One of the most sensitive issues that drives a wedge between a foreign student and a host teacher is plagiarism. Robinson (1992) has reported an unusually high rate of plagiarism among international students. There could be a cultural reason here. For foreign students in certain cultures, knowledge is considered to be in the public domain and thus plagiarism is often viewed as harmless borrowing rather than unethical stealing of someone else's idea. Other cultures acknowledge that such acts of copying are disrespectful if not downright illegal. Clearly, the law has something to do with this too. As noted by Torkelson (1992), there is no protection of new ideas with patent or copyright laws in China, as there is in the United States. In this regard, the issue of plagiarism is not one between home and host, as it is between learner and teacher (particularly between institution and individual). Teachers acting on behalf of their academic institutions are required to explain to students that plagiarism is unacceptable and adopt a near-zero tolerance to the practice, including the threat of dismissal from the university. In this regard, a simple assignment to encourage a foreign student to practise writing summaries, using direct quotes and paraphrasing can contribute to their understanding of the concepts and issues they are dealing with, without resorting to cut-and-paste imitation. These paper exercises can reinforce a foreign student's understanding of the right and wrong ways to include published materials into their own work.

Building trust between teacher and student can take place during the initial discussion of the syllabus. Here, the teacher should speak directly to the students about common classroom practices inherent in the host educational system, including plagiarism, cheating, attendance, tardiness, and self-directed learning. The teacher ought to explain his/her expectations to the students and then offer to help them accomplish

their goals. In the view of Ladd and Ruby Jr (1999, p.366), the classroom is not a place to play the game of "let's see if the students can figure out the rules"; it is a place where cognitive and affective growth can – and should – flourish.

A final point on a foreign student's learning environment raises the issue of the preferred place of study – in campus or away from it. While campus provides some of the best facilities like libraries and laboratories – and the ever-presence of friends and teachers – some students regard on-campus studying as overly competitive, distracting and even disruptive. Today, more and more learning is taking place outside the formal framework of the school day. Although school effectiveness still mattered, the future learning environment depends on creating a system of out-of-school learning to complement the core curriculum. This meant places like study centres, public libraries or even the modern air-conditioned *kopi-tiam* (Singaporean term for coffee shop) where the atmosphere is deemed more relaxed and less daunting. Quite clearly, some Indonesian Chinese may prefer these laid-back and non-obtrusive venues while other students prefer the highly-focused arenas known as university campus. In literature terms, there is a gap in this largely unexplored area of off-campus studying which this study hopes to examine.

2.7 Conclusion

This review of current literature provides an understanding of why international students find it worthwhile to study abroad, and, based on this study's SRQs, also highlights some of the key adaptation problems they face 'once there'. For the first Research Question on why Indonesian Chinese decide to pursue Higher Education study abroad, this literature review has emphasised common push and pull factors that generally affect all students studying abroad. As to why in the case of this study, Indonesian students' final destination is Singapore, the literature has also revealed the strong institutional (governmental) and infrastructural (good universities) pull of the city-state. However, being an ethnic Chinese minority in Indonesia complicates the matter and makes SRQ1 on 'Why don't they study in Indonesia?' an important issue. Understanding their psyche will help to understand their attitude towards pursuing a tertiary education 'anywhere but home'.

As for SRQ2 on 'Why do they choose Singapore as opposed to other possible destinations?', it would be over-simplistic to simply argue that the Republic as an

academic destination is cheap, convenient and competent. While these are important considerations, they are not sufficient conditions – this study hopes to delve into the peculiarities of the Singapore educational and social system, and the relationship which attaches an Indonesian Chinese to this ‘workaholic’ state.

Furthermore, this study also aims to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the choice of Singapore as an educational stop for Indonesian Chinese students. A recurring theme is the cultural asymmetry experienced by these students in a highly Westernised Singapore. However, whether this asymmetry is seen as a negative (an adverse influence running counter to their own culture), or a positive (in terms of acculturating Indonesians into western values), will be clarified in the present study. Currie (2007) argues that host teachers should be reflexive about the potential ethnocentrism embedded in their pedagogical approach, value cultural assumptions held by incoming Chinese students and explore these in a dialogic fashion, which takes account of power relations underpinning interactions between Singapore teachers as hosts and international students of a different culture.

For the second Research Question on the study habits of the Indonesian Chinese once they have settled in Singapore, this literature review has also provided a good understanding of the coping mechanisms used by international students generally, as well as Chinese students in particular. Many of the studies called for the students to adjust to their new environments and not cling too much to their home habits, while also making a pitch for the host institutions to treat the adaptation difficulties which foreign students face as a mainstream and not a marginal issue. However, there are still gaps in the literature with regard to the SRQ on “What do they find supportive in Singapore?” as foreign students respond rather differently to the highly varied offerings of support, ranging from in-campus study groups to off-campus social groups; from formal academic assistance to informal ‘outside’ support. Another SRQ on “How do they manage or cope with the difficulties?” may also surface modern ways of adjustment from joining Facebook/tweeter networks to engaging in MSN-SMS-blackberry interactions.

The current study will investigate whether or not cultural acclimatization by Chinese Indonesians to teaching methods by Singapore teachers is revealed in a stark and

significant way, and whether or not the 'voice' of these participants has been pushed to the margins. This study will attempt to understand Indonesian Chinese students' experiences in terms of satisfaction and discontent, and how the Singapore government and university authorities might respond in the best possible way.

Thus, answers to some of these questions should benefit educators in both Indonesia and Singapore to re-strategise, if necessary, their Higher Education packages. This does not discount the possibility for both countries to collaborate in offering programmes that allow Chinese Indonesian students or Singapore lecturers to shuttle between the two places in hybrid forms of distance-learning, very much like the University of Leicester distance-learning programmes in Singapore.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In previous chapters, the research problem of Chinese Indonesians exiting their homeland in large numbers in the last decade was identified as a worthy subject of study. A literature review showed that the exodus involved a high number of ethnic Chinese enrolling for tertiary courses in foreign settings, particularly Singapore – even though there are reputable universities in Indonesia to provide adequate Higher Learning opportunities. The research aims of this thesis are firstly, to explore the phenomenon of why Indonesian Chinese Higher Education students decide to go to Singapore to study and secondly, to examine how they manage their experience of studying in the island-state. The study will thus examine two key Research Questions (RQs). RQ1 is why do Indonesian Chinese decide to pursue Higher Education study abroad, especially in Singapore? Its two Specific Research Questions (SRQs) are: why don't they study in Indonesia; and why do they choose Singapore as opposed to other possible destinations? RQ2 is how do Indonesian students in Singapore manage their student lives? Its SRQs are: where and how do they study; what do they find supportive about (living and studying) in Singapore; what difficulties do they face; and how do they manage or cope with the difficulties?

3.1 Research Paradigms

Theory (if it is loosely defined to include the aims and research questions) leads method. In proposing a suitable research design, it is difficult to do so without first establishing a theoretical foundation for that research. Thus the research methodology to be adopted in tackling these SRQs depends on the research purpose, which will help researchers convert an unfocused and unsystematic research question into a serious disciplined probe. Johnson (1994) defines research as “a focused and systematic enquiry ... to acquire specialised and detailed information, providing a basis for analysis and elucidatory comment on the topic of enquiry”. While the formulation of RQs and SRQs are the first steps towards the translation of an enquiry into an academic frame of expression, this conversion is still incomplete as the exact frame for the

specialised field of educational research would entail further notation. McGaw (1996) suggests that “the term educational research is best preserved for work in which the central organising feature is a dominant commitment to the field of education”. His point is that any research work must reflect the discipline that provides its roots of enquiry; otherwise a piece of work may be relevant to education but still not be educational research. As in most social science research, educational research can be broadly categorised into two such distinct ‘roots’ or paradigms – a term made explicit by Kuhn in his seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to identify “what members of a scientific community, and they alone, share” (Kuhn 1974: 460). A paradigm shift occurs when a dominant paradigm has been replaced by a new paradigm with its new way of looking at the world. He also conferred on members of the same paradigm ‘the entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques’ (Kuhn 1996: 175). Usher (1996) later added some roles for the community, i.e. to determine important problems for members to address as well as to define acceptable theories and ways to solve these defined problems.

One suggestion that has emerged from these concerns is to combine the best of both paradigms into an eclectic mix known as paradigm commensurability. The argument is that if two paradigms can co-exist, the use of mixed methodology utilizing their respective strengths would be possible. This issue will be discussed in §3.2.1 below.

3.1.1 Positivism

It would appear, on the surface at least, that RQ1 of the current study requires an ontologically objective and epistemologically quantitative approach to demonstrate that a sizeable number of would-be international students are indeed leaving Indonesia in droves for the various push factors peculiar to them as Chinese Indonesians. Epistemologically, Easterby-Smith (1994) stressed that knowledge is only of significance if it is based on observations of these external realities. To be successful in the Indonesian study would therefore require a closer examination of this external reality. In practical terms, this would mean the gathering of empirical data based on the SRQs to establish a set of Indonesian social facts and the various ‘external realities’ that lie within the variables that contribute to these facts. For example, push or pull factors are likely to be the objective external realities that these Indonesian students share in common – even

prompting them to respond in common. One could imagine that their broadly-similar responses are rather structured and could thus be quantified empirically. A questionnaire-survey would be able to capture these objective social facts. To this end, large samples of randomly selected overseas-bound Chinese Indonesians are crucial in order to generalise a piece of research to its entire population.

Ontologically, positivism is one such approach that is based on the assumption that there are universal laws that govern social events, and uncovering these laws enables researchers to describe, predict and control social phenomena (Wardlow, 1989). For the current study, the job of the researcher is to discover general laws explaining the nature of the reality that is being observed and recorded.

Thus, in attempting to understand an Indonesian's push factors, a researcher must measure both these ontological and epistemological realities through the use of objective, quantitative methods. Positivism satisfies both these conditions. As a theory of knowledge on which late 20th-century Western science is based, positivism has influenced many researchers into a particular set of theories about the best way of finding things out. Indeed, it was much earlier in the 17th century in Europe that this foundation was laid when Hobbes provided his literally reactionary response to the upheaval of values threatened by the English Revolution. Later, in providing its sociological dimension, founding father Auguste Comte holds that social reality exists independent of people and can be objectively investigated by employing valid and reliable measurements. This was followed by David Hume who put in the final touches to a philosophy of science that came to be known as empiricism, regarded as the most extreme form of positivism. Continuing this line of thinking in the modern context, Stephen Hawking, author of the much celebrated *A Brief History of Time*, said: "Any sound scientific theory, whether of time or of any other concept, should in my opinion be based on the most workable philosophy of science: the positivist approach" (Hawking, 2001: 31). According to him, a scientific theory is a mathematical model that describes and codifies the observations we make. In this way, a good theory will describe a large range of phenomena on the basis of a few simple postulates and make definite predictions that can be tested. Concepts such as structural functionalism (Parsons,

1951) and even structural Marxism (Marx, 1887 and Althuseer, 2005 – both translated) are derived broadly from this epistemological perspective.

3.1.2 Interpretivism

While positivism provides a useful way to capture some of the requirements in the current study, the magnitude of the task, while neither a direct weakness nor a fault of positivism itself, sometimes dissuades researchers from adopting this probabilistic approach. In contrast, interpretivism is a different paradigm which takes a different tact. Rather than attempting to generalise across the population under study, interpretivistic ontology focuses on the need for a greater appreciation of, in the context of this present study, a Chinese Indonesian's motivations and a deeper understanding of his/her sense making in studying in Singapore. Similarly, interpretivistic epistemology reduces the demand for large random samples in preference for small purposive (albeit subjective) non-probabilistic samples and the gathering of in-depth specific rather than broad-based general data.

Interpretive research explores values, beliefs and meanings of social phenomena, thereby obtaining *verstehen* (Max Weber's term for a deep and sympathetic understanding) of human social activities and experiences (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). Researchers who advocate the interpretivist paradigm challenge the positivist's choice of the so-called 'mind-independent' reality. To them, social realities are constructed as a product of theorizing by individuals, and this individual theorizing itself shapes reality. Thus, there is no mind-independent reality to correspond with hypotheses to serve as an external referent point on their acceptability (Walker & Evers, 1999). Knowledge is thus taken to comprise multiple sets of interpretations that are part of the social, cultural and in our instance, educational context in which it occurs. Interpretive researchers argue for openness to the understanding of people (Indonesian students in our case) whom researchers study. It also argues for tentativeness in the way researchers hold or apply their conceptions of those being studied (Giorgi, 1997). Concepts such as social action (Weber, 1978), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1967), phenomenology (Schutz, 1982) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) are said to be derived from the interpretivist tradition. Their

basic similarity is that individuals bring meanings to their actions, based on their interpretation of the stimuli, be they single occurrences or prolonged events.

3.2 Choice of Paradigms

Of the two research paradigms, it would seem that interpretivism has a better fit for the current research. A major limitation of the positivistic approach, which interpretivism can compensate for, is the need in the current research to deal with the complex interplay of factors at the macro and micro levels of study. For example, in the study of SRQ 1 at the macro-level, the way that Chinese Indonesian students manage their university work in their quest for a Singapore education may involve their personal perceptions of push and pull factors and their individual responses to them. While a questionnaire-survey may provide the external realities to the independent push/pull variables, it may neither adequately handle the interplay of such forces such as society, culture and politics, nor link them to their relationships with individual aspirations.

Similarly, at the micro-level of analysis, SRQ 2 requires a deeper understanding of the subjective inner (rather than objective external) reality for the individual Indonesian Chinese to deal with the way they handle their off-campus studies in their desire to cope with the Singapore education environment. Cohen and Manion (2000, p. 51) argue that the principal concern is the way in which ‘the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world’ s/he is. Indeed, phenomenologists like Schutz and Husserl would take the interpretivist approach a step further by asserting that it is the very individual perceptions of the learners that bestow meaning to their situations and then act upon them. This concept of the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) is insightful in the study of SRQ2 in dealing with how Indonesian Chinese students cope with life away from home. Beyond the influence of push and pull factors which are broadly commonly experienced, individual resilience allows certain personas to cope better away from home in the same way that some professional football teams regularly perform better away from their home grounds while others excel in hostile environments . The response of Chinese Indonesian students would be more acutely based on their personal attributes such as language competency, sociability and affordability. Usher (1996) noted that all human action is

meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices. For these reasons, this research will be based on a broadly interpretivistic approach.

3.2.1 Mixed Methods and Paradigm Incommensurability

If time, and if funding and other research resources were not an issue, a triangulation of both methods may be insightful. Creswell (2003) is a firm believer that the use of mixed methods is a third form of research methodology, to complement its better known counterparts in quantitative and qualitative methods. If the latter two methods cannot be adopted equally, some researchers have argued that it may be possible to mix them by moving from a small scale qualitative research as a pilot to a quantitative questionnaire as a mainstay – certainly a more likely option than the reverse of moving from a small-scale quantitative method to a qualitative one. However, while an eclectic mix of both quantitative and qualitative research design may appear attractive on the surface and thus tempting, it will not be adopted for the purpose of this study. Its modest size and limited resources meant settling for a more manageable and realistic single method. There is another strong reason why mixed methods should not be used for this study. Some theorists believe that it is theoretically and fundamentally impossible to use mixed methods if they hailed from different paradigmatic traditions, such as the ones we have discussed in positivism and interpretivism. Here, paradigm commensurability is a concept associated with the permissibility of using mixed methods. To commensurate is to match so something that has ‘good commensurability’ has a ‘good match’. Conversely, something that does not match is incommensurable. The premise of incommensurability is that all rules and parts of a new paradigm, be they metaphysical, epistemological, or empirical are not compatible or commensurable with parts of any other paradigm. When a paradigm switch occurs, all existing rules and assumptions are discarded in order to form the rules and assumptions of the new paradigm. If paradigms cannot mix, neither can their accompanying methods. Burrell and Morgan (1979) set the stage for the paradigm debate when they suggested two contrasting positions on the issue of commensurability:

- a. No cross-paradigm communication is possible. (Broadly a positivist view of incommensurability.)

b. Cross-paradigm communication is possible. (Broadly, a non-positivist relativist view of commensurability.)

The basic line of argument about incommensurability is that paradigms are separate and incompatible (i.e. mutually exclusive). ‘Commensuralists’ such as Gioia & Pitre (1990) support the judicious use of mixed methods so long as the rival paradigms in question are able to operate in areas where they share common traits or in grey areas where their differences are not so distinct. On the other hand, the ‘incommensuralists’ or ‘paradigm warriors’ such as Donaldson (2001) adopt a hard-line argument that, as phenomena themselves are constituted within and by paradigms, there is nothing ‘the same’ to compare and discuss across paradigms. Paradigm changes may often resemble transformations of faith in which one set of governing notions is replaced by another. These governing notions are however mutually exclusive, i.e. a rival paradigm's explanations cannot both be correct in respect to the same phenomena.

The allegation of paradigm incommensurability implies that the results of mixed methodology research are inevitably fallacious because the mixed methods are studying different things, have different purposes and different types of results. According to this school of thought, rival paradigms cut up the world with different standards, different assumptions, different language. Having too many paradigms may also trap us inside the theoretical prison since we do not know which one is true – if we insist on looking for the single, universal perspective. Pfeffer (1993) cautioned that the domain of theory is coming to resemble more of a weed patch than a well-tended garden and that a good deal of pruning and weeding is needed to avoid the confusion of methodologies.

In dealing with the Indonesian case study, it is important to note these debates about paradigm incommensurability as a theoretical principle that will affect the adoption of mixed methods at the practical level. One way out of the conundrum is perhaps to argue that paradigms can remain incommensurable but that research methodology should be free to adopt single or mixed methods. All that a researcher need do is to be mindful that research methods are used as neutral tools for the purpose of observation or measurement, and avoid treading on theoretical

epistemologies. Paradigm warriors would of course argue that such a compromise is unacceptable as research work is ultimately drawn from the theoretical paradigms in which it is developed.

3.3 Case Study and Grounded Theory

The choice of paradigm, approach and research method is best determined by the aims of the research and the research question. No matter which research paradigm is adopted, it is vital to achieve linearity (or connectivity between research purpose and data collection methods). Thus in the Indonesian case where the choice of the interpretivism paradigm has led to the use of qualitative research methods, it is crucial to ensure that issues concerning methodology are lineated for consistency. This prompts the use of the case study approach and the application of grounded theory.

Grand theory uses meta-narratives such as those offered by Emile Durkheim's structural functionalism, D.H. Hargreaves' symbolic interactionism and Karl Marx's critical realism to espouse their ideologies and concepts. A case study approach, in contrast with that of a grand theory approach, disciplines itself by drawing up a research parameter at the outset of the study. Even Robert Merton's suggestion of a middle-range theory to bridge the gap between grounded and grand theories might be somewhat ambitious for this study. In this thesis, the case study parameter does not include all ethnic Chinese from Indonesia but only those who are tertiary students and who are bound for Singapore for their higher education. A case study approach is intentionally restrictive and confined to the closed boundaries of its population set. This is precisely to discover potential theory at ground level.

Case study is a common approach in a range of qualitative approach and grounded theory uses it. Grounded theory does not set out to prove an existing theory but attempts to allow what is relevant to emerge in the effort to build new theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define grounded theory as 'one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents'. In the current study, this is a reasonable approach otherwise it would be too simplistic and reductionistic to label all Chinese Indonesians as either too lonely hiding in their rented room or

too busy socialising with all and sundry; or that they are broadly serious high achievers or wild party animals. They may indeed turn out to be such extremes but it would be better, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out, for these substantive theories to emerge from the data (post-ante rather than ex-ante) since prior theory could not possibly include the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered. In practical terms, what these authors are saying is that the procedures of grounded theory are designed systematically in order to develop theory. This approach would then lead to theoretical sampling, constant comparisons of data and the use of a coding paradigm in order to ensure the development of conceptual density (Strauss, 1987).

Elaborating on this approach, Charmaz (2000, p. 523) stated that ‘the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed’. It is inadequate therefore to simply accept that theory emerged naturally from data collection but that it is co-constructed between the researcher as the viewer and the participants as the viewed. In this regard, this researcher has spent the last five years attempting to understand the cultures and politics of Chinese Indonesian students in order to develop a better thesis as well as to build stronger friendships based on researcher-participant dialogue.

3.3.1 The participants and sampling method

Grounded theory requires theoretical sampling to evolve into saturated sampling. While these two sampling forms appear to be two independent sampling methods (albeit with an extensive overlap), they can be thought of as a two-stage sampling process that moves the initial sample of participants who meet the research requirements (theoretical sampling) to an eventual sample of the remaining participants who display the maximum variation in the characteristics under study. Saturation is then deemed to be reached when the sample size contains enough participants who display the maximum variation. Many doctoral studies employing grounded theory aim for between 10 and 25 participants for saturation. For this reason, it was initially projected that 25 participants would be sufficient before saturation was reached but as it turned out, saturation was reached much earlier at the 20-participant mark.

Specifically, this is how the sampling worked. The case institution offered nine Bachelor of Science degree courses under the UOL programme, centered on the three key areas of economics, business and information management. Theoretical sampling was adopted initially – with one student introduced at a time to derive a wide range of student experiences. Since this would nonetheless entail a non-random sample, care was taken to ensure that, nearer to saturation, students with similar profiles would be discarded to ensure maximum variation and minimum similarities. Saturation was deemed to be reached only when maximum variation of the various features was achieved in the following sequence:

- a. Age range from 18 to 23, with a mix of male and female students
- b. Residing in private or public apartments (including hostel)
- c. Living alone, in pairs or group (more than three under the same household)
- d. Living with at least one member of family; one close relative; or without.
- e. Currently in their first, second, third, repeat year of study; or graduated
- f. Offering different courses in Economics, Business, Information Technology etc.
- g. Family income from working class to middle class
- h. Working part-time (technically not allowed) or fulltime students
- i. Level of competence in English (based on qualifying tests)

In order for the small sample to satisfy these nine features, the following procedures were adopted:

- a. Each two-polar feature had a range of variation between 12 and 8 students. For example, while it was ideal to have 10 males and 10 females; the tolerable difference would be 12 students of one gender and 8 students of the other.
- b. As each student was sequentially being allocated to the nine features, students who exceeded any tolerable difference of any feature (eg the 13th male student) was dropped in favour of a student who could meet it (i.e. a female student).
- c. Most importantly, students would be varied to draw out their maximum (theoretical) differences from each other.

A breakdown of the 20 participants is listed in Table 3.1 below.

Table	Sex	Age	Course	Year	Years	Remarks
M1	Male	23	Business	Grad	5	Graduated 2 years earlier
F2	Female	20	Management	Year 2	2	Straight entry
M3	Male	19	Accounting & Finance	Year 1	1	Straight entry
F4	Female	21	Business	Year 3	3	Straight entry
M5	Male	20	Banking & Finance	Year 2	2	Straight entry
F6	Female	19	Economics & Management	Year 1	3	Lived 2 years in Singapore prior to study
M7	Male	21	Info Systems & Management	Year 3	3	Straight entry
M8	Male	20	Management	Year 1	1	Spent 1 year in Indonesia for English remedial
F9	Female	19	Mathematics & Economics	Year 1	1	Straight entry
F10	Female	22	Management	Repeat	4	Straight entry
M11	Male	20	Computing & Info Systems	Year 2	2	Straight entry
F12	Female	20	Economics & Finance	Year 1	2	Lived 1 year in Singapore prior to study
M13	Male	20	Economics & Management	Repeat	4	Straight entry
F14	Female	20	Business	Year 1	2	Spent 1 year in Singapore for English remedial
M15	Male	21	Info Systems & Management	Year 3	3	Straight entry
F16	Female	22	Economics & Finance	Grad	4	Graduated 1 year earlier
M17	Male	19	Banking & Finance	Year 1	1	Straight entry
F18	Female	20	Computing & Info Systems	Year 2	2	Straight entry
F19	Female	19	Business	Year 1	1	Straight entry
M20	Male	21	Accounting & Finance	Year 3	3	Straight entry

3.3.2 Qualitative sampling

The basic point to be made about sampling in quantitative research concerns generalisability, that is, whether findings can be applied to individuals or situations other than those in which the findings were gathered. However, if generalisability from a sample to a population is not a key purpose, then it is a moot point whether a phenomenon under (case) study can be extended to its population. In qualitative research, the main aim is not usually to generalize from the sample to a population, but rather to choose cases on their capacity to develop theory. The aim is then about allowing theory building rather than theory testing to be the methodological emphasis. Random sampling thus gives way to purposive sampling and there is now a greater insight into the phenomenon being studied.

Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) have provided 15 types of such purposive sampling ranging from extreme case sampling to homogeneous sampling, to opportunistic sampling. While any of them could be used if it fits the ongoing research purpose, the Indonesian case study might find relevance in two of them as they facilitated the use of grounded theory. These are the maximum variation sampling and theoretical sampling. The former identifies Indonesian participants who constitute the broadest possible range of variation in the push-pull; fight-flight phenomena under study. The latter is theory-based or operational construct sampling which allows the selection of specific cases by a particular theoretical construct, for example, the developing theories put forth as to why and how Chinese Indonesians are affected in different ways by push and pull factors to opt for an overseas education. Cases are chosen for their potential for theory development (Punch, 1998, Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In practical terms, the use of maximum variation sampling covers a wide range, rather than typical case sampling for generalisation. Hence generalisability in the traditional sense is not the aim of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). However, qualitative researchers talk about transferability (Guba, 1981), and it should be possible for the reader to draw inferences from this analysis that may or may not apply to their situation. To enhance this possibility, this study aims to provide thick description of context and data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An intensive sample of these students will then be selected for intensive data collection and analysis. Finally, the responsibility for generalising is placed on the reader rather than the researcher to improve generalisability in qualitative research.

As for theoretical sampling, Strauss & Corbin (1990) have suggested this form of sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven of theoretical relevance to the evolving theory while Janesick (1994) identifies it as a non-probability sampling in which the objective of developing theory guides the process of sampling and data collection. In practical terms, this sampling form is used to deliberately seek out ways to ‘saturate’ – given a realistic dose of time and resources – all instances and types of such Singapore-bound students so that no meaningful and possible categorisation of this group under study is left out. Thus, a researcher starts by analysing the initial set of data and decides where to proceed from there. The Indonesian study may lead us to

regular haunts and watering holes of the Indonesians or it may bring us closer to private scenes of serendipity and solace.

3.4 Context – Case Institution

According to Punch (1998), a case may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of social life. A research proposal using a case study needs to be clear on what the case is, including identification of its boundaries. The research should also be translated into specific purposes and research questions. It should also show what data is to be collected, from whom and how. Following on Punch's working definition, this study chose a group of overseas Chinese Indonesians studying at a local campus, identified here only as a 'case institution'. It was the Global Education division under the case institution that provided distance-learning programmes for local (both full-time and part-time) and foreign students (only full-time and mainly from China, Indo-China and Indonesia) in partnership with international institutions such as the University of London (UOL) in UK, University of Buffalo in the US and RMIT University in Australia. This case study was restricted to a purposive sample of Chinese Indonesian undergraduates studying at the case institution from 2008 – 2009. The undergraduate programme covered a wide range of subjects including the humanities, business studies and information technology. In the past two years, the case institution had set up a Student Liaison Office to help foreign students cope with their studies and other settlement difficulties. Indonesian students themselves had marked their on-campus presence with the setting up in 2008 of their own country-based social club, which organised year-round activities for themselves. For the year of study in 2008, global education increased by 13% in student numbers despite the grim economic situation, with 18,000 part-time (mainly Singaporeans) and full-time (mixed) students. Of the 12,000 fulltime students, a quarter was international students. The majority or about 40% of international students were Indonesians (1,200), of whom 70% were Chinese Indonesians (840 students).

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

This study generally adopted a semi-structured interview method in order to narrow the focus of the interview within the scope of student adaptation to life in Singapore, while allowing

participants to express their views as freely as possible (Burgess, 1993). Both personal (single) as well as focus group interviews (in 2s and 3s) were used. As an insider researcher, unstructured observation was also used to supplement the main interview method. A final form of collection was the use of document analysis – each student was requested to keep a diary for a week-long period to record their personal reflections on a typical week's activities, with special focus on the way they manage their studies. Data collection took nine months from Sept 2008 to May 2009.

3.5.1 Pilot interviews

Prior to the interview proper, one round of pilot interviews was conducted in September 2008 with three different participants – one was a male graduate (M1); another was a female student (F2) who had been in Singapore for nearly two years while a third male (M3) had just started his studies in Singapore. The purpose of the pilot was to test and amend, if necessary, the specific research questions and all related queries. Questions were kept as open-ended as possible as part of a semi-structured interview to allow students the flexibility in framing their responses in their own personal ways. In the Indonesian study, both maximum variation and theoretical sampling were applied after the pilot interviews. Since this case study was based on an emergent design where the researcher was likely to adapt and develop methodology as the research matures, the sampling approach adopted was more flexible and hence non-random. One significant benefit of the pilot was in helping the researcher to modify his interview schedule from **Appendix A** to **Appendix B**, with more open-ended questions adopted, and ambivalent questions either modified or removed.

3.5.2 Interviews

Following the pilot interview round, three rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted during the periods Oct – Nov 2008; Jan – Feb 2009; and Apr-May 2009. These were mainly individual interviews. Due to the reluctance of some participants to discuss their problems in a group, only two focus group interviews were conducted, one each during the second and third round. The use of maximum variation and theoretical sampling proved particularly attractive and resilient starting from the data collection phase. The study was able to move simultaneously between data collection, data coding and data analysis, making it an iterative process. This

approach was quite unlike probabilistic sampling where there were no intermittent analyses with work-in-progress data, but where analysis was done only after all data has been collected. Glaser (1978) pointed out that the process of data collection is controlled by theoretical sampling according to the emerging theory. A semi-structured interview schedule shown in **Appendix A** was used to provide a general guide to the direction of the research inquiry. This general approach helped guide the participants to move towards the interviewer's research objectives (Gall et al., 1999, p. 132).

The interview questions were derived from both the literature review (which sets the general direction of inquiry) and the Research Questions (which set the specific direction of research). However, as the data collection intensified and maximum variation moved towards saturation, questions were more directed. For example, in an effort to determine whether participants were goal-oriented or task-oriented, questions related to their vision, ambition and study methods were raised to determine which categories they belong to.

A key issue at this juncture is reflexivity, which is a means to examine, challenge and limit the effect of a researcher's preconceptions on the conduct of the research and, in particular, any interpretation of data. Reflexivity is a self-recognition by researchers that they have "a significant influence on the development of the research and the engagement of the participants" (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, pp. 92-93). Researchers carry a moral responsibility to be transparent about that influence. To prevent this researcher from imposing his views on the participants, he keeps a separate personal diary to record his emotions, biasness, assumptions and values that emerge throughout the research process. For example, one entry reads:

"Remember Steinbeck – we are the only varmints who get trapped in our own traps. If (M13) feels it's okay to cheat in test to get a good grade, so be it. That's him speaking his mind."

Reflexivity also helps to keep the questions fairly open-ended. For example, the revised interview schedule, as shown in **Appendix B**, was more varied and more customised to cater to

the requirements of different interviewees. The researcher made it a point that he would allow the participants to choose any venue and time preferred by them as this would allow for maximum comfort and spontaneity as well as remove the ‘interview room’ atmosphere. Thus, interview venues were as varied as a basketball court (after a game) and a participant’s home (after watching a live football game on television). Each session lasted from an average of one to two hours. All interviewees were required to sign a consent form and if they were below 21 years of age, their guardians were required to approve of their participation (see **Appendix C**). An extract of the two appendixes is provided in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below.

Figure 3.1 – Extract of interview questions taken from pilot study

Interview Question	Objective of Question
2.1 How has your government managed higher education in your country?	To understand the education environment of the host country.
2.2 What are the education opportunities and conditions like in your country today?	To uncover the core issues linked to the education environment.
2.3 Would you describe the higher educational opportunities and quality as better or worse than previously – say over the past 10 years?	To appreciate participant’s feelings about the education environment

Figure 3.2 – Extract of interview questions taken from the main study

Interview Question	Objective of Question
Having covered 2.1 to 2.3 above, the second interview set included a more in-depth investigation of the participants’ views.	
2.4 What do you like/ not like about the Indonesian higher educational system?	To understand the participant’s attitude: whether there is personal biasness or prior disposition on their home system.
2.5 What are the reasons for you to choose to study overseas? Are some of these reasons more important than others? If so, which.....?	To understand the individual differences in attitude among participants, and to account for these differences.
2.6 What are the factors for/against an overseas education for you? Are some of these reasons more important than others? If so, which.....?	This is a cross-check question to examine consistency in a participant’s answers.

All interviews were duly transcribed and coded. In-between, informal clarifications were also conducted to remove ambiguities and apparent inconsistencies. Concomitantly, data were being analysed on an on-going basis, with emerging theories being noted. Member checking, or respondent validation, the process of having the participants vet their own inputs for completeness and accuracy, was also used (Punch, 1998). This was achieved by checking back against a participant's own emic account of an event where s/he might have interpreted differently. This form of validation enhanced accuracy and completeness. Another was to have a participant's account of a common event double-checked in a focus group or with another member who was also present or involved with the event. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher adopted an open, all-inclusive and receptive approach to suggested changes by participants in order to avoid imposing his own values on the study.

3.5.3 Documentary sources – use of diaries

A final form of collaboration was the use of document analysis – 18 students (except for the two who had graduated) were requested to keep a diary for a week-long period to record their personal reflections on the week's activities, with special focus on the way they manage their studies. Document analysis complemented the use of an interview schedule but could not be individually designed to suit a particular research purpose. It was drawn on as a source of data in the form in which it stands (Johnson 1994). Thus, to ask participants to keep a diary record of their week-long activities was to use them as deliberate sources but in an unobtrusive or non-reactive way. As it was not affected by the fact that these diaries were being used for this research, this form of documentary analysis was more authentic and captured the spontaneous and genuine moods of the participants in the absence of the interviewer. The diary format was kept broadly flexible without a pro forma; students were asked to enter their activities (and/or thoughts) in the form of an hourly entry over a 24-hour, seven-day period. Upon collection of the diary, clarification was made before coding of the entries was done. A sample of a day's entry is shown in **Appendix D**.

3.5.4 Data storage

As the researcher was a former journalist and a trained T-line transcriber (writing speed at 100 words per minute), he was able to transcribe his interviews to a reporter's notebooks. Many of the Chinese Indonesians spoke a mix of English, Bahasa, Mandarin and the Chinese Hokkien dialect – all of which the researcher was conversant with. Audio tapes were used when necessary in group sessions were involved. The collected data were then transcribed into Word documents and categorized according to participants. No video device was used to reduce interviewee effect when participants became too conscious of themselves and spoke unnaturally or less frankly.

3.5.5 Summary of data collection activities

Beginning with the literature review to the data collection, an equivalent of 318 days of documentation was recorded. This consisted of five months (150 days) of interview covering 50 hours of individual and group interviews and 24 (12 participants x 2 weeks) week-long diary entries. The data collection activities included regular rounds of data analysis, including coding and theorising as laid out by procedures in grounded theory. Theoretical sensitivity, a term frequently associated with grounded theory, was applied so that the researcher maintained an awareness of the subtleties of the meaning of data and to separate the pertinent from the superficial (Glaser, 1978). Such sensitivity would allow a grounded theory that was conceptually dense and well integrated to be developed.

3.6 Data Analysis

In practical terms, the procedures of grounded theory are designed systematically in order to develop theory. In that sense, grounded theory is like any other qualitative research in the use of interview, observation and documentary analysis. Where it differs is in the way that data analysis, known as coding, is conducted. This analysis is likely to involve three levels of coding from open coding to axial coding to selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 58). Data gathered from the 20 students were coded differently depending on the purpose of the data and the stage of the project, as illustrated below:

(1) Open coding: The study first selected about 5 – 10 categories from the analysis of the data. It then plotted the overall features of the phenomenon under study. For example, variables involved in the push-pull phenomenon were identified, labeled, categorised and related together in an outline form. These numbered between 20 and 30.

(2) Axial coding: The study then put the data together in new ways. This was achieved by utilising a ‘coding paradigm’, i.e. a system of coding that seeks to identify causal relationships between these 5 – 10 categories. A coding paradigm was applied in grounded theory in order to ensure the development of conceptual density. Thus its aim was to make explicit connections between categories and sub-categories.

(3) Selective coding: Finally, the study selected the core category and relates it to other categories. It will validate relationships and develop categories, estimated to be about 4 – 5. Categories were integrated together and a grounded theory would hopefully be arrived at.

3.6.1 Open coding

As the first stage of the coding process, open coding involved the naming and categorising of phenomena through a close examination of the data, which was fractured into discrete parts, scrutinized and compared for similarities and differences. Questions were then asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data. Two processes were involved here, labeling phenomena and discovering categories, where similar events and incidents were labeled and grouped. Examples of open coding on interview transcripts and documents are given in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 below.

Figure 3.3 – Extract of Transcript from F2

Date of interview: 18 November 08

Researcher	Participant F2	Open Coding
2.4 What do you like/ not like about the Indonesian higher educational system?	Our universities are not in the world’s top league. Our degrees are only useful if we use it to look for jobs at home. The only thing I like about it is that it is cheaper to study at home and easier to qualify for many of them. But what’s the use? The courses available are also academic rather than practical and not of direct relevance to our future jobs.	Prestige Relevance Affordability Accessibility Perception Relevance

Figure 3.4 – Diary of F6

Date of Recording: Monday, 16 February 09

Time	Details of Activities	Coding
7 am	<i>Woke up at 7 am</i>	Sleep ends
8 am	<i>Quick breakfast; Took bus (to SIM campus)</i>	Meal; Transport
9 am	<i>Econs lecture</i>	Lecture
10 am	<i>Econs lecture</i>	Lecture
11 am	<i>Econs lecture; lecturer rushing through his notes, spoke too fast</i>	Lecture; Learning
12 pm	<i>Lunch at campus with 3 friends (all Indonesians)</i>	Meal; Socialising
1 pm	<i>Found library spot for self-study (did an Econs assignment)</i>	Self-study
2 pm	<i>Doze off for about half an hour (between 1 – 2 pm)</i>	Rest
3 pm		
4 pm	<i>Tea at campus with (2) friends (both Indonesians)</i>	Tea; Socialising
5 pm	<i>Took bus (home to Holland Road)</i>	Transport
6 pm	<i>Took bath, washed clothes</i>	Hygiene; Chore
7 pm	<i>Watched TV (with room-mate; a fellow Indonesian girl)</i>	Relaxation; Companionship
8 pm	<i>Took dinner at (nearby) Hawkers' Centre (with same room-mate)</i>	Meal; Companionship
9 pm	<i>Ironed (own) clothes while watching TV (with same room-mate)</i>	Chore; Relaxation
10 pm	<i>Internet (in own room: online chat and surf music/video streams)</i>	Relaxation
11 pm	<i>Made (overseas) call to Mum (in Indonesia); Continue Internet (activities)</i>	Family contact; Relaxation
12 am	<i>Continue Internet (activities)</i>	Relaxation
1 am	<i>Sleep</i>	Sleep starts
2 am		
3 am		
4 am		
5 am		
6 am		

3.6.2 Axial coding

In axial coding, which follows on from open coding, data are put back together in refreshing new ways by making connections between categories. This involved the use of a coding paradigm as follows:

Causal conditions → Phenomenon → Context → Intervening Conditions
→ Action/Interaction strategies → Consequences
(Source: Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.99)

Like open coding, it involves making comparisons and asking questions, but axial coding uses a more focused and geared process to discover and relate each category in terms of the paradigm model. In short, each category (phenomenon) is developed in terms of the causal conditions that give rise to it; the specific dimensional location of this phenomenon in terms of its properties, the context, the action/interactional strategies used to handle, manage, respond to this phenomenon (in the light of that context) and the consequences of any action/interaction that is taken. An example of how this was achieved is given in Figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5 – An example of Axial Coding from M5 participant

M5 wants tertiary education (causal condition: a specific property of the phenomenon)
→ Pull Factor: M5 sees Singapore as a good choice (phenomenon)
→ Singapore is a choice of many other Indonesian Chinese (context: a specific property of the phenomenon)
→ Singapore is close to Indonesia (intervening condition)
→ M5 applies to study in Singapore (action/interaction strategy)
→ M5 starts his tertiary education at case institution (consequence)

A point to note is that even in axial coding, the researcher continues to look for additional properties of each category and to note the dimensional location of each incident, happening or event. These categories are worked out based on their salient properties, dimensions and associated paradigmatic relationships to make them as rich and dense as possible (Strauss and

Corbin, 1990, p. 117). Ultimately, the purpose of axial coding is to develop the basis for selective coding.

3.6.3 Selective coding

Three months (Mar – May 2009) were spent integrating the various categories to form a selective code and eventually a grounded theory. The final integration was a complicated and long-drawn process of going back to the drawing room several times over in order to attempt to bridge the list of concepts in the earlier phases of open and axial coding into an eventual theory. The process was rigorous because any one research project could yield several different ways of bringing it together (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). In that sense, integration was not much different than axial coding except that it was done at a higher more abstract level of analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 117). The actual process entailed: identifying possible relationships between major categories in terms of their properties and dimensions; formulating some rough conception linked to the research problem via the use of diagrams or memos; and systematically developing the rough form into a picture of reality that is both comprehensible and grounded. To do so, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested five steps. Examples from the current research are included in Figure 3.6 below:

Figure 3.6 – A Partial Example of Selective Coding

No	Step	Example (partial)
1.	Explicating the story line	The main story is about Chinese Indonesians deciding on, or settling for their higher education in Singapore and how they adjust to the host environment academically. Much depended on their response to the push and pull factors, their coping strategies as well as their general or specific goals thereafter. Clearly, different students adopt different perceptions and coping mechanisms depending on how they see their past, present and future. Students are not only accountable to themselves and their families, they are also responsible for living their lives in terms of their ethnicity (being Chinese) and their nationality (Indonesians). They carefully weigh the risks and privileges of being international students and make judgements about the appropriate things to do while in Singapore. If they feel that their fate is in their own hands, they take risk or work hard (in the extremes). If

		they feel that their fate is outside of their control, they either shut themselves out or leverage on the opportunities available.
2.	Relating categories at the dimensional level	All Chinese Indonesians may have some similar ‘callings’ (push and pull factors as subsidiary categories) but it would appear that their responses to these ‘callings’ differ, for example, depending on their level of attachment to their home country and whether they view Singapore as ‘home away from home’ or conversely ‘a strange land’. These are the dimensions of home attachment and host adjustment and the way that different types of students are related to them.
3.	Relating these (subsidiary) categories around the core category	Within these broad impetuses, there are individual callings (attitudes and aspirations) which, for example, make adjustment to life in Singapore a fairly idiosyncratic process. These students make very active decisions – at times way in advance of reaching their host country – as to how they intend to ‘perform’ in Singapore. An instance of the core category of learning strategy would include the subsidiary categories of attention learning strategy, cognitive learning strategy and affective learning strategy.
4.	Validating those relationships against data	It is noted that many of the intentions of the Chinese Indonesian students become self-fulfilling prophecies. Particularly, in instances where the circumstances do not fit their ‘routines or habits’, these students resort to different strategies to either ‘make things happen’ or conversely ‘fit their comfort levels’.
5.	Filling in categories (translating into an analytic story)	Based on their levels of home attachment and host adaptation levels, for example, one group of Indonesians can be identified as ‘ambassadors’. These students are equally adept in adjusting to their new environment without losing their strong attachment to their home where they eventually hope to return to. They also appear to have a strong learning strategy – be they attention learning strategy, cognitive learning strategy or affective learning strategy.

It may be of some consolation to note that even experienced researchers struggle with selective coding as integrating all the interpretive work done is perhaps the most difficult task in one’s research. Grounded theory procedures – from open to axial to selective coding – help immeasurably with integration. Central to the procedures is the selection of a core category and relating all major categories both to it and to each other.

3.7 Ethics

In deciding on a grounded theory approach, one key issue that needed to be dealt with is whether the adopted research methods are ethical. For example, an Indonesian participant with adjustment difficulties may not want to reveal that s/he regularly took to drugs or pornography to overcome the pressures of extreme loneliness or that s/he cheated in class tests / played truant to overcome the pressures of unreasonably high parental expectations – issues justifiably deemed to be either private or embarrassing, or both.

This study has adopted the broad ethical principles of respecting the dignity and rights of the participants; not exposing them to harm; getting their explicit permission for recorded interview and preserving their rights to privacy. In this respect, a problematic ethical aspect of the current research was the question whether it would adopt some acceptable form of deception. As this researcher is a part-time lecturer at the case institution, he is concerned that his subjects might be affected by the Hawthorne effect and allows the observer's presence to affect their responses.

However, the use of deception poses ethical problems because it is incompatible with the principle of informed consent – no matter how well intentioned a research project may be, if subjects have not knowingly agreed to their participation, the research cannot commence with them. It seems eminently unreasonable to deceive participants, even temporarily, about the true purpose of a research study. British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research make it clear that it is unacceptable to deceive at all. For this reason, deception was eventually not used in this study. Thus, only materials from Indonesian students who were prepared to be associated with the study from the outset were used. This safeguard procedure ensured that the research sticks closely to the justifiable grounds of informed consent.

3.8 Trustworthiness

The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative study is to support the argument that the researcher's findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 290). Thus, the issue of trustworthiness is about the extent to which one could believe in the accuracy and validity of the

research findings. Trustworthiness to the qualitative researcher is what validity and reliability are to the quantitative researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985:120) noted that “if you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it”. They went on to offer four issues in trustworthiness (see Figure 3.7 below), which will be adopted for this research:

Figure 3.7 – Application of methods to secure Trustworthiness

ISSUE	DESCRIPTION	APPLICATION
Credibility	An evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a “credible” conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data	Research has ensured that rigorous sampling techniques (saturation, maximum variation, theoretical) are adopted to give a multi-layered (triangulated) feel to the project.
Transferability	The degree to which the findings of this inquiry can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project.	Research has placed the responsibility of generalisation on the ‘reader’ rather than the researcher. To do so, thick description of participants has been provided to the reader.
Dependability	An assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation	Research runs through an explicit chain of evidence through an audit trail to allow other researchers to review or challenge its data collection and findings.
Confirmability	A measure of how well the researcher’s findings are supported by the data collected.	An audit trail and member checking are means by which the data can be confirmed.

Triangulation, or the use of different research methods to test each other out, is yet another approach adopted to enhance trustworthiness. For example, the research used multiple data collection methods ranging from in-depth interview to diary-keeping to provide a multi-layered system of data collection. However, one of the most effective means to ensure that the research is both transparent and relevant is to adopt an audit trail, which is a detailed description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of

findings. These are records that are kept regarding what was done in a research investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Figure 3.8 illustrates how this was done for the current research.

Figure 3.8 – Audit Trail of Data collection and analysis

Steps	Audit Items	Application
1.	Raw data	All gaps in transcription – including all raw data, written field notes, unobtrusive measures such as diaries – are checked against interview notes as well as with interviewees. Clarifications were sought in the process.
2.	Data reduction and analysis products	Summaries such as condensed notes, open-coded information and quantitative summaries and theoretical notes were checked for all possible categories. For example, some categories overlap while others were mutually exclusive.
3.	Data reconstruction and synthesis products	Structure of categories (themes, definitions, and relationships), findings and conclusions based on axial coding were checked for their connections to existing literatures and for their integration of concepts, relationships, and interpretations
4.	Process notes	Notes related to methodology were checked for procedures, designs, strategies and rationales. Notes related to trustworthiness were checked for credibility, dependability and confirmability. Audit trail notes were checked for transparency and integrity.
5.	Materials relating to intentions and dispositions	Moving closer to selective coding, care was taken with inquiry proposal, personal notes (reflexive notes and motivations) and expectations (predictions and intentions).
6.	Instrument development information	Pilot forms, preliminary schedules and observation formats were examined for weaknesses and limitations. For example: many of the participants’ diaries lacked a rich description of the writers’ emotions and meanings and had to be addressed with the researcher.

3.9 Role of Researcher; Researcher positioning

While both qualitative and quantitative researchers perform similar roles in designing and planning a research project, they perform rather different roles in data collection. The quantitative researchers are detached and may not get involved in the data collection – indeed, they may not even know the identity of their participants. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, are actively involved and even interact with their participants (Charmaz, 2000). For positivism, the assumption is that the quantitative observer is independent of what is observed and that the research ought to be value free because of this emotion-free approach. The problem in ‘what is observed’ in order to achieve a scientific breakthrough is that it is based on ‘what is known’ or what a social fact is. Conversely, creative breakthroughs, which may lead to such scientific breakthroughs, seldom come from a straightforward logical sequence as one would expect from a positivistic endeavour. Burgess (1993) prefers to take his chances with ‘some guesswork, competition, rivalry and lucky breaks’. While this may sound rather disorderly and unscientific, it is not. What interpretivism requires the qualitative researcher to remember is not to rely on mere techniques in his/her process of investigation.

Mercer (2007) sums it well when she described the onerous yet advantageous role of the ‘insider researcher’ as someone who may have a fieldwork edge in terms of access, intrusiveness, familiarity and rapport. The current research will adopt basically an interpretivist approach as an insider researcher, relying on the use of qualitative data to arrive at a *verstehen* or empathetic understanding of the phenomena as spelt out in the research questions. Mercer also cautioned against the three dilemmas relating to informant bias, reciprocity in interviews and research ethics for the insider researcher. To overcome these problems, the fieldwork in the current research aims for rigour and a high yield in trustworthiness – bearing in mind that the aim is to generate theory based on an understanding of the specific research questions (SRQs) and not to test specific hypotheses from the outset. The eventual aim of the researcher is to design an appropriate educational intervention (for example in dealing with Indonesians with spoiled identities). To achieve this subjective contextualisation, the writer’s own etic position has been subordinated to the participant’s emic position. He will also make clear his research intentions to readers who may not share his perspective of the phenomena.

As a part-time lecturer at the case institution, this researcher has all the advantages of being an insider researcher mentioned above. However, there is the risk of such a person being overly involved with the participants by championing their causes. The reverse is also true in that the participants may also provide the types of views they deemed the researcher wanted to hear. In both these extremes, the researcher has deliberately avoided selecting participants whom he has taught (except for those who have graduated). The researcher also used an audit trail and member checks to further minimise his pre-dispositions and personal bias,

3.10 Generalisability and Transferability of Findings

It is entirely possible to complete a grounded theory study without producing findings that are transferable to a broader context or generalisable to other contexts. Imagination and insight may also be required to appreciate what the data are reflecting. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 257) noted that ‘there is an interplay between the researcher and the data, and no method, certainly not the grounded theory one, can ensure that the interplay will be creative.’ An unimaginative analysis may in a technical sense be adequately grounded in the data, but which may also be insufficiently grounded to be transferable for broader use. Thus, a good theory has to be plausible and open to conditions that can fit with reality in order not to diminish its general applicability. The study might be generalisable in that Chinese Indonesians studying in other countries may be expected to share some of the characteristics of those in the current Singapore study. Whether the views and behaviours of 20 participants could be generalised to all Indonesian students is uncertain; however, since the purpose of the current study is theory generation and not theory verification (Punch 1998) – this was of less concern. Thus, to the extent that generalisation may be possible, it is inferential and largely based on readers being sufficiently informed to transfer the study findings of this research context to their own situations.

To facilitate the researcher-reader comparison, the current thesis provides its readers with in-depth data from participants and also the study context by ensuring, for example, that data collection was conducted over several rounds and that with each round of collection, data

analysis was also carried out. This cycle of iteration took nine months and several repetitions until theoretical saturation was reached around the 18th participant. The final two participants did not surface any new theoretical elements but rather confirmed what had already been found. In this manner, thick description was achieved. The iteration between data collection and analysis can be said of the literature review. Unlike quantitative research when normally all the literature review is conducted before data are collected, some of the literature review for this thesis was conducted after the initial data collection. As Punch (1998) states, “The problem with reviewing the literature in advance of such a study is that it can strongly influence us when we begin working with the data” (p. 168).

3.11 Conclusion

The debate over whether a dominant paradigm is appropriate for the rapidly evolving situation of Chinese Indonesians studying in Singapore has resulted in significant discord among researchers in the field. One school argues that in many cases, the taxonomy of positivistic research should be employed as the central methodological framework in investigating the mass exodus of Chinese Indonesians be it to Singapore or other destinations; or for purposes of higher education or unrelated reasons.

On the other hand, interpretivists warn that grounded research must be designed to obtain findings that can stand the test of trustworthiness by providing a richer understanding of how students perceive their situations; put meanings into their realities; and act upon these subjectivities. The strength of this qualitative approach is that it may generate new theoretical discoveries through creative breakthroughs. Thus the methodological focus of the study is based on grounded theory, underpinned by the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm and the use of theoretical sampling. In terms of research methods, unstructured interviews and diary analysis rather than questionnaires and structured observations are preferred, while open, axial and selective coding are employed as core processes of grounded theory.

Finally, the role of the researcher is thrust into focus here. Should they be involved emotionally with their participants in order to *verstehen* them and appreciate the meanings that they bestow

upon their actions? Or is subjectivity an over-rated asset in scientific research? While it is always possible to argue that a qualitative researcher can remain objective and neutral by adopting systematic methodology, there is admittedly a higher chance that he/she may become over-involved with the research and over-identify with the plight or pleas of the subjects. Mercer has suggested several ways in which some of these problems could be resolved.

Since all research, be it quantitative or qualitative, is subjective to some extent, the true test is in the engagement process. In other words, how researchers conduct their research work and engage their participants in their studies (without straying into undue bias) reveals the extent to which such research can be deemed to be relevant and trustworthy. It is in this spirit that this research is carried out.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Theory of ‘Selective Accommodation’

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the Theory of Selective Accommodation that eventually emerged from rounds of data collection, analysis and interpretation. It provides the final story line (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 117) that has been derived from the detailed analysis and findings to be presented in Chapters 5 and 6. In this sense, highlighting the eventual grounded theory before discussing the data collection and analysis process may appear out of sequence. However, the justification for sketching out an overview of the theory in the current chapter is to present a holistic picture of the thesis so that the reader can more easily locate the detailed conceptual development and data analysis that follows in the next two chapters.

This study investigates Chinese Indonesian students’ perceptions of studying in Singapore by gathering primary data based on grounded theory methods (see Chapter 3). Sampling methods seek theoretical saturation. In the process of analysis, many uncoordinated labels were hypothetically generated during the initial open coding stage. These first-level concepts include abstractions such as educational pressures, self concept, group study, sociability and academic performance. This is followed in the next stage, known as axial coding, with the formulation of concepts and categories, namely Push Factors, Pull Factors, Pliability, Study Mechanisms and Future Direction. Coding is a stern challenge as some categories, such as push factors, are so common as to appear unrelated to data, whereas others such as ‘pliability’ and ‘*suka rela*’ (Indonesian term for ‘accommodation in general’) reflect the in vivo or actual words used by participants during the research. The different ‘scripts’ are then integrated as core categories to form the final storyline (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 107 -110) at the concluding stage of selective coding, which sees the emergence of the grounded theory of Selective Accommodation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 61 – 63). At this final stage of data analysis, only the most salient categories, or core variables, are selected to provide the rudiments of the Theory of Selective Accommodation. These include the four-fold typology of Ambassadors, Adherents, Achievers

and Apathetics. Throughout the iterative process, the researcher goes back and forth naming, merging and modifying concepts until a stable stage is reached at final coding.

In all, this theory will be discussed in three parts relating to the participants, the general story line and the final story line, which is the hypothesis of Selective Accommodation. This hypothesis itself will be developed in four ways, as follows: (a) in relation to the overall hypothesis of Selective Accommodation and (b) the processes of Selective Accommodation. The reason for dissecting the hypothesis this way is to demonstrate how grounded theory is derived from the three sequential processes of open, axial and selective coding.

4.1 The Participants

Details of the 20 participants in Table 3.1 show the sequence of sampling and selection and the diverse backgrounds of the students based on their gender, age, course type, course year and the length of stay at the time of the study. Maximum variation sampling is used – whereby one student participant is chosen at a time (except for the first two students, albeit with differing characteristics, during the pilot interview where both are introduced concurrently) the aim being to secure a sample with maximum student differences of experience according to the key criteria specified in the research design. As this pointed to a non-random sample, care is taken to ensure that, nearer to saturation, six students with similar profiles that do not add to the variation are discarded. Saturation is reached when maximum variation of the various features in relation to the hypothesis on Selective Accommodation is achieved, and when data from additional participants proves repetitive and adds nothing new. At no time is ‘forcing’ done to accomplish a pre-conceived outcome. Rather, care is taken to ensure that the grounded theory is truly ‘emerging’ and ‘being constructed’, from the data (Glaser, 1992).

Participant confidentiality is not breached at any phase of this study in order to achieve the criterion of ‘trustworthiness’. The identity of participants and their courses have been kept confidential. Otherwise, all meaningful data has been kept transparent and available for reference in order to fully augment the search for a truly grounded theory.

During the process of data gathering, participants related their ‘stories’ candidly and openly as far as the researcher could tell. These ‘grounded’ narratives are carefully analysed by the researcher, coded and presented. The characteristics of each participant are also carefully studied as they assist in the formulation of the typology of all participants. The processes (story lines) and categories are eventually interlinked via a fourfold typology to provide and justify the grounded theory of Selective Accommodation. Chapter 6 will detail how four Ideal Types emerge from the grounded data, including how the various factors within each category are grouped, and how they relate to each other within the same Type, and across Types.

While participants tend to describe their lives back home in Indonesia and abroad in Singapore in a random and uncoordinated manner, especially in the early parts of their interviews, care is taken in this study following several rounds of iteration to ensure that the fields of discussion are gradually narrowed down to the phenomenon in question. For example, while the first-line concept of ‘accommodating’ others in a new environment is generally applicable to all students and is evident as early as the initial phase of open coding, it is not until near mid-stream in the data collection process that the act of ‘accommodating’ – being helpful and willing to do what someone else wants (Longman Exam Dictionary, 2006, pp.9) – is noted to be applied by all types of participants whether they are extremely competitive or extremely apathetic. This appears puzzling as an accommodating student is someone who is usually deemed more adaptable while a hostile or apathetic type is less likely to display any accommodating spirit. The answer to this seeming paradox is that there are different magnitudes of accommodation, to the extent that their differences are in kind and not just in degree.

This pervasive yet varied accommodating attitude of every Chinese Indonesian participant is best explained via the concept of Javanese-style ‘accommodating’, known as ‘*suka rela*’, which carries several shades of meaning in the Bahasa or Indonesian language. In descending order from genuine to insincere accommodation, the first type displays a non utilitarian but sincere form of accommodation, such as a participant who exudes a genuine voluntary spirit of going out of his/her way to help without condition. This form of full volunteerism, known as ‘*gila rela*’ is done to enhance one’s self-image, usually subconsciously rather than deliberately, even if there

is no foreseeable advantage. The most genuine extent of '*gila rela*' is someone who is altruistically and spontaneously helpful. In-between, the second and third type of '*suka rela*' are those who accommodate the wishes of others to please ('*terpaksa rela*') or out of sheer obligation ('*setengah rela*') to the other party from whom they may derive some future advantage, such as in a lecturer- student relationship. At the lowest end of accommodation, '*pura pura rela*' is the fourth type that displays an Indonesian willingness to 'help' because the person just wants to be non-confrontational but without actually carrying out the promises made.

These nuanced distinctions of the concept of '*suka rela*' in the heavily Javanese-influenced Indonesian culture (including participants of ethnic Chinese origins) only emerged when the researcher notes the contrast in the behaviours of two participants. While both of them appeared sharply divergent in their attitudes and behaviours towards their Singapore sojourn, they appear to show the same accommodating traits which, on the surface, seem to be similarly motivated. When the researcher asks participants to keep a diary record for a week, all of them 'willingly' accommodate the request – but varied in terms of their commitment to the task. There are the *gila-rela* type who enthusiastically write a full account of their activities as well as their emotions and opinions, while the *pura pura-rela* type keep several slots blank. As the data analysis move up several notches in the coding process, these differences become more evident and an important separator for the eventual typology of participants to represent the theory of Selective Accommodation.

4.2 The story of Selective Accommodation

The overall story of the Theory of Selective Accommodation is derived from the four types of participants namely: (1) "Ambassadors" (2) "Adherents" (3) "Achievers" and (4) "Apathetics". It is the emergence of these four categories that contribute to the overall theory of Selective Accommodation. All four types are highly accommodating but in sharply different ways and for vastly different reasons. Being accommodating is a key mechanism for adapting to a new educational environment. These four types are described below in descending order of accommodation, or *suka rela*.

a. Ambassadors. The Ambassadors, a term coincidentally used by two students to describe themselves (M3 and M15), demonstrate the ‘purest’ form of accommodation consistent with *gila rela*, in dealing with both friends and strangers, course mates and lecturers, Indonesians and non-Indonesians. They display little ulterior motive but go out of their way to offer assistance. For example, they may contribute their time generously to group discussions even at the expense of their own self-study. At other times, they share their marked scripts generously with other students even if there is no quid-pro-quo from the benefitting parties. If any ulterior motive were to be inferred upon them, it is that they want to be good ambassadors for their country. While they are aware of their minority status as ethnic Chinese and the push factors they face back home, they exhibit a high level of pride as Indonesian citizens. They perceive the push factors as the result of the prevailing economic situation rather than a political problem caused by the native reactions to their unique history as migrants to Indonesia from China. In that sense, one could argue that they have fully assimilated the Indonesian culture. They are positive and optimistic about Indonesia’s bright future and want to play a part in its future development. Singapore is viewed as a destination of choice because it offers some of the solutions to Indonesian woes in the academic domain. They hope to be part of that solution. As a group, Ambassadors are collaborative, as they adopt the more instrumental approach of ‘joining forces’ and ‘pooling resources’ (M11). In the collaborative style, a lot of negotiation takes place, usually in Bahasa because non-Chinese Indonesians might be involved. For their off-campus interactions, Ambassadors adopt transformational relationships, which put true friendships ahead of pecuniary interests.

The adjustment problems faced by Ambassadors could thus be linked to their style of accommodation. By putting the affairs of others before their own, they sometimes lose focus in their educational pursuits and are often guilty of upholding mismatched or wrong priorities. If all the Chinese Indonesians selectively accommodate via a collaborative win-win approach, education providers in Singapore would have the least to worry either about their adjustment difficulties or level of academic performance. The truth, however, is the Ambassadors are struggling with their grades. Indeed, they may be a more difficult group to provide assistance to as they tend to hide their academic weaknesses behind their smiles and accommodation masks.

Indeed, Ambassadors have sometimes been accused of being sycophantic whenever they display their *gila rela* style of accommodation.

b. Adherents. The Adherents have been colourfully described by their own kind as *lallang*, a Bahasa word for a type of tall grass found near padi fields that has a tendency to flow with the wind. They are accommodating because of their perceived self-worth and the need 'to belong'. They are therefore anxious to be accepted by people around them. Adherents do not have an opinion, or at least not a contrarian view. They move out of Indonesia because they perceive that it is the thing to do and many others are doing so; they end up in Singapore because their compatriots favour that neighbouring state. They look microscopically at the immediate and the foreseeable, with neither a notion of their academic targets nor a vision of their future paths. They prefer to take things one step at a time and adopt a '*terpaksa rela*' style of accommodation towards their studies and peers, that is non-committal - neither too warm nor too cold. Herein lies their accommodation problems – a serious lack of focus in their studies and a lack of clarity about their future direction. For example, if there is no breakthrough in their Singapore studies, that is, they fare badly in their exams. Adherents tend to follow one of two routes, depending on their resources: If they are rich, they would sooner move to another country for a shot at another degree programme. If they are poor, they tend to either linger in Singapore hoping for a job opportunity to spring up or return to Indonesia for a low-paying job. They also need much help with their study methodologies and to change their come-what-may mentality that adversely affects their attitude towards study.

c. Achievers. The Achievers adopt a social exchange attitude in that any help rendered today would hopefully result in plentiful return at some point in the future. They view themselves as academically achieving and are powerfully driven by the determined pursuit of obtaining a good degree with good grades. Ironically, the persecution that they face as ethnic Chinese back home only acts as a spur for their back-against-the-wall mentality. For them, there is no turning back because they perceived 'back' as a desolate home with a bleak future. Singapore to them is not just another stop but a crucial destination– a make or break academic

opportunity. Success would spell either the beginning of a life-long career or a springboard to the US or UK for a second or Masters' degree.

Little wonder that they adopt a '*setengah rela*' style of accommodation. Their self-study is carried out with a specific objective in mind. Thus, if the objective is to memorise a piece of work, then time will be spent on rote-learning. This approach has the same ring as 'work smart and not just work hard'. Achievers tend to describe their style of revision as 'planned', 'tactical', 'calculated' and 'deliberate'. When they are studying as a group, Achievers adopt the highly 'competitive' way of securing the leadership of the group in order to dictate how the group and group members should operate

The difficulties faced by Achievers are that they usually miss the big picture, such that they see education as an end in itself rather than a means to other socially desired values. Friends, lecturers and universities are all tools or resources to help them excel in their examinations. Their almost-Machiavellian instincts cause them to miss out on the intrinsic values of good education and they tend to forget what they have learnt the moment the exams are over.

d. Apathetics. The fact that the 'Apathetics' ended up in Singapore has to do with its proximity and affordability rather than its perceived academic excellence. To be sure, they would be happy to get a job in Singapore and not bother to pursue their tertiary education, if that would mean not returning to Indonesia. In that regard, their 'accommodating' level is at the lowest form of volunteerism. They display a '*pura pura rela*' accommodation strategy towards their peers and lecturers that is intended as a delay tactic – soon to be forgotten once the other party has left. Apathetics, a term they describe themselves in a self-deprecating way, not only 'give in', they may even 'give up' especially when their contributions are not appreciated because of their inferior quality work.

Apathetics usually take their assigned tasks from the group with a 'pinch of salt', and are gratified that they are not marginalised or removed from their team. In terms of their off-campus interactions, they behave as most loners do in keeping much to themselves. The risk of not seeing the danger signs in stressed-out Apathetics, given global examples of campus tragedies

that befall maladjusted foreign students, is extremely high. They are most in need of both educational as well as non-educational help from all parties concerned.

4.3 The process of Selective Accommodation

Tracking backwards, the theory of Selective Accommodation is predicated on five distinct categories. They are: (1) Push Factors (to get out of Indonesia); (2) Pull Factors (to study in Singapore); (3) Pliability; (4) Study Mechanisms; and (5) Future Direction. Each of these five categories is in itself further supported by its respective concepts, which are presented below.

Table 4.1 – Theory derived from Coding Process

Categories		Theory of Selective Accommodation			
		Achievers	Ambassadors	Adherents	Apathetics
PUSH FACTORS	Political Pressures	Both direct and indirect experiences of ethnic discrimination and political persecution.	Least important push factor. No political pressures. Setbacks are caused by global factors.	No direct persecution, mainly from secondary sources.	Most important push factor. Mainly personal, direct experiences of persecution.
	Educational Pressures	Most important push factor.	Poor academic standards.	Poor facilities and funding.	Weak educational master plan.
	Loss of Chinese Identity	High sense of loss. Strong sense of Chinese identity. Moderate sense of Indonesian identity.	Lowest sense of loss. Weak sense of Chinese identity. Strong sense of Indonesian identity.	Low sense of loss. Weak sense of Chinese identity. Moderate sense of Indonesian identity.	Highest sense of loss. Strong sense of Chinese identity. Weak sense of Indonesian identity.
PULL FACTORS	General Pull	Full agreement on the general pull factors. Globalisation has increased international providers of tertiary education.			Apathetics find this reason particularly appealing.
	Specific Pulls	Educational features are a key pull factor. Singapore is a destination of choice.	Host facilitation is a key pull factor. But Singapore is one of many choices.	Country features are a key pull factor. Singapore is a destination of choice.	No particular strong factor. Singapore is one of many choices.
PLIABILITY	Personality	Optimistic. Go-getting. Least pliable.	Optimistic. Go-getting. Some pliable.	Pessimistic. Unassuming. Most pliable.	Pessimistic. Unassuming. Little pliable.
	Locus of Control	Internal control.		External control.	
	Self-Presentation	Low self-monitors.	High self-monitors.		Low self-monitors.
STUDY MECHANISMS	Self-Study Methods	Strategic self study. Problem-solving. Most common study method.	Cognitive self study. Purpose-building. Least popular study method.	Attentive self study. People-tending.	Affective self study. Passion-filling.
	Group-Study Methods	Competitive. An aggressive approach. Least popular.	Collaborative. An instrumental approach.	Cooperative. An altruistic approach. Most popular.	Conceding. A yielding approach.
	Off-Campus Interactions	Strong transactional relationship.	Strong transformational relationship.	Moderate transformational relationship.	Moderate transactional relationship.
FUTURE DIRN	Academic Performance	Good grades anticipated.	Average grades anticipated.	Average grades anticipated.	Poor grades anticipated.
	Career Direction	Next stop: further studies or work. Eventual stop: Possibly home, if other choices not available.	Next stop: work. Eventual stop: Definitely home, even if other choices available.	Next stop: work. Eventual stop: Most probably home, even if other choices available.	Next stop: work. Eventual stop: Anywhere but home.

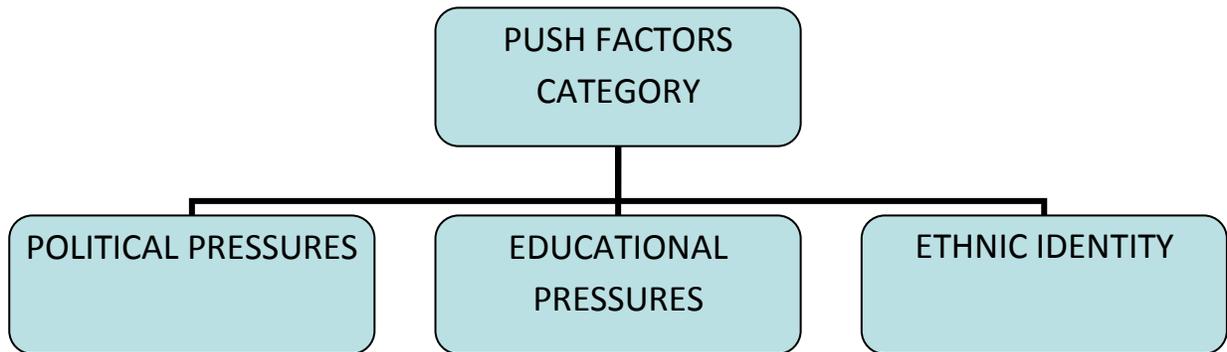
As an illustration, the terms ‘rote-learning’ (F4), ‘memory work’ (F16) and ‘repetition’ (M7) were used by some participants early in the research, to describe how they adjust their study methods to the new educational environment in Singapore. These descriptions were later grouped under the open code of ‘strategic study’, itself an in-vivo term used by two participants. As strategic study was used to describe an individual’s method of study, it was coded under the sub-category of ‘self-study methods’ (as opposed to ‘group study methods’) and, eventually, as part of the more general category of ‘study mechanisms’ (as opposed to non-study activities). Study mechanisms are one of the five categories that contributed to the Theory of Selective Accommodation.

All 20 participants who form part of this emerging theory adapted their behaviours from ‘study mechanisms’ as did the other four categories, but they all differ differently in that not all applied ‘strategic study’. (Other students adopted ‘cognitive study’, ‘attentive study’ and ‘affective study’.) The students who use ‘strategic study’ on a most regular basis claim that it helps them to consistently achieve good grades. This type of students is thus labeled as Achievers by the researcher when it is found that other participants who do not use this method also failed to achieve reasonably good grades. (They are labeled as Apathetics.) Another group of students achieved good grades without using ‘strategic study’. They are labeled as Ambassadors for using ‘cognitive study’. Details of how each of the five categories is coded are explained below.

4.3.1 Category of Push Factors

It was quite evident even at an early data gathering stage that all participants have been consistently affected by factors ‘pushing’ them to leave Indonesia. Some cited political reasons of ethnic persecution while others gave reasons of educational pressures such as inferior academic standards in Indonesia. A third push factor is the sense of threatened ethnic identity. Educational pressure was a key ‘exit factor’, especially among Achievers (concerned with poor academic standards) and Ambassadors (concerned with quality of degree), whereas Apathetics were impacted mainly by political pressures. As for the loss of their Chinese identity, both Achievers and Apathetics felt an acute sense of loss of their ethnicity, which led to a feeling of insecurity. Push Factors are shown in Figure 4.1 below:

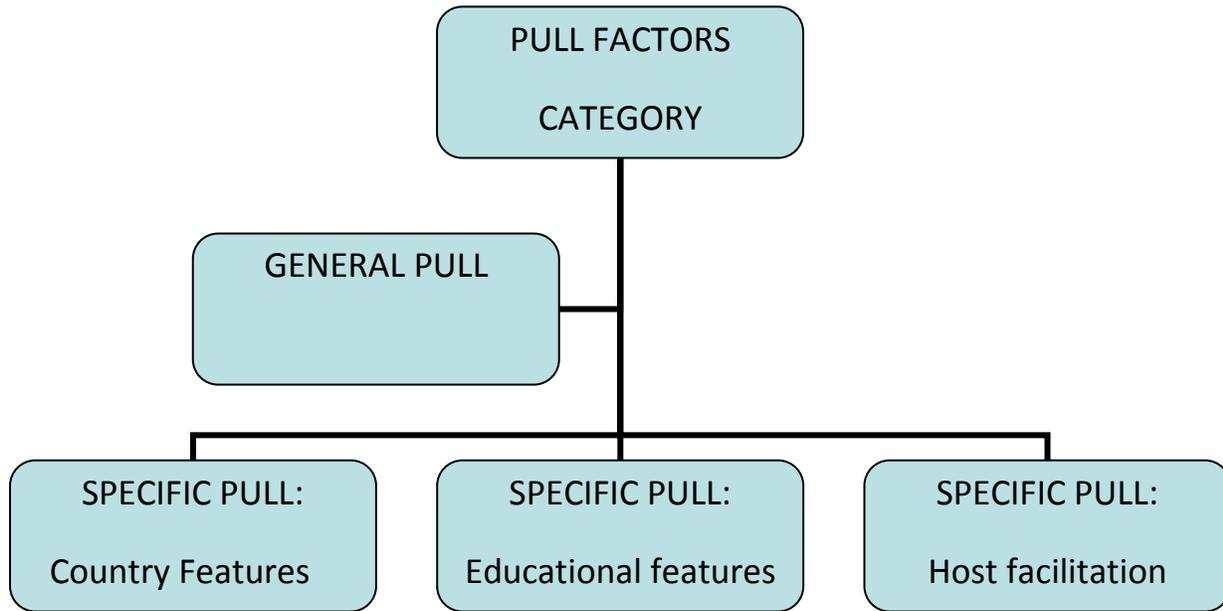
Figure 4.1 – Push Factors Category Chart



4.3.2 Category of Pull Factors

While host destinations that Chinese Indonesian students are attracted to include other favoured stops such as Australia, the USA, UK and even Malaysia, this study focuses on Singapore as a choice destination and examines the strengths of Singapore as a Pull Factor for Chinese Indonesians. Nonetheless, for those who view Singapore as a destination comparably with other favoured stops, this would be tagged “General Pull”, as illustrated in Figure 4.2. As for the ‘Specific Pulls’ of Singapore, they consist of Singapore as a favoured country in general (the case for Ambassadors and Apathetics) or as a centre for tertiary learning in particular (the case for Achievers and Adherents). Another specific pull factor is the perception as to whether Singapore makes foreigners feel welcome by facilitating their stay.

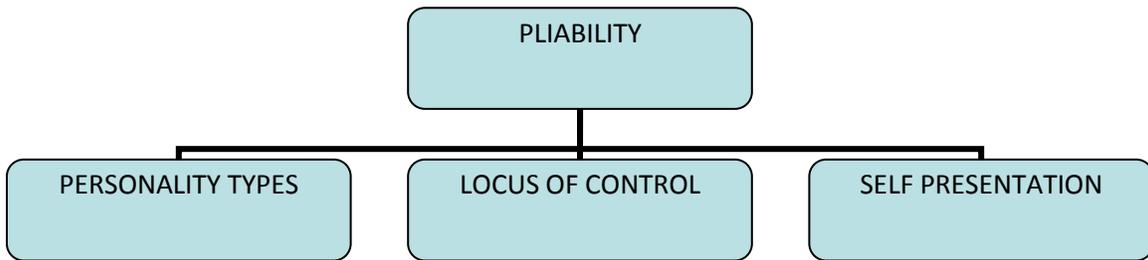
Figure 4.2 – Pull Factors Category Chart



4.3.3 Category of Pliability

This category of pliability determines whether a participant is likely to be ‘easily influenced and/or controlled by other people’ (Longman, 2006, pp.1166) especially in a foreign environment. Figure 4.3 below measures risks of pliability based on how participants perceive their role as students in a foreign country. Apart from asking participants to describe their own personality types in this regard, they were also asked to consider how they thought others close to them would perceive them. Their concept of ‘self’ was also examined as well as their tendency to look internally to themselves (internal dispositions) or externally to the environment (outside factors) for their successes and failures. This is known respectively as the internal and external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). For example, Achievers and Ambassadors accommodate the events that happen around them based on internal control in that they are likely to blame themselves when things go wrong as well as to claim credit when things go well. Conversely, Adherents and Apathetics accommodate events by interpreting both pleasant and unpleasant things as externally caused.

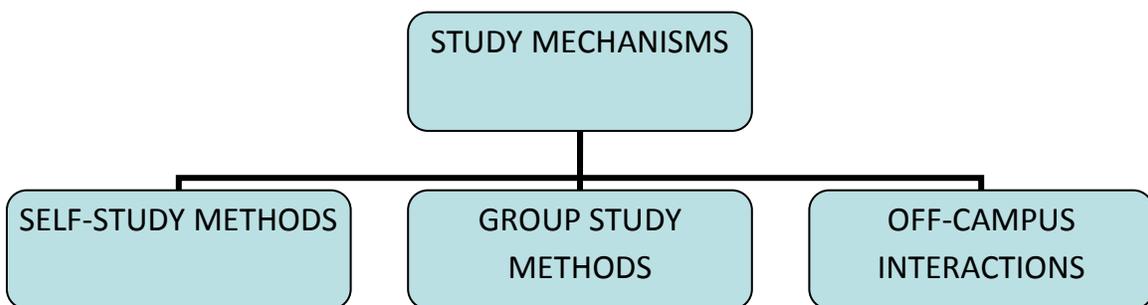
Figure 4.3 – Pliability Category Chart



4.3.4 Category of Study Mechanisms

This category is the result of attempting to answer the second Research Question about coping mechanisms. It focuses on coping with studies and is divided into three major portions namely the individual’s self-study methods, group study methods and off-campus interactions. Self-study methods are derived from strategic self study (mainly Achievers), cognitive self study (Ambassadors), attentive self study (Adherents) and affective self study (Apathetics). In terms of group work, Achievers tend to be competitive by adopting an aggressive approach. Ambassadors accommodate their group members by being collaborative, whereas Adherents do so by being cooperative. As for Apathetics, they accommodate using a conceding style that yields to the whims and fancy of members. See Figure 4.4 below.

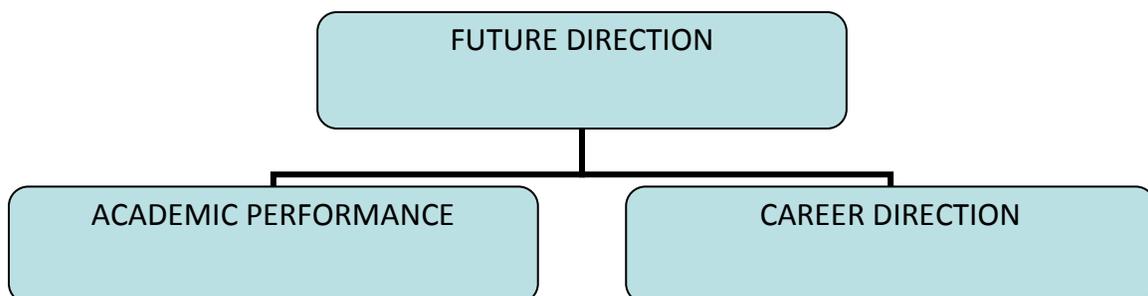
Figure 4.4 – Study Mechanisms Category Chart



4.3.5 Category of Future Direction

This category looks at the participants' view of their future intentions from two perspectives (see Figure 4.5). The first is their academic performance and how they view the definition and importance of a 'good grade', and where such a grade might take them; be it to the start of a promising career or further studies. Generally, Achievers are confident of scoring good grades whereas Ambassadors and Adherents are satisfied with average grades. Apathetics are pessimistic as they only foresee poor grades for themselves. The second sub-category of career direction brings this study right back to the first Research Question where it all started, in their home country Indonesia. Are Chinese Indonesians likely to return to where they once feel compelled to leave? Would the journey home be immediately or eventually; temporarily or permanently? Apart from Ambassadors who are sure they would want to return home quickly and permanently; and Apathetics stating 'anywhere but home'; the remaining two types of students remain open about these destination issues.

Figure 4.5 – Future Direction Category Chart



4.4 The Main Hypothesis of Selective Accommodation

This section discusses how the typology and processes of Selective Accommodation are understood within the context of the participants' (1) push factors (2) pull factors (3) pliability (4) study mechanisms and (5) future direction. This will give a clearer picture how the four types of Selective Accommodation are derived.

4.4.1 Hypothesis on the General Theory of Selective Accommodation

The participants' reliance on selective accommodation can be witnessed throughout the period that Chinese Indonesians studied in Singapore. Faced with perceived political persecution back

home, they took up the advice of their families and friends in Indonesia and elsewhere to further their studies in neighbouring Singapore. Accommodating the wishes of their loved ones and well wishers, as it turns out, is not only to please or appease them but to heed their strong advice that they have no future in Indonesia – at least where their academic advancement is concerned. Thus, a key reason for making nearby Singapore a destination of choice is to accommodate the wishes of their parents who prefer them to stay within contactable distance. Families that are not as well-off, in particular, saw Singapore as a good choice because of the affordability factor. Thus, while many of these students would have preferred the USA, UK or even Australia, they oblige their parents by making the short trek to Singapore.

Having arrived in Singapore, they then adopted a pliable attitude in order to make the transition a smoother experience for themselves. While participants differ in their personality traits, they were generally accommodating, obliging and willing to accept good advice from their hosts - to varying degrees of '*suka rela*'. The most evident display of such selective accommodation can be observed from the way that they coped with the everyday study routines and non-study activities. While different participants adapt differently in relationship-building, some were highly obliging to the extent that they would not give 'no' for an answer when requests for help are made of them. An accommodating spirit allowed the Chinese Indonesians to adapt quickly as well as to allow the locals to receive them more warmly. Notably, Singaporeans working or studying at the case institution generally think Chinese Indonesians are friendlier and warmer than Chinese from China, Malaysia or Indo-China. The Chinese mainlanders cope with their new stress either by withdrawing within themselves or adopting a highly combative attitude, thus not endearing them to the locals. The more relaxed Malaysian Chinese, in contrast, adopt a lackadaisical attitude in terms of peer relationships because they are neither persecuted back home nor perceive Singapore as a highly treasured destination. To them, Singapore is like a 'superior Malaysian university' that communicates in English rather than Malay. As for the Indo-Chinese from Vietnam or Myanmar, many completely escaped into their small communities. Finally, in terms of their future direction, the Chinese Indonesians again adopted a very conciliatory and accommodating attitude. They would be happy to stay and work in Singapore, if Singapore employers are willing to offer them jobs. But, equally, the group of Ambassadors

would be happy to return home to more sympathetic employers and certainly more supportive families. In short, adaptation with an accommodating attitude is the key to how they have attempted to cope with their stay in Singapore – differently among themselves and, certainly, differently compared with other overseas Chinese students.

4.4.2 Hypothesis on the Processes of Selective Accommodation

As discussed earlier, the core category of Selective Accommodation emerges from the processes of five linking categories of (1) Push Factors (2) Pull Factors (3) Pliability (4) Coping Mechanisms, both study and non-study types and (5) Future Direction. The processes within the categories, including the respective sub-categories, are summarised as follows:

The first category of Push Factors (Figure 4.1) consists of three inter-related sub-categories of political pressures, educational pressures and Chinese identity. This category helps to identify the magnitude of the desire to leave one's country for an overseas destination. Push Factors can arguably be deemed to be the very first substantive category to emerge that goes on to trigger a ripple effect among all other subsequent categories – even though it need not be a necessary condition.

The second category of Pull Factors (Figure 4.2), on the other hand, is an essential condition for the Theory to emerge. This category consists of the general pull that may arise from overseas destinations per se, including the US, UK, Australia and even Malaysia. However, the specific pulls of Singapore are derived from its Country Features, Educational Features and Host Facilitation. The mere geographical location of Singapore makes its proximity an extremely appealing destination for both rich and less wealthy Chinese Indonesian parents to send their children to. Singapore's educational features in boasting world-class academic facilities and teaching staff also play a key role in pulling in Indonesians. Perhaps most important of all, the foresight and determination of the Singapore authorities to make the country a global educational hub by putting in place schemes and means to enable overseas students to adapt quickly is the single most powerful pull factor.

The third category of the risk of pliability places the ability to adapt well squarely on the shoulder of the students (Figure 4.3). The three pliable traits of personality types, locus of control and self-presentation contribute to the accommodating nature of Chinese Indonesians. While it is not the result of the Push or Pull Factors, an individual's intention to be pliable is contingent upon the perception of how important the people around are in making his/her Singapore stay a success. Pliability is perhaps the single most important category that defines a person's willingness to be accommodating as it reveals his true academic intentions. Pliability has an impact on the next category, that of a student's study mechanisms (Figure 4.4). Self-study and group-study methods, and off-campus interactions are critical conditions in the learning curve of the participants. Under the latter, the level of sociability and the quality of lifestyle adopted by participants in their life outside college also contribute to their general mental and physical well-being.

Finally, the future direction, which is the cumulative outcome of all the four preceding categories, determines the closing story line (Figure 4.6). This category can be viewed from the impact of a participant's academic performance on their future academic and career plans, as well as on their intentions or otherwise to return home. These two concepts signal that the theory of Selective Accommodation applies even as the participants end their studies in Singapore.

4.4.3 Contextualising the processes of the Hypothesis of Selective Accommodation

It would be overly simplistic to assume that participants practise the same form of Selective Accommodation, and to the same degree. Neither is so. Given their different backgrounds, their current life experiences and their future intentions, Chinese Indonesians do vary significantly in their attitudes towards accommodation. Hence, there is no unanimous acceptance of all or even some of the inter-related concepts within all or some of the categories. The first category of Push Factors may be a common historical or political backdrop for all Chinese Indonesians but that does not mean they react to these externalities in similar ways. Some are more concerned with the political pressures in the push factors and not the educational pressures, whereas the situation may be the opposite for others. Similarly, the sense of home detachment plays a crucial role: a participant who shows a higher attachment to home is more likely to feel 'homesick' and more

willing to fend off the political and educational pressures than one who is carefree and would let these pressures sway them forward or, more precisely, outward.

By the same token, the Pull factors may be differently received. Some participants saw no difference between a stop in Singapore or the USA, but would choose Singapore because it is much nearer to home. Others could be impressed by the way that they have been made welcome by their academic hosts – albeit with much prompting from the Singapore authorities. There would be others who are attracted to Singapore’s cultural uniqueness or its world-class educational facilities.

Participants are likely to differ greatest in their pliability factor. Even given the general attitude of ‘*suka rela*’ accommodation, some Chinese Indonesians are likely to be more enthusiastic while others are probably less so. Coping mechanisms – whether in terms of study or non-study situations – are likely to be varied as well, since some students tend to be more individualistic while others are more collectivistic. Add to it the participants’ sociability, lifestyle and future direction and one can see a whole range of accommodation styles that participants may adopt.

4.4.4 Hypothesis on relation to the Typology of Participants

The four types of participants that emerged from the grounded theory of Selective Accommodation share the same generic characteristic of accommodation. However, within this broader context, they think and react differently. The ‘Ambassadors’ accommodate the most, followed by the ‘Adherents’, the ‘Achievers’ and the ‘Apathetics’. It is precisely because of their different accommodation styles that gives rise to the emergence of the typology of participants in Chapter 6.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter pre-empts Chapters 5 and 6 by presenting the final story and theoretical outline before discussing the processes of coding and categorisation. This is intentional in order to allow the reader a prior holistic view of the direction of the data analysis and coding exercises that are

to follow. By viewing the final story line upfront ahead of the discussion, the reader should find it easier to locate the varied dimensions of the ongoing narration.

The important thing is that the rigorous process of data collection and analysis has led to the interpretation in this chapter of the influence of the theory of Selective Accommodation. It signifies the characteristics of accommodation employed by Chinese Indonesian undergraduates in Singapore, and helps the researcher describe four participant types. This can only be achieved because the initial hypothesis of Selective Accommodation has been rigorously tested against the five processes and categories of Push Factors, Pull Factors, Pliability, Study Mechanisms and Future Directions. The hypothesis presented in this chapter will now be expounded in full in Chapter 5, illustrating how the concepts and categories have led to the grounded theory of Selective Accommodation. This data analysis will in turn provide the groundwork for discussion in Chapter 6 to account for the typology of participants as expressed through the four categories. The concluding Chapter 7 will deal with both the positive and negative aspects of their accommodation strategies and propose measures to reinforce or rectify them, as the case may be.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Concepts and Categories of the Theory of 'Selective Accommodation'

5.0 Introduction

The theory of Selective Accommodation was outlined as an 'architecture', or structural design, in the previous chapter, where the entire story line from start to finish was presented, followed by a concise presentation of the categories and processes of Selective Accommodation. This chapter elaborates on the full story with full reference to the data collected, having captured the many conditions and consequences bearing upon the given phenomenon of Selective Accommodation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 175). The categories formed from these conditions and consequences will be discussed as follows:

- 5.1 Participants' Identification System
- 5.2 Category of Push Factors
- 5.3 Category of Pull Factors
- 5.4 Category of Pliability
- 5.5 Category of Coping Mechanisms
- 5.6 Category of Future Direction

5.1 Participants Identification System

The study centres on Chinese Indonesian students who have either recently graduated from or are still studying at a Singapore higher education institution. Out of 26 participants interviewed, six were deselected in the process as theoretical sampling tightened the suitable candidates based on the criterion of maximum variation. Care was taken to ensure that 'forcing' did not occur and that concepts and hypotheses were allowed to 'emerge' that would provide the eventual grounded theory. To this end, theoretical memoing of ideas about substantive codes were scrutinised for their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during iterative coding, collecting and the analysing of data (Glaser, 1998). One example was that the concept of 'accommodation' did not surface at the initial coding phases and only revealed its underlying

variations when the word was examined in relation to Indonesian semantics. The researcher only became aware that participants may be using the same term ‘accommodating’ in English to mean different variants in *Bahasa Indonesia*. How these variations were identified is discussed in the next chapter.

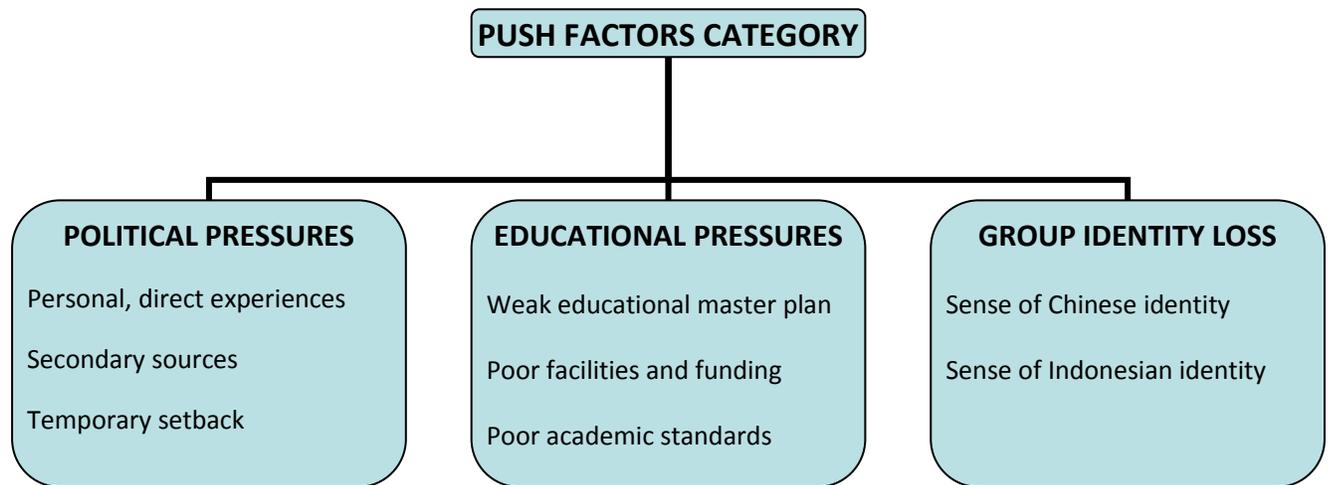
For the sake of confidentiality, each participant in the original batch of 26 was coded as M (Male) or F (Female) and suffixed by numerals running from 1 to 26. By the time the final 20 participants (which happened to be equally gendered) were sampled, the numbering was reduced and re-ordered from 1 – 20. This inconvenience turned out to be an advantage as it became difficult to trace the identity of a participant without the researcher’s formula that effectively converted, for example, the original ‘F25’ to the eventual ‘F19’ even though both tags referred to the same participant. This also meant that the original ‘F19’ was not the eventual ‘F19’ as the former had been converted to the eventual ‘F14’. In some other situations, the original tag, say ‘F11’, might have been discarded. Strict confidentiality for the participants was maintained throughout. The raw data, however, remained available so long as the coding formula was disclosed. This ensured transparency. All references used in the current study therefore referred to the revised numbering of the 20 participants, from 1 to 20.

The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 23 with the median age at 21. The mean age was younger, at 20.3 years, which is representative of most foreign students in the Institution. The number of years spent in Singapore at the point of the study ranged from under one year to four years, with just one participant, M1, having lived in Singapore for 5 years. M1 was involved in the pilot interview and his recollection of events throughout his stay in Singapore was necessary to help formulate follow up questions. The mean period of stay in Singapore was a short 2.45 years, which helped participants recall their living experiences and the early adjustments they needed to make in Singapore. Table 3.1 provides the profiles of the 20 participants based on the revised tags.

5.2 Category: Push Factors (to get out of Indonesia)

The “Push Factors” category consists of three concepts which are labeled as: (1) Political pressures; (2) Educational pressures and (3) Group identity loss. See Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1 – Push Factors Category Chart



Push factors provide a balanced starting point and useful conceptualisation to examine why an overseas education is an end-choice for many undergraduates, as they embrace the broadest variation of reasons to be factored for consideration. Being an ethnic Chinese minority in Indonesia is challenging as relations with native Indonesians have been historically, and still remain, difficult. This complicates the push factor, and makes SRQ1 on ‘Why don’t they study in Indonesia?’ an important exploratory question. Understanding their psyche helps in the appreciation of their attitude towards pursuing a tertiary education ‘anywhere but home’. A full discussion on each of these concepts now follows.

5.2.1 Political pressures

Political pressures as a first concept of Push Factors refer to the sense of persecution that the ethnic Chinese Indonesians feel as a result of their historical links with China, their immigrant status as outsiders in Indonesia and their perceived discrimination against them as a minority race by the locals, who are of Malay stock and form the majority. This sense or feeling was

experienced by 16 of the 20 participants in varying degrees. Their sense of connection to China (historical connections) and/or their Chinese-ness (ethnicity) was a key reason why they saw the need to move out of the country – whether for further studies, work or as new immigrants. For the current study, the focus was placed on the political pressure to simply ‘get out of the country – and stay out’ as M13 described it. For him, it did not matter what he intended to do in the host country, as pursuing a tertiary education was ‘just one of many options’. F14 put it more succinctly:

“Honestly, I don’t even care which country I end up in or what I am doing there. If it is to study, I don’t care where I study, what course I am taking or how I will perform. An overseas education is just a convenient excuse not a desired option.”

F10, a repeat student penned this thought in her diary, to start a particular Monday: “Another week to !!! deadline.” Asked to elaborate later what ‘!!!’ meant, she said sheepishly:

“Sorry, I wasn’t referring to assignment deadlines. I was counting down the days when my stay in Singapore would be over and I could return home. I don’t want to go back to Indonesia but without a job to keep me here, I have no choice.”

A common link among this group of participants who felt the most political pressure was their claim that they had experienced some form of racial intimidation against them or their friends and families. While none of their examples included physical harm or violent racial discrimination, three students (M8, F10 and M13) cited either snide remarks or hostile gestures (‘vulgar signs’ or ‘angry stares’) while two others (F6 and F14) claimed that the natives boycotted their parents’ retail business. F6 recalled:

“A local school mate of mine told me to my face that his family and kampong friends are no longer patronizing my dad’s bicycle shop. I felt like saying: ‘Big deal, you can’t afford a bicycle, anyway’ but then decided to keep my thoughts to myself and my mouth shut. They can be so unreasonable and irrational. Blaming the global economic crisis on us, Chinese.”

Among the 16 who sensed political pressure but to a lesser degree, they cited secondary source of political pressure, rather than their own direct experience, as their key push factor. Unlike the more generic historical context and direct encounters to account for the push factor quoted by the earlier group, this second group pointed to a more specific source: friends and the local community. Both M5 and F9 admitted that they had been socialised into their political pressures by ‘friends in the Chinese community’. Referring to the racial unrest in 1997, M5 explained:

“Personally, I don’t quite understand what political persecution meant as I was only nine when it happened. But my parents told me that there was no future for us in Indonesia, so I believed them and accepted their version.” F12 and M20 also pointed to the influence of second-hand information rather than their personal first-hand experiences. F12 explained: “We heard loads of anti-Chinese horror stories but to be fair none of them was verified. Certainly, no one near or dear to me was harmed.”

A third group of four participants (M3, M11, M15, M17) who did not cite political pressures as their push factor, argued that the decades of assimilation and accommodation had made all Indonesians feel as one. To them, the economic crisis was a global, temporary setback that affected both the Chinese and non-Chinese in Indonesia equally. M11 noted:

“I can honestly say that the ethnic crisis brings us Indonesians closer together. Among the working class, whether we are Chinese or non-Chinese, we see ourselves as being bullied by the rich and politically powerful – and they are equally Chinese and non-Chinese tyrants. It is not an ethnicity issue, and not a nationality issue.”

M15 was more specific: “Even as a Chinese, I can identify more with non-Chinese Indonesians than Chinese from Singapore or China. My nationality as Indonesian is more important to me than my ethnicity.”

In summary, political pressures as a push factor concept was more acutely felt by participants who either viewed their ethnicity or minority status as a key threat to political stability in

Indonesia, or claimed to have experienced some direct form of intimidation. The less pressured group derived their political pressures from secondary sources and did not have a strong sense of “Chinese-ness”. The final group did not sense political pressures at all as they saw themselves more as Indonesians than as Chinese. They blamed the push factor on temporary global setbacks faced by the world and not confined to Indonesia. Thus, they were comfortable with their status and the pressures for them to study overseas came from the next set of push factor concepts, to be described next.

5.2.2 Educational pressures

Educational pressures as a second concept of Push Factors refer to the desire to achieve an educational status that Chinese Indonesians feel can only be offered by tertiary courses overseas. This is deemed an indictment of the relatively inferior degrees offered by local universities. Despite the wide choice of 81 public universities and 2,514 private campuses, many Indonesian parents, non-Chinese included, prefer to send their children overseas while they strategise their alternative homes away from their country of domicile (Juliastuti, 2006).

Educational pressures, more than political pressures, appeared to be the most common Push Factor, with all 20 participants acknowledging that it had a significant part to play in them deciding to leave the comforts of home. A most common complaint was that the Indonesian tertiary system did not seem to have an overall master plan on education to demonstrate how the government intended to develop graduates by providing continuity from their secondary to tertiary education and, thereafter, to deploy graduates in the various fields of entry into the job market. M1 complained: “There doesn’t seem to be a holistic plan to weave us into tertiary education. When we graduate, there is also no plan to weave us into employment.” F16 added: “All we see is discontinuity. There is no link between what we are taught and how the real world operates. There is also no link between our qualifications and the real world.”

However, these students readily admitted that they might not be good enough for places in the more prestigious local universities such as the public University of Indonesia and Gadjadara University, and the private Pelita Harapan University and Trisakti University (M8, F10, M13 and

F19). Others, however, blamed the discriminatory admission policies as well as ‘bribe fees’ for their dissatisfaction with the local educational system (F2, F14 and F18). F18 commented: “I don’t mind paying a bribe at (name removed) Uni but it is not as if I then get a better degree. If everyone can get a degree this way, what is the degree worth?”

Other participants either pointed to a lack of facilities due to poor public funding (F6, F9, F12) or rigid antiquated pedagogy in universities (M5, F19) as an educational pressure to leave.

Indonesian universities, especially those in the technological fields, were deemed to be equipped with outmoded facilities with little or no state-of-the-art technology to boast of. M5 lamented:

“We are not even asking for state-of-the-art facilities such as the latest lab equipment.

Sometimes, there are not even enough test tubes to share around!” Teaching methods, where the local system was deemed to be teacher-centred or exam-centric, were another ‘put-off’.

According to F19:

“One would have thought that after so many years of rote-learning and memory work in primary and secondary schools, at least the tertiary educational system would challenge us academically in different ways. Instead what we get is ‘more of the same’!”

Of the 20 participants, eight of them felt that the painful truth had to be told: Indonesian universities were simply not good enough, compared to those in the region. While M3, F4 and M11 expressed their willingness to study in a top university in Indonesia for which they qualified, they felt it would be ‘money better spent with a higher return on investment’ if the same amount of time and resources were spent in a good foreign university. M1, M7 and F16 went beyond that, saying that a good foreign university was not only good value for money, but was also a passport to one’s career advancement. “Sadly, Indonesian universities fall short in meeting our aspirations,” sighed M7.

In summary, educational pressures are directly linked to the educational system in general and the academic institutions in particular. A common complaint is that the Indonesian tertiary system does not seem to have an overall strategic plan as to how the authorities intend to develop

and deploy graduates. To be fair, some participants leave because of their ineligibility to qualify for a prestigious university in Indonesia, while others feel local universities are out-moded, ill-equipped and do not offer value for money. Or, as a few pointedly say, they are simply not good enough.

5.2.3 Group Identity Loss

Of the three Push Factors, the third concept of the loss of group identity (either with the Chinese ethnic identity or Indonesian national identity) is arguably the most ‘personal and subjective’. Group identity refers to one’s sense of belonging to a group which makes it appealing to ‘go where the crowd goes’. The absence of a national identity in seeing themselves as Indonesians is, for many Indonesian Chinese, a key reason why they are forced to look for new non-politicised identities elsewhere that are based more on professional links than traditional or blood ties. There are two key dimensions of group identity in which personal sentiments matter, namely the Chinese cultural system and, separately, the Indonesian social system.

Three quarters of the 20 participants were proud of their Chinese roots. They saw themselves as part of the Chinese diaspora that brought them ‘out of China’ in the last century to Indonesia today. Many of them conceded that being third or fourth-generation Chinese Indonesians, they had lost their mastery of the Chinese language but, unlike their ABC (American-born Chinese) counterparts in the United States, they did not lose the two traditional qualities of intelligence (*zhi*: 智) and diligence (*qin*: 勤). An intelligent person has a head start in life as he/she has the brains to ‘work smart’. A diligent person, on the other hand, will be paid his/her dues by virtue of the amount of effort put into a piece of work. If the person strives harder than the others, that person will receive a more handsome reward. Thus, a diligent person has the stamina to ‘work hard’. Both these attributes are the ying-yang (complementary opposites) that a person requires to be successful in life – no point having *qin* without *zhi*, or *zhi* without *qin*, as both have to be present to be successful. More significantly, both can also become misused if they are not used wisely.

Four of the participants (M1, F4, M7 and F16), felt that their *qin* and *zhi* were steadily being eroded because of the low priorities that these qualities were accorded in real life. They worried that they might one day lose both these interlocking qualities. Said an apprehensive F4: “No matter how hardworking I am, I will still end up as a worker but not a manager. *Qin* is not recognised here.” Similarly, M7 felt the same way about intelligence: “Everyone may recognise that I have *zhi* but if the system does not reward those of us with this quality, it doesn’t get you high up the career ladder.” Nonetheless, these participants continued to subscribe to the Chinese qualities of *qin* and *zhi* as they did not see the fault as lying in their centuries-old value system. The problem, in their view, lay in the Indonesian social system, which was the other dimension of their Group Identity Loss push factor.

Almost all participants pointed to “KKN” as a key aspect of the Indonesian social system that hampered their sense of national identity. The acronym represented the initials of the Bahasa Indonesia words *Korupsi*, *Kolusi* and *Nepotisme*, which are derived from the respective English words of corruption, collusion and nepotism. The researcher could sense an air of despondence when participants blamed their failure to achieve their *qin* and *zhi* on KKN. F12 held this belief:

“KKN is like a plague that afflicts everyone in my community, whether you are rich or poor, Chinese or Javanese. Temptation is greatest for the rich and powerful to use collusion to satisfy their greed. It soon filters down to the local Indonesian officials who collude with their bosses and become part of the act. Finally, the rest of the community, including the poor, are sucked into the system. Corruption becomes a way of life for everyone. The motivation to use one’s intelligence and to put in sheer hard work loses its meaning. KKN is the dominant meaning.”

The weakening of the positive aspects of the Chinese cultural system coupled with the strengthening of the negative aspects of the Indonesian social system contributed to the Push Factor of group identity loss, where participants felt the need to leave the country in order not to be consumed by its social ills. However, participants M3, M11, M15 and M17 felt that the negative forces of KKN were over-exaggerated and ‘blown out of proportions’. They felt that the

current political leadership under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono would be pushing for political reforms aimed at reducing KKN. Noted an optimistic M11:

“Compared to a decade ago, corruption has eased with the emergence of a free media and independent civil society in Indonesia. I believe that our political institutions will find a way out of the conundrum. I will give it a chance.”

M17 signalled a much clearer intention: “Home identity is about your sense of belonging, your sense of attachment. If you truly feel you are an Indonesian, you will return to make your country a better place for yourself and your fellow countrymen – Chinese or not.”

These identity sentiments were borne out in a study by scholar Chew Chye Lay of ethnic Chinese who fled to Vietnam at the same time that other Chinese ended up in Indonesia, in the last century (Chew, 2005: pp 295 – 306). Chew identified ethnic Chinese in Vietnam based on their sense of identity with China or Vietnam. Of the 28 respondents, 71 per cent (20) identified themselves as of ‘Vietnamese or Chinese ancestry’; 21 per cent (6) regarded themselves as ‘Chinese living in Vietnam’ and only seven per cent (2) identified themselves as ‘Chinese of China’. In the current study, the sense of identity with Indonesia, compared to Vietnam, seemed higher: 75 per cent (15) regarded themselves mainly as Indonesians who happened to have Chinese ancestry; 20 per cent (4) saw themselves as ‘Chinese living in Indonesia’ and only one respondent, M13, saw himself as ‘Chinese of China’. He explained: “Poverty pushes my family out of China; persecution pushes me out of Indonesia. Once China becomes prosperous, and once I get my degree, I will return to my *zuguo* (motherland)”.

5.2.4 Summary of Push Factor Category

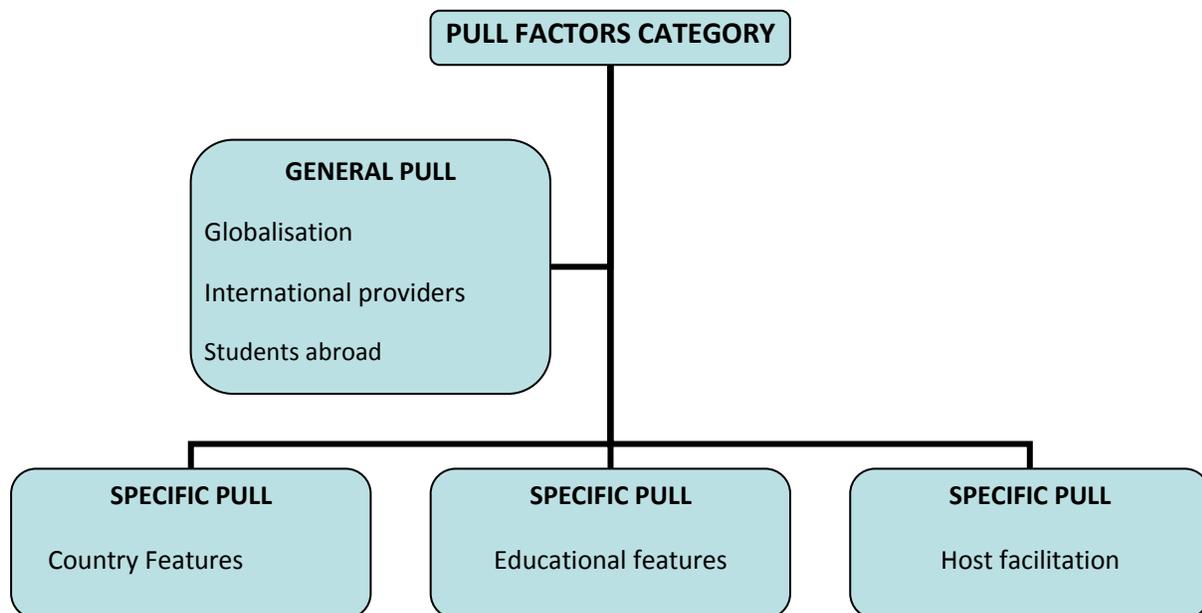
The reasons for Chinese Indonesians seeking greener pastures for their overseas education are compelling. The political pressures are more acutely felt by participants who are conscious of their ethnicity or minority status, or who claimed to have experienced some personal intimidation. A second group of Chinese Indonesians derive their political pressures from secondary sources as they have not experienced personal discrimination as Chinese. The final group senses little pressure – they see themselves more as Indonesians than as Chinese. They are comfortable with

their status and the push for them to study overseas comes more from educational pressures. These pressures are directly linked to the educational system in Indonesia – the most common push factors for all the participants. Their common complaint is that the Indonesian tertiary system does not seem to have a master plan to develop and deploy graduates. Many feel local universities do not offer value for money and are simply not good enough. The final Push Factor concept is the loss of group identity, or more precisely the loss of Chinese ethnic identity rather than Indonesian national identity. The weakening of the Chinese cultural system, especially its qualities of *qin* and *zhi*, can be accounted for by the overwhelmingly negative forces of KKN in the Indonesian way of life. Participants feel compelled to leave as they no longer see a future shrouded by corruption, collusion and nepotism. This sense of homelessness is exacerbated if participants identify themselves more as Chinese of China than Indonesians of Chinese ancestry.

5.3 Category: Pull Factors (to study in Singapore)

The “Pull Factors” category consists of both general and specific pull factors. General pull factors refer to the attractiveness of an overseas education whereas specific pulls refer to the magnetism of Singapore as a country, educational hub and, generally, as a safe and good host. See Figure 5.2 below:

Figure 5.2 – Pull Factors Breakdown Chart



5.3.1 General Pull Factors

Knowledge acquisition, especially economic and technical knowledge, is nowadays universal. With the help of globalisation, reputable institutions that produce knowledge have universal appeal. This is a good reason why universities remained as global entities even as nationalism continues to rise. Universities have responded to global demands by making their courses more market-oriented and demand-driven. According to a 2008 International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) report, globalisation of higher education has become a market-oriented activity attracting foreign capital, inviting competition and providing a profit at times higher than that in other sectors. Cross-border higher education, in particular, has become an important mode of globalising higher education as it involves providers, programmes, course materials, teachers or students moving beyond national boundaries (Varghese, 2008, p. 9).

Almost all the participants in the current study viewed cross-border education as an international opportunity to gain academic and vocational skills, even as they recognised that all universities were national entities. M17 expressed it this way: “Nationalism closes doors but education opens them.” Higher educational institutions behaved more as corporate entities that were apolitical than as national entities shrouded in politics. M7 shared similar sentiments when he claimed that he did not need to think ‘too hard’ whether he was a Chinese or an Indonesian: “My only identity that matters is that of an international student; who cares whether I am from China, Indonesia or Mars?”

For these participants, cross-border education was the most visible form of the globalisation of higher education as it implied the movement of students and programmes across national boundaries. Universities in OECD countries such as the United States, Britain, Germany, France and Australia attracted the highest number of international students. According to IIEP (2008 report), the demand for cross-border higher education would increase to 7.2 million by 2025. This market was expanding, as was the number of importers and exporters of education. F16 observed: “Let’s face it. A foreign degree translates into additional earnings – for the same amount of time spent in a local university. M20 provided another reason: “Studying in another

country means the chance of working in another country. At the very least, it broadens my social and business networks.

Another key reason was competitive pricing. Even though an overseas education was easily upwards of 10 times the equivalent cost of a local undergraduate programme, the sharp increase in education providers had moderated pricing to an affordable level even for the working class family, which is typical of the Chinese Indonesians under the current study. F14 noted:

“Quite frankly, we are spoilt for choice. There seems to be an option for every budget. Those who can’t travel far, can travel near. Those who can’t afford a great university can opt for a good university.”

Thus, where foreign students used to be a drain on national resources in the past, they were now a vital source of income. The process of globalisation and increasing employment opportunities in multinational corporations and foreign countries were expected to contribute to the gradual increase in the demand for international education.

5.3.2 Specific Pull Factor: Country Features

The three Cs (Cost, Closeness and Culture) of Singapore provided the reason why the Republic was a favourite stop among many Chinese Indonesians, even though there were equally more attractive destinations, especially Australia. “To put it graphically,” analysed M13, “Singapore can be reached by ferry. It is cheap, close and comfortable.” Every one of the 20 respondents cited these country features as a key attraction of Singapore. F10, whose father was a ‘thrifty’ petty trader, spoke frankly: “Given my family income, it’s either Singapore or Senayan (in Jakarta)”. While the cost of living in Singapore was typically that of a financial capital, it is about 12 times higher than Jakarta and ranges from S\$750 to S\$2,000 a month for living expenses. A carefully planned budget could mitigate these costs by about 20 per cent, according to F10. Apart from living expenses, fee levels were another cost domain. As overseas education had shifted from state-funding to individual-funding, fee levels had forced many Indonesians to look to educational opportunities closer to home. The average fee cost in Singapore ranged from S\$20,000 to \$30,000 annually. Recalled M7:

“While I was in junior secondary school, my options were varied but had by then excluded the United States. By the time I was in general secondary school, the UK was out of my range. By the time I left Indonesia for tertiary education, Australia was also out of question. There was only Singapore left.”

Closeness, which included physical proximity and access to home conveniences such as indigenous consumer goods and local amenities, was also a key feature of Singapore as a choice destination. Whether it was the convenience of travel, the cost of phone calls or the availability of Indonesian products and services, Singapore’s proximity made these amenities within easy reach and at reasonable cost. F5 recalled a family emergency where her physical presence and signature were required. She rushed over in the morning and was back at lectures the following morning – barely 24 hours later. “Elsewhere and I wouldn’t even dream of traveling, let alone rush back in time for class.” F2 and M8 also recalled having to make urgent trips home. But instead of making use of the weekend to make the journey, they could do so ‘anytime of the week’. “Weekends are a bonus, not a must,” expressed F2.

Cultural similarities – be they the Chinese or Malay culture – were another form of ‘creature comfort’. To borrow an over-used cliché, Singapore was like ‘a home away from home’ for most of the participants. Whether it was food, fashion or fun, these similarities made it easier for Chinese Indonesians to adjust fairly quickly to the way of life in a multi-ethnic society. “Just about the only thing that requires getting used to,” said F12, “is the pace of life. You do the same thing you do in Indonesia but 10 times faster here.” The bi-polar nature of Singapore – being fully Chinese but reflecting a lot of Indonesian culture – had the added advantage that the participants could ‘culture tango’ (according to F16) ‘by having an Indonesian meal before watching a Chinese movie’. Networks of friends and contacts were also flexible. The participants were equally comfortable socializing with Chinese or non-Chinese Singaporeans – ‘even Singaporeans find difficulties mixing with other races’. The key reason was that all Chinese Indonesians could speak Bahasa but Chinese Singaporeans cannot. The current study is consistent with that done by Li and Bray (2006), which showed that mainland Chinese students highly valued the social and cultural experience gained during their stay.

5.3.3 Specific Pull Factor: Educational Features

The fact that an Education team had been set up under the Singapore Tourism Board's aptly-named "Destination Experience Group" indicated the government's intention to make the Republic a global educational hub in attracting both international providers as well as overseas students to its shores. A key strategy of this approach was to focus on programme quality, which included a focus on both academic standards and course relevance. In M1's view: "There is a sense that the Singapore brand of education is trustworthy and value-for-money; the two key ingredients of a good overseas educational package." Li and Bray (2006) noted that the main motivation for students from mainland China to seek higher education in Hong Kong was that academic institutions in the Special Administrative Region provided better quality education. F14 was persuaded by the educational pull argument for the way in which synergy was built into the entire educational system in Singapore:

"A foreigner could enter the Singapore's educational system at any stage – as young as from Primary One and proceed all the way to the very top. There is very little disruption and much transparency. Transition at every stage is seamless. It is this continuity that is much admired by us Indonesians, as some of us join the system much earlier."

M13 was attracted by the wide range of options available:

"It can be in hospitality or science. It can be a US or a local programme. It can be exam-based or project-based. It's almost like plug-and-play and you can literally customise a programme to suit your every need. Singapore is really an education shopping mall – and a one-stop shop at that."

A feature of the Singapore education system that impressed F18 was the regular revision of the programme from curriculum to syllabus, and even from subject to topic:

"While these regular updating may show the local educational authorities as indecisive, it is actually the system's way of constant self-renewal, to make sure that all its course contents stay relevant and fresh. There is hardly a year gone by that a course has not been updated."

Agreeing, M8 noted that the education providers try to minimise any disruption by reducing changes to fundamental aspects of the course, such as the exam or grading format: “They are not changing for the sake of change so we try to respond positively by tolerating the disruptions.” In short, the perceived academic superiority of the educational institutions was a key pull factor for Singapore.

5.3.4 Specific Pull Factor: Host Facilitation

Overall, a unique feature of the Singapore system, as seen by Indonesian students, was the “Whole-of-Government” approach where a good educational system was viewed in the context of a good national system that supported education. International students in Singapore could look forward to student concessions and privileges, a wide choice of hostels and rental housing, ease of transportation and educational learning journeys and attachments. Praising the system, M11 noted: “The Singapore authorities do not leave us stranded on their island! The educators put themselves in our shoes and try to figure out our every need, including that of our social life and daily requirements.”

Being the pragmatic sort, M20 enjoyed the facilitation of employment opportunities, the exposure to multi-national corporations and initiation into professional networks. “There’s always something you could do either on a part-time basis or during the vacation breaks. Singapore is quite a ‘happening’ place so there are opportunities aplenty.”

All these, together with the high level of foreign direct investment and the migration of firms to Singapore to set up their regional headquarters, have made the island a destination of choice for all 20 participants. F6 summarised their sentiments best:

“In Singapore, there is the real possibility that we can stay for an extended period after our graduation to work here or to use it as a springboard when we move to a third country, or simply to return home. This in itself is a great pulling force to be here.”

5.3.5 Summary of Pull Factor Category

On balance, the 20 Chinese Indonesians conceded to being more influenced by pull factors than push factors. As F9 put it: “If we leave our country simply because we have little faith in our system without an inkling where we are headed for, what’s the point of that?” Singapore, to these participants offered a realistic goal destination that contained all the trappings of a better career and a brighter future. Geographic proximity was a natural pull factor but it was the concerted efforts of the Singapore government and educators that brought out its true attractiveness. This included a quality education package that was wrapped with a generous dose of ‘whole of government’ support system that made Singapore irresistible to many of these students.

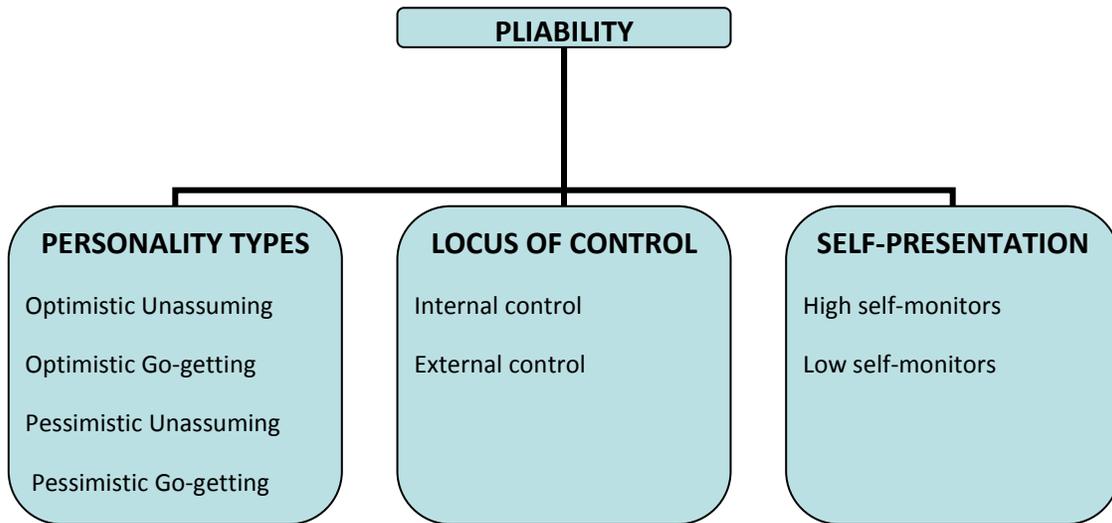
5.4 **Category: Pliability**

The term ‘pliability’ was an in-vivo code that was used by F16, a recent Economics and Finance graduate:

“There are those of us who are ‘pliable’ and those of us who are not. I learned this precious English word from my Dad before I left home for Singapore. Dad was afraid that I would be a target for bad influence as I was a straightforward kind of gal and easily persuaded. So he had this banner specially sewn for me ‘NO PLACE FOR PLIABILITY’ and insisted that I placed it prominently in my room. I had no idea what ‘pliability’ meant and had to check the dictionary.”

This in-vivo code formed the next category of Chinese Indonesians studying in Singapore that determined whether they were likely to be ‘easily influenced and/or controlled by other people’ (Longman, 2006, p.1166), in this case, in a foreign environment. See Figure 5.3 below.

Figure 5.3 – Pliability Breakdown Chart



This category measured the likelihood of pliability based on how the participants perceived their role in a foreign country. Apart from getting participants to describe their own personality types in their role as students, they were also asked to consider how they thought people around them would perceive them. The concept of ‘locus of control’ was examined to see if they had any tendency to attribute their successes or failures either internally to themselves (internal dispositions) or externally to the environment (outside factors). These were known respectively as the internal and external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Pliability also examined whether the participants displayed a high or low sense of self-presentation in relating to how other people perceived them.

5.4.1 Personality types

Depending on what aspects of a person’s character are being studied, personality can be examined from a psychological to a sociological perspective; from being a leader to a follower. When asked to describe themselves, however, the majority of participants chose to relate their personalities to their role as students. Two dimensions seemed to emerge – go-getting versus unassuming dimension, and optimistic versus pessimistic dimension. This can further be viewed from a matrix of the two dimensions (below).

Optimistic - Unassuming (7 students)	Optimistic - Go-getting (4 students)
Pessimistic - Unassuming (5 students)	Pessimistic - Go-getting (4 students)

Nine of the participants arrived in Singapore with some sense of foreboding amid an air of pessimism – they feared that they might not be good enough academically compared to their Singapore counterparts. Two key factors for their apprehension-cum-anxiety were their lack of English language competency, and familiarity with the examination system. Confessed M8: “We have all heard how *kiasu* (competitive) Singaporeans are and no matter how hard we try, we can’t match them. Personally, I am not at all hopeful.” Expressing similar sentiments, F6 added that weak language command was her Achilles’ heel: “Frankly, I am not all that optimistic that I will do well as a student. Even with the offer of English language tutorials during the term, the language gap can be too much for me to cope with.” M13 was more concerned with the fast pace in which English was spoken, especially the way that local lecturers delivered Singlish (Singapore-style English) in their classroom lectures: “They speak like machine-gun in non-stop rapid fire, using an accent that is hardly comprehensible.” Other self-descriptions by this group included: ‘apprehensive’, ‘anxious’, ‘concerned’, ‘gloomy’, ‘moody’ and even ‘scared’.

The other group of 11 was more optimistic about the new environment and more confident of themselves. A forward-looking M15 best reflected this position: “We have already taken the first vital step to come to Singapore. We might as well make the best of the situation.” F19 took a similarly positive view: “It is not all that bad, really. Our two countries share many similarities culturally and socially. We just have to make the best of the situation.” Most of the eight optimistic participants described their optimism using words such as ‘hopeful’, ‘exciting’, ‘cool’ and even ‘bright’.

However, no matter whether the 20 participants were optimistic or pessimistic, they were equally divided in terms of their goal-orientation, with eight of the participants seeing themselves as go-getters. M3, M11, M15 and M17 represented the optimistic – go-getting group that was most

determined to make the best of the situation. “I know what I want and the Singapore system will spur me to do well, I am confident of that,” said M11.

There were also students among the go-getting group who were pessimistic. M7, who labeled himself a pessimistic – go-getter, took the view that there was no point ‘mopping in self-pity’:

“I may be pessimistic but that doesn’t mean that I am fighting a lost cause. In the end, it is up to us as individuals to decide whether we want to stay focused on our goal or waste our time in Singapore. The choice is obvious, to me.”

Among the group of unassuming students, seven of them remained optimistic. F2 best exemplified the down-to-earth spirit of this group:

“I am not a high achiever but I remained optimistic that things would turn out well for me. I may not be academically strong and I am not a pusher but I believe in doing things in an unassuming way, working slowly but steadily. This is the Indonesian way, I suppose. We take a positive outlook but we don’t try to bite more than we can chew.”

There were, however, four participants who were both pessimistic and unassuming. M13 defended this attitude:

“Yes, you can describe me as both negative and uninterested. I can’t see myself making any major headway in Singapore. I’m just doing what my parents want. I admit I don’t push myself hard enough. If I can get by, I’d get by. I don’t pretend to be what I’m not.”

Added F6: “No need to work ourselves to the ground for the sake of a degree, right? If it is ours, it will be ours. Don’t force it.”

The two optimism-pessimism and goal-getting-unassuming dimensions have thus produced a matrix of four subsets that reflect students whose personality traits are as varied as their desires to graduate from Singapore.

5.4.2 Locus of Control

There is no denying that the personality traits of students are very closely linked to their perceptions of their own perceived control of their destinies, that is, the belief that they can maneuver their study environment in ways that determine whether they experience positive or negative outcomes. This concept is derived from the research of Rotter (1966), who suggests that people vary in the extent to which they feel they have control over their lives. An internal locus indicates a belief in a high degree of personal control over one's destiny, whereas an external locus of control indicates a more fatalistic belief, suggesting little personal control over what will happen.

The participants in the current study displayed either one type of control or the other. Two-thirds (13) of them attributed their perceived control internally – regardless of the degree of control they actually possessed. These students showed a strong sense of internal control and were more likely to maintain their academic progress than those with a weak sense of internal control. Moreover, once they faltered, like failing a test or assignment, they were likely to adjust to the setback and promote their own rehabilitation better. F16 remembered her shock when she failed her first assignment in her first year, where she also fared badly in her first test on a finance module. It prompted her to get to the root cause of the problem:

“Of course, there is an academic reason for it, which is my lack of understanding of finance concepts, since the subject matter was new to me. But I told myself that this was no different from mathematics or science when we started primary school. Every subject has a starting point and it so happens that the subject of finance catches me cold...and late, when I am 19. If I managed to cope with a new subject in primary school, all the more I should be able to overcome a new subject when I am older and wiser, right? It's really up to me.... I can blame others – or I can look to myself for answers. The basic thing is to believe that since these factors are within my control, since they are caused by me, then I should be able to solve them using my own resources.”

F16 did that and had not failed a test, assignment or module since.

What most of these Chinese Indonesians rely on to overcome their problems was self-efficacy, an aspect of perceived control that referred to the belief in one's ability to carry out specific actions that produced desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977). M3 demonstrated this belief in the way he dealt with his 'mounting homework':

"I truly believe that I can succeed at something I want to do. This is no child psychology. For example, I review how I overcome similar difficulties in the past and apply the same principles to current problems. They usually work."

There is no doubt that perceived control was generally associated with better adjustment by all 13 participants. The concern was that participants may blame themselves entirely if they were unable to resolve their study problems, when internal control was over-emphasised. This was the case with M13:

"I failed a test in which many other course mates also failed. I blamed no one but myself. But when I again failed the next test which had fewer students failing, I can't help but blame myself even more for being so stupid."

Blaming oneself for the lack of improved performance only exacerbated the problem for participants like M13.

For the remaining one-third of participants (7) who attributed their perceived control externally, they tended to blame the tough module, the stringent exam questions or weak lecturers for their own poor academic performances. An exasperated F6, who was taking an Economics and Management degree, said:

"I have always coped well in Indonesia. But the moment I started my studies in Singapore, everything has been going downhill. My parents are worried and puzzled. I told them it was not my fault and that I had been studying very hard. It is just that the subjects are too theoretical and with no practical relevance. How

can we be motivated when Economics and Management turned out to be so dry and boring?”

Facing similar problems, M8 added that the tough exam questions and incompetent lecturers were to blame. “To begin with, I think the examiners are trying to fail us by setting weirdo (sic) questions. Lecturers who failed to help us spot exam questions worsened the problem for us... it is really, really not our fault.” M20 argued that the problem was more acute during project work, which was examinable.

“See, we are given a piece of project to do. The subject guide tells one thing; the examiner says another; and our project manager guides us in yet a third way. So who is right? It is all so subjective and frustrating. If we do well, it is because we happen to guess correctly what a particular marker wanted. And if we fail, it is because we did not make the right guesses. Project work is not to test our ability but to try our luck!”

Notably, many participants who attributed their failures to external locus of control admitted that their grades were at best satisfactory – they also experienced more study stress and minor health ailments.

5.4.3 Self-presentation

The preceding discussions on personality types and locus of control appear to have a distinctive influence on pliability, which is partially addressed through the participants’ presentation of the ‘self’. This is the way that people present themselves to the outside world and manage the impressions others have of them. Snyder (1974) argues that people differ in the extent to which they self-monitor and devise a scale to distinguish between ‘high’ and ‘low’ self-monitors in their self-presentation. High self-monitors are people who are concerned with the social appropriateness of their impression-making, whereas low self-monitors are not concerned with others’ views about what is their appropriate behaviour.

In the current study, 11 participants (F2, M3, M5, F9, M11, F12, M15, M17, F18, F19 and M20) displayed characteristics of being high self-monitors. F12 explained her behaviour:

“I tend to be attentive to what others are doing and I use that as a guide to how I should then express myself. This means that I am willing to control my self-expressions if it means I can give a better account of myself. For example, in a project, I am usually ready to agree with any approach so long as everyone else is to give the impression that I am not a ‘trouble-maker’ or ‘skiver’. I am not being a hypocrite – I just don’t want to be ignored or stigmatised.”

She highlighted a case whereby project members wanted to interview a celebrity ‘to score more marks’. F12 thought it was a ‘daft idea’ with ‘no merit whatsoever’ but went along as she did not want to appear a spoilsport. M15 had a more utilitarian reason for being a high self-monitor: “I may have a different view but if by going along with my other course-mates it means less work for me, or more help for me, then I’d do it. I want to be seen as an efficient chap.” He related a case where the project work required the team to research a particular Information Systems topic. M15 would have gone for a more challenging unexplored assignment but when the team opted for an ‘easy but boring topic’, he went along with it.

The remaining nine participants displayed signs of being low self-monitors; three of these were so on their own admission. M7 confessed that he was more attentive to his ‘inner self’ rather than paying attention to what others were doing: “I am not interested in controlling my self-expressions in social settings nor am I willing to do so. Quite frankly, why should I? I am not in Singapore to win a popularity poll.” Agreeing, F14 said she behaved in the same way but that did not mean having to be rude, just “doing things my way”.

One notable consequence of the two types of self-monitors is that high self-monitors tended to be more inconsistent, as they varied their response from one situation to another. They were also more socially skilled to the extent of being seen as manipulative. Low self-monitors, on the other hand, were more consistent, and were seen either as frank or boring, or both. This was evident during social gatherings. A high self-monitor like M5 would assess the social activity and decide

his involvement. If the event was attended mainly by casual friends and strangers, he was less likely to be actively involved. If the event was attended by his close friends, he would show more enthusiasm – even for similar events like orientation camps and year-end celebrations. “I am less conscious of myself when strangers are involved and more conscious of my actions when friends are present.” On the other hand, a low self-monitor like F10 was more consistent in her behaviour: “Friends or foes, they will always see the true me.” Ironically, these people also tended to have more intimate and committed social relationships. Added F10: “I have few close friends because of this attitude of mine. But a few true friendships are always better than many casual ones.”

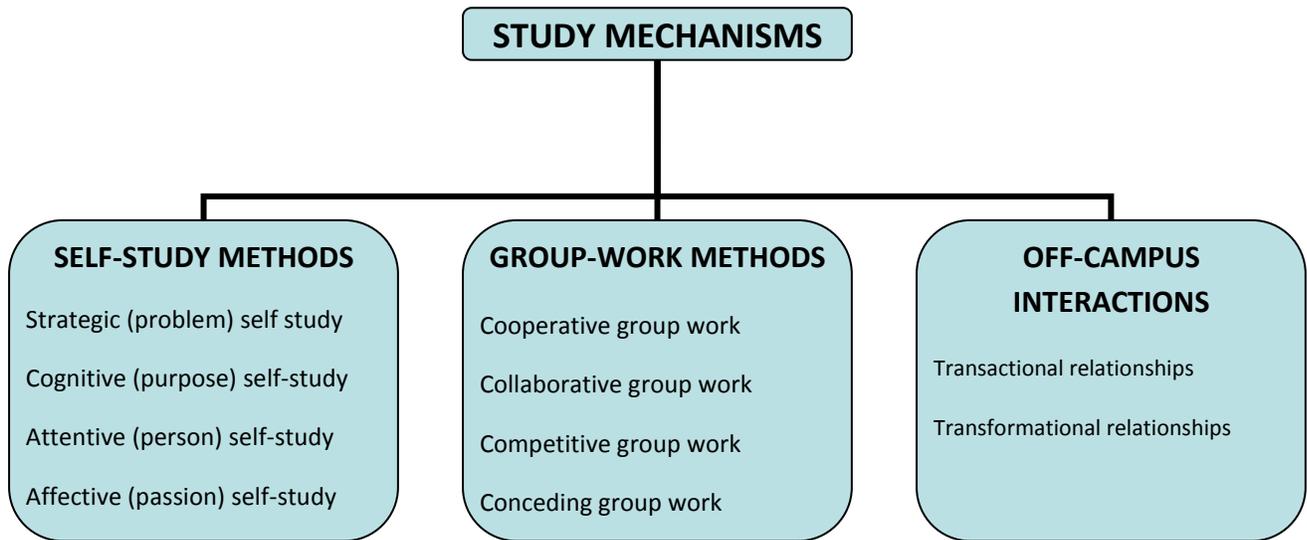
5.4.4 Summary of Pliability Category

Pliability is concerned with the likelihood that Chinese Indonesians in Singapore are influenced in their attitudes and behaviours by those around them, either deliberately or naturally. Any combination of the dimensions of go-getting – unassuming and optimistic – pessimistic will affect pliability. Another key factor is whether one is controlled by internal or external locus with pliability being dependent on one’s internal disposition or external environment. Finally, the way that participants operate either as high or low self-monitors determines how they adjust to the people and social activities around them.

5.5 Category: Study Mechanisms

This category is divided into three sections namely the individual’s self-study methods, group work and off-campus interactions. It examines the ways in which participants cope with their studies individually and how these methods vary when they operate in a group. The way that they spend their off-campus time (in relation to their studies, albeit obliquely) is also explored in the current study. Please see Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 – Study Mechanisms Breakdown Chart



5.5.1 Self-study Methods

There are broadly four ways in which self-study is carried out by Chinese Indonesians in Singapore, much of which is reflective of and consistent with the manner in which they study at home. They are mainly ‘slow and steady’ rather than ‘rush and run’ in their approach, as observed by M1. The four self-study methods include strategic self-study; cognitive self-study; attentive self-study and affective self-study. These labels are coined by the researcher to reflect his observations of the individual study dynamics adopted by the participants. The four approaches are overlapping categories although each participant relies heavily on a certain type most of the time.

Strategic self-study is the most common form of self-study and is used by three-quarters of participants (15). It is strategic in the sense that self study is problem-centered and carried out with a specific objective in mind – if the objective is to memorise a piece of work, then time will be spend on rote-learning. Conversely, if the objective is to understand relationships among variables or concepts, then a fish-bone diagram or a flow chart sketch may be used. F2 accounted for this tactic of hers: “I was taught this phrase ‘a different horse for a different course’ and I apply this wisdom in my studies. It has the same ring as ‘work smart and not just work hard’.” Users of strategic self-study methods tend to describe their style of revision as ‘planned’,

‘tactical’, ‘calculated’ and ‘deliberate’. Not surprisingly, the number of participants who admitted to rote learning was high in this category. F12 explained:

“Sometimes, we really have no choice but to take Route One. There is so much we need to cram into so little time and rote-learning is much easier and surer, especially if we have strong memory power. I would consider myself to be in this category. I am not very clever but I can store a lot up there (pointing to her head). I know many Indonesians do it this way.”

Other problem-centered strategic learning techniques include ‘spotting’ exam questions as well as preparing ‘stock’ answers. M15 defended this self-study method: “I know the examiners hate it and go on and on about their disapproval of set answers. It is really not that we are lazy. We just think this is a safe method. As foreigners, we have very little room for error. We can’t afford risks.” The Chinese Indonesians accepted that if examiners chose to be ‘difficult’ and set tricky questions, then they are fated to fail.

The cognitive self-study method, most participants conceded, was a system more appreciated by lecturers and examiners, who wanted students to learn with understanding in order to appreciate what they had learnt and value the knowledge they had accumulated – which marked the true meaning of education. Some participants, like M7, understood this virtue and tried their best to study ‘the right way’:

“I know rote learning is far safer and easier but at the end of the day, if I learn nothing constructive, my education is meaningless. That is why I try my best to be true to myself and to my study mission.”

For this reason, while strategic learning was centered on problem-solving, cognitive learning focused on the purpose of the study. This partially explained why cognitive learning, for Chinese Indonesians, was not easy and accounted for only a handful (four) of users. But if done purposefully, the rewards were plentiful. F4, a third-year student, intended to continue with this purposive style of studying:

“Learning by comprehension and understanding requires much thinking and is usually quite daunting at the start. But once cognition is acquired, it is much easier than rote learning. For example, I find myself expressing my ideas much clearer. I think I scored well during my second year because I switched to this self-study method.”

A third self-study method, attentive self-study, was neither focused on problem (strategic style) or purpose (cognitive style) but focused on paying attention to people ‘who mattered’. This method worked for half of the participants, principally because they were foreigners, with many of them thinking about their anxious parents back home. A few others studied hard for the sake of their loved ones such as a steady or a partner, back in Indonesia. Still others put in more effort because of an inspiring lecturer, an encouraging friend or a social/religious group which they belonged to. F9 wrote in her diary: “Called mum today. Told her how much I love and miss her. Will study hard for her sake. Told her not to worry. Won’t disappoint her.” Relying on this people-based approach, F19 said:

“Sometimes, everything around you looks bleak and you feel lonely – especially if there has been an unpleasant episode such as failing a test. Motivation hits rock bottom and there is no way to raise concentration level. The only thing left to do in order not to give up is to think of my loved ones. I will then contact them by email or internet and that usually gives me an extra lift.”

A final self-study method for eight participants was the affective self-study method, which was not based on problem-solving, purpose-building or people-tending but emotions and passion. Notably, many students use the term ‘study passion’ to describe the importance of their psychological and emotional state of mind when they are settling down for a period of self-study. M20 spoke of his learning ritual: “I try not to let anything stress me or distract me. If there is something that is bugging me, I will try to make peace with it. Without passion, there is no progress.” M20 recalled times when he had a tiff with his girlfriend, a parking fine and even a hunger pang. In all cases, he removed the ‘bug’ as quickly as he could before starting on his homework:

“Once I was mugging for an exam and I felt real hungry just after midnight. I rushed down to the nearby 24-hour convenience store to grab a microwave burger. It was a worthwhile ‘investment’ as I stayed in high spirits for the rest of the night. I scored well for that paper.”

Conversely, many students said that they would ‘let the (good) mood come’ to them instead of forcing it by ‘chasing the blues away’. M3 was one of them:

“There is no point trying to psyche oneself up to make oneself feel lifted. If there is no study mood, then there is no study mood. Don’t force it. Let it come to you. By the same token, if the mood is good, capitalise on it. Leave everything aside and start on your revision or homework quickly. Passion works for me most times.”

The four study methods overlap and, at times, may even come in phases. For example, a student may start with an attentive method (focus on parents) and then move on to a strategic method. Another student may use an affective study method before transiting to a cognitive method.

5.5.2 Group-work Methods

As project work or group discussion is a central aspect of their academic requirements at the higher institution in Singapore, all of the 20 Chinese Indonesian participants are involved in group study. Usually in group sizes as small as three to those as large as seven, students meet in the various study benches and cozy corners around campus. This research study has selected in vivo codes, as they appropriately describe the group-study methods as perceived by the participants, in the way they operate as team members and, for some, as informal team leaders.

The most common style of group work, experienced by 18 participants, was described by F2 as the ‘cooperative’ style:

“We, Indonesians, whether Chinese or non-Chinese, adopt a very easy-going style of acting as a team by co-operating with each other. It’s really a part of our

national culture of working together. This partnership is usually a happy, harmonious one...with lots of food and loads of fun.”

Indeed, the idea of mixing snacks with studies seems a regular occurrence in many of the get-together study sessions. M5 attested to the importance of what he cheekily described as ‘food for thought’:

“Tidbits are a real ice breaker as it is always a conversation starter. On top of that, tidbits are also a stress-reliever and reflect the Indonesian way of showing warmth and hospitality. All my friends can testify that we put on weight during exam periods!”

Food may be the top draw but, to be sure, it could be the sharing of the latest Youtube video, gossiping over Facebook entries and sharing of lecture notes (since students may be taught by different lecturers for the same module). The main purpose was group bonding. Added F18: “If we can share personal likes and dislikes, we can generate rapport and trust.” The intended bonding was perceived to be crucial in group study as it reminded the Chinese Indonesians that they needed to stay united as they were ‘foreigners in a strange land’. Co-operation was their way of sharing, norming and bonding; of establishing their common identity. Continued F18:

“Group study carries an added meaning when you know you are confronting many obstacles from a new environment to a new institution to a new course. Studying in a group reminds you just how vulnerable you are if you do not have support around you.”

Group identity achieved in this manner was further reinforced by the use of the common Bahasa language and to revert to familiar study techniques that they were used to in Indonesia, such as the common use of rote-learning to prepare for their class tests.

Unlike the more altruistic nature of ‘cooperative’ group formation, the second group-study method has been described as ‘collaborative’ by 11 students and involves the more instrumental approach of ‘joining forces’ and ‘pooling resources’, as observed by an articulate M11:

“This arrangement is rational and negotiated. Quite frankly, many of us feel like poor cousins in a campus where everyone else seems to be well-placed and highly-gearred. We have to make up for this with our numbers. In the war of attrition, size counts. So whether we like it or not, we need to negotiate our way into agreement on the various assigned tasks.”

In the collaborative style, a lot for negotiation went on where, for example, each student was assigned a certain ‘hot topic’ to prepare for an examination. The student would then brief other group members and collective learning began, usually conducted in Bahasa, because non-Chinese Indonesians might be involved. There was also much bargaining when collaboration occurred. F16 recalled an incident when group members could not agree on the division of work as everyone wanted to take the simpler tasks:

“The bargaining was rather solemn when it started yet turned out to be rather comical in the end. The participant who pleaded to do the easiest task offered to run simple chores for the group, such as buying packed lunches, for the rest of that week! No one complained and this way of ‘balancing the task’ makes negotiation not only workable but perceived as justifiable as well.”

Collaboration only posed a problem if someone became over-calculating or deemed to be free-loading. In these situations, group pressure was brought to bear. “The lazy student either bucks up or ships out. Nobody can have his cake and eat it. Luckily, we didn’t have such a sticky incident to handle,” claimed F16. For the Chinese Indonesians, collaboration was a viable option as the Chinese were highly rational (even deemed to be manipulative or scheming by the other non-Chinese Indonesians) and were concerned with the equal distribution of work and the concept of fair play.

The third group study method involved the highly ‘competitive’ way of wresting control of the group, especially its leadership. This is not a regular occurrence among the Indonesian sojourners in Singapore as it cast a sense of hostility or an atmosphere of unpleasantness. Not surprisingly, only three participants (M1, F4 and F16) admitted that they adopted this study

method when they felt that the group lacked direction or cohesion. F4 justified a fiercely competitive approach this way:

“If I can help it, I would prefer to stay in the background and be led. It’s only when everyone is lost or uninterested that I step forward to offer leadership. For us Indonesians, our groups cannot afford to be rudderless.”

F16, who specialised in Economics and Finance recounted an incident where the group needed to decide on a banking project. Some members wanted to study a small private bank whereas others wanted to discuss a major public bank. Then there was also disagreement whether a local bank or an offshore bank should be selected. The group also needed to consider whether the study should target a bank’s deposit or investment activities. “The issue dragged and days turned to weeks. I had to step in to make the call. There was some disagreement but no strong objection.” M1 interpreted this competitive spirit negatively as a struggle for power, bordering on dictatorship, and usually led to a zero-sum game:

“In my case, the leadership is temporal. Once the objective is achieved, I retreat into the background and hope someone else would step forward and take over the mantle. Sometimes, I do so at someone else’s expense. Even though some of us may be uncomfortable when one of us acts like a control freak, we try not to think ill of him. We just shrug it off and justify that rivalry is inevitable.”

The final group study approach is one based on the opposite of ‘to compete’, which is ‘to concede’. Seven participants have adopted this approach occasionally in Singapore. In this method, members not only ‘give in’, they may even ‘give up’. F10, a repeat student, said that she used to contribute a fair bit of effort but found that her contribution was not appreciated because members found her work inferior. “I now take care of the mundane chores or the ‘dirty work’, so to speak, such as photo-copying or borrowing books from external libraries. I rarely get tasked to do some basic research. I accept that this is my fate.” ‘Conceding’ students though, did not usually blame their team for their own misfortune, which partially explained why they took their assigned tasks ‘with a pinch of salt, and a pinch of pride’. Said F14: “I am just happy to be accepted as a member of the team, and that they do not kick me out, so no complaints!” Equally,

as ‘conceding’ members were deemed to be the weaker members of the team, the stronger ‘competitive’ members did not make life miserable for their less impressive friends. Explained M15: “So long as they do what is given to them, and not try to find excuses, we adopt a ‘live-and-let-live’ attitude. This way, everyone contributes some share.”

Just like the self-study methods, group study-methods also overlap for many of the participants. There seems, however, to be a link between one’s academic ability and the choice of group methods. Students who are academically stronger tend either to adopt the ‘competitive’ or ‘collaborative’ ways while weaker students are usually more comfortable with the ‘cooperative’ or ‘conceding’ styles.

5.5.3 Off-campus Interactions

The majority of Chinese Indonesian students maintain broadly ‘the same Indonesian cliques’ during their non-study activities such as evening chills and weekend outings. However, their interactions with non-Indonesians and other Indonesians outside their circle give a fuller insight into their off-campus behaviours. Two types of such relationships can be detected namely transactional and transformational relationships. These are two terms used by the researcher to describe his observations during his off-campus interactions with the students. A transactional relationship is one where both parties try to derive utility value from an encounter. Thus, the seven Chinese Indonesians who engaged in transactional relationships tended to ‘fit the right friends into the right activities’. According to F6:

“When I go clubbing, I usually move with my non-study group friends because I hate to discuss school work while chilling out. I find Singapore friends more fun to be around with. At least, we don’t have to talk about school work and we can explore new areas of relationships since we are from quite different backgrounds and cultures.”

F4 explained another reason for transaction-style friendship:

“I love music, dancing and performing. So I mix around with fellow dancers and actors over the weekends to pursue our special interests. These people could be

Indonesians, Singaporeans or Malaysians. It really doesn't matter so long as we can hone our artistic skills."

Transformational relationships, on the other hand, do not see friendships as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. They can therefore be deemed to be more lasting and are practised by 13 participants, like M17. He engaged in these relationships regularly were seen as more 'loyal' and 'committed' to the 'ties that bind', as she put it. Not surprisingly, these participants brought their campus ties to non-campus relationships. M17 continued:

"It is fun to move around with those whom we suffer together. Sometimes we find that certain problems that we cannot untangle during study periods can find solutions in these informal settings. Less pressure and less rigid study environments all lead to a more relaxed atmosphere. Without an agenda, we find that ideas were more flowing and forthcoming. We are also less defensive when it comes to disagreements."

Agreeing, F12 said that time and space were two key reasons for the important role that off-campus activities indirectly contributed to academic successes: "That is why we tend to stick to our core study group pals. There is continuity, understanding and tolerance. These friendships are also more genuine and lasting."

In terms of leisure activities, both transactional and transformational groups engage in broadly similar ones, from movie-watching to birthday parties to chilling-out. The 20 Chinese Indonesian participants usually adopt a particular off-campus style but occasional switch-overs do occur. For example, M1 considered himself a 'transactionist' but would be happy to invest in a transformational relationship without any hidden agenda if his 'weekend friends' also share his lifestyle.

"I find, for example, that my ballet friends are of the same personality type as I am, more than my group mates in campus. We are more 'daring' in outdoor activities and more 'liberal' in our views. My schoolmates are fine but they can be rather conservative."

The reverse is also true: transformationists may also be the occasional transactionists. F9 recalled a good friend whose father ran a successful investment firm in Indonesia.

“I pressured my friend to get his father to provide us with the network contacts so that we can engage these specialists for our finance project. My friend agreed though with some reservation. Yes, we make friends not for the purpose of these reasons but should the need arise, what’s wrong with using these contacts, even if they appear we are manipulating these friendships?”

5.5.4 Summary of Study Mechanisms category

A notable aspect of the study methods of Chinese Indonesians is that it seems to have an eclectic mix of the best in Chinese and Indonesian traditions. Their sheer hard work and determination to make the best of their Singapore sojourn seem to resonate from the immigrant spirit of their Chinese forefathers, who made the long journey a century ago from China to Indonesia. On the other hand, their easy-going and carefree spirits in which they adapt to life in Singapore’s many fast lanes speak volumes of their friendliness, warmth and altruism.

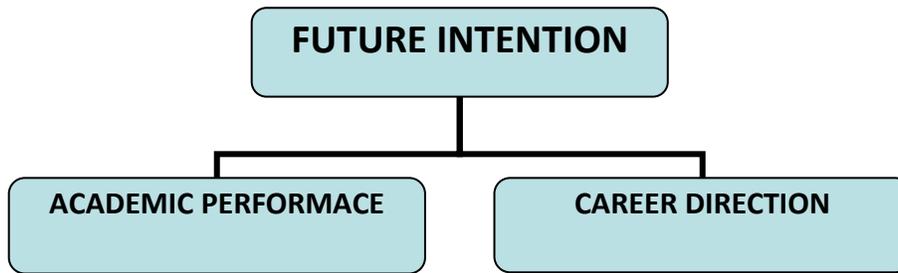
Collectively, these two sets of cultural values have become their survival kit. But that is not all, according to M15:

“Once we are familiar with the Singapore modern work ethic, we learn how to let technology act as our resource multiplier. Singapore is also our network resource. In that sense, we have the best of three worlds – China, Indonesia and now Singapore!”

5.6 Category of Future Direction

This category looks at the participants’ view of their future intentions from two perspectives. See Figure 5.5 below.

Figure 5.5 – Future Direction Breakdown Chart



The first, academic performance, is dependent on how participants view the implications of a ‘good grade’, and where such grades will take them; be it to the start of a promising career or further studies. Academic performance invariably, though not always, points to their career direction, which determines whether they stay in Singapore, move to another country or return home. Questions which these participants ponder over include: Are they likely to return to Indonesia where they came from? Would the journey home be immediate or eventual? Temporary or permanent?

5.6.1 Academic Performance

Indeed, all 20 participants were more concerned with their academic performance than with their career direction, as the former might shape the latter. There were three perceptions of academic performance: good, average or poor. While one would normally associate good performance with good grades, a few participants considered average grades to be part of good performance as well. Explained M8: “For me, I can only dream about getting Second Class Upper Honours. So if I can get Second Lower, it would have been a very good achievement.” For this reason, this study based good performance on the participant’s own subjective perception rather than any objective evaluation of their performances. Among the participants, only five were confident they would achieve good grades and only two among them would consider either taking a second degree or furthering their studies in Singapore or overseas. The other three hoped to use their good grades to find a good job ‘any where’.

Eleven of the participants reckoned they would obtain average grades in the grueling Singapore exam system. Half of them even considered getting a pass grade as a satisfactory grade. None of

them had further study ambitions, but would hope to use the degree as a springboard to a good job. Said F19: “I’m not confident how a mere degree will land me a good job but at least it is better than having an Indonesian degree in terms of increasing those chances.”

The remaining four sounded more pessimistic – they had a strong feeling that they were unlikely to make the grade, given their abysmal performances in Year One. Admitted F6: “Half of me tells me I am wasting my time in Singapore; the other half of me tells me to hope against hope!” She confessed to being “aimless in life”, adding: “I take things one step at a time. To be quite honest, I don’t know what will happen to me after my graduation. I suppose much depends on whether I can secure a job in Singapore, which is basically what most Indonesians are hoping to do.” F6 lamented that if she did not get a visa extension, then she will have to return to Indonesia. The same sentiments were shared by the other three participants.

5.6.2 Career Direction

It is rather apparent that participants with good academic results (thus far in this study exemplified by participants who are confident of their academic achievements) tend to have more options in regard to their career direction. However, another factor not covered in this study that might also affect a participant’s career direction is his/her family wealth. There are three options open to the 20 participants: stay in Singapore; move to a third destination; or return home to Indonesia. The push factors (see Section 5.1) remained a strong reason why many of the Chinese Indonesians preferred not to return home, or at least not in the immediate future. Many, like F16, hoped to secure a job, even if it was only for a year’s contract, to stay in Singapore:

“Prospects here are better. Even if the starting pay is low, I am prepared to rough it out as the learning curve is steep in Singapore, just like our studies here. Moreover, I can explore more work-related opportunities. And because we are less demanding compared to the locals, we have more job options in a wider range of areas compared to the locals.”

Paying compliments to the Singapore educational system, M11 said that the practical way in which Singapore lecturers applied theory to knowledge helped to make their courses relevant and

pragmatic: “Unlike our system back home, much of what we learn here is directly applicable to our job hunt, especially in the IT field.”

A second option is to move to another country but that would depend on the purpose of such a move. For those with good academic results, their next stop would usually be the United States or a European destination where a Masters or doctoral degree awaits. The Singapore stop is thus a logical stepping stone. A contributing factor would be one’s family wealth as many of the Indonesians do not fancy themselves securing a scholarship in Singapore, given the tough competition in the island-state. Only two participants indicated that they would definitely move on for further studies.

The final option, to return to Indonesia, is apparently not the top option for most of the participants. No doubt, some of them do feel homesick and see a return to the motherland as a much needed respite. However, if the return home is meant to be permanent, then many of them would rather seek out other career opportunities outside of Indonesia first, at least for the ‘first three years’. Beyond that “who knows?” asked F2. There is no questioning that eventually all 20 participants in the study would return home to Indonesia. Home is, after all, where relatives, friends, marriage, career and the future truly are. Equally, though, it is also where uncertainty lies. Putting a perspective to his career direction, M5 said philosophically: “I won’t be happy unless and until I experience a foreign work environment. If I fail, at least I know I have tried, I have given it my best shot. I can confidently say ‘no regrets’.” The spirit of Chinese Indonesians, overall, is typified by this carefree yet give-all mentality by M5. Leaving the comforts of home, studying in a tough foreign environment and trying to kick start an overseas career before eventually settling home – these are tough choices which Chinese Indonesians make in the pursuit of a brighter, largely unknown future.

5.6.3 Summary of Future Direction Category

The two sub-factors of academic performance and career direction are interlinked; with one’s academic successes heavily prompting one’s career decisions. However, since academic results are not known at the point of the study, a participant’s self-perception could nullify or worsen

weak academic achievements. “At the end of the day,” noted M3, “self confidence is everything. If you think you can make it in Singapore or elsewhere, go for it!”

Many Chinese Indonesians in the study seem to display a healthy sense of adventurism and optimism such that even those few who feel that their academic results may not give them the edge, are still prepared to give it their best shot. “That, basically, marks us Chinese Indonesians differently from the rest!” said M3.

5.7 Summary of All Categories

This section has discussed how the processes and categories of Selective Accommodation are understood within the context of the participants’ (1) push factors (2) pull factors (3) pliability (4) study mechanisms and (5) future intentions. Some common traits have emerged within these linking categories which will contribute to the Typology of participants, to be discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

A Typology of Chinese Indonesian Students Studying in Singapore

6.0 Introduction

Grounded theory is a method of analysis that allows the researcher to examine the interactive nature of events as they are being integrated together. These events have been identified in Chapter 5 as: (1) push factors; (2) pull factors; (3) pliability; (4) study mechanisms; and (5) future direction. Grounded theory is thus best thought of as a 'transactional system', according to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 159) in that these events interact with each other across a matrix of ways to form an explicit explanatory framework. A substantive 'theory' starts to emerge when the various categories reflecting the motivation for Chinese Indonesians to study in Singapore are collated, coded and analysed as part of the transaction process. The eventual framework, or grounded theory that finally emerges (or is co-constructed in the view of Charmaz between researcher and respondent) is the outcome of this transaction. In this study, the Theory of Selective Accommodation is the grounded theory to emerge from this rigorous process of transactional analysis, where all details, procedures and operational logic are integrated. The first part of this Chapter provides a statement of the theory and this is followed by a conceptualization of typologies of selective accommodation which are generated from the theory. The typology of participants is the result of all 20 participants responding differently to these factors for reasons typical of each type.

This Chapter is structured into the following main Sections:

- 6.1 A Statement of the Theory
- 6.2 The Nature of Typologies
- 6.3 The Achievers
- 6.4 The Ambassadors
- 6.5 The Adherents
- 6.6 The Apathetics

6.1 The Nature of Typologies

While it is to be expected that all foreign students (or for that matter any foreigner) will devise certain ways to make their overseas stay as comfortable, meaningful and productive as possible, this study shows that the 20 Chinese Indonesian students go about their strategies of accommodation in Singapore by selecting tactics based on their history (as Chinese), their nationality (as Indonesian) and their respective personalities. Such a selective accommodation is achieved in complex ways – some participants accommodate by taking the path of sheer determination and even self-denial by ‘leaving it all on the floor’ (to borrow a sporting parlance used by M7) while others choose the path of least resistance by ‘bending over backwards’ (F6) to accommodate to the highly competitive new environment. In-between these extremes, some participants tactfully adopt a ‘*lallang*’ mentality of a tall grass (*lallang*) swaying with the wind by accommodating ‘all and sundry’ (F18). Other participants choose the ‘diplomatic high road’ by tactful negotiation and sensitive accommodation – ‘just like our politicians in Indonesia’ (M15).

One quintessential feature in how Indonesians accommodate to their new environment is the very high level of tolerance to the new environment and personal adjustment in their social interactions. No matter which typology emerges, all categories of participants demonstrate a certain degree of ‘Javanese’ accommodation, known throughout Indonesia as well as the Southeast Asia region as the beauty of Indonesian culture of warmth and hospitality. This means that Indonesians do not display obnoxious self-centredness in expecting others to adjust to them. F12 explains: “Indonesians are particularly known for our sense of acute accommodation. Even when we have to say ‘no’, we don’t! We’ll do it in so many other ways to send the message across that is polite and non-confrontational.”

6.1.1 Five Grounded Categories

There is no question that all Indonesians accommodate to a large extent. The question is how far they would go to accommodate. This poses a great challenge in this study as the subtleties in the different forms of Javanese accommodation have to be carefully grounded in the theory of selective accommodation. F12 continues:

“We ourselves are not aware how we accommodate but that we do and that we do so in an array of ways. It is not something that we articulate as

a specific tactic but something that we act out quite naturally. In so doing, we do have our subtle differences.”

Based on the individual responses of the 20 participants to the five categories of push factors, pull factors, pliability, study mechanisms and future direction, a Typology of Selective Accommodation emerged based on the different ideal types of Chinese Indonesians studying in Singapore. An Ideal Type is an analytical tool first proposed by sociologist Max Weber (Aron, 1967, p. 201) to compare different types of entities under study. The German scholar uses these ideal types as idea-constructs to help put the chaos of social reality in order. As an abstract, it does not exist in reality but allows for the testing of a hypothesis which uses empirical reality to be compared with a perfect non-existent ‘reality’. Weber defines an ideal type as formed ‘by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those onesidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct.’ (Shils and Finch, 1997, p.88).

In the current study, an attempt was made to identify the ideal types from characteristics and elements of the given phenomenon of Chinese Indonesians studying in Singapore, and how they select their accommodation strategies. These vary as follows:

a. Push Factors: Accommodation is achieved based on their response to political and educational pressures. Their sense of Chinese-ness and their Indonesian identity also affect their willingness to accommodate. The more they face push factor pressures, the more they are prepared to adjust to the new environment.

b. Pull Factors: Accommodation is equitable with the belief in the Singapore’s educational system – whether they think it would directly impact their career opportunities. The more they view this positively, the more they would devise ways to accommodate to the Singapore system.

c. Pliability: Here, accommodation can be described as the most diverse as it depends on individual sense of self-image. Their accommodation is largely displayed through their self-presentation.

d. Study Mechanisms: This is also another area where accommodation varies significantly, notably on a group basis. The accommodation of others in their

group study and off-campus interactions displays perhaps the widest range of accommodation strategies that has enriched this study.

e. Future Direction. The future intentions of participants are reflected in their current accommodation behaviours – the more that they show clarity in their ambitions, the more they are prepared to accommodate to achieve those ideals.

6.1.2 Relations within Ideal Type

From the grounded theory, four ideal types of selective accommodation emerged to reflect the different ways in which such accommodation is executed and achieved. They are: (1) The Achievers; (2) The Ambassadors; (3) The Adherents; and (4) The Apathetics. (See Table 6.1 below for breakdown of respondents into each group.) Each ideal type draws on the five categories in a consistent and chronological manner: Push and Pull Factors broadly reflect the students' recent past prior to embarking on their studies in Singapore. The two categories indicate their perceptions and responses to their external home/host environment. The next two categories of Pliability and Study mechanisms represent the students' current experience in Singapore, with the former revealing their personality traits and the latter, their study habits. The final category of Future Direction is self-explanatory and indicates the aspirations of the students after their sojourn in Singapore. Collectively, the five categories provide an across-the-board look at the selected accommodation strategies used by these students in their adjustment and adaptation to life across the Indonesian Strait.

The four Ideal Types and their characteristics are:

a. Achievers view educational pressures (a pull factor) and academic performance and career direction (both future intention factors) as their most important stimuli. Due to their strong will to succeed and their undivided focus, they have been labeled 'achievers'. Their style of accommodation can be described as 'clear everything that gets in the way; accommodate anything that helps along the way' (F16). Achievers display a high level of ingenuity in the way they accommodate difficulties in their new competitive environment.

b. Ambassadors are diplomatic, courteous and accommodating. They are thus labeled as they adopt a high sense of public relations (a forte of ambassadors) in dealing with challenges, which they view more as opportunities than obstacles. One

highly distinguishable characteristic of ambassadors is that they have pledged their full allegiance to Indonesia and do not see themselves as Chinese from China. In their accommodation, they ‘carry the flag’ (M15) and project themselves as representatives of their country. In that sense, ambassadors are also prepared to be rather sacrificial in their accommodation as “we don’t accommodate for our own sake but for the good name of our country” (M11).

c. Adherents, generally speaking, adopt the widest range of accommodation tactics for all occasions. They may have even been unfairly labeled as *lallang*, a Malay word for a type of long grass that sways with the wind. They are not labeled as adherents for this negative reason, of course, but for their sincerity and willingness to turn an unpleasant incident into something pleasant, or at least to diffuse a difficult or nasty situation. They do so by adhering to generally acceptable social conventions. This form of accommodation must not be under-estimated, according to M5, as “people respond positively simply by seeing your sincerity and willingness to accommodate”.

d. Apathetics are described as such not because of the usual negative connotations linked with the term in relation to their treatment of others but more for their evaluation of themselves. Some might even feel inferior or dejected. “Our style of accommodation involves a heavy dose of withdrawal, self-pity and resignation. Basically, we have little self-confidence and we do what we can to fend off any perceived threat – from delay tactic to feigning ignorance” (F6).

These four Ideal Types are not meant to correspond to all of the characteristics of any one particular Chinese Indonesian participant. It is not meant to refer to perfect things but to stress certain elements common to most cases of the given Typology. They relate to how participants ‘selectively accommodate’ the various aspects of their sojourn in Singapore – depending on how they accommodate the broader external environment (namely the push and pull factors), their campus environment (particularly their study mechanisms) and their expectations (based on their pliability and future directions). Thus, the choice of accommodation is different from one participant to another. Similar patterns of accommodative behaviours subsequently emerge, reflecting the nature with grounded theory research.

6.1.3 Relations across Ideal Type

The grounded theory of selective accommodation in the current study has been promulgated by means of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The two guiding Research Questions have produced five categories that eventually lead to the four Types. Their relationship is presented in Table 6.1 below and will thereafter be discussed in subsequent Sections.

Table 6.1 – Relation of typology of participants and categories

Categories		Ideal Types			
		Achievers	Ambassadors	Adherents	Apathetics
PUSH FACTORS	Political Pressures	Both direct and indirect experiences of ethnic discrimination and political persecution. [16]	Least important push factor. No political pressures. Setbacks are temporary and caused by global factors. [4]	No direct persecution, mainly from secondary sources. [11]	Most important push factor. Mainly personal, direct experiences of persecution [5]
	Educational Pressures	Most important push factor. Poor academic standards. [12]	Poor academic standards. [18]	Poor facilities and funding [15]	Weak educational Masterplan [19]
	Loss of Chinese Identity	High sense of loss. Strong sense of Chinese identity. Moderate sense of Indonesian identity. (6)	Lowest sense of loss. Weak sense of Chinese identity. Strong sense of Indonesian identity. (3)	Low sense of loss. Weak sense of Chinese identity. Moderate sense of Indonesian identity. (5)	Highest sense of loss. Strong sense of Chinese identity. Weak sense of Indonesian identity. (6)
PULL FACTORS	General Pull	Full agreement on the general pull factors. Globalisation has increased international providers of tertiary education. Being students abroad also gives a sense of prestige and self esteem. [20]			Apathetics find this reason particularly appealing. [5]
	Specific Pulls	Educational features are a key pull factor. Singapore is a destination of choice. [16]	Host facilitation is a key pull factor. But Singapore is as good a choice as any other. [14]	Country features are a key pull factor. Singapore is a destination of choice. [20]	No particular strong factor. Singapore is as good a choice as any other. [5]
PLIABILITY	Personality	Optimistic. Go-getting. Least pliable. (4)	Optimistic. Go-getting. (4)	Pessimistic. Unassuming. Most pliable. (7)	Pessimistic. Unassuming. (5)
	Locus of Control	Internal control (13)		External control (7)	

	Self-Presentation	Low self-monitors (3)	High self-monitors (11)		Low self-monitors (6)
STUDY MECHANISMS	Self-Study Methods	Strategic self study. Problem-solving. Most common study method. [15]	Cognitive self study. Purpose-building. Least popular study method. [4]	Attentive self study. People-tending. [10]	Affective self study. Passion-filling. [8]
	Group-Study Methods	Competitive. An aggressive approach. Least popular, usually as a last resort. [3]	Collaborative. An instrumental approach. [11]	Cooperative. An altruistic approach. Most popular, usually as a first choice. [18]	Conceding. A yielding approach. [7]
	Off-Campus Interactions	Strong transactional relationship. (7)	Strong transformational relationship. (4)	Moderate transformational relationship. (2)	Moderate transactional relationship. (7)
FUTURE DIRECTION	Academic Performance	Good grades anticipated. (5)	Average grades anticipated. (4)	Average grades anticipated. (7)	Poor grades anticipated. (4)
	Career Direction	Next stop: further studies or work. Eventual stop: Possibly home, if other choices not available. (2)	Next stop: work. Eventual stop: Definitely home, even if other choices available. (3)	Next stop: work. Eventual stop: Most probably home, even if other choices available. (9)	Next stop: work. Eventual stop: Anywhere but home. (6)

Key: () indicates mutually exclusive figures; adds to exactly 20.

[] indicates overlapping figures; numbers above 20.

Each Ideal Type is naturally linked to the other three ideal types since all four of them are drawn from the same pool of data reflecting five common categories of push factors, pull factors, pliability, study mechanisms and future direction. This would mean that the Ideal Types are in themselves constructed from the five categories and do not have substantive data of their own, which is the very essence of grounded theory. For this reason, the ideal types are distinguishable in the way that they

leverage on different aspects of the common categories. In terms of past push/pull factors, Achievers and Apathetics tend to be bothered by push factors as much as Ambassadors and Adherents are swung by pull factors. In terms of pliability, Ambassadors tend to stand out with their altruistic character as much as Achievers appear self-centered and uncaring. Yet all four groups tend to display a strong sense of group-study methods and struggle with self-study methods – albeit in a different manner. As for the future direction, Ambassadors and Achievers seem to know what they want a lot more than Adherents and Apathetics. Pulling all these five factors together, the common thread is apparent – the way the ideal types select strategies of accommodation that best surface their strengths and suppress their weaknesses.

6.2 Achievers

6.2.1 Push factors and Achievers

Push factors consist of three processes namely political pressures, educational pressures and the loss of group identity. Achievers are most sensitive to political pressures in the shape of political persecution and ethnic discrimination. It does not matter to them whether they personally encounter such unpleasant incidents or have these events related to them vicariously. To them, the source of information is unimportant compared to the sense of persecution. Every time an incident is seen or heard, it reinforces their political pressure to leave their home country. Nonetheless, educational pressures are a common push factor, as they occur with all four types. For the Achievers in particular, educational pressures are the most important push factor as this type is most focused on achieving educational successes, hence the so-named typology of Achievers. “The only way we know how to accommodate is to get out of a bad situation,” according to F4. Many achievers cited specific concerns such as poor educational standards as a real put-off in Indonesian institutions of higher learning, which then prompted their strong desire to leave. In terms of the sense of loss of their Chinese identity, it is a push factor as they have a high sense of loss, although the highest loss is experienced by the Apathetics. The loss is somewhat worsened by their moderate sense of Indonesian identity.

6.2.2 Pull factors and Achievers

The general pull factors of globalisation, international providers and students abroad, as discussed in the Chapter 5, are commonly felt by all participants. It is the area of

specific pull factors of Singapore in terms of its country features, educational features and host facilitation that separate Chinese Indonesians studying in Singapore. Of these three specific pull factors, Achievers are most concerned with the educational features. They are impressed with the Singapore educators in making the Republic a global educational hub to attract both international providers as well as overseas students to its shores. In particular, they are awed by the focus on programme quality, which focused on both academic standards and course relevance. Regular revision of the course programmes to make them relevant, yet not at the expense of the foundations of the subject matter, is a balance which participants feel typifies the Singapore brand of education. “To get to Singapore, I am prepared to accommodate in any way necessary. It is not how I accommodate but how far – and I am prepared to go very far,” according to F16.

6.2.3 Pliability and Achievers

Pliability is concerned with the likelihood that Chinese Indonesians in Singapore are influenced in their attitudes and behaviours by those around them, which in turn will affect their own attitude (optimism versus pessimism) and behaviour (goal-getting versus unassuming). Achievers are optimists and highly geared towards achieving their goals – which is to secure a good education. They take the view that there is no point ‘wallowing in self-pity’. In the end, it is up to Achievers as individuals to decide whether they want to stay focused on their goal of securing a good result or waste their time in Singapore. The choice is obvious to Achievers. This also explains why Achievers are the least pliable of the four groups. These students show a strong sense of internal control and are more likely to maintain their academic progress than those with a weak sense of internal control. Moreover, once they falter, like failing a test or assignment, they are likely to adjust to the setback and promote their own rehabilitation. In terms of their self-presentation, Achievers, like the Apathetics, are low self-monitors. They are more attentive to the ‘inner self’ rather than bother with what others think of them. They are not interested in controlling their self-expressions in social settings nor are they willing to do so. M1 explains: “I don’t think about my ‘own face’. If I need to bend over to accommodate, I would do so. I also try not to think too much about ‘another person’s face’. If he gets in my way, I would politely but firmly tell him to move aside.”

6.2.4 Study mechanisms and Achievers

Strategic self-study is the most common form of self-study and is used by three-quarters of participants. It is, quite naturally, a favourite self-study method of the result-seeking Achievers. M7 confesses: “The best form of accommodation is not having to accommodate – that is why I prefer to study on my own and save all the crap about ‘accommodation’!” Since strategic self-study means problem-centered and is carried out with a specific objective in mind, it suits the personal disposition of the Achievers. Thus, if the objective is to memorise a piece of work, then time will be spent on rote-learning. This approach has the same ring as ‘work smart and not just work hard’. Achievers tend to describe their style of revision as ‘planned’, ‘tactical’, ‘calculated’ and ‘deliberate’. When they are studying as a group, Achievers adopt the highly ‘competitive’ way of securing the leadership of the group. However, unlike the competitive nature of such a practice that one would associate with a highly combative school environment, the ‘competitive’ group method is not a regular occurrence for the Indonesian sojourners in Singapore as it evokes a sense of hostility or an atmosphere of unpleasantness. Achievers resort to this approach as a last option when they feel the group lacks direction or cohesion. In their off-campus interaction, Achievers adopt a transactional relationship, where both parties derive utility value from an encounter (be it a meal or a movie). There is also the occasional ‘fitting the right friends into the right activities’ (F6). This may include clubbing with the more relaxed Indonesians and discussing regional developments with the more serious Singaporeans.

6.2.5 Future directions and Achievers

The two key factors in analyzing the future intentions of the participants are their perceived predicted academic performance and their anticipated career direction. For the first factor, ‘good’, ‘average’ or ‘poor’ academic performances are based on the participants’ own subjective perception rather than any objective evaluation of their performances. In other words, a perceived good performer may end up doing worse than a perceived average performer. Among the participants, the Achievers are most confident they will achieve good grades. And if their confidence bears out, Achievers are likely to take a second degree or further their studies in Singapore or overseas. They also believe that good grades will lead them to good jobs ‘any where’. Not surprisingly, they are happy even if they do not have to return to Indonesia

permanently, except for home visits and sentimental trips. Admits M7: “If accommodation means staying away from Indonesia forever, then make that my ultimate accommodation!” However, they accept that they have to return home if foreign options are closed. Like the Apathetics, their sense of loyalty to Indonesia is weak.

6.3 Ambassadors

6.3.1 Push factors and Ambassadors

In direct contrast with the Achievers, Ambassadors do not perceive political pressures to leave the country as they do not sense any political persecution or ethnic discrimination. M11 explains: “There is no pressure to leave the country so accommodation to any new environment is not difficult. If I don’t fit in, I can always return to home, sweet home”. Push factors, instead, are blamed primarily on the economic factor, which is a result of global developments not to be blamed on the Indonesian government. In any case, these setbacks are temporary and awaiting a global recovery. In that sense, the Ambassadors are rather loyal to their country and can also be described as fiercely committed to national development in Indonesia. Their push factors come from educational pressures, as Ambassadors share the anxiety of Achievers over poor educational standards. However, their motivation comes mainly from pull factors (see next section). Given their very strong sense of Indonesian identity, the loyalty of Ambassadors to their country is not in question and thus the loss of the Chineseness is not a push factor.

6.3.2 Pull factors and Ambassadors

Ambassadors tend to focus on host (Singaporean) facilitation as a key pull factor. One unique feature of this facilitation is the “Whole-of-Government” approach where a good educational system is viewed in the context of a good national system that supports the inflow of foreign students. For example, Ambassadors enjoy the student concessions and privileges, and a wide choice of hostels and rental housing offered by Singaporean and university authorities. They also appreciate the affordability of public transportation for foreign students and educational learning journeys sponsored and organised by local government agencies. Job attachments and internships are also sourced for foreign students by local educational authorities, which are appreciated by the participants. The educators put themselves in the shoes of the participants and try

to figure out their every need, including their social life and daily requirements. M3 appreciates host facilitation: “Singapore’s willingness to go out of its way to welcome me makes me feel less pressured to adjust. Accommodation is easy when support is there.”

6.3.3 Pliability and Ambassadors

Ambassadors can be described as positive students – they are optimistic and go-getting in their personality. Ambassadors are most determined to make the best of the situation. They know what they want and Singapore’s competitive yet fair system will spur them to do well. Most people find Ambassadors to be most amenable and helpful, sometimes to the extent of being ‘plastic’ as M15 has been accused of: “I hate it when my sincere intentions to accommodate another person are perceived by the other party as being insincere or even scheming!” To be ‘plastic’ means being pretentious such that their kind gestures are viewed either as insincere or clouded with motives. However, as their name implies, Ambassadors simply want to be good representatives of themselves and diplomats of their country, Indonesia. What most Ambassadors rely on to overcome their problems is self-efficacy, an aspect of perceived self-control that refers to the belief in their own ability to carry out specific actions that will produce desired outcomes, such as dealing with mounting homework. In that sense, they have the same internal locus of control like the Achievers. In terms of self-presentation, Ambassadors are like the Adherents in that both groups are high self-monitors. They are concerned with the social appropriateness of their impression-making. They tend to be attentive to what others are doing and use that as a guide to how they should then conduct themselves. This means that Ambassadors are willing to control their self-expressions if it means giving a better account of themselves.

6.3.4 Study mechanisms and Ambassadors

The cognitive self-study method is the least popular of all study methods, even though lecturers and examiners want their students to adopt it. It implies the principle of learning with understanding – which marks the true meaning of education.

Ambassadors usually adopt the strategic method like the rest of the 20 participants but they are also the group most likely to switch to this alternate form of studying ‘the right way’ (M7). Thus, while strategic learning centers on problem-solving, cognitive learning focuses on the purpose of the study. “Learning by comprehension and

understanding requires much thinking and is usually quite daunting at the start for me,” says M3. However, if done assiduously, it is a rewarding experience. As a group, Ambassadors are collaborative, as they adopt the more instrumental approach of ‘joining forces’ and ‘pooling resources’ (M11). In the collaborative style, a lot of negotiation takes place, usually in Bahasa because non-Chinese Indonesians might be involved. There is also much bargaining when collaboration occurs. For their off-campus interactions, Ambassadors adopt transformational relationships, which is a contrast with the transactional relationships adopted by the Achievers. Ambassadors do not see friendships as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. They can therefore be deemed to be more lasting. Not surprisingly, Ambassadors bring their campus ties to non-campus relationships. Outside the context of assignments, tests and exams, they find that ideas are more flowing and forthcoming.

6.3.5 Future directions and Ambassadors

Ambassadors expect to obtain average grades in the grueling Singapore exam system. They hope to use the Singapore degree as a springboard to a good job as it is ‘better than having an Indonesian degree in terms of increasing those chances’ (F19). In the long term, however, Ambassadors long to return to Indonesia – even if they have offers to stay abroad. “My highest form of accommodation is to accommodate to my newfound identity as an Indonesian rather than as a Chinese from China,” declares M17. In this regard, their loyalty, like many overseas Chinese migrants, has switched from China to their adopted homes in Southeast Asia. Such a form of selective accommodation can be described as both ideological and practical, as M3 reconciles the two: “We like to think we are Chinese, but China does not recognise us. But when we think of ourselves as Indonesian, we find greater acceptance and more opportunities. So being Indonesian is making the best of a bad situation.”

6.4 Adherents

6.4.1 Push factors and Adherents

The Adherents lie between the Achievers and the Ambassadors in terms of their political pressures, although they are slightly more similar to the Ambassadors in that they do see themselves more as Indonesian than as Chinese (without losing their Chinese culture). For one thing, they do not face any direct persecution and most of their memories of the anti-Chinese movement in the mid-1990s come from secondary

sources. As for educational pressures, they generally cite a lack of funding and poor facilities as the main causes, without having a deeper concern for the more pertinent issue of poor educational standards. F12 admits: “We accommodate quite easily. We don’t worry much about educational standards – just make sure the funds and facilities are available. Beggars can’t be choosers.” Adherents neither have a strong sense of Chinese nor Indonesian identity. Their Chineseness can be described as weak although, comparatively, their Indonesian-ness is slightly better. Ethnic or national group identity is therefore not a key push factor.

6.4.2 Pull factors and Adherents

Adherents consider themselves ‘less fussy’ and are therefore not too concerned about the specifics of educational features (as are the Achievers) or host facilitation (as are the Ambassadors). To them, welcoming country features of Singapore are sufficient. So long as the three Cs of Cost, Closeness and Culture as discussed in the earlier Chapter are taken care of, Singapore will be a favourite stop. “We are pretty easily going,” M20 claims, “we don’t ask beyond creature comforts. Good educational features are a bonus. That’s a down-to-earth way of accommodation.” This attitude is understandable, given that Singapore can be cheaper by about 20 per cent in terms of living and educational costs. Closeness, which includes physical proximity and access to home conveniences such as indigenous consumer goods and local amenities, is another key feature for making Singapore a choice destination for Adherents. Cultural similarities – be it the Chinese or Malay culture – are another form of ‘creature comfort’. They also include similarities in terms of fashion, food and fun. To Adherents, Singapore is like ‘a home away from home’.

6.4.3 Pliability and Adherents

Adherents are easy-going people, popular among their peers for their accommodating nature, which explains why they are the most pliable of the four groups. For example, M5 states: “If you want to be sincere about getting along with others, you must truly accommodate their whims and fancy, while suppressing your own whims and fancy.” Although Adherents are pessimistic about their chances of academic success in Singapore, they are unassuming and not as fiercely competitive as the Achievers or even the less-determined Ambassadors. They adopt a down-to-earth mentality and believe that ‘things would turn out well’ (F2) for them even though they do not see

themselves as being academically strong. Among their peers, they are not pushers but believe in doing things in an unassuming way, working in a slow and steady Indonesian way. “That’s the way we accommodate,” declares M5, adding that they do not attempt to bite more than they can chew. However, Adherents, like the Apathetics, attribute their perceived control externally, tending to blame the tough module, the stringent exam questions or weak lecturers for their own poor academic performances. “Some accuse us of finding excuses for ourselves but it’s how we cope with the pressures by reasoning away our faults!” In terms of self-presentation, Adherents are similar to Ambassadors as both are high self-monitors. They want to give the impression that they are neither trouble-makers nor slackers as they do not want to be marginalised or stigmatised. Thus, Adherents go along with the rest in their opinions and activities as they do not want to appear as spoilsports.

6.4.4 Study mechanisms and Adherents

Adherents adopt the attentive self-study method, which is neither focused on problem (strategic learning) or purpose (cognitive learning). This method pays attention to people ‘who matter’ (F18) and works for Adherents because they are concerned with their anxious parents and loved ones back home. “We think about our parents working so d*** hard to support us financially and it’s enough to keep us on our toes,” asserts M5. In terms of group work, Adherents adopt the ‘cooperative’ style, which is also popular among almost all other participants. This is a very easy-going group method of standing as a team by co-operating fully with each other. It is noted by users of this method as a part of the Indonesian culture of working together and the partnership is usually a happy, harmonious one – usually with lots of food and loads of fun thrown in. In terms of their off-campus interactions, Adherents are neither committed to the transactional relationships of the Achievers nor the transformational relationships of the Ambassadors. However, they tend to show a slightly more transformational style as they are not so utilitarian in their man management. “I won’t say I look at people as eternal friendships but neither do I look at them as transient strangers. Just show sincerity and let nature take its course,” advises F19.

6.4.5 Future directions and Adherents

Like the Ambassadors, the Adherents similarly anticipate getting ‘average’ grades in the gruelling Singapore exam system, even considering getting a pass grade as

satisfactory. “My goal is quite simply to get a degree, no matter whether it is a good or bad degree. A degree is a degree, right?” asks F18. None of the Adherents had further study ambitions, but would hope to use the degree as a springboard to a good job. Eventually, however, Adherents see themselves as more Indonesian than Chinese (even though they may be less fervent than Ambassadors) and plan to return home after three to five years – even if they have a choice to stay away permanently. Their sense of loyalty, like the Ambassadors, is with Indonesia, although they have not forgotten their Chinese roots especially in times of political persecution.

6.5 Apathetics

6.5.1 Push factors and Apathetics

The Apathetics are similar to the Achievers in feeling persecuted because of their Chinese race. However, they themselves, or at least a family member, have direct encounters of some form of racial intimidation. This makes their resolve to leave Indonesia because of political pressures more imminent. M13 puts it bluntly: “Leave the place. Get a degree. Find a job. Don’t return.” Apathetics tend to stereotype themselves as a persecuted minority and are suspicious of developments in the country. Apathetics tend to view these developments in a negative light and cannot wait to leave the country because of it. Like all other three groups, the Apathetics also cite educational pressures as a key push factor. However, they do not have a specific issue of dissatisfaction unlike the Achievers who are concerned with the more pertinent issue of poor educational standards or even the more general concern with the lack of funding and poor facilities in tertiary institutions. To them, they only have an inkling – or may not even care – that there is no clear vision, such as an educational master plan to guide tertiary education and for this, the Apathetics feel the pressure to leave the country. Compared to the four types, the Apathetics face the highest sense of identity loss in terms of their Chineseness as they only have a weak sense of their Indonesian identity.

6.5.2 Pull factors and Apathetics

Apathetics are the most aware and conscious of all the groups of the General Pull factors of globalisation, international providers and students abroad, as globalisation has increased international providers of tertiary education, making an overseas education cheaper and more competitive. Being students abroad also gives a sense of

prestige and self esteem to them. In that sense, Apathetics are, relatively speaking, not as concerned with the Specific Pull factors offered by Singapore. F14 remarks: “If you are truly keen on an overseas education, you should be happy to land anywhere reasonably liveable. Don’t ask too much, and don’t complain too much. That’s the mark of true adaptation.” This does not mean that Apathetics do not appreciate Singapore’s attractiveness but that they would have left Indonesia for any foreign stop anyway – whether or not it was Singapore.

6.5.3 Pliability and Apathetics

Apathetics are both pessimistic and unassuming and have often been described by their peers as ‘negative and disinterested’ (M13). They do not see themselves making any major headway in Singapore and it may even be that they are just complying with what their parents want them to do. Apathetics concede that they do not push themselves hard enough: if they can get by, they will get by. They do not pretend to be what they are not. They may even hold to the belief that there is no need to work themselves to the ground for the sake of a degree. If the degree is meant to be theirs, it will be theirs. They do not like to force it. Like the Adherents, the Apathetics also tend to attribute their locus of control externally, which means that they blame and praise external factors for their respective failures and successes. For better or worse, luck seems to be at the centre of their life-story. Notably, many Apathetics admit that their grades are at best satisfactory – they also experience more study stress and minor health ailments. In terms of self-presentation, Apathetics are low self-monitors. They behave like the Achievers, whether they are having a discussion with a lecturer, a peer or a junior. F10 states: “Just be normal, be yourself. No need to put on an act. Nobody likes pretentious people.” Besides, having a low self-monitor does not mean having to be rude, just “doing things my way” (F14).

6.5.4 Study mechanisms and Apathetics

Apathetics adopt the affective self-study method. This method is not based on problem-solving (for the Achievers), purpose-building (for the Ambassadors) or people-tending (for the Adherents) but emotion and passion. Apathetics use the term ‘study passion’ to describe the importance of their psychological and emotional state of mind when they are settling down for a period of self-study, which is more of a short-term learning ritual rather than a long-term study methodology. Simply put, a

moody student is not a learning student. In terms of group study, the Apathetics adopt the opposite of the Achievers' competitive approach, which is the conceding approach. Apathetics not only 'give in', they may even 'give up' especially when their contributions are not appreciated because of their inferior quality. "We don't mind being treated like foot soldiers, so long as we are not kicked out of the unit," reveals F14. Conceding Apathetics usually take their assigned tasks from the group with a pinch of salt, and are gratified that they are not marginalised or removed from their team. In terms of their off-campus interactions, Apathetics are neither committed to transactional relationships of the Achievers nor the transformational relationships of the Ambassadors. However, they tend to show a slightly more transactional style as they are more utilitarian in their people management.

6.5.5 Future directions and Apathetics

The Apathetics are pessimistic – they have a strong feeling that they are less likely to make the grade, given their poor performances in Year One. Some among them feel they are wasting their time in Singapore and are simply hoping against hope.

Apathetics confess to being aimless in life. They take things one step at a time and hope to secure a job in Singapore thereafter, which is basically what most Indonesians are hoping to do. However, they have no qualms about leaving Indonesia permanently and setting up homes and their own families overseas. Like the Achievers, and perhaps even more determined, they have little loyalty to Indonesia and see it as an option among many. Given a choice, they would want to leave the country permanently. M8 sums it up well: "All the talk about nationality, ethnicity and education – they are meaningless unless they can do something for us."

6.6 **Conclusion**

The study of the perceptions and motivations of Chinese Indonesian students studying in Singapore has resulted in the eventual identification and discussion of a theory of selective accommodation that examines how these students cope with their nationality (push factors) and their educational aspirations (pull factors). In so doing, they learn the art of accommodation. Once they arrive in Singapore, this tactic becomes a tool kit for survival. The Indonesian students learn how to cope with their study by adjusting their personalities and study methods. When it comes to the end of their stay in Singapore, their process of selective accommodation does not end. Instead, they

attempt to modify their future directions based on their grades and the intention to return to Indonesia.

In so doing, a fourfold typology of these students is derived. The full analysis of how each of these types relates to each of the five categories of the last Chapter further affirms the grounded theory of Selective Accommodation. This typology in turn demonstrates how the various hypotheses under each type contribute to the whole structure of the theory. Thus, when the typology finally emerges, it provides a complete picture of why and how Chinese Indonesians manage their experiences of studying in Singapore.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussions, Implications and Recommendations

7.0 Introduction

The inflow of Chinese Indonesian students into Singapore universities in the last two decades appears to be aligned to international trends where countries with quality institutions of higher learning attract students from countries where these facilities are limited (Kemp, 1995). But more than it being just another digit in International Student Flow (ISF) statistics, the particular trend of Chinese Indonesians flocking to Singapore has more far-reaching social and educational implications, such as the appearance of an identity struggle (for example, being ethnically Chinese while being politically Indonesian at the same time), an orientation struggle (the Singapore destination as an avenue for political escapism or academic opportunism) and a learning struggle (a sense of educational apathy or achievement). This Chapter summarises the major discussions, provides relevant conclusions and offers some recommendations on how these issues may be seen from an educational perspective, using the following structure:

- 7.1 Discussions
- 7.2 Implications
- 7.3 Recommendations

7.1 Discussions

This Section provides a summary of the main thrust of this research and its investigative methodology, linking the outcomes back to the literature review and the specific research questions it started with.

7.1.1 Basis of the Study

Two developments, one at the political/macro level and another at the personal/micro level, prompted the current study. The first was the dramatic fall of the Suharto regime in Indonesia in 1997 that was quickly accompanied by the systematic violence directed at Chinese Indonesians by their non-Chinese counterparts in the country. Despite living side by side with each other for

generations following the mass inflow of Chinese immigrants from China at the close of the 19th Century, Jakarta's assimilation policy not only did not seem to work but also appeared to have backfired. One major development was the massive exodus of Chinese Indonesians into Singapore since about 1990 under the guise, excuse or otherwise, of the pursuit of quality education. That Singapore was the most popular stop for Chinese Indonesian undergraduates raises the issue of whether it was the fact that Singapore was a Chinese-majority state that proved the main attraction. If this preliminary observation were correct, the political push factor would be a key reason for such an inflow, dwarfing educational pull factors. On the other hand, Singapore's proximity and its educational excellence were equally and regularly cited in this study as critical educational pull factors for the island-state being a destination of choice (pull factor) for Chinese Indonesian undergraduates rather than a destination by default (push factor). From an educational perspective, these dialectical push and pull factors make the study of overseas student motivation a fascinating one. One wonders whether these forces of push and pull Influence learning attitudes and academic outcomes.

The second observation which prompted the current study is the highly noticeable characteristics displayed by the distinctive Chinese Indonesian student population, either as a foreign group or as individuals, finding and feeling their way around Singapore tertiary campuses. Always bearing a smile on their faces and always willing to lend a helping hand, these Chinese Indonesian undergraduates mark their presence with their effervescence and highly accommodating attitude (which some would argue were more the result of their Javanese influence rather than their Chinese upbringing). Their spontaneous displays of warmth and out-of-the-way friendliness are as noticeable as they are natural. One wonders whether Chinese Indonesians possess certain naturally-endowed dispositions that facilitate their accommodating attitudes and, if so, whether these traits are generalisable or transferable for other student groups in other learning environments. On the other hand, these selective adaptation/accommodation strategies could be a form of social camouflage and/or personal disguise that conceal the generally average-to-poor standards of academic performance of Indonesian students in Singapore. There have after all, been reported cases of suicide and physical attacks on Singapore lecturers by maladjusted Chinese Indonesian students.

7.1.2 Research methodology

The literature review supported the preliminary observations that commonly-shared reasons do account for ISF, and that these are an important source of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). But despite case studies on educational flows ranging from Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) on push factors to Chen and Zimitat (2006) on pull factors, few studies specifically draw on the unique contributions of the students' historical background, cultural upbringing and political persuasion, and then go on to relate these to their overseas learning experiences. For example, the literature on adaptation to a foreign living environment is historically concerned with cultural adaptation (Laroche et al., 1997) but little is discussed about how adaptation is made in relation to foreign students with an identity crisis (Indonesian or Chinese), or how unique styles of accommodation peculiar to them are selected to assist them in their learning and adjustment processes.

This study attempts to fill this vital information gap involving a robust community of minority immigrants, as they attempted to negotiate their way out of a dishevelled home into an alien living, language and learning environment, by the use of differing strategies of adaptation and accommodation. To do so, the study raised two key Research Questions, 'Why do Indonesian Chinese decide to pursue Higher Education study abroad?' and 'How do Indonesian students in Singapore manage their student lives?' Guided by the two RQs, the study adopted the interpretive research methodology as the epistemological basis of its investigative process: the way to comprehend a student's study experience is through his/her thought process, emotional management and learning behaviours. A grounded theory approach was adopted because of the exploratory nature of a study that intended to build itself inductively from emerging data (Glaser, 1992; Charmaz, 2006). This study aimed to generate a theory and propositions, as well as a typology – all of which were considered appropriate for a doctoral study of this nature (Khat, 2008). Data were collected from a number of Chinese Indonesians at a particular tertiary institution with the bulk of research based on unstructured in-depth interviews from 20 participants, sampled with the intention of achieving theoretical saturation of the data. As the study evolved, sampling choices were selected based on the categories of the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A final form of collaboration was the use of document analysis – 18 students (except for the two who had graduated) were requested to keep a diary for a week-long period to record their personal reflections on the week's activities, with special focus on the way

they managed their studies. Document analysis complemented the use of an interview schedule and was drawn on as an additional source of data in the form in which it stood (Johnson, 1994). In summary, the collection of data from multiple sources ensured triangulation of the data collected and analysed.

The analytical process that followed adopted rigorously all stages of the grounded theory process, namely open, axial and selective coding. Open coding helped in the labelling and categorisation of the phenomena as surfaced by the data. Axial coding assembled and reconstructed the data in a fresh manner by associating a category with its subcategories. Finally, selective coding integrated the main categories to generate the grounded theory from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

7.1.3 Outcomes of the Study

Data analysis through grounded theory produced five main categories (namely push factors, pull factors, pliability, study mechanisms and future intentions). It was from these categories that the study went on to generate the nascent Theory of Selective Accommodation. This Theory explained, in relation to SRQ 1, how the group of Chinese Indonesian students coped with their political pressures (push factors) and their educational aspirations (pull factors). In so doing, the Theory asserted that they learned the art of accommodation, which was essentially their response to SRQ 2. Once they arrived in Singapore, the skills of accommodation became a tool kit for survival. The Indonesian students learned how to cope with their studies by being pliable and flexible in their study methods. Eventually, when it came to the end of their study tour in Singapore, their process of selective accommodation continued. The students attempted to chart their future directions based on their grades (and work out how these would facilitate their next move) and their intentions as to whether at some point to return to Indonesia. But what emerged from the study was also a dialectical development in that these accommodation strategies at times posed as obstacles in themselves to educational achievements, as much as they had facilitated them.

a. Specific Research Question 1. The first SRQ on ‘Why do Indonesian Chinese decide to pursue Higher Education study abroad, and specifically in Singapore?’ was addressed

by the first two main categories of push and pull factors under the Theory of Selective Accommodation. The reasons for Chinese Indonesians seeking greener pastures for their tertiary education were compelling – the majority felt the desperation and the determination to leave. However, the political pressures were more acutely felt by a select group among the 20 participants who were greatly conscious of their ethnicity and/or minority status, with a few claiming to have experienced some personal intimidation by non-Chinese Indonesians. In their reflection, they felt that some of these pressures were linked to the inferior educational system in Indonesia – that the Indonesian tertiary system did not seem to have a convincing master plan to develop and deploy local graduates. Many felt that local universities did not offer value for money or were, quite simply, not good enough. Another push factor, ironically, was the erosion of Chinese ethnic identity. The weakening of the Chinese cultural system for these mainly fifth- to sixth-generation Indonesian students meant that they saw themselves more as Indonesian than Chinese. Their reason for leaving Indonesia was slightly different – as citizens rather than as an ethnic minority, they felt despondency with the bleakness of an Indonesian future in finding jobs, pursuing careers and raising children. Participants felt compelled to leave as they no longer saw a future shrouded by corruption, collusion and nepotism.

This sense of home displacement was exacerbated if participants identified themselves more as Chinese than as Indonesians of Chinese ancestry. These identity sentiments were borne out in a study by scholar Chew Chye Lay of ethnic Chinese who fled to Vietnam at the same time that other Chinese ended up in Indonesia, in the last century (Leo, 2007: pp 295 – 306). Chew identified ethnic Chinese in Vietnam based on their sense of identity with China or Vietnam. Of the total respondents, 71 per cent identified themselves as of ‘Vietnamese or Chinese ancestry’; 21 per cent as ‘Chinese living in Vietnam’ and only 7 per cent as ‘Chinese of China’. In the current study, the sense of identity with Indonesia, compared to Vietnam, seemed higher: 75 per cent regarded themselves mainly as Indonesians who happened to have Chinese ancestry; 20 per cent saw themselves as ‘Chinese living in Indonesia’ and only one respondent saw himself as ‘Chinese of China’.

The second part of SRQ 1 relating to Singapore was addressed by the main category of pull factors. On balance, the respondents from the current study conceded to being more influenced

by pull factors than push factors. Singapore, to the participants in the study, offered a realistic goal destination that contained all the trappings of a better career and a brighter future. In short, education in Singapore is part of a ‘package deal that includes future job and even marriage opportunities’ (M1). Geographic proximity between the two countries was a natural pull factor but it was the concerted efforts of the Singapore government and educators that brought out the city’s attractiveness.

All these, together with the high level of foreign direct investment and the migration of firms to Singapore to set up their regional headquarters, thereby increasing job opportunities, made the island a destination of choice for all 20 participants in this study. They could stay for an extended period after graduation to work or to use it as a springboard when they moved on to a third country or simply returned home. This ‘stopover’, as M7 described it, was in itself a great pulling force to study in Singapore.

b. Specific Research Question 2. The second SRQ on ‘What are the study habits of the students once in Singapore?’ was addressed in the main category of study mechanisms and the two other categories of pliability and future direction. The main category is divided into three sub-categories covering the individual’s self-study, group-study and off-campus activities. It examined the ways in which Chinese Indonesians cope with their studies individually and how these methods vary when they operate in a group. The way that they spent their off-campus time was also explored under this category.

Noteworthy, is that Chinese Indonesians adopted a study style that is reflective of and consistent with the manner in which they conducted their daily lives – being ‘slow and steady’ rather than ‘rush and run’ of most Singaporeans. Altogether, they used four overlapping self-study methods labelled by this researcher as strategic, cognitive, attentive and affective self-study. Of these, strategic self-study was the most common form and was used by three-quarters of participants on several occasions. Strategic self-study, admittedly a euphemistic term for tactical self-study, was problem-centered and carried out with a specific end-goal in mind. Thus, if the objective was to memorise a piece of work, then time would be set aside for rote-learning. The participants themselves had variously described this approach as ‘Route One’ and ‘work smart, not work

hard'. Their style of revision was planned, calculated and deliberate. The number of participants who admitted to rote learning was astoundingly high in this category. All participants had done it to some degree. Other problem-centered strategic learning techniques under this self-study method include 'spotting' exam questions as well as preparing 'stock' answers. Participants were 'resigned to fate' (M8) and 'fated to fail' (F6) if examiners chose to be 'difficult' and set tricky questions.

In terms of group work, many Chinese Indonesians operated in group sizes from three to seven. The most common style of group work was described by a participant as the 'cooperative' style. This was a very easy-going style of co-operating as a team and was more synonymous with their national (Indonesian) culture rather than ethnic (Chinese) culture. This Indonesian-style study method, usually against a harmonious backdrop, often involved 'lots of food and loads of fun'. Indeed, the idea of mixing snacks and music with studies seemed a regular occurrence in many of the get-together study sessions – so much so that one participant naughtily described these sessions as 'food for thought'. Besides, tidbits were also a stress-reliever and sharing them reflected the Indonesian way of showing genuine warmth and hospitality.

The main purpose of cooperative teamwork was group bonding. By openly sharing personal secrets, rapport and trust were generated. Such bonding was perceived to be crucial in group study as it reminded the Chinese Indonesians that they needed to stay united, if not close ranks, as they were 'foreigners in a strange land'. Co-operation was their way of norming and bonding in adversity; and of establishing their common identity and destiny. Thus, group study carried an added meaning for the students in Singapore where they were confronting many obstacles from a new environment, to a new institution, to a new course. Studying in a group in Singapore starkly reminded them just how vulnerable they were if they did not have strong and continual support around them. Group identity achieved through cooperative teamwork was further reinforced by the use of the common Bahasa language and to revert to familiar study techniques that they were used to in Indonesia, such as the excessive reliance on rote-learning to prepare for their class assessments and final exams.

7.1.4 A Typology of Chinese Indonesian undergraduates

The principal outcome arising from this study is the development of a typology of students with different styles of adaptation to their studies, based on their strategy of selective accommodation, which is the way they adjusted to their new learning environment in the hustle and bustle of a cramped Singapore, away from the serenity of spacious Indonesia. The main intervening characteristic in distinguishing students under this typology was the differences in the way they managed their study affairs, based on their perceptions about their purpose in Singapore. These variations result in other distinctions being made in the analysing, actualising and regulating processes in the theory of Selective Accommodation. Consequently, based on theory grounded in data, the participants may be broadly classified into four types of learners: Achievers, Ambassadors, Adherents and Apathetics. Their characteristics can be summarised in the following table:

Table 7.1 – Characteristics of the Four Accommodation Types

TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	KEY STRATEGIES
Achievers	Strong will to succeed with undivided focus. View educational pressures, academic performance and career direction as their most important stimuli.	‘Abandon anything that gets in the way; accommodate anything that helps in the way’. Ingenious in the way they accommodate difficulties in their new competitive environment.
Ambassadors	Diplomatic, courteous and accommodating. Employ a high degree of public relations in dealing with challenges. Most loyal to Indonesia as motherland and do not see themselves as Chinese from China.	‘Carry the flag’ for their country and project themselves as representatives of the state of Indonesia. View their Singapore stint as temporal. Ultimate aim is to return to their roots in Indonesia.

Adherents	Adopt the widest range of adaptation tactics for all occasions. Labeled as <i>lallang</i> for bending with the wind. Committed to turning an unpleasant incident into something pleasant, or at least to diffuse an awkward situation.	Adhere to generally acceptable social conventions. Must not be dismissed as sycophantic as outsiders respond positively when they see their willingness to accommodate despite inconveniences to themselves.
Apathetics	Linked to some form of bad attitude but more for their own apprehension about themselves. May feel inferior or dejected because of their low self-esteem, involving psychological withdrawal, self-pity and resignation.	With little self-confidence, they do what they can to fend off any perceived threat – with strategies ranging from delaying to feigning ignorance and, in some extreme situations, to taking flight.

These four Ideal Types are not meant to correspond with all the characteristics of any one particular Chinese Indonesian participant. Instead, they relate to how participants ‘selectively accommodate’ the various aspects of their educational sojourn in Singapore – depending on how they accommodate the broader external environment (namely the push and pull factors categories), their campus environment (particularly their study mechanisms category) and their expectations (based on their pliability and future directions categories). Thus, the choice of strategies for accommodation is different from one participant to another. The four-part typology has demonstrated how the various hypotheses under each type contribute to the whole structure of the theory of selective accommodation. Thus, when the full typology finally emerges, it provides a comprehensive picture of why and how Chinese Indonesians manage their experiences of studying in Singapore.

7.2 Implications

As discussed in Chapter 2, researchers such as Naidoo (2007), Kaufman and Goodman (2002), and Lancrin (2002) have all noted that cross-border student migration is a growing trend in recent decades because of a combination of home-country limitations and host-country facilitations. The current study has added to the research literature by pointing to the specific movement from developing countries to developed ones. It accounts for the trend of Indonesian

students flocking to Singapore because of home persecution as a push factor and state intervention by the Singapore authorities as a pull factor. Not only has such host facilitation contributed to the outflow of Indonesians and other students from developing countries, it has also immensely benefitted the island-republic in that Singapore is gradually becoming a destination of choice for those from more affordable, better developed countries as well.

Thus, the use of selective accommodation by Chinese Indonesians to cope with their studies in Singapore is not intended as a mere academic exercise in theorising but to draw out significant lessons that may help future cohorts of cross-border students adjust to study life in Singapore's well-developed institutions. Where possible, these lessons are also extracted for their general applicability for all foreign students facing difficult learning environments in unfamiliar territories. These lessons should provide useful insights for practitioners, including students, lecturers, researchers and policy makers in creating effective learning environments for foreign students.

7.2.1 Implications for Students

The current study has shown that Chinese Indonesian undergraduates in Singapore adopt a repertoire of accommodation strategies to cope with both their learning and living environments in Singapore. Rather than discuss how these accommodation strategies work for the students, it is more illuminating to understand how they emerge in the first place and why participants draw strength from these styles. A noticeable practice is the extensive use of the strategic self-study method by almost all students, especially in preparation for tests and exams. This self-study method employs a disproportionately high degree of rote learning which may help the short-term objective of securing a pass for an assessment but, disturbingly perhaps, not in knowledge acquisition. Not a few participants have confessed that they would rather 'pass without much understanding' about what they have learned than to 'fail with much understanding', as M8 puts it. But what is perhaps more disconcerting is that even Achievers, the best performing of the four types of students, frequently employ sheer memory power to succeed.

Clearly, the negative implications of the strategic approach have to be dealt with for two reasons. The first has to do with the ultimate aim of education, which could be described as learning for

the intrinsic purpose of learning. No member of the teaching profession would want to see students passing their grades based on memory rather than thinking skills. The second reason exists at the personal level – if students believe that they can get by (or get away) with rote learning, their attitude towards the acquisition of knowledge would be affected adversely. Their motivation would drop and so would their pursuit of educational excellence.

7.2.2 Implications for Lecturers

In the sub-category on off-campus activities (under the main category of study mechanisms), participants generally adopt a transformational or transactional style in their social circle of relationships. A transactional relationship is one where both parties try to derive utility value from an encounter, in the form of social exchange. Thus, Chinese Indonesians who engage in transactional relationships tend to ‘fit the right friends to the right activities’. Transformational relationships, on the other hand, do not see such encounters as a means to an end, but as an end in itself; what one would normally dub them ‘true or loyal friendship’. They can therefore be deemed to be more lasting and are based on ties that bind. Since participants bring their non-campus relationships to campus relationships, and vice versa, lecturers must learn to understand their role as mentors and coaches when they form teacher-pupil relationships with the new foreign students outside the classroom context, especially after lecture hours. T

7.2.3 Implications for Researchers / Policy Makers

One issue worth exploring is to ask whether the ambient culture – be it the influence of being Indonesian or being Chinese or both – played a significant role in the individual’s sense of accommodation. If so, it is necessary to appreciate that the various accommodation strategies are selected within the broader cultural framework. In the view of this researcher, the cultural concept of Indonesian-style accommodation can best be captured by the general term ‘*suka rela*’, which is accommodating in general. It refers to a willingness to accommodate (mainly, help) others by doing what the other party wants you to do. In the view of this researcher, *suka rila* can perhaps be sub-divided into four different sub-types based on the amount of volunteerism involved:

a. *Pura-pura rela* is one extreme of accommodation. It is being ‘diplomatic’ where one is saying yes to be accommodating but not necessarily doing as promised. There is no volunteerism involved here.

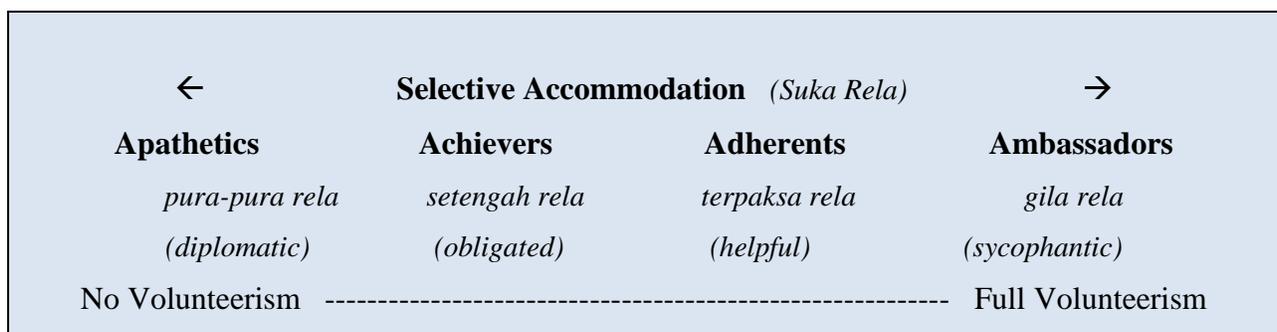
b. *Setengah rela* is somewhere near the *pura-pura rela* attitude, which is accommodating because one does not want to offend the other party who is deemed to be important to oneself. To some extent, this is a sense of feeling ‘obligated’. In this sub-type of accommodation, there is slightly some volunteerism on one’s part, though not much.

c. *Terpaksa rela* is accommodating because it looks good on oneself to do so. In this instance, there is a lot more voluntarism involved and is close to the idea of being ‘helpful’.

d. *Gila rela* is a sense of total volunteerism and willingness to help. Viewed negatively, the person who practises this form of accommodation would be viewed as being ‘sycophantic’.

The graphic representation based on the amount of volunteerism is given below:

Figure 7.1 – Indonesian-style Relat Accommodation as measured by Ideal Types



If indeed the cultural context played a key role in an individual’s accommodation response, it would open a whole new ground for research to link the broader social framework to accommodation strategies. In this regard, the relationship between the various components of

suka rela and the four types of learners under the current study will become more evident in the next Section on Recommendations.

7.3 Recommendations

The above implications have far reaching consequences for the four types of learners selectively adopting accommodation strategies to cope with their studies in Singapore. Chinese Indonesian learners choose these strategies based on the ways they are affected by push and pull factors, pliability and study mechanisms and their future intentions. The following recommendations are made with future literature and theoretical developments in mind and are offered in two parts:

a. The first set of recommendations relate to the specific needs and remedies for each of the four sets of learners.

b. The second set of recommendations relate to the broader macro context of Chinese Indonesians studying in Singapore.

7.3.1 Recommendations relating to Specific Types

a. Apathetics. Of all groups, Apathetics have the hardest time coping with their studies in Singapore and experience the strongest sense of negative pressures in their studies, blaming political persecution for their plight as well as their own lack of learning abilities. In interviewing the participants, this researcher senses a mix of emotions among Apathetics – from anxiety to fear about the political push factors; and from resignation to self-denial about their academic capabilities. Not surprisingly, Apathetics offered the least amount of *suka rela* in their general accommodation style and the minimal amount of volunteerism they provide is akin to *pura-pura rela* – they would say yes to any request for help just to get themselves out of a tight spot – but the chances of the actual help being rendered are usually quite slim. For example, an Apathetic may agree to help out in a cultural event but subsequently failed to deliver on the promise. The following measures are recommended for them:

(1) Since the perception of persecution is a key determinant of the Apathetics' negative accommodation strategies including the adoption of *pura-pura rela*, a change in their persecution attitude may help to reduce the negative push factors and the resultant accommodation strategies adopted. A formal, organised approach to change these negative perceptions towards their own government might work. This would involve getting the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore to organise regular welcome parties for these students, where Indonesian adults can offer their support and make them feel more at home in Singapore.

(2) As government initiated activities might be dismissed as state propaganda, using voluntary non-government Indonesian associations in Singapore might be an alternative. These voluntary bodies are also not viewed as political propaganda, as they cover wider fields from science to arts, and from music to dance. In the areas of educational improvements, the best agencies to spearhead these so-called Love Indonesia outreach would be the Chinese Indonesian student groups in the various campuses. Voluntary educational bodies have the resources to gather best practices in study methods and pass them on to these groups through their group leaders. In addition, the Singapore universities could act as facilitators for these groups that operate within their auspices by providing relevant study materials to the study groups.

(3) Perhaps the best solution lies with the students themselves. Informal group interactions between the two extreme groups (in regard to nationalism) of the Apathetics and the Ambassadors may be a more endearing and enduring approach. More opportunities should therefore be created for Apathetics to mix with Ambassadors to have meaningful dialogues. These activities, such as weekend gatherings, must be purposive and perhaps somewhat directed, without being overly structured and organised. Substantive themes could be introduced into these dialogues – before or after the traditional Indonesian meals are served – to stay focused on issues of concern, from nationalism to communities; from individual ambitions to individual roles in society. Indeed, school work and difficulties encountered in campuses could also be raised at these sessions.

b. Adherents. Adherents display the highest amount of pliability in that they are easy going and cooperative in nature. They are also high self-monitors, being conscious and concerned with how others perceive them. Just because they adopt a friendly, at times altruistic approach, does not mean they are hypocrites or sycophants. That is why the Adherents could be paired with the style of accommodation known as *terpaksa rela*, where they are genuinely more helpful and display more volunteerism. The challenge facing the Adherents, which is the most sizeable of the four types of learners, is their ‘*que sera sera*’ or ‘come-what-may’ mentality. The following measures are recommended for them:

(1) Student learning courses on effective study methods can be introduced at the start of each new academic year to help students hone their study discipline and achieve a clearer sense of academic objective. These compulsory programmes will introduce different study methods for different types of examination formats ranging from multiple-choice questions, to mathematical problem-solving to essays.

(2) As Adherents are better motivated by what they believe in rather than what they are told, bringing industry experts to the campus on a regular basis might be more effective. By stressing less the paper-and-pen examinations and creatively bringing industry relevance to the subject matter, Adherents may see the ‘big picture’ of their courses and appreciate the intricacies involved in the make-up of its content.

(3) Learning journeys should be made a regular component of new modules with the emphasis on self-discovery trips to industry-related firms. On a broader context, cognition must bring benefits for the Adherents beyond examination scores. They must be made to feel that skill mastery or knowledge acquisition does not only help their academic performances but is relevant for their overall development as adults. Adherents, for now, are like lost sheep – they can be guided down the right path.

c. Achievers. Achievers are the sharpest of the four types of learners and are clear minded about what they want – including where their next stop is after graduation. They are

prudent to the point of being economical with their accommodation strategies, only choosing to help those they are obligated to help and offering minimal volunteerism in return. The Achievers are thus adopting a style of accommodation quite close to the *setengah rela* that is present in their Indonesian culture. The following measures are recommended for them:

(1) The examination format should be re-designed from rewarding text-based answers to application answers, in order to steer the student towards cognitive learning, and away from rote learning. The former has thus far been unpopular simply because it has not been rewarding. The radical change must therefore come from the way that students are rewarded for their application skills rather than their acquisition skills. For a start, exam questions must steer away from proving a theory or principle into its mundane application in the real world context. This has largely been done but certainly not far enough.

(2) More project work should be introduced to move lecturers away from ‘telling’ and nearer to students ‘doing’ in the classroom. A movement away from textbook learning to Research and Development via academic projects is necessary here. Project work requires a high amount of independent thinking and rigorous collection of data. Students learn more as they plough into the real world of problems requiring solutions.

(3) The role of lecturers must be converted from that of a teacher to a facilitator. This can be done whereby a classroom encounter requires students to present their views on certain pre-assigned topics which require substantive prior reading or research. Republic Polytechnic in Singapore has taken this approach a step further by grading such tutorial sessions. Students will only be highly rewarded if they contribute actively and meaningfully to these small group discussions.

d. Ambassadors. Ambassadors conduct their ‘business’ of adjusting to life in Singapore in what can be described as a picture perfect accommodation strategy. They adopted the most diplomatic of *suka rela* styles by displaying the maximum amount of volunteerism, known as *gila rela*. If all the Chinese Indonesians selectively accommodate via a collaborative win-win

approach, education providers in Singapore would have the least to worry either about their adjustment difficulties or level of academic performance. The truth, however, is usually less pleasant. The truth is the ambassadors are also struggling with their grades. The following measures are recommended for them:

(1) Institute a regular feedback loop in the annual learning cycle for students so that they do not simply move from year to year without being accountable for their past failures. Some university groups require team members to fill in a peer appraisal form to evaluate each member. This peer assessment has potential to be used more extensively for group-based projects. If Ambassadors are aware that they have been assessed negatively by their team-mates, they would want to reflect on their own shortcomings and move towards a more cooperative form of teamwork.

(2) Subject content especially for social, liberal and humanities modules could be expanded beyond the intrinsic knowledge of the subject itself, to reflect its implications, significance and value in cross-cultural contexts, as part of extrinsic knowledge. For example, in an exposition of political economics over the use of IMF (International Monetary Fund) measures to rescue debt-ridden countries in the 1997 and 2008 global crises, the extrinsic knowledge section could mention the responses of different countries to IMF aid and ask students to consider whether their own countries would have accepted IMF terms and conditions, and why.

(3) As part of off-campus activities, attachments to relevant industries or purposive non-governmental agencies can be a real motivation for Ambassadors as they are constantly yearning for ways to ‘show off’ their acquired knowledge. These external agencies will meet their demand for a ‘big picture’ application of their specifically-acquired knowledge. Having a real-world dimension to their studies encourages students to assimilate their learning faster and adds mundane realism to their work.

7.3.2 Recommendations relating to general accommodation in Singapore

In order to provide meaningful recommendations from the current study in looking at the selective accommodation behaviours of Chinese Indonesians, it is useful to examine the close

links between the four types of learners and how they are, rather fortuitously, linked to the broader Indonesian (mainly Javanese) culture of accommodation, even though the *rela* terms in themselves are categorised by the researcher, and not based on any fixed *rela* terminology.

It cannot be denied that the way that Chinese Indonesians choose to accommodate in Singapore is based, in the first instance, on the individual and their perceptions of who they are; why they are in Singapore; and what do they intend to do in the future. Another group of foreign students, say Chinese Vietnamese or Chinese Malaysians, may share some of these characteristics while at the same time, differing from them. Again, while these can be partially accounted for at the individual level, the broader national context from the country of origin provides the framework for accommodating behaviours. In the current study, this can be succinctly traced to the Indonesian concept of *suka rela*. The four components of this Javanese concept have already been explained and indeed linked to the four learner types. What can be done now is to provide the broader framework in which the current study could be better understood. The following measures are recommended for them:

- a. The Institute of South-east Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore should commission a purposive study linking the general *suka rela* adaptation styles found in Javanese culture to the specific four Ideal Types of Selective Accommodation strategies adopted by Chinese Indonesian students in Singapore, as shown in the current study. For example, if *suka rela* encapsulates the four *rela* components, it should mean that switching from one *rela* type to another should be possible and indeed desirable. What this means is that if one *rela* type fails, there is always another *rela* type for an individual to move to since the difference centres simply on the amount of volunteerism that a participant is prepared to invest in. By logical extension of this argument, the four types of learners solicited from this study are equally transferable and not cast in stone – at least in the minds of the Chinese Indonesians. This proves the fundamental theory of selective accommodation in that apart from codifying participants into behaviour types, it can also help the researcher into knowing which direction to move to in order for positive traits to be acquired.

b. The Ministry of Education should consciously, over time, consolidate all serious studies of adaptation styles and accommodation strategies in Singapore into a data bank, with an eventual purpose of understanding how foreign students from all countries cope with study stress in the island-state. The theory of selective accommodation, like its *suka rela* equivalent, is at the same time a theory of typologies in as much as it is a jigsaw piece in the overall model for learning for foreign students. As a theory, it guides researchers in thinking broader issues about how Chinese Indonesians perceive their time in Singapore, as has been done throughout this study. As a model for action, the four types provide a useful guide to practical ways in which Chinese Indonesians combine the best of their Chinese ethnicity and Indonesian nationality to cope with studying in an alien country. It is thus recommended that MOE compares and contrasts these nationality differences and deals with specific questions on educational adjustment. The Ministry could then publish a Guidebook for students, lectures and administrators.

c. The Private Education Act in Singapore can be tightened to include an ambitious, some may say draconian, performance clause that requires a certain cohort pass rate as well as an accepted percentage of high achievers. The Act, which was as recently enacted as 2009, is a government gazette that covers corporate governance, student protection programmes, financial management, curriculum design and development, and student satisfaction in more than 1,000 private schools in Singapore. While it adequately covers the general framework for the protection of foreign students in Singapore, the Act is silent on quality assurance in specific content delivery. In other words, it governs private schools mainly on entry requirements and not on performance outcomes. The problem is more complicated than it would seem. Many lecturers at the tertiary institution where this study was conducted are part-timers who have full-time jobs elsewhere. It would not be fair to say that these lecturers are less dedicated but it does impose a strain on their time, as they usually rush from one lecturing assignment to another outside the campus. The Act may be tweaked to require a certain number of fulltime lecturers on campus at all times as part of this suggested performance clause. The current rigidly structured roles of lecturer and student would therefore have to be reconfigured to best achieve an optimal level of balance between fulltime and part-time lecturers.

d. Finally, to bring this study back to where it started from, perhaps historians or linguists at the National University of Singapore might want to collaborate their academic interests by jointly studying the dialectical pressures of being an Indonesian and a Chinese at the same time. Unlike the proposed study for ISEAS referred to above which is linked to education in Singapore and adopted a pragmatic slant, the proposed academic collaboration here between the Chinese Studies department and the Southeast Asian programmes department will examine the future of this ethnic group. One unmistakable trend is that many Chinese Indonesians have become more Indonesian than Chinese. While ethnicity still figured as one's cultural heritage, displacement from the motherland, China, has caused many an Indonesian to forget Chinese traditions as well as mastery of the language. The erosion in the use of the pure Chinese language has already taken place and is gradually being replaced by a Chinese hybrid language. Kuntjara (2005), a Chinese Indonesian himself, noted that younger generation of Chinese Indonesians were now mostly speaking a Chinese hybrid language that is a combination of Malay with local dialects, some Dutch, some Chinese and in a local accent. The hybrid language reflected the conflicts and struggles that had taken place. Making similar observations, Ang (2001), in accounting for such a Chinese hybrid language, noted that it reflected not just the positive forces of fusion and synthesis but, equally, the competitive forces of 'friction and tension, ambivalence and incommensurability, and also contestations and interrogations'. It is recommended that future studies into Chinese Indonesian accommodation theories could be angled on the impact of language trend and related developments. For instance, would the more general accommodation strategies of the Indonesians known as *suka rela* be replaced by the more specific four Ideal Types in the current study? In such a scenario, the theory of selective accommodation that has been proposed by the current study will become more accentuated and invaluable.

7.3.3 Recommendations relating to future research

A researcher's emotional involvement must also be kept in check in order to achieve dispassionate neutrality without losing the authenticity and realism in his/her study. In the final process, this writer brings a semblance of verisimilitude (Adler and Adler, 1994) to the readers by faithfully documenting the participants' phenomenological descriptions in an authentic and credible manner. This compensates for the small sample size and the lack of statistical representativeness in the current study. An investigator should be true to the problem at hand

rather than attempting to be ambitious given limited time and resources (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 33 – 40). The key advantage afforded by qualitative research in the current case study is that this researcher is able to engage with the Indonesian participants in all their emotions and perspectives. Had a quantitative approach been adopted, this researcher might have become too detached from the data and unable to display an empathetic understanding of their concerns.

At an academic level, this study is an attempt to contribute to the broader body of research on cross border student migration in the form of a detailed examination of one specific instance of that development. In particular, it examines the adaptation challenges, ranging from personal to political, faced by students moving from a developing country to a relatively developed one. In so doing, it has drawn out the distinctive differences in response from Chinese Indonesians that cannot be assumed to be common in all overseas students. Ironically, herein lies the limitations of this study. Qualitative research does not start with SRQs that are categorically clear in the initial research phases whereas research in the positivistic tradition starts with the testing of hypotheses, which means that SRQs are pretty stable at the start of the research process and remain intact throughout. Quantitative research would also have given a stronger indication of the problem of cross-border student migration from developing to developed countries. Such an empirical research would have surfaced more clearly the specific regions where this trend is occurring, and whether it has become worse. If so, a quantitative approach might also show up the specific reasons for the reliance of developing countries on developed nations for their higher educational needs. There are two ways to look at this cross-border student migration problem.

The first approach would obviously be to seek ways in which a source country might improve the quality of local universities to stem the flow from a developing to a developed country. Sufficient empirical evidence suggests that domestic tertiary education opportunities are inversely related to international student mobility, meaning that – bluntly put – overseas study is a substitute of choice for domestic education. Conversely, if the quality of tertiary education improves in the source countries, there will be a lower need for students from developing countries to study abroad. This is easier said than done as many of the under-developed countries do not possess the capital or professional resources to independently improve their domestic conditions and provide good educational facilities.

The difficulties of the first approach lead to the second approach, which is an alternative to the first. Some of the reasons for the current state of despair could be a home country's own undoing in that the burden of providing good tertiary education falls on the host destination rather than the home country. Due to this over-reliance on developed countries to deliver the goodies (excuse the pun), the spotlight does not fall on the source country as there is not much political pressure on the developing states to do so. Thus, issues beyond the traditional 'brain drain' problem need to be examined. For example, Naidoo (2007) suspects that increasing academic trade will prevent the predominantly developing source countries from being motivated to invest in their own higher education systems. If these source countries like Indonesia simply import rather than grow their own higher education system, it would have a grave impact on Indonesians who cannot afford the expense of overseas study, such as in Singapore. Although the Indonesian authorities could encourage the setting up of off-shore campuses in Indonesia to benefit students without the monetary means to travel, the advent of any economic crisis such as the Asian financial fallout in 1997 and the global economic meltdown a decade later would force these foreign institutions to uproot their investments and return to their countries of origin (Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin, 2002). The Indonesian government would need to demonstrate political leadership and academic vision to improve its struggling tertiary institutions. And, ironic while it may seem, the efficient Singapore educator-bureaucrats could provide the very assistance that Indonesia need to groom all of its tertiary aspirants – home or abroad.

End

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